



The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn

by Mark Twain

Teacher's Guide

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Synopsis

Chapter 1

The motherless son of the town drunk, Huckleberry Finn, has received \$6,000 from locating a robbers' cave. Judge Thatcher invests the total on Huck's behalf and leaves him with a dollar a day. The same arrangement applies to Tom Sawyer, his partner and friend. Huck lives with the Widow Douglas and her sister, Miss Watson, who owns a slave named Jim. Huck's life stabilizes during his residence at the widow's house, but he chafes under the strictures of clean living, good manners, religion, and education.

Chapter 2

In contrast to the widow's ways, Huck prefers bare feet, a carefree smoke, and the freedom of the outdoors. He sneaks out with Tom and pulls pranks on Jim. The boys form a gang with Ben Rogers and Tommy Barnes. At daylight, Huck slips back into his room.

Chapter 3

Miss Watson lambastes Huck for muddying his clothes. For a month, Huck plays robber with the gang, then resigns. On Saturday the boys disrupt a church picnic.

Chapter 4

After three or four months, Huck's luck turns bad after he spills salt at breakfast. He spies Pap Finn's heel mark and hurries to the Judge to give away all the investment. Jim predicts that Huck will be hanged. That night, Pap appears in Huck's room.

Chapter 5

Pap accuses his son of being a dandy and demands his money. The next day, Pap gets drunk

and threatens the Judge. The widow and judge try to gain custody of Huck, but a new judge refuses. Pap promises to reform, then gets drunk again.

Chapter 6

Pap continues his binge drinking and, in spring, takes Huck by skiff up the river three miles and over to the Illinois shore. He imprisons Huck in a remote cabin. At first Huck enjoys the primitive lifestyle. Eventually, Pap gets too free with his punishments during drunken bouts. After two months of trying to get Huck's money, Pap threatens to hide Huck in a spot six or seven miles away. To free himself from an unpredictable father, Huck prepares to flee by water. That night, Pap works himself up, falls into a drunken fit, and threatens to kill Huck. The boy arms himself with a gun and waits for his father to sober up.

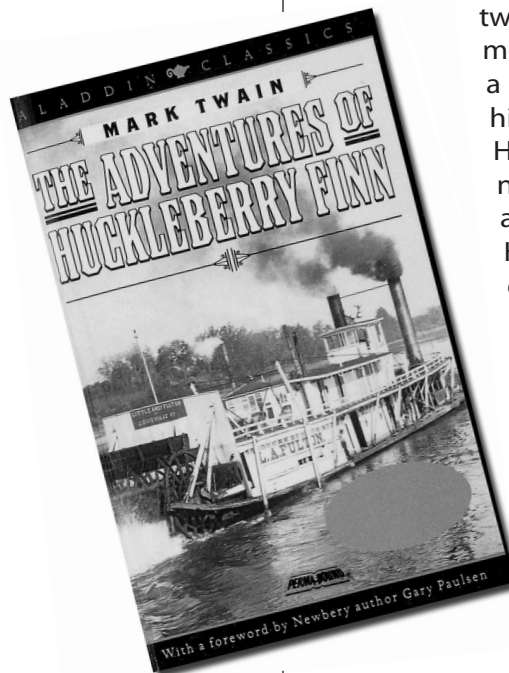
Chapter 7

The next morning, Huck begins to gather cordwood, a canoe, and pieces of log rafts, which he hides among willows. In the afternoon, Pap locks Huck in the cabin and shoves off with nine logs to sell in town. Huck saws his way from the cabin and leaves clues that impli-

cate Pap in murder. During the night, he sets out for Jackson's Island and falls asleep before breakfast.

Chapter 8

After 8:00 A. M., Huck enjoys watching local people searching for his body and recognizes Pap, the Judge, and Tom Sawyer's family. On the fourth day, Huck searches the island, which is three miles long and a half mile wide. That night, he paddles to the Illinois shore, then returns and meets Jim, who ran away the night Huck was supposedly murdered. Jim fears Miss Watson will sell him to New Orleans for \$800 and hides during the day, even though he goes hungry.



Chapter 9

Jim and Huck move to a cave for ten or twelve days and look for driftwood. One night, they spy a floating house in which a dead man lies amid trash. The duo carries off some loot to the Illinois shore.

Chapter 10

Huck terrifies Jim by coiling a dead snake on his blanket. Jim is bitten by its mate. For four days, he is delirious, then recovers. Huck grows bored and dresses like a girl to reconnoiter the Illinois shore.

Chapter 11

Claiming to be Sarah Mary Williams from Hookerville, Huck visits St. Petersburg. Judith Loftus tells him about the supposed murder and a reward of \$300 posted for Jim's return and \$200 for Pap. She confides that people have seen smoke arising from Jackson's Island; her husband plans to locate Huck for the reward. Huck hurries back to the cave for Jim and moves to the foot of the island.

Chapter 12

At dawn, they tie up the raft at a towhead 16-17 miles below the village on the Illinois side and spend the day watching river traffic. After constructing a wigwam, steering oar, and dirt floor, they travel and fish. After passing St. Louis, Huck moves inland each night to steal chickens, melons, corn, and pumpkins. The fifth night, they encounter the wreck of the *Walter Scott*, a steamboat on which they foil the plot of two thieves who conspire to kill a man. Huck hurries to Jim, but discovers that the raft has broken away.

Chapter 13

Huck and Jim steal a rowboat and recover the raft. Huck lies to a ferryboat watchman about a family stranded on the wreck.

Chapter 14

The duo look over the stolen goods they took from the wreck. Huck teases Jim about a king's harem and narrates the history of Louis XVI.

Chapter 15

Aiming for Cairo, Illinois, and the Ohio River, the pair navigate in fog the second night. Huck and Jim are separated. Huck paddles the canoe back to the raft and fools Jim into believing that they were never apart. Jim humbles Huck for lying.

Chapter 16

That night, they drift toward Cairo with Jim eager for freedom and an opportunity to reunite with his wife and two children. Huck fights his conscience over slave stealing. When overtaken by men with guns, he leads them to believe that his family has smallpox. The men give him two \$20 gold pieces and leave. Huck determines to stop trying to be honest. After the pair arrives in the Ohio River, a steamboat hits their raft. Huck swims ashore.

Chapter 17

Under the name George Jackson, Huck finds himself in the midst of a bitter, longstanding feud between the Grangerfords and Shepherdsons.

Chapter 18

Colonel Grangerford's refinement impresses Huck. He learns that Cousin Bud was shot three months before and Baldy Shepherdson a week later. Sophia Grangerford leaves a note for Harney Shepherdson in her Testament. A slave leads Huck back to Jim. Huck hurries to the Grangerford house after he learns of Sophia's elopement and arrives in time to see gunmen kill his new friend Buck. Dismayed, Huck returns to the raft.

Chapter 19

Jim and Huck travel for two or three days. At dawn one morning, they encounter two humbugs being chased by men with dogs. The pair call themselves the king and duke, but Huck is not fooled.

Chapter 20

Huck makes up a lie about being from Pike County, Missouri, and is troubled for several days with people trying to reclaim Jim. Huck is washed overboard. The con men hold a camp meeting. The king has a reward poster printed describing Jim. They tie Jim to demonstrate that they are returning him to custody.

Chapter 21

The grifters practice a dramatic act, which they advertise in Arkansas. Huck witnesses the shooting of Boggs and the formation of a lynch party to punish Colonel Sherburn, his killer.

Chapter 22

Sherburn faces down the mob. Huck goes to a circus. That night, the con men introduce "The King's Cameleopard."

Chapter 23

The night of the third performance, Huck suspects trouble from disappointed viewers. The con men hurry to the raft and count \$465 dollars. Huck tries to explain history to Jim, who mourns his children, especially Elizabeth, a deaf mute.

Chapter 24

The next night, the con men dress Jim in King Lear's outfit and paint him blue to simulate a sick Arab. Huck and the frauds buy new clothes. Huck goes to make reservations on a steamboat. When a country lad tells about Peter Wilks' death the previous night and the three teenage daughters left fatherless, the king and duke plan to grab the girls' inheritance. By boarding a steamer and putting ashore, they assume the identity of Wilks' mournful brothers, Harvey and William.

Chapter 25

While Lawyer Bell is in Louisville on business, the king leads the duke in pretending to be William, a deaf mute. Mary Jane Wilks lets the king read the will, which leaves the girls the house and \$3,000 in gold. Harvey and William are to receive an equal amount along with the tanyard and some real estate. In the cellar, they locate the gold, which is short by \$415, and carry it upstairs to divide with the girls. The king makes a magnanimous gesture of giving all the money to the girls. Dr. Robinson is not fooled, but Mary Jane proves her trust by handing the king all the money to invest.

