

Why huck finn shouldnt be banned essay sample

[Sociology](#), [Slavery](#)



To teach or not to teach? This is the question that is presently on many administrators' minds about *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain. For those who read the book without grasping the important concepts that Mark Twain gets across "in between the lines", many problems arise. A reader may come away with the impression that the novel is simply a negative view of the African-American race. Many scholars and educators, like Marylee Hengsetbeck who said, "If Huck Finn is used solely as a part of a unit on slavery or racism, we sell the book short." feel that there is much to be learned about Blacks from this book and it should not be banned from the classroom. This is only one of many themes and expressions that Mark Twain is describing in his work. Another central theme is how the depiction of race relations and slavery is used as insight into the nature of blacks and whites as people in general. Overall, the most important thing to understand is that Mark Twain is illustrating his valuable ideas subtly and not pushing them upon the reader directly.

Huck Finn teaches readers two important lessons about the true nature of people. Throughout the book, one of these main lessons is that Blacks can be just as caring as whites. The white characters often view the blacks as property rather than as individuals with feelings and aspirations of their own. Huck comes to realize that Jim is much more than a simple slave when he discusses a painful experience with his daughter. Jim describes how he once called her and she did not respond. He then takes this as a sign of disobedience and beats her for it. Soon realizing that she is indeed deaf, he comforts her and tries to make up for the act of beating. The feeling that Jim displays shows Huck that Jim has a very human reaction and the fact Jim

says, “ Oh Huck, I bust out crying....’Oh the po’ little thing!” (Twain 151), only further proves to Huck that Jim is as caring as he is. Huck’s realization allows him to see that Jim is no longer the ordinary slave.

The point where Huck completely changes his attitudes towards blacks comes when he is faced with the dilemma of turning in Jim. Huck fights with his conscience and also reflects on the things that Jim has done for him. “ I’d see him standing my watch on top of his’n, stead of calling me, so I could go on sleeping; and see him how glad he was when I come back out of the fog; and when I come to him again in the swamp, up there where the feud was; and such likes the times: and would always call me honey, and pet me and do everything he could think of for me, and how good he always was...”

(Twain) These two key scenes are among many that illustrate the idea that Blacks can be as caring and emotional as Whites - one of the main lessons of the book. The second main lesson that the book teaches is that the world is full of hypocrites. Huck realizes that through his experiences with Jim that he and Blacks like him are not what he has been told. People like Miss Watson, who represent the established belief system of Huck’s society, tells him that blacks were nothing but property and should be treated as such. Huck now knowing that this is not the case sees that people, like Miss Watson, made up these laws to suit themselves.

Furthermore, Huck sees that Miss Watson would often make up a regulation for him but not abide by it herself. An example of this concerns the subject of snuff. “ And she took snuff too; of course that was alright, because she done it herself.” (Twain) Huck noticed this double standard even more now

because he began to see that not everything Miss Watson told him was true. With this, Huck not only sees Jim in a new light, but begins to see that the people who supposedly know everything, didn't really know anything. Again other critiques of the novel state that as a whole the book is " a masterpiece of irony." (Kilpatrick) With this second main lesson, the book defends itself against being banned. People who would ban " Huckleberry Finn" simply for the on the surface racial content are no better than the character of Miss Watson. The idea of banning a book and not teaching it to others is selfish and subjective in itself.

Those who are seeking to ban it would often follow their own agendas, like Miss Watson in only trying to get their own view across and not allowing the novel to be interpreted for what it really is. As Hengstebeck states in her critique, " Selective editing only masks the real problem." (Hengstebeck) another main reason arises about the recognition of slavery and racism. Racism is an ever-present idea in our society. To ban the book would be to deny students the insight that Twain brings to the subject. Mark Twain brings a first hand account to the subject through the character of Jim and how he reacts to his white neighbors. Jim, although he is shown to be a rational and mature person, bows down to white authority when he says lines like, " Jim couldn't see no sense in the most of it but he allowed, we was white folks and knew better than him" The perspective that Twain gives through the character of Jim is invaluable because it takes the concepts of slavery and racism and gives them life.

By making the concepts more real and accessible to people, Twain shows the subject for what it really is. Having this perspective would only help people to understand the concept better and deal with its many implications. As Morton Fried states “ The removal of such literary works from the classroom, however, would be a strategy of defeat on the war against racism.” (Fried) Racism is built on ignorance, therefore banning the book’s insights would only perpetuate that ignorance and be a victory for racism and not a loss. To consider banning this novel simply because it has situations and characters that are considered racist is superficial. The novel does show the relationships between blacks and whites in the nineteenth century and all its overtones. However, it shows these situations not to promote racism against blacks, but to bring a better understanding of the subject.

The character of Jim is shown to be caring, considerate towards Huck and more mature and human than the society allows him to be. Although he is shown to be this way, Twain shows the irony and hypocrisy of treating a mature man like simple property. The novel also shows how a boy, who is a product of this hypocritical society, comes to realize the true nature of his friend Jim and how screwed up his white peers actually are. In showing these ironic situations and the transformation that Huck goes through the reader sees racism and its implications in a real life setting. People who want to ban the book miss the idea entirely. Instead of getting rid of something that is supposedly racist, they only perpetuate racism by denying others a good source of material on the subject. Overall, banning the book would be doing more harm than good for society because of the denial of ignorance-breaking insight on an everlasting conflict.