

Huckleberry finn and "self-reliance" essay sample

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Huckleberry Finn and “ Self-Reliance” Essay Sample

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn written by Mark Twain mainly takes place on and along the Mississippi River in about 1840. Mark Twain puts the main character, Huckleberry Finn, in many situations that cause him to reflect back on himself and his character in order to make his decisions. Many of the decisions Huck makes can be directly connected to an essay by Ralph Waldo Emerson “ Self-Reliance”. Emerson strongly believed in the idea of non-conformity and self-reliance or doing as you believed right.

Emerson himself is a non-conformist and strongly believes that people need to do as they believe right and not as society tells them. In his essay “ Self-Reliance” he writes “ Whoso would be a man, must be a non-conformist. He who would rather gather immortal palms must not be hindered by the name of goodness, but must explore if it be goodness”(364) Huckleberry Finn is a non-conformist in everything he does. No one would ever even consider to run away with and help a black man. But Huck does, he says to Jim

‘ Well, I did. I said I wouldn’t, and I’ll stick to it. Honest injun, I will. People would call me a low-down Abolitionist and despise me for keeping mum-but that don’t make no difference. I ain’t a-going to tell, and I ain’t a-going back there, anyways. So, now, let’s know all about it.’ ”

Right there Huck demonstrates his non-conformist character by promising Jim he won’t turn him in. Emerson believed that each individual had a right and responsibility to think for themselves and decide for themselves what the truth is. He believed that society held too much influence in guiding what

people thought or how they behaved. “ Good and bad are but names very readily transferable to that or this; the only right is what is after my constitution; the only wrong is what is against it...”(364) Huck Finn demonstrated this internal instinct for good that Emerson believed in when he decided he would do not as society told him was right but as he believed for he would feel the same either way.

...then I thought a minute, and says to myself, hold on; s’pose you’d ‘ a’ done the right thing and give Jim up, would you felt better than what you do now? No, says I, I’d feel bad-I’d feel the same way I do now. Well, then, says I whats the use of learning to do right when its troublesome to do right and ain’t no trouble to do wrong, and the wages is just the same? I was stuck. I couldn’t answer that. So I reckoned I wouldn’t bother no more about it, but after this always do whichever come handiest at the time. In this instance, Huck is standing up for a friend when the rest of society would not, just as Jim has taken care of Huck the whole time they were gone.

According to Emerson, being self-reliant is to stand up for what you believe in. as Emerson wrote “ It is easy in the world to live after the world’s opinion; it is easy in solitude to live after our own; but the great man is he who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude...”(365) Huck constantly is wondering which is right, to sell Jim out or to help free Jim. Throughout the book Huck goes back and forth between believing he should turn Jim in and believing that would be the wrong thing to do.

When Emerson was quite young he was prompted by an adviser at the church “‘But these impulses may be from below, not from above.’ I replied, ‘but these do not seem to me to be such; but if I am the Devil’s child, I will live from the devil.’” (364) Huck Finn struggles with the idea that helping Jim become free is wrong even though there are many times where he doesn’t see why it would be so. Huck decides to write a letter to Miss Watson and tell her about Jim. Then, maybe for the first time he could pray and God would listen and help him out.

I felt good all washed clean of sin for the first time I had never felt so in my life, and I knowed I could pray now... It was a close place. I took it up, and held it in my hand. I was a-trembling, because I’d got to decide, forever, betwix to 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... I would work and steal Jim out of slavery again... That moment showed us a very important side of Huck’s constitution. He had decide to go against the norm and act as he felt and believed was right.

Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote an essay called “ Self-Reliance”. In the essay he wrote about being a non conformist and relying on oneself to decide what is right and wrong. Mark Twain puts the main character, Huckleberry Finn, in many situations that cause him to reflect back on himself and his character in order to make his decisions. Many of the decisions Huck makes can be directly connected to an essay by Ralph Waldo Emerson