

“Adventures of Huckleberry Finn” by Mark Twain [B1]

In questo racconto della vita di uno degli adolescenti più intrepidi della letteratura mondiale, l'autore del Mississippi dimostra il suo talento nel ritrarre i personaggi e nel riprodurre il vernacolo.

Mark Twain is the pseudonym of novelist and humourist Samuel Langhorne Clemens. Born in 1835, Twain grew up in Missouri on the Mississippi River. His stories, inspired by his own experiences, brought him international fame. The novel *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876) was a bestseller. *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, considered its sequel, is a [coming-of-age story](#) about innocence, morality, slavery — and human [weakness](#).

ROUTINE

The story is narrated by Huckleberry ‘Huck’ Finn, a boy of around thirteen years of age. He lives by the Mississippi with the [Widow](#) Douglas and her sister, Miss Watson. Huck has no interest in material things and is bored by the routine of respectable life. When he is taken by his father, a volatile alcoholic, to a remote cabin, Huck finds that he enjoys a return to the old way of life. “It was kind of lazy and jolly, laying off comfortable all day, smoking and fishing, and no books nor study. Two months or more run along, and my clothes got to be all rags and dirt, and I didn’t see how I’d ever got to like it so well at the widow’s, where you had to wash, and eat on a plate, and comb up, and go to bed and get up regular.” “Era abbastanza uno spasso, starsene comodi e tranquilli a non far niente tutto il giorno, e fumare e pescare, niente libri e niente studio. Dopo due mesi i miei vestiti erano ridotti a stracci sporchi, e non riuscivo più a capire come avevo fatto a trovarmi bene dalla vedova, dove dovevo lavarmi, mangiare in un piatto, pettinarmi, e andare a letto e alzarmi a orari regolari”.

VERNACULAR

With humour, irony and insight, Twain describes the charm and cruelty of pre-Civil War America. Huck narrates in regional dialect and his natural goodness is shown to contrast with modern society's greed, brutality and corruption. To escape his father, Huck fakes his own death and heads to the river. He meets Jim, Miss Watson's runaway slave, and the two set off together on a raft. "Sometimes we'd have that whole river all to ourselves for the longest time. [...] It's lovely to live on a raft. We had the sky up there, all speckled with stars, and we used to lay on our backs and look up at them, and discuss about whether they was made or only just happened." "Ogni tanto avevamo il fiume tutto per noi e per un bel pezzo. [...] Era meraviglioso vivere su una zattera. Avevamo tutto quanto il cielo, lassù, scintillante di stelle, e ci mettevamo a guardarle sdraiati a terra, e discutevamo se le aveva fatte qualcuno o se erano venute fuori così, da sole".

DECISION TIME

Life on the river is not always idyllic. Huck and Jim experience a river-boat accident, murderous robbers, feuding families, and two terrible fraudsters, known as the duke and the king. When Jim is betrayed for reward money, Huck plans to free him, but fears he will go to hell if he does. He writes a note to tell Miss Watson where to find Jim, but then stops to think. "And I see Jim before me all the time: in the day and in the night-time, sometimes moonlight, sometimes storms, and we a-floating along, talking and singing and laughing. [...] and then I happened to look around and see that paper. I took it up, and held it in my hand. I was a trembling, because I'd got to decide, forever, betwixt two things, and I knowed it. I studied a minute, sort of holding my breath, and then says to myself: 'All right, then, I'll go to hell' – and tore it up." "E ho rivisto Jim di fronte a me per tutto quel tempo, di giorno e di notte, a volte sotto la luce della luna, altre nella tempesta, e a come avevamo navigato chiacchierando e cantando e ridendo. [...] E poi mi sono guardato attorno, e ho posato gli occhi su quel pezzo di carta. Era lì accanto a me. L'ho preso e l'ho tenuto in mano. Stavo tremando, perché dovevo prendere una decisione, e per sempre, tra due cose, e lo sapevo bene. Ho

studiato il da farsi ancora un minuto, trattenendo quasi il respiro, e poi mi sono detto: “E va bene, allora finirò all’Inferno,” e ho strappato il biglietto”.

NEW ADVENTURES

Huck succeeds in freeing Jim, but can he remain so? What adventures await Huck? Perhaps his future lies far from the Mississippi, as America expands [westward](#) into “Indian Territory”. Huck has his own reasons to travel west. “And so there ain’t nothing more to write about, and I am rotten glad of it, because if I’d a knowed what a trouble it was to make a book I wouldn’t a tackled it, and ain’t a-going to no more. But I reckon I got to light out for the Territory ahead of the rest, because Aunt Sally she’s going to adopt me and sivilize me and I can’t stand it. I been there before.” “E così non c’è più niente da scrivere e io sono stramaledettamente contento, perché se mi pensavo che buttare giù un libro era una rottura del genere manco ci provavo, e poco ma sicuro non mi ci metto più. Comunque, penso che me la filo nel Territorio Indiano prima di chiunque altro, perché zia Sally vuole adottarmi così divento una persona civile, e io non lo reggo. Stavolta non mi ci fregano più”.

BANNED

Adventures of Huckleberry Finn enjoyed commercial and critical success, although Twain faced criticism for his [unflinching](#) portrayal of racism and slavery, as well as his use of racist [slang](#). While the novel is still [banned](#) by some US libraries today, for many it is a work of literary genius, and of great historical and social significance.

Glossary

- **set off** = partire
- **westward** = verso ovest
- **Widow** = vedova
- **heads to** = dirigersi
- **runaway** = fuggitivo
- **fraudsters** = truffatori
- **reward** = ricompensa
- **coming-of-age story** = romanzo di formazione
- **charm** = fascino
- **greed** = avidità
- **slang** = gergo
- **fakes** = fingere
- **feuding** = essere in lotta per
- **unflinching** = deciso
- **weakness** = debolezza
- **raft** = zattera
- **banned** = vietare