Chapter 26

Huck, who plays the king's valet, wants to fetch the doctor to disclose the con men's trickery. He hides in their room and overhears their plan to sneak out at 3:00 A. M. To preserve the money, he steals it from the straw tick and sneaks downstairs.

Chapter 27

While Mary Jane keeps watch by her father's coffin, Huck slides the moneybag next to the corpse, then goes back to his room in the attic. The funeral at noon bores Huck, who worries that the money may have been removed before the burial. The king schedules an auction for two days later to sell the house, property, and slaves. Huck is saddened by the parting between the girls and their slaves. To the con men's questions, he implies that slaves have stolen the moneybag.

Chapter 28

The next morning, Mary Jane still grieves that the slaves must be sold. He tells her the whole story about the con men who are posing as her uncles. After Mary Jane leaves, Huck makes up a lie about her nursing Hannah Proctor through mumps. At the end of the auction, the real heirs arrive.

Chapter 29

While the two pairs of contenders squabble, Lawyer Levi Bell disputes the king's claim by identifying him as the man seen in the canoe with Tim Collins. A comparison of handwriting proves the con men are lying. In a rainstorm, the crowd hurries to the cemetery to dig up the corpse and look for a distinguishing tattoo. When the searchers uncover the moneybag, Huck hurries away to Jim. Before they escape, the duke and king overtake them.

Chapter 30

The con men fight over the failed plan. After they get drunk, Huck tells Jim what really happened.

Chapter 31

As the raft continues for days on a southerly course, the con men try several methods of defrauding the public. At Pikesville, Huck discovers that they have taken Jim for the reward. Huck tries to pray to relieve his conscience, then tears up his letter to Miss Watson disclosing Jim's whereabouts. He searches for Silas Phelps' sawmill and finds the duke. Huck blames the king for Jim's disappearance. The duke dispatches Huck toward Lafayette, but Huck doubles back toward the Phelps property.

Chapter 32

At the farm, Huck greets Aunt Sally and poses as Tom Sawyer.

Chapter 33

Huck meets the real Tom on the road to his aunt's house. He advises Tom to adopt Sid Sawyer's name and continue the ruse. As the Sawyer brothers, they eat dinner with the family, then shinny out their bedroom window to hurry to town. On the way, they see a mob carrying the king and duke, tarred and feathered, on a rail.

Chapter 34

Tom and Huck engineer an elaborate plot to dig Jim out of the cabin. Jim is grateful for their help.

Chapter 35

The romantic notions Tom has read in adventure stories lead them to a complicated escape plot requiring 37 years of work.

Chapter 36

That night, Tom tells Jim that he intends to make a witch pie.

Chapter 37

The boys perplex Aunt Sally by stealing shingle nails, bedsheets, candles, and spoons, and put the witch pie in Jim's pan.

Chapter 38

Tom concocts a trail of clues to Jim's noble identity and background.

Chapter 39

The next morning, they search for rats and snakes to keep Jim company. At the end of three weeks, Silas plans to advertise Jim in the papers. Tom leaves a warning note on the door.

Chapter 40

Aunt Sally attempts to expose the boys' plot. A gang of fifteen farmers arrives to search for Jim. A stray bullet strikes Tom.

Chapter 41

Silas apprehends Huck and returns him to the farm. Aunt Sally sits up all night waiting for Tom.

Chapter 42

The doctor returns Tom and Jim and treats Tom's leg. Jim is locked once more in the cabin; Aunt Sally nurses Tom all night. He confesses to the plot, but Aunt Sally thinks he is delirious. Aunt Polly arrives to unravel the inexplicable letters Aunt Sally has sent about Tom and Sid. Huck learns that Miss Watson has died and set Jim free in her will.

The Last

The family thanks Jim for tending Tom's wound. Jim confesses that the dead man in the floating house was Pap. Aunt Sally plots to civilize Huck, but he has been there before and flees.

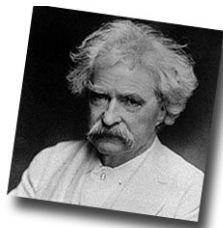
Timeline

- 1774-93 Louis XVI is king of France.
- 1785 The Dauphin is born.
- 1793 Louis XVI is beheaded.
- 1795 The Dauphin, also known as Louis XVII, dies.
- 1803 United States buys the Louisiana Territory from France.
- 1807 Robert Fulton demonstrates the steamboat *Clermont*.
- 1808 Importation of slaves into the United States is banned.
- 1819 Hannibal, Missouri, is founded.
- 1820 Missouri is admitted to the Union as a slave state.
- 1830-37 William IV is king of Britain.
- 1835 Halley's Comet appears; Samuel Clemens is born.
- 1837 Victoria becomes queen of Britain.
- 1842 Ether and chloroform are used as anesthetics.
- 1845 Irish potato crop fails, leading to wide-spread famine.
- 1846 The planet Neptune is discovered.
The Smithsonian Institution is established.
- 1846-48 Mexican War
- 1850 Fugitive Slave Act imposes heavy penalties for aiding runaway slaves.
Nathaniel Hawthorne publishes *The Scarlet Letter*.
- 1851 Herman Melville publishes *Moby Dick*.
- 1852 Harriet Beecher Stowe publishes *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.
- 1854 Antislavery groups help form the Republican Party.
Walt Whitman publishes *Leaves of Grass*.
- 1859 Charles Darwin publishes *The Origin of Species*.
John Brown leads raid on Harper's Ferry, Virginia.
- 1861-65 Civil War
- 1862 Homestead Act encourages settlement of the West.
- 1863 Abraham Lincoln issues the *Emancipation Proclamation*.
Lincoln delivers the Gettysburg Address.
- 1865 The Thirteenth Amendment formally abolishes slavery.
- 1866 Gregor Mendel publishes his discoveries on heredity.
The Klu Klux Klan is organized.
- 1867 Dominion of Canada is created.
Joseph Lister introduces sterilization and

- antiseptic procedures.
- 1876** *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* is published.
Battle of the Little Big Horn
- 1877** Reconstruction ends.
- 1883** *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is published.
- 1886** Geronimo surrenders.
- 1890** Battle of Wounded Knee marks end of the Indian Wars.
Census Bureau announces official end of the frontier.
- 1895** Steven Crane publishes *The Red Badge of Courage*.
- 1896** In *Plessy v. Ferguson*, Supreme Court rules segregation is constitutional.
- 1898** Spanish American War
- 1899** United States takes control of the Philippines.
- 1901** Queen Victoria dies.
- 1903** Wilbur and Orville Wright make first powered heavier-than-air flight at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina.
Upton Sinclair publishes *The Jungle*.
- 1904-14** The Panama Canal is built.
- 1910** Halley's Comet appears; Samuel Clemens dies.

Author Sketch

Mark Twain, one of America's most beloved authors, began life on November 30, 1835, as Samuel Langhorne Clemens near the Mississippi River in the backwoods community of Florida, Missouri. His father, John Marshall Clemens, a brilliant but short-tempered attorney, failed at his profession and turned to real estate schemes as a means of supporting his family. Twain's temperament reflects the influence of his witty, sweet-tempered mother, Jane Lampton Clemens, a Virginia belle. In 1839, the family moved to Hannibal. Because the death of Twain's father in 1847 ended Twain's education, he apprenticed in a printshop.



After working on his older brother Orion's newspaper, the *Hannibal Journal*, from 1853 to 1854, Twain practiced the printing trade in Philadelphia, St. Louis, Cincinnati, and New York. At the beginning of his writing career, he published pseudonymous humorous sketches in Orion's papers. Because he had yearned to become a riverboat pilot since childhood, he learned complicated river maps and current charts to obtain a pilot's license. After only

four years of piloting, he saw his career thwarted by the Civil War, which closed the river to business travel. Twain joined a band of Confederate volunteers, then abandoned them after two weeks and accompanied his brother to Nevada. After laboring in a Carson City quartz mine, Twain prospected for silver and gold, then began writing for the *Virginia City Territorial Enterprise*. A year later, he adapted the pseudonym by which he is best known.

Relocated in San Francisco in 1864, Twain lectured and wrote humorous sketches with the aid of supporters Artemus Ward and Bret Harte. Twain's first major publication, "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County" (1865), preceded a variety of travelogues, adventure stories, histories, and satires. He traveled to Hawaii in 1866 for the *Sacramento Union*. The next year, he wrote dispatches on the Holy Land for the San Francisco *Alta California*.

