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Prestwick House
Literature
Teaching Unit
Chapter-by-Chapter Study Guide



Adventures
of Huckleberry Finn

by Mark Twain

- Learning objectives
- Study Guide with short-answer questions
- Background information
- Vocabulary in context
- Multiple-choice test
- Essay questions
- Literary terms



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Item No: 300032

Adventures of Huckleberry Finn

Objectives

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

1. understand the literal events in the story and enjoy the comic adventures
2. read selected passages of dialect aloud and understand their meaning
3. define “irony” and point to at least five examples from the novel that illustrate this definition
4. discuss the development of the following major themes in the novel:
 - Huck’s growth and understanding of his world
 - Man’s inhumanity to man
 - Individual beliefs that are in conflict with the laws vs. expectations of one’s culture
 - The restrictions on one’s freedom in a town, as opposed to the freedom to live outside of civilization
 - The cruelty/oppression of slavery and the dehumanizing of black people by the white nineteenth-century culture
5. discuss the elements in this novel that make it one of the most important works in American literature
6. note and discuss the following objects of Twain’s satire:
 - Sentimentality (being influenced more by emotion than reason) and gullibility (being easily tricked, cheated, or fooled)
 - The average man
 - Traditional concepts of religion
 - Romantic literature with its mournful subject matter in poetry and in ridiculous plots in novels
 - A code of honor that results in needless bloodshed

Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. Explain why this novel is sometimes seen as a “rite of passage” story. Consider how Huck is at the beginning, what ordeals he undergoes, and how he seems at the end.
2. Define the term “irony” and cite four examples from the novel that support your definition.
3. By citing incidents from the novel, demonstrate that a major theme is “man’s inhumanity to man.”
4. Trace the development of Huck’s troubled conscience. What is his problem, and how does he finally resolve it?
5. Explain why Huck decides to “light out for the territory” rather than stay with Aunt Sally, who wants to “sivilize” him.
6. Prove the following thesis by citing passages or incidents from the novel:

On the river, Huck finds peace and freedom. When on land, he has to deal with human gullibility, greed, corruption, and cruelty.
7. In what ways is Jim a less-developed character at the beginning and at the end of the novel than he is in the middle?
8. List as many points of contrast as you can between Tom and Huck.
9. Why do you suppose Ernest Hemingway said that all modern American literature began with *Huckleberry Finn*?
10. A work of literary art is frequently described as a book that has something important to say and says it with great artistry. What important comments on the human experience does this book make?
11. Identify passages from the novel in which Twain satirizes the average man, human gullibility, and romantic literature.
12. How has Huck’s view of slavery, and of Jim in particular, changed over the course of their adventures?
13. What does the Mississippi River symbolize?

Adventures of Huckleberry Finn

Chapter I

Vocabulary

commenced – started
kin – a relation
middling – moderately
victuals – food

1. What is your reaction to Twain’s “Notice”? Is it meant to be taken seriously, humorously, or what?

2. Why does Twain purposely misspell the word “civilize” in the second paragraph?

3. In Huck’s mind, what does being civilized involve?

4. A frequently used technique of Twain’s is irony. What is ironic about Huck’s joining Tom Sawyer’s band of robbers?

Chapter III

Vocabulary

ingots – molded metal pieces, possibly bricks of gold

lath – thin strips of wood

ornery – common; contrary

resigned – quit

1. What two views of religions (Providence) does Huck get?

2. How is Twain's point of view expressed, and how is it different from Huck's view?

3. Why does Huck believe that the body that is found is *not that of* his father?

4. What impression does Huck give the reader of his father?

5. What comparison is made in the last line of the chapter?

Chapter X

Vocabulary

notion – an idea

1. Why does Jim feel so strongly about *not* talking about the dead man?

2. What bad luck happens to them? Why is it Huck’s fault?

3. What is humorous about the digression Huck gives on “looking at the new moon over your left shoulder”?

4. As the chapter ends, where does Huck go and why?

Chapter XXI

Vocabulary

blackguarding – insulting; talking badly about

bodkin – a dagger

bray – to make a sound like a donkey

illustrious – outstanding; famous

imperative – pressing; important and necessary

soliloquy – a dramatic monologue

1. Hamlet's soliloquy, as presented by the duke, is a bunch of nice-sounding lines from several different Shakespearean plays jammed together, but they mean nothing. What are some lines you recognize, and from what plays do they come?

2. At first, the town loafers seem to be lazy but good-hearted men. What do they do, however, that seems cruel?

3. How do the townspeople describe Boggs? What happens to Boggs?

Chapter XXXII

Vocabulary

aground – onto the shore
waylay – lie in wait for

- 1. Throughout the novel, we have seen instances in which Twain uses descriptions of nature to convey a mood of tranquility, beauty, or power. What mood is conveyed in the description?

- 2. When Huck makes up a story about a boiler on a steamboat blowing up, he is asked if anyone was hurt. What attitude of the people does Twain attack with Huck's answer?

- 3. Explain the fortunate coincidence that enables Huck to continue his masquerade.
