

Advanced Placement in
English Literature and Composition

Individual Learning Packet

Teaching Unit

Adventures of Huckleberry Finn

by Mark Twain

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Adventures of Huckleberry Finn

Objectives

By the end of this Unit, the student will be able to:

1. analyze the characters of Huck and Jim and their relationship to each other.
2. explain the impact of the first-person protagonist narrator on the story.
3. discuss the techniques Twain uses to create suspense.
4. discuss Twain's use of humor, satire, and occasional pathos.
5. examine, identify, and discuss the use of imagery and figurative language in the novel.
6. analyze the importance of literary elements, such as irony and foreshadowing, on the development of the plot.
7. identify and explain Twain's social themes as expressed in the novel.
8. identify and explain the significance in the characterization of different social classes during the time period of the novel.
9. respond to multiple choice questions similar to those that will appear on the Advanced Placement in English Literature and Composition exam.
10. respond to writing prompts similar to those that will appear on the Advanced Placement in English Literature and Composition exam.
11. offer a close reading of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and support all assertions and interpretations with direct evidence from the text, from authoritative critical knowledge of the genre, or from authoritative criticism of the novel.

Adventures of Huckleberry Finn

Lecture Notes

I. Mark Twain, *Tom Sawyer*, and *Huckleberry Finn*

Mark Twain:

- Mark Twain was his pen name inspired by a riverboat term, “Mark twain,” signaling depth and the point where the boat could drift on its own current.
- Real name: Samuel Clemens.
- Born November 30, 1835 in Florida, Missouri.
- Parents were from Virginia, moving to Missouri later in life with their children.
- In his late formative years, Twain moved to Hannibal, Missouri. This area’s modern tourism revolves around Twain and the characters of his novels. It is similar to the setting for his most popular novels, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, which take place in St. Petersburg, Missouri.
- Twain tried his hand at many jobs prior to writing including: a riverboat pilot, a printer, and a hopeful gold miner.
- He married Olivia Langdon in 1870.
- Writing pieces included: various letters for newspapers, *The Innocents Abroad*, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court*, *The Prince and the Pauper*, *Roughing It*, *The Gilded Age*, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, *Life on the Mississippi*, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, and *Pudd’nhead Wilson*.
- Many of Twain’s books contained powerful social themes challenging traditional Southern ways of thinking. In some cases, this led to extreme controversy and the banning of the book. (See section on banned books following.)
- Mark Twain died in 1910 on April 21st. He was 75 years old.

Tom Sawyer:

- Mark Twain’s first official novel. His previous works could be considered short stories, and *The Gilded Age* was co-written with Charles Dudley Warner.
- *Tom Sawyer* was published in 1876.

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Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. What indications are there throughout the book of Huck's morality?
2. Is Jim a static or dynamic character? Explain your answer with support and illustrations from the text.
3. Discuss the role of each of the father figures in Huck's life: Pap, Jim, Judge Thatcher, the duke, and the king.
4. Discuss Twain's use of the Mississippi River as a symbol throughout the novel. Find examples of at least three different situations in which the river represents various aspects of life.
5. Discuss the use of weather to foreshadow events and to add mood to scenes throughout the book.
6. Research the attitudes of the general citizen and the stance of the American government, especially those of the South, on slavery and the treatment of blacks during the time period of this novel.
7. List examples of Huck's quick wit and ability to stay calm in tense situations.
8. Sort the novel into separate episodes, analyzing the merits and overall plot development of each, as well as how these episodes appeal to the reader.
9. List, compare, and contrast Twain's use of allusions with the actual titles alluded to including: Shakespeare's Hamlet, King Richard III, Macbeth, and Romeo and Juliet.
10. Refute or support the argument that The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn should not be read by young adults or that the material should be restricted to certain readers.
11. Identify and examine the different dialects spoken by the characters in the novel. Using a linguistic approach, compare and contrast the dialects of multiple characters throughout the novel.
12. Discuss the significance of Twain's use of satire in the following situations and rank the influence of each upon the reader:
 - sentimentality and gullibility
 - the average man
 - romantic literature with its mournful subject matter in poetry and its ridiculous plots in novels
 - a code of honor that results in needless bloodshed
 - religious dogma.

Adventures of Huckleberry Finn

Chapter 1

1. What can the reader expect in a story told from first-person point of view?

2. Describe the setting as it is established in the first chapter.

3. What evidence is presented to establish Huck as a youth rather than an adult?

4. What exposition is provided by Huck, which he claims is the prequel to this story.

Chapter 10

1. How does Huck's view of superstition evolve over the course of this chapter?

2. What does the following paragraph indicate about the development of Huck's character?

“Jim sucked and sucked at the jug, and now and then he got out of his head and pitched around and yelled; but every time he come to himself he went to sucking at the jug again. His foot swelled up pretty big, and so did his leg; but by and by the drunk begun to come, and so I judged he was all right; but I'd druther been bit with a snake then Pap's whisky.”

3. How does Huck's dressing up as a girl help to establish his independence as a character?

Chapter 20

1. How does Twain again use weather to emphasize the mood and rising action of a conflict?

2. What is Twain suggesting by having the king and the duke pull their first “con” at a religious revival?

3. How does Twain continue the lightened mood of the chapter in the last few lines?

4. What solution to a complication of the plot is temporarily solved in the chapter?

Chapter 30

1. Explain how this chapter is the resolution of the Wilks framework story?

2. The king and the duke make amends and indulge in drinks. What is Twain probably suggesting by having these characters take to drinking?

3. What single incident proves the king and the duke to be nearly as stupid as the townspeople?

Chapter 39

1. How does Twain begin to build the climax of Jim's escape plan by using the element of suspense?

2. How has the entire episode of attempting to free Jim contributed to Twain's theme of moral ambiguity?

Chapter 40

1. Explain the verbal irony in Huck's statement: "We was all glad as we could be, but Tom was the gladdest of all because he had a bullet in the calf of his leg."

2. What startling revelation does Huck come to regarding Jim?