In 1870, Twain married Olivia Langdon, an Eastern aristocrat, and settled in Hartford, Connecticut. He abandoned journalism and turned to creative writing, beginning with *Roughing It* (1872), *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876), *The Prince and the Pauper* (1882), the autobiographical *Life on the Mississippi* (1883), and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1883), his masterpiece. He followed with *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (1889) and a humorous mystery, *Pudd'nhead Wilson* (1894). Famous in Europe and America, he received notables at his Mississippi-style house, which he designed and built to resemble a riverboat.

The last years of Twain's life brought sadness and despair. In 1885, an ill-conceived investment in the Paige typesetter ruined him. He declared bankruptcy and began lecturing to pay his debts. He suffered the deaths of his wife and daughters Susy and Jean. As his health declined, he wrote skeptical works on religion and human perfectability. In 1906, he began dictating an autobiography to his secretary. Twain died in Redding, Connecticut, on April 21, 1910. He was mourned by people of all stations.

Critic's Corner

The success of Mark Twain's two most popular works, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, rests on his affectionate portrayal of boyish good times in nineteenth-century rural America before the Civil War. More valuable than

the verisimilitude of dialect and setting or his skill in storytelling, the episodic adventure stories delineate the values of the plantation South and the yearning of blacks to be free and unhampered citizens. Set on the Mississippi, Twain's childhood backyard, the novels offer Huck, a motherless orphan, an escape from coercion that would civilize him according to Victorian standards. Twain salts the text with incidental humor at the expense of ministers, do-gooders, lynch mobs, and gullible country folk.

One of world literature's most appealing boys, Huck immerses himself in river lore. Through his protagonist, Twain relives the quandaries and temptations of childhood from the point of view of a tender teen who has no qualms about lying, stealing, or deceiving on a grand scale. A perennial debate topic, Twain's masterwork continues to garner a share of headlines as schools and libraries determine where the text fits in American literature and what young readers should derive from an acquaintance with a Southern rascal not above liberating a slave and setting out for high times on board a humble raft.

Other Works by Mark Twain

"The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County," 1865

Innocents Abroad, 1869

Roughing It, 1872

The Gilded Age, 1873

Ah Sin, the Heathen Chinese (with Bret Harte), 1876

The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, 1876

A Tramp Abroad, 1880

The Prince and the Pauper, 1882

Life on the Mississippi, 1883

A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court, 1889

Pudd'nhead Wilson, 1894

Tom Sawyer Abroad, 1894

Joan of Arc, 1896

Tom Sawyer, Detective, 1896

Following the Equator, 1897

"The Man Who Corrupted Hadleyburg," 1898

The Mysterious Stranger, 1916

The Autobiography of Mark Twain, 1924

"Letters from the Earth," 1963

Related Reading

Avi, *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle*

Orson Scott Card, *Ender's Game*

Paulo Coelho, *The Alchemist*

Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*

Sid Fleischman, *Jim Ugly*

Paula Fox, *Slave Dancer*

Robin Graham, *The Dove*

Robert Heinlein, *Have Spacesuit, Will Travel*

Irene Hunt, *No Promises in the Wind*

Jack London, "To Build a Fire"

Gary Paulsen, *Nightjohn and Hatchet*

J. D. Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye*

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<http://etext.virginia.edu/railton/huckfinn/satrev.html>.
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General Objectives

1. To follow the pattern of exploits in an episodic novel
2. To discuss the theme of dishonesty
3. To explore the use of setting as an impetus to adventure
4. To evaluate the protagonist as hero
5. To explain the author’s purpose in using dialect
6. To isolate the elements of humor
7. To determine why Twain’s novel is an American masterpiece
8. To discuss the author’s view of human tendencies toward crime
9. To define conscience
10. To explain the historical and social background of slavery

Specific Objectives

1. To explain how a character like Huck becomes a part of American culture
2. To examine the theme of greed as revealed in the king, duke, Judith Loftus, and Miss Watson
3. To discuss evidence of community concern for Huck’s welfare
4. To note emotional differences in Huck and other children his age
5. To account for prejudice against Jim and abolitionists
6. To determine how Huck foils the plot to defraud the Wilks girls
7. To enumerate Huck’s lies and the purpose of each
8. To describe Pap as father and villain
9. To discuss Huck’s use of flight as a method of coping with distress
10. To note places in the text where the author patches together events without adequate motivation

Literary Terms and Applications

For a better understanding of Mark Twain’s fiction, present the following terms and applications:

Bildungsroman: literally a “formation novel,” which describes the coming-of-age of an untried or naive youth. Huck’s growing up is more a matter of necessity than a leisurely acquisition of adult attitudes and coping methods. Because Pap appears ready to kill him during a bout with delirium tremens, Huck knows that he must escape the cabin or be transferred farther from civilization, where he would be at Pap’s disposal. Still naive about money, responsibility, and ownership, Huck orders his life to suit a child’s notion of justice. Stealing Jim is the pragmatic choice, even though conscience gnaws at Huck for being a low-down abolitionist. When events fall into place in the final scene, Huck is left with one quandary—how to maintain autonomy away from the prudery and fussiness of female dominators. Returned to a child’s rebellion, he immediately thinks of running away, this time to lawless territory where he can function outside the strictures of the widow’s domain.

Humor: a gentle, affirmative emphasis on human nature, foibles, and idiosyncrasies. Twain lightens his text with a generous outpouring of comic scenes, such as melted butter misdiagnosed as brain fever and Huck’s failed attempt to dress and behave like a girl. On the line between comedy and theme are scenes in which Huck makes up lies as easily as talking. By pretending to conceal smallpox from slave catchers, implying that his family is stranded on the *Walter Scott*, and claiming that Jim is a sick Arab and that Mary Jane is nursing Hannah through mumps, Huck displays an ability to disarm people with spur-of-the-moment naivete and dismay. Yet, his skill at artifice reflects a deeper theme of lying as a means of survival and countering authority.

Irony: an implied discrepancy between what is said or done and what is meant. Twain creates a puzzle in Aunt Sally Phelps. Loving and forgiving of the boys, she offers mothering as a means of restoring Tom to health and returning Huck to civilization. However, when Huck first encounters her, she dismisses the death of slaves from a steamboat accident as though black people are incapable of suffering. Twain’s study of plantation ignorance

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn Mark Twain

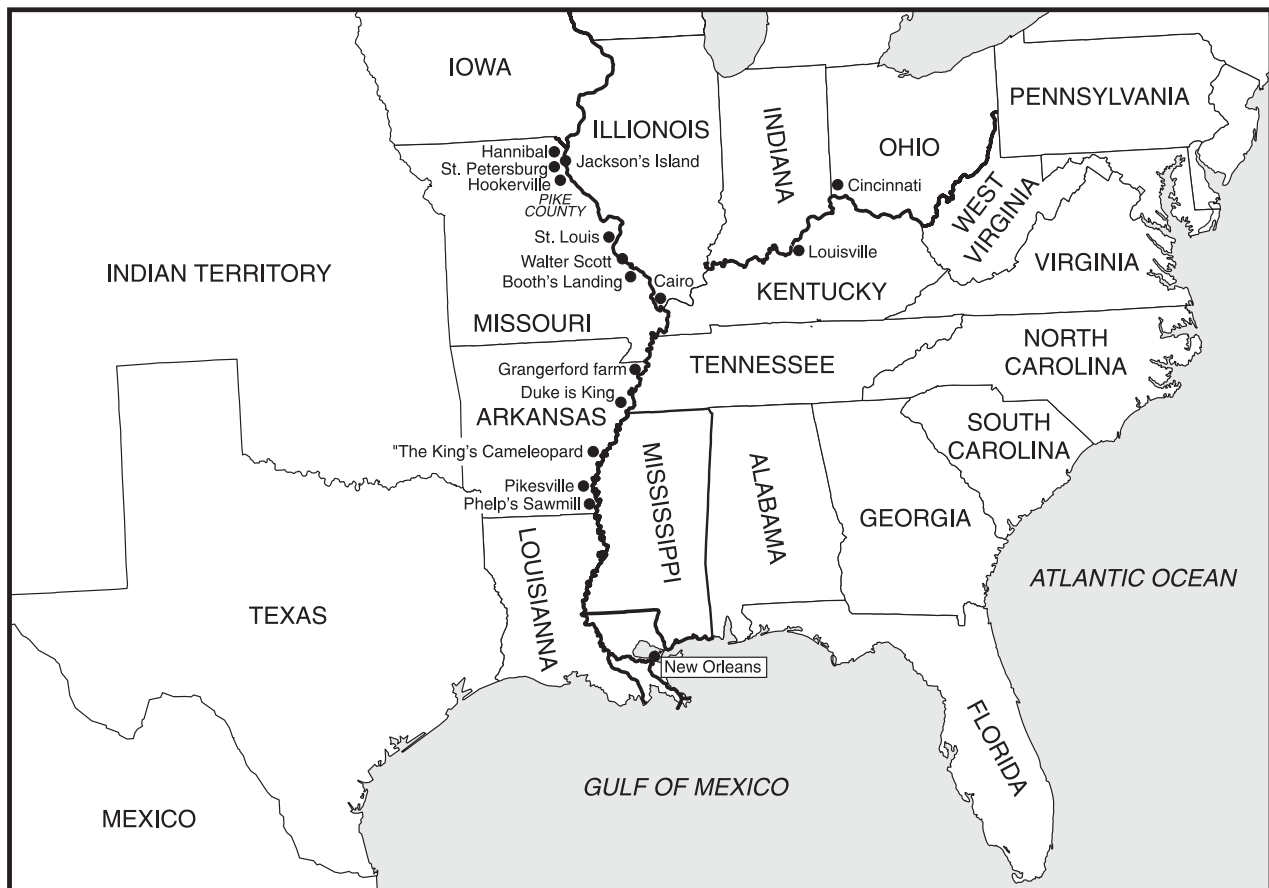
raises the question of how a good person like Aunt Sally can function in a two-level society in which young boys are worth the effort of taming and protecting, but slaves are as expendable as farm animals.

The Importance of Setting

The milieu of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is perhaps American literature's most famous setting—one of the world's fabled rivers and the dividing line between slave and free states and between white civilization and Indian territory. On the border that tempts Huck to abandon law and civility, he discloses his natural tendencies. On the one hand, he is capable of taking a rowboat, raiding henhouses, and stealing from local vegetable patches with no qualms of conscience. On the other, he recognizes that slave stealing is social anathema. As the raft nears Cairo, Illinois, Jim's reaction toward freedom that seems to be within arm's reach reminds Huck that fleeing home means more to Jim than a mere change of scenery.

The topography of current, bottoms, bluffs, river islands, and timber-covered shores alters as rapidly as the raft travels over a roiling river freshly invigorated with spring rains. The milieu floats flotsam and jetsam in the hands of Huck and Jim, who scavenge usable wood, clothing, and other items from the shore with the same insouciance that impels them to pilfer from thieves aboard the wreck of the *Walter Scott* or from trash in the floating house. The liquid world that moves them freely among episodes epitomizes Huck's free-floating morals, which stab him occasionally with a view of himself as slave stealer. Just as he weathers fog and bobs back from being swept overboard, he periodically battles his pangs of conscience on the harsher landscape within himself.

It is significant to the story that evil behavior occurs on land, with the murderous feud of the Shepherdsons and Grangerfords and the shooting of Boggs, as well as adrift, especially the cool murder plot against Jim Turner and Huck's feigned death to link Pap to murder. Thus, wherever Jim and Huck stray aboard their movable adventure home, they can't escape wickedness in its multiple



forms. Huck recovers from childhood's miscalculations on land-based adventures at the Phelps farm. Far from the bobbing raft, he recognizes in Tom the capacity to steal slaves on a grand scale and realizes that a single bullet can quell boyish gang activity that boasts of piracy, kidnap, and mayhem. Returned to solid earth, Huck ends his adventure with two convenient truths: Miss Watson can no longer threaten to sell Jim and Pap can't return to menace and imprison Huck. No longer in need of a raft, Huck is willing to trust his legs to land, this time by escaping society on a trek to the territory.

Cross-Curricular Sources

For more information about Mark Twain, prejudice, morality, bullying, survivalism, the Mississippi River, John A. Murrell's gang, Tom and Huck in art and music, and other subjects and issues deriving from the novel, consult these sources:

Acting on Your Values, Rosen Publishing Group
Characters in Crisis, Center for Humanities
Life on the Mississippi, Center for Humanities
Prejudice in Literature, Center for Humanities

Themes and Motifs

A study of the central issues and situations in Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* should include these aspects:

Themes

- rootlessness
- isolation
- control
- survival
- autonomy
- violence
- mendacity
- dishonesty
- self-knowledge
- guilt
- rescue
- friendship

Motifs

- coping with an alcoholic parent
- undisciplined children
- management of sudden wealth
- experiencing social issues on a personal level
- taking responsibility for actions
- empathizing with a fellow orphan

Meaning Study

Below are words, phrases, sentences, or thought units that have particular meaning in the novel. Explain the meaning of each. Chapter and page numbers note the context from which the item is taken.

1. I judged I could see that there was two Providences, and a poor chap would stand considerable show with the widow's Providence, but if Miss Watson's got him there warn't no help for him any more. (Chap. 3, p. 19-20)
(The variance in Christian concepts of God's goodness and grace is obvious in the two sisters. The widow's vision of God entices Huck, but the stinginess and mean-spiritedness of Miss Watson's religion repels him.)
2. I seen somebody's tracks. They had come up from the quarry and stood around the stile awhile, and then went on around the garden fence. (Chap. 4, p. 27-28)
(Huck, who is expecting ill fortune, easily tracks Pap in the snow by following the cross-marked left heel, which is meant to keep away evil. The movements suggest someone who arrives from the direction of the quarry and observes Huck from the vantage of the stile, a set of stairs in a fence. Without taking chances, Pap moves on around the property without accosting his son.)
3. "...a mulatter, most as white as a white man. He had the whitest shirt on you ever see, too, and the shiniest hat..." (Chap. 6, p. 47)
(Pap, an illiterate racist, is horrified by the appearance of a well-dressed, light-skinned man of mixed parentage who dressed well and could vote. Pap's negative reaction leads him to strong words: "Thinks I, what is the country a-coming to? ... I says I'll never vote ag'in.")
4. After supper Pap took the jug, and said he had enough whisky there for two drunks and one delirium tremens. (Chap. 6, p. 49)
(Pap refers to the late stage of alcoholism in which the victim sweats, trembles, and suffers from anxiety and frightening hallucinations. The scene which follows gives graphic testimony to the physical and mental effects of a life of hard drinking. Huck is so frightened of his father's violent behavior and promise to hide Huck in a more remote spot that he arms himself with a gun and plans to escape the cabin and run away.)

5. And the minute the words was out of his mouth somebody over in the crowd struck up the doxolojer, and everybody joined in with all their might, and it just warmed up you and made you feel as good as church letting out. (Chap. 25, p. 283)

(To ease the tension caused by the arrival of the orphaned Wilks girls' uncles from England, mourners of Peter Wilks begin singing the doxology, a short hymn opening a Christian worship service by offering honor, glory, and praise to God.)

6. Well, one thing was dead sure; and that was that Tom Sawyer was in earnest and was actuly going to help steal that nigger out of slavery. That was the thing that was too many for me. (Chap. 34, p. 402)

(Huck, who admires Tom for his harebrained romanticism, is suddenly relieved of the pang of conscience for helping Jim escape when he realizes that his hero is capable of the same crime. For the first time lightened of a burdensome sin, Huck comments, "Here was a boy that was respectable and well brung up; and had a character to lose; and folks at home that had characters; and he was bright and not leatherheaded; and knowing and not ignorant; and not mean, but kind; and yet here he was, without any more pride, or rightness, or feeling, than to stoop to this business, and make himself a shame, and his family a shame, before everybody.)

7. "On the scutcheon we'll have a bend or in the dexter base, a saltire murrey in the fess, with a dog, couchant, for common charge, and under his foot a chain embattled, for slavery, with a chevron vert in a chief engrailed, and three invected lines on a field azure, with the nombril points rampant on a dancette indented; crest, a runaway nigger, sable, with his bundle over his shoulder on a bar sinister; and a couple of gules for supporters, which is you and me motto, *Maggiore fretta, minore atto*. (Chap. 38, p. 445-446)

(Tom attempts to decorate a shield-shaped surface in order to fashion an appropriate coat of arms for Jim. To ridicule pseudo-French pretension, Twain includes gold on the right side, a purplish horizontal band crossing it, a recumbent dog with a chain underfoot, a green stripe and three lines on a blue field. The crest is a runaway slave offset by red bars, and an Italian motto meaning "The More Attempted, the Less Accomplished.")

8. "How'd you say he got shot?"
"He had a dream," I says, " and it shot him."
"Singular dream," he says. (Chap. 41, pp. 477-478)

(By way of explanation of the bullet in Tom's leg, Huck claims that the dream caused it. In actuality, the gang of armed men dashing around in the dark in search of the runaway are more lethal than other menacing events in the novel. However, Huck chooses to blame Tom's penchant for romance, which carries a grain of truth.)

9. I tole you I got a hairy breas', en what's de sign un it; en I tole you I ben rich wunst, en gwineter to be rich agin; en it's come true; en heah she is! (The Last, p. 504)

(In his joy with newfound freedom and the forty dollar gift from Tom, Jim reminds Huck that Jim has always been marked for wealth by the amount of hair on his chest, just as he had said when he and Huck met on Jackson's Island. However, Jim does not account for the failure of his prediction that Huck will be hanged.)

10. 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. (The Last, p. 506)

(The status of Indian territory west of Arkansas was the great unknown, where outlaws and settlers fended for themselves against the natives who owned the land. Like Jim among the free states, Huck looks on Indian territory as his opportunity to live as he pleases.)

Comprehension Study

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important and you should be ready to defend your answers by referring to passages from the novel.

Questions 1-5 (Literal Level)

1. What facts from *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* lead directly into *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*?
(At the end of the first novel, Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn are heroes and rich men for recovering money that robbers hid in a cave. Huck, a motherless thirteen-year-old waif, has earned the love of the Widow Douglas, a foster parent who intends to provide a home and suitable background for him. At the beginning of the second novel, however, Huck has tired of the widow's civilizing and her sister's piety. He remarks, "It was rough living in the house all the time, considering how dismal regular and decent the widow was in all her ways." He despises prim manners and new clothes, which cause him to "sweat and sweat, and feel all cramped up." In addition, Huck's life has been further complicated when Pap learns of the six thousand dollars that Judge Thatcher has invested for the two boys.

Huck longs for the freedom to smoke, cuss, stretch out on the furniture, stay out late, and choose his own companions. He rejects Miss Watson's idea of heaven and explains, "All I wanted was to go somewheres; all I wanted was a change, I warn't particular." He returns to adventures with Tom, Joe Harper, and Ben Rogers, who form a gang to act out piracies and expeditions, but the semblance of rebellion is not the same as actual freedom. Running away is the only act that can free Huck from an indecent, manipulative father on one side and two do-gooder women who have no idea how to compensate for Huck's meager upbringing.)

2. How do Huck and Jim rig the raft for longterm travel?

(After their escape from Jackson's Island, in Chapter 12, Jim and Huck depart with the makeshift log raft and canoe that Huck acquired to flee from pap's control. They make changes to the raft so that it will serve as more permanent headquarters suited to cooking, eating, sleeping, and relaxing. Jim uses planks from the raft to build a wigwam so they will be snug against inclement weather or safe from the hot sun. In the middle of the shelter, he builds up a 5-7 inch dirt floor to keep them dry when waves wash over the surface. Twain does not mention the danger of a cooking fire, but the dirt floor would also enable them to build a fire to dry their clothes, warm them, and heat water and food. The duo also add an extra steering oar and a forked stick to hang their lantern on to enhance maneuverability and to keep river traffic from swamping them. By the time they have completed the overhaul, the raft is more suited to long-term use.)

3. Why is Huck overjoyed to have Tom help him set Jim free from the cabin?

(Huck battles an uncomfortable conscience throughout much of his adventure. He has been reared to believe that "nigger-stealers" and abolitionists are bad people in that they are depriving the rightful owners of property which is the equivalent of farm animals. He has wrestled with his conscience over his part in Jim's escape. Jim intensifies Huck's concern by vowing to steal his wife and children and take them to free territory. In Huck's words, "It would get all around that Huck Finn helped a nigger to get his freedom; and if I was ever to see anybody from that town again I'd be ready to get down and lick his boots for shame."

When Tom arrives at the Phelps farm and agrees to assist in the theft of the runaway slave, Huck, momentarily jolted to discover that Tom would engage in slave theft, breathes a sigh of relief. Huck's idol, whose opinion he values more than all others, shares Huck's enthusiasm for setting Jim free. As they walk home after seeing the duke and king being tarred, feathered, and run out of town on a rail, the boys agree on the vicissitudes of values: "A person's conscience ain't got no sense, and just goes for him anyway.")

4. How does Twain illustrate the natural intelligence of Tom and Huck?

(Both Huck and Tom possess a natural skill in extricating themselves from complicated situations. In numerous instances, Huck and Tom think up convoluted lies to cover their trails. Huck concocts numerous aliases when he encounters bounty hunters and when he must explain the theft of the moneybag to the duke and king. Tom invents methods of setting up Jim with a witch pie, pet rattlesnake and spiders, and coat-of-arms to turn his escape into an adventure equal to those of romance novels.

Most serious situations reveal great flexibility on the part of both boys. Huck is able to fit in with Buck Grangerford and to play the role of mannerly aristocrat in an overly ornate family. In the final chapters, Tom is quickly drawn into the ruse of playing Sid to Huck's Tom. They eagerly shinny out of their bedroom window and deceive Aunt Sally and Uncle Silas with a series of thefts from the kitchen and misplacements of incriminating letters. By the time that Tom must confess his series of deceits, Aunt Sally fears that he is delirious and dreaming up nonsense. Both boys manage to endear themselves to the adults by explaining away multiple misdemeanors.)

5. How does Twain use coincidence to link the two boys in their final adventure?

(Jim's location on the Phelps farm and Tom's arrival for a visit to Aunt Sally occur at a fortuitous moment. Just as Huck is cranking up a good explanation of his appearance, he is able to adopt the easiest alias of all. Becoming Tom Sawyer is a snap compared to his flawed attempt at Sarah Mary Williams and George Jackson. It is also easy for Tom to assume the role of his own brother Sid. The simplicity of their impersonations leaves their imaginations free to fool Aunt Sally while they concoct a proper escape plan for Jim.

Additional conveniences round out the plot. At the moment of resolution, Tom recovers from a bullet wound to the leg, Jim learns that Miss Watson's death has freed him from slavery, and Jim tells Huck that the dead man in the floating house was Pap. In a too-neat bundle, Twain rounds out the complexities of character conflict, then returns Huck to his initial wish to be free of civilization. With a hint at a sequel, Twain suggests that Huck will again run away, this time to Indian territory, where there are no laws, judges, or the widow to confine his actions.)

Questions 6-8 (Interpretive Level)

6. In what respect is Huck a more mature character than Tom?

(The nature of Huck's adventures reveals more of his struggles with conscience and more depth of character than the boyish shenanigans of Tom and his pirate gang. Although Tom's expeditions parallel Huck's longing for freedom, it is Huck's story that

strikes at the heart of social inequalities and racial prejudice. He copes with an abusive father and applies survivalism to the quandary of imprisonment in the cabin and pap's murderous rages. At the moment of escape, Huck pays Pap in kind by faking a murder scene that duplicates the death that Pap nearly inflicts. For good reason, Huck implicates the old man to keep him under the eye of the law while the boy makes his getaway.

On the lengthy episodes aboard the raft, Huck is stripped of social impingements and reveals a sincerity and flawed upbringing that endears rather than repels. Although he is shocked to discover that Jim would steal his family out of slavery, Huck has the purity of heart to realize the worth of a black human being who has offered him protection, fatherly love, and devotion. Because Huck pledges to go to hell rather than renege on his friendship with Jim, he, more than Tom, earns the loyalty and acclaim of readers.)

7. How does the relationship between Huck and Jim change during the course of their adventures together?

(At the beginning of the novel, Huck and Jim mean nothing to each other. Huck is a member of the master race and Jim is only another superstitious "nigger" devoid of the finer human qualities. By Chapter 11, Tom, accompanied by Huck, ridicules Jim with a boyish prank that terrifies the slave with fear of witches. Jim's reaction provides the plot with an amusing situation that demonstrates the rascality of two boys out for a good time.

Even after Huck and Jim become companions on Jackson's Island, Huck continues to regard Jim as a mere slave rather than as a fellow human runaway. While fleeing apprehension, Huck plays a practical joke by coiling a dead snake on Jim's blanket. When the mate appears, the game backfires with dire consequences. Jim's brush with death from snake venom not only sobers Huck, but also suggests that Jim's honor and dignity supersede Huck's. As the duo drift downstream on the raft and mutually experience the peace, beauty, and majesty of the river, their relationship deepens. Without realizing it, Huck begins to acknowledge Jim's humanity.

A turning point in character understanding occurs following Huck's separation from Jim during a fog. Jim has fallen asleep from exhaustion when Huck finally returns to the raft and takes an opportunity to play another joke to make Jim feel foolish. He convinces Jim that their desperate search for each other was a dream. Jim, who is cagy enough to notice debris on the raft, realizes that Huck is ridiculing him once more. His speech expresses a deep hurt when he explains that "trash is what people is dat puts dirt on de head er dey fren's en makes 'em ashamed." It is Huck's turn to cringe: "It was fifteen minutes before I could work myself up to go and humble myself to a nigger; but I done it,

and I warn't every sorry for it afterwards, neither." Huck surrenders his superior air and values Jim for a friend. An unbreakable bond grows deeper with time as Jim becomes the loving father that Huck lacks.)

8. Why is Twain's novel often criticized and condemned on the grounds that it ridicules the black race?

(Censors seeking to quell the use of Twain's novel often object to the pejorative "nigger" in any context. For good reason, they find the frequent use of the word difficult to accept. However, Twain has Huck express himself in real working-class language of the antebellum South. For the time, place, and social milieu, the word is appropriate to a poor uneducated cracker like Huck. It is natural that he never questions social values and that he unthinkingly repeats a word he has grown up with, just as Pap abuses mulattos and Aunt Sally dismisses dead slaves as negligible loss.

Since Jim is ignorant, superstitious, and often servile in the presence of white people, his characterization appears to mock the black race. However, he, like Huck, is the product of a flawed social order that degrades laboring blacks as farm essentials rather than people. Because Southern law prohibited the education of slaves, Jim is understandably gullible. His superstition and ignorance about the world outside the plantation South narrow his perspective. Conversely, he displays a brain for logic and often outfoxes Huck. In the final analysis, Jim must act the part of the bowing, scraping "nigger" as the price he must pay to survive. The proof of his spunk comes from his flight from Miss Watson and his intent to rescue his wife, son Johnny, and daughter Elizabeth, the deaf-mute child whom he mourns and misses. As Huck reaches a height of understanding, he acknowledges that Jim has the same human feelings that white people display. The thought is an epiphany for Huck.)

Questions 9 and 10 (Critical Level)

9. What effect does the author achieve by having Huck tell his own story?

(When Ernest Hemingway said, "All modern American literature comes from one book by Mark Twain called Huckleberry Finn," he no doubt was referring to the novel's narrative style as well as its setting, historical impetus, and character motivation. The text is the direct result of having Huck tell the story in his own words as a young teenager of limited formal education, but ample personal experience. The language is precise: Huck invariably expresses himself better than he knows, for example, comparing the singing of the doxology to the warm feeling he gets from church letting out. There are times when he is moved to use imagery that verges on poetry, as in his admiration for a storm that ruffles the leaves and branches and splits the sky with lightning. To Huck, thunder goes "rumbling, grumbling, tumbling

down the sky towards the underside of the world, like rolling empty barrels downstairs—where it's long stairs and they bounce a good deal, you know."

Huck's language departs from the elaborately complex style of James Fenimore Cooper, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Herman Melville, the sires of the nineteenth-century American canon. Twain's novel poses the boy's nonstandard grammar and usage as a means of establishing validity and accuracy. The author effectively captures the rhythms of vernacular speech to re-create the sounds of rural America. The texture effectively creates reality. Thus, Twain produces a milestone in honest American writing by establishing colloquial speech as a legitimate literary vehicle. Modern writers have followed in this tradition of simple, direct style that reproduces spoken language. The result is a verisimilitude that makes Huck more real than wooden story-book figures.)

10. Why does Mark Twain deserve to be called the true fountainhead of American literature? *(By remaining true to his memories of the Mississippi Valley, Twain depicts the speech patterns, habits, beliefs, superstitions, and rural lifestyle of nineteenth-century Missouri by reflecting the social milieu of the Hannibal he grew up in. Twain deserves his place among world authors for breaking free from the conventions of European literature to establish a forthright national fiction. His witty putdown of family escutcheons, European monarchies, and class prejudice stocks the novel with light humor, which balances the grimmer moments in the floating house and wrecked steamer and the mob violence that threatens Colonel Sherburn for killing Boggs.*

While Twain makes no attempt to conceal greed, corruption, petty thievery, murder, child abuse, drunkenness, venality, or scoundrels, he juxtaposes an equally decent set of thrifty, hard-working, kindhearted, and likable characters like Aunt Sally who justify the reader's understanding of pride in American heritage. Anchored in the real world are the two grifters who commandeer the raft and the three Wilks girls, whose generosity and trust astound Huck. The return to home folks in the final chapters sets Huck alongside the kindly farm family who claim Tom as nephew. Against the cruelty and coarseness of an armed search party dispensing frontier justice, Tom comes home to a warm bed, comfort for his wounded leg, and welcome from Aunt Sally, a mother figure who epitomizes the universal parent. In the end, Huck retains his spunk and individuality. With Jim settled as a free man and Pap out of the way, Huck is set to probe a more idiosyncratic American scenario in Indian territory.)

Questions 11-13 (Creative Level)

11. Explain in a short speech why Samuel Clemens chose an appropriate pseudonym for himself and his career.
12. Make a bulletin board display depicting the dangers of rafting on the Mississippi River at night, in fog, and during heavy commercial traffic.
13. Lead a panel discussion of Hal Holbrook's impersonation of Mark Twain.

Across the Curriculum

Cinema

1. View several films and television series set in Twain's milieu, including *The Big River*, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, *Life on the Mississippi*, and four cinema versions of *Huckleberry Finn*. Discuss with a small group the memorable background details that became a focus of the author's settings and characters.

Science and Health

1. Compose a lecture on the causes of delirium tremens. Comment on current treatments for people like Pap Finn who have no control over their alcoholic consumption or behavior.
2. List the dangers of bullying, lying, feuding, vengeance, gang behavior, and coercion. Explain what Huck learns about human nature from witnessing alcoholic rage, murder, a lynch mob, tar and feathering, and Tom's gunshot wound.
3. Explain in a paragraph how the combined drain of Pap's torments and the widow's prissy childrearing methods forces Huck to seek a new environment in the territory.
4. Explain to a small group what survival techniques Huck employs to make life on the island comfortable, particularly sleeping late, hiding his raft, scavenging food from the land, lying in the sun, scouting out new terrain, and joining up with Jim.

Geography

1. Create a mural or web site that introduces these settings: Cairo, Illinois, free states vs. slave states, New Orleans slave market, Ohio River, Arkansas, St. Louis, and Twain's boyhood home in Hannibal, Missouri. Add definitions of towhead, shallows, current, cottonwood thicket, clear water, cavern, swamp, and bottom land.
2. Compose a paragraph contrasting life in a cave with travel aboard a raft. Note how Huck copes with hunger and lack of news while living on the Mississippi River.

Art

1. Using desk-top publishing or other artistic media, design a road sign indicating the way to St. Petersburg or Goshen, a handbill advertising a reward for Jim or Pap, a letterhead from Dr. Robinson or a juvenile court judge, a placard or banner welcoming the Wilks brothers from England, a poster offering tickets for "The King's Cameleopard," pamphlets on alcoholism or recovery of a drowning victim, business cards for Colonel Sherburn or slave catchers, an announcement or television news item about the boys' return to the Phelps farm or about Miss Watson's death, or a travel brochure covering Twain's prewar riverboat travel from the Ohio River south to New Orleans.
2. Lead a panel discussion of scenes of natural beauty, especially storms over the river or stars viewed from the cavern mouth or the raft. List the aspects of freedom that Huck treasures.

Law

1. Launch an Internet web site inviting readers to explain the difficulty of living on a river that borders on free and slave states. Discuss the difficulty of upholding the law and of halting abolitionists from stealing slaves.

Economics

1. Determine the cost of a slave at various times during the first three centuries, from the colonial period to the Civil War. Explain why stealing a slave was a serious felony.

2. Suggest ways that the Wilks brothers could invest the girls' money and manage their property and the tanyard to earn a comfortable living for them.

Social Studies

1. Write a brief address explaining Huck's need for moral education. Cite the qualities and values that schools should teach him, for example, honesty, cleanliness, nonviolence, loyalty to family and friends, thrift, hard work, and compassion for slaves and defenseless orphans.
2. List ways that boys like Tom, Huck, and Ben could learn more about history without turning it into high romance. Suggest books, films, and art works about French history, piracy, Indian warfare, and expeditions that give an honest picture of past eras.

Psychology

1. Make contrasting chalkboard definitions of bullying, coercion, guilt, lying, and fraud. Explain how the terms define Huck's methods of dealing with situations beyond his control, for example, fending off slave catchers.
2. Determine what factors force Huck to assume so many aliases, particularly George Jackson and Tom Sawyer. Pantomime his failure as Sarah Mary Williams.
3. Compose a short speech in which you account for the inappropriate upbringing that the widow and Miss Watson force on Huck. Suggest a compromise to the starchy proprieties of living in a house, demonstrating table manners, and accepting the enforced religion that Huck doesn't understand or appreciate.

Mathematics and Computers

1. Using desktop publishing, compose an annotated time line of Twain's life, the Civil War, and the opening of the West. Divide events under the three headings, noting when Lincoln freed slaves and when Twain fled the military.
2. Using a scale of miles, estimate the distance that Huck and Jim travel aboard the raft and

the distances they cover inland from the Mississippi River.

Music

1. Work with a group to list music and river sounds to accompany an outdoor staging or tableau of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Consider bird calls, rain, thunder, folk songs, spirituals, hymns, stage and circus music, steamboat whistles, and popular nineteenth-century tunes to be whistled or hummed.

Language and Speech

1. Compose individual posters explaining these terms: hogshead, reticule, corn pone, quicksilver, persimmons, crabapples, dandy, Jericho, genie, salt pork, saltcellar, the unities, mesmerism, phrenology, temperance revival, doxology, gars, corncrib, junketing, decanter, sideboard, tumbler, crockery, and poetic effusion.
2. Characterize in separate paragraphs the dialect of whites and blacks. Cite specific lines spoken by Aunt Sally, Jim, Tom, Huck, Silas, Judith Loftus, the king and duke, Colonel Sherburn, and Mary Jane.
3. Account for Samuel Clemens' choice of a name that indicates safe water. Why does the sound and meaning suit him personally and professionally?

Literature

1. Read aloud from nonfiction, novels, plays, and stories about isolation and survival. Include J. D. Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye*, Irene Hunt's *No Promises in the Wind*, Paulo Coelho's *The Alchemist*, Lord Byron's "The Prisoner of Chillon," Robin Graham's *Dove*, Margaret Walker's *Jubilee*, John Glenn's "A Day in Space," Lois Lowry's *The Giver*, Gore Vidal's *A Visit to a Small Planet*, Esther Hautzig's *The Endless Steppe*, Elie Wiesel's *Night*, Paula Fox's *Slave Dancer*, Karel Capek's *R. U. R.*, Yoko Kawashima Watkins' *So Far from the Bamboo Grove*, Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, Theodora Kroeber's *Ishi*, Orson Scott Card's *Ender's Game*, Avi's *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle*, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Gary Paulsen's *Nightjohn* and *Hatchet*, Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston and James Houston's *Farewell to Manzanar*, Jack London's *Call of the Wild*, and Barbara Kingsolver's *The Bean Trees* and *Animal Dreams*.

2. Using examples from *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, define the style and purpose of an episode. Differentiate between plot, vignette, digression, and individual scenes that have little impact on the action, for example, Tom's gang and Huck's trip to the circus.
3. Draw a character web representing the interconnectedness between Tom, Sid, Aunt Polly, Aunt Sally, Silas, Huck, Pap, Huck's mother, the widow, Miss Watson, Jim, Elizabeth, Johnny, Judge Thatcher, Ben Rogers, and other townspeople.

History and Current Events

1. Characterize the current life on the street for transient children like Huck who choose to live day by day from stealing, running, lying, forging, posing under false names, consorting with criminals, and dreaming of a grand destination.
2. Recreate by time line, webbing, flow chart, mural, or web site the era of the antebellum South that produced genteel families like the Grangerfords, the widow, Colonel Sherburn, and Judge Thatcher.

Education

1. Brainstorm ways of returning Tom and Huck to polite society, for example, by treating them to Boy Scout camp, travel and visits to patriotic sites and museums, opportunities to enjoy less adventuresome hobbies and activities, healthful diet and rest, and friendships with well behaved young people.

Student Involvement Activities

1. Organize a panel discussion of friendship. Characterize Huck's experiences with Tom and Jim. Note how the difference in age and experience turns Huck's love for Jim into a father-son relationship. Supply examples of Jim's tender care, particularly his willingness to let Huck sleep while taking his turn on watch.
2. Launch a discussion group to determine why Huck would have more difficulty skipping school, eluding foster parents and the law, and staying on the run in current society.

- List questions to ask at an interrogation of Huck and Jim concerning the dire situation aboard the *Walter Scott* and their role in preventing Jim Turner's murder. Also question Huck about the tar and feathering of the duke and king and about the lynch mob that breaks up without harming Colonel Sherburn.
- Compose a web site on the themes and symbols that intrigue readers, especially the raft, river current, slavery, superstition, ignorance, corpses, aliases, disguises, worship, literacy, class structure, and fake gentility.
- Explain with a collage, shadow pictures, or mobile how the Mississippi River forms an integral part of Huck's life. Include his knowledge of currents, driftwood, salvage, weather, stars, cities, and commerce.
- Dramatize a meeting between the widow and Huck. Express his reasons for disliking Miss Watson, joining a gang, running away from Pap, tearing up the letter to Miss Watson, and helping Jim escape being sold to New Orleans.
- Create a list of images from the novel that appeal to the five senses. Use these as models: "Jim was setting there with his head down between his knees, asleep, with his right arm hanging over the steering oar," "I never knowed how clothes could change a body before," "It was kind of lazy and jolly, laying off comfortable all day, smoking and fishing, and no books nor study," and "There is ways to keep off some kinds of bad luck, but this wasn't one of them kind; so I never tried to do anything, but just poked along low-spirited and on the watch-out."
- Improvise a scene in which Jim and Huck return home. Add details about Jim's reunion with his wife, Johnny, and Elizabeth and Huck's continued friendship.
- Discuss the effects of unqualified love and acceptance on Huck from Aunt Sally, the widow, Sophia Grangerford, and Mary Jane. Explain why his loss of a mother causes him to idealize kind, empathetic women, such as Mary Jane, who can't keep a secret, and Aunt

Sally, who is easily fooled, yet willing to sit up all night until Tom returns safely. Why are Judith Loftus and Aunt Polly less empathetic?

- Draw a cause-and-effect diagram illustrating the emotional changes that take place in Huck and Jim. Comment on the light-hearted characterization of Tom, who lacks the motivation to flee a harsh father, fake evidence of a murder, or helps a slave avoid sale.

Alternate Assessment

- List examples of teamwork, fear, dishonesty, loyalty, admiration for women, ingenuity, and guilt in Huck and his acquaintances.
- Compile a list of actions that demonstrate ignorance and prejudice.
- Compose a scene in which the widow learns of Huck's disappearance from Pap's cabin.
- Make a character list and explain the virtues and flaws of each.
- Account for Huck's confusion about the location of free states.

Vocabulary

Complete these quotations with words from the list below:

abreast	clatter	infernal	quicksilver	stanchion
aggravate	dismal	inscription	rapscallions	stovepipe
anxiety	estimation	lugubrious	rascality	texas
banished	gaudy	meddle	resigned	wane
carpetbags	harelip	patent	shipshape	whitecaps
cavorting	histrionic	pone	speculate	yawl

1. Well, then I happened to think how they always put _____ in loaves of bread and float them off because they always go right to the drowned carcass and stop there.
2. "Watchman your grandmother," I says; "there ain't nothing to watch but the _____ and the pilothouse."
3. There was four or five men _____ around on their horses in the open place before the log store, cussing and yelling, and trying to get at a couple of young chaps that was behind the wood rank alongside of the steamboat landing-- but they couldn't come it.
4. She sent out her _____, and we went aboard, and she was from Cincinnati.
5. There was a noble good lot of them, down cellar, and it took us a whole hour, but we done the job tight and good, and _____.
6. If you think it ain't _____ and lonesome out in a fog that way, by yourself, in the night, you try it once—you'll see.
7. I watched it come creeping down, and when it was most _____ of where I stood I heard a man say, "Stern oars, there! heave her head to star-board!"
8. Well, there was a big outlandish parrot on each side of the clock, made out of something like chalk, and painted up _____.
9. And every second or two there'd come a glare that it up the _____ for a half a mile around, and you'd see the islands looking dusty through the rain, and the trees thrashing around in the wind.
10. Mary Jane's nineteen, Susan's fifteen, and Joanna's about fourteen—that's the one that gives herself to good works and has a _____.
11. He'd got all that coat of arms business fixed, so now he started in to finish up the rest of that part of the work, which was to plan out a mournful _____—said Jim got to have one, like they all done.
12. Then they tucked the old man into a beautiful room, which was the spare room, and in the night some-time he got powerful thirsty and clumb out onto the porch-roof and slid down a _____ and traded his new coat for a jug of forty-rod, and clumb back again and had a good old time.
13. I put on the sun bonnet and tied it under my chin, and then for a body to look in and see my face was like looking down a joint of _____.

Vocabulary (Page 2)

14. He had an old long-tailed blue jeans coat with slick brass buttons flung over his arm, and both of them had big, fat, ratty-looking _____.
15. Jour printer, by trade; do a little in _____ medicines; theater actor—tragedy, you know.
16. “But the _____ muse is the darling.”
17. Persons attempting to find a motive in this narrative will be prosecuted; persons attempting to find moral in it will be _____; persons attempting to find a plot in it will be shot.
18. All kings is mostly _____, as fur as I can make out.”
19. “Well, that’s _____ mean.”
20. And I’m bound to say that Tom Sawyer fell, considerable, in my _____.
21. “Well, I’ll learn her how to _____.”
22. We played robbers now and then about a month, and then I _____.
23. “Here’s the law a-standing ready to take a man’s son away from him—a man’s own son, which has had all the trouble and all the _____ and all the expense of raising.”
24. I was pretty willing to let her _____ right along.
25. “What did you _____ in, Jim?”

Comprehension Test A

Part I: Matching (30 points)

Match the following descriptions with characters. Choose your answers from the list of names below. You may use some of the answers more than once and some not at all.

- | | |
|--|-----------------------|
| _____ 1. advises Huck on the investment of \$6,000. | A. Jim |
| _____ 2. knows about smoke sighted from Jackson's Island. | B. Judith Loftus |
| _____ 3. joins the gang along with Tom, Joe, and Huck. | C. Miss Watson |
| _____ 4. agrees to leave home before breakfast. | D. Mary Ann Wilks |
| _____ 5. arrives at her sister's house to check on Tom. | E. Aunt Sally |
| _____ 6. helps mourners determine the identity of William Wilks. | F. Judge Thatcher |
| _____ 7. mourns Elizabeth's double handicap. | G. Aunt Polly |
| _____ 8. circles the wreck looking for a stranded family. | H. Harney |
| _____ 9. hears the devil tramping. | I. Buck |
| _____ 10. drops a whetstone as a clue. | J. Pap |
| _____ 11. intends to sell a slave to New Orleans. | K. ferryboat watchman |
| _____ 12. conceals Pap's death from Huck. | L. Huck |
| _____ 13. refuses to take Huck from his father. | M. Ben Rogers |
| _____ 14. sits up all night waiting for Tom. | N. Lawyer Bell |
| _____ 15. elopes with Sophia. | O. new judge |

Part II: Fill-in (20 points)

Fill in the paired blanks with answers that complete each statement.

1. Jim fears that _____ will sell him to New Orleans for \$_____.
2. Aiming for Cairo, Illinois, and the _____ River, Jim and Huck are separated during a heavy _____.
3. The Arkansas crowd reads handbills for "The King's _____" or "The Royal _____."
4. Harvey and William are to receive \$_____, a _____, and some real estate.
5. _____ supposedly nurses Hannah through a case of the _____.

Comprehension Test A (Page 2)

Part III: Cause and Effect (20 points)

Complete each of these statements

1. Jim is dressed and painted like a sick Arab because

2. Jim Turner is in danger because

3. The mob gathers at Colonel Sherburn's house because

4. The king and duke flee the third performance of "The King's Cameleopard" because

5. Huck is surprised that Tom would engage in slave stealing because

6. Huck tears up his letter to Miss Watson because

7. Huck expects bad luck because

8. Jim looks for the lights of Cairo because

9. Pap intends to move Huck to another hiding place because

10. Tom takes pride in the bullet because

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Account for Huck's ability to lie his way out of scrapes.
2. Describe the scene in which Aunt Polly arrives.
3. Discuss the significance of Jim's superstitions.
4. Summarize details of the floating house scene.
5. Explain why Huck pretends to be murdered.

Comprehension Test B

Part I: Settings (30 points)

Identify a setting that fits each of the following descriptions. Select your answers from the list that follows.

- | | |
|--|------------------------|
| _____ 1. Huck is impressed by chalk parrots and a turkey wing fan. | A. Wilks house |
| _____ 2. A testament contains a letter setting a secret meeting. | B. Sherburn's house |
| _____ 3. Huck steals a rowboat and part of some stolen loot. | C. England |
| _____ 4. Huck appears to have brain fever. | D. Loftus house |
| _____ 5. Huck's sunbonnet does not conceal his identity. | E. temperance revival |
| _____ 6. Mary Jane sits up with her father's corpse. | F. cave |
| _____ 7. Huck coils a snake on Jim's blanket. | G. church |
| _____ 8. Huck saws through a log. | H. Phelps farm |
| _____ 9. A mob tries to avenge Boggs' death. | I. floating house |
| _____ 10. Jim conceals the identity of a dead man. | J. widow's house |
| _____ 11. Huck spills the salt. | K. Grangerford house |
| _____ 12. Jim builds a wigwam. | L. <i>Walter Scott</i> |
| _____ 13. Huck sits up with a gun. | M. Goshen |
| _____ 14. A doctor treats Tom's wound. | N. Pap's cabin |
| _____ 15. The king flees a mob. | O. raft |

Part II: Short Answer (10 points)

Explain the significance of the following details:

1. a hairy breast
2. goo-goo
3. dollar a day
4. mesmerism and phrenology
5. coat-of-arms

Comprehension Test B (Page 2)

Part III: Identification (30 points)

Place an X by statements that refer to Huck.

- _____ 1. tries to give \$3,000 away.
- _____ 2. can't read.
- _____ 3. won't vote for a mulatto.
- _____ 4. watches searchers looking for his corpse.
- _____ 5. pretends to be Sid Sawyer.
- _____ 6. believes Sophia shouldn't marry Harney.
- _____ 7. claims to be Sarah Mary Williams.
- _____ 8. paints Jim to look like King Lear.
- _____ 9. recognizes the lights of St. Louis.
- _____ 10. calls Jim trash.
- _____ 11. implies that slaves stole the moneybag from the straw.
- _____ 12. plays Peter's valet as he sings the doxology.
- _____ 13. wants to escape to the territory.
- _____ 14. resigns from the gang.
- _____ 15. plots to make a witch pie.

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

- 1. List and describe scenes in which Huck debates right and wrong.
- 2. Describe the scene in which Buck dies.
- 3. Explain why Huck tries to introduce Jim to history.
- 4. Account for Huck's determination to reach the Phelps farm.
- 5. Compare the symbolism of river and freedom.

Answer Key

VOCABULARY

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1. quicksilver | 14. carpetbags |
| 2. texas | 15. patent |
| 3. cavorting | 16. histrionic |
| 4. yawl | 17. banished |
| 5. shipshape | 18. rascallions |
| 6. dismal | 19. infernal |
| 7. abreast | 20. estimation |
| 8. gaudy | 21. meddle |
| 9. whitecaps | 22. resigned |
| 10. harelip | 23. anxiety |
| 11. inscription | 24. clatter |
| 12. stanchion | 25. speculate |
| 13. stovepipe | |

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Matching (30 points)

- | | | |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1. F | 6. N | 11. C |
| 2. B | 7. A | 12. A |
| 3. M | 8. K | 13. O |
| 4. D | 9. J | 14. E |
| 5. G | 10. L | 15. H |

Part II: Fill-in (20 points)

- Miss Watson, 800
- Ohio, fog
- Cameleopard, Nonesuch
- 6,000, tanyard
- Mary Jane, mumps

Part III: Cause and Effect (20 points)

Answers will vary.

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Settings (30 points)

- | | | |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1. K | 6. A | 11. J |
| 2. G | 7. F | 12. O |
| 3. L | 8. N | 13. N |
| 4. H | 9. B | 14. H |
| 5. D | 10. I | 15. E |

Part II: Short Answer (10 points)

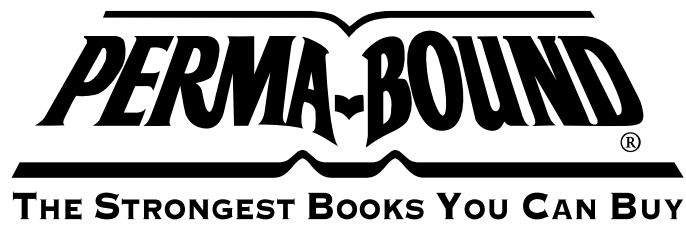
- Jim is proud of his hairy chest because he considers it a sign of good luck.
- The duke babbles to indicate that he is William Wilks, a deaf mute.
- Judge Thatcher pays Huck and Tom a dollar a day apiece from the interest on \$6,000.
- two of the phony professions practiced by the king and duke
- a segment of Tom's romantic plot to free Jim from Wilks' farm

Part III: Identification (30 points)

- | | | |
|------|------|-------|
| 1. X | 6. | 11. X |
| 2. | 7. X | 12. |
| 3. | 8. | 13. X |
| 4. X | 9. X | 14. X |
| 5. | 10. | 15. |

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.



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