

Mark twain controversy

[Sociology](#), [Social Issues](#)



Everyone remembers reading the works of Mark Twain when they were in school. Freshman year of high school you're sitting in your English class and the teacher is reading the story of Huckleberry Finn. As you go through the story, you start to think, "Wow, people actually treated other humans this way?" and you realize how cruel it really is. It teaches you that discrimination is not right and everyone deserves to be equal. Now just imagine never having read that book, never feeling the sympathy for the people that you felt, and never learning the lessons you learned from it. Ever since their publications over a century ago, the novels of Huckleberry Finn and Tom Sawyer have been very controversial and have caused many arguments. The style and slang that Mark Twain used was, at the time, acceptable and normal to people who lived in the South, where the Black race was frowned upon. In the book Huckleberry Finn, the word "nigger" is used a total of 219 times. However, now-a-days when Blacks are equal to everyone, the word "nigger" is found offensive to some and emotional to others. If you know anything about Mark Twain as a person, you know that, in his opinion, slavery was "an abomination" (Uba). Now the question remains if it is ethically right to teach these stories in a classroom with the slang originally used in them. It would be wrong to take out the word "nigger" and replace it with slave because, by taking out the original style of writing and slang used, you take out the historical background that make these stories so unique. This is important because the whole reason that you read those books in the first place is to get a good view of where our nation actually started in comparison to where it is now. The world we live in today is intensely different from the world during the time Huckleberry Finn was

written. The world we live in is sugar-coated compared to the one then. By changing the slang in these books, you would not only be making them "child-friendly", but you would also be taking out the historical impact that the story has when you read it. If you take "nigger" out of the stories, you take out the significant meaning of what that word contributes to the story as a whole. "Nigger" was the proper word used when referring to slaves. Someone cannot just change a part of history because they do not like it. Changing the dialect of the story to make it more friendly would be like changing the dialect of how Shakespeare wrote his plays just because it is too difficult to understand, compared to the way we talk today. It is important that as American citizens leaving in and representing America, we know our true historical background. The study of other cultures cannot compensate for a lack of thorough familiarity with the founding principles of one's own culture. Just as it would be a failure to encounter an educated Chinese who had never heard of Confucius, however well versed he may be in Jefferson, so also it would be a failure of liberal education to teach Americans about the Far East without immersing them in their own philosophical and literary tradition... (D'Souza, 418) What this quote says is that, by not teaching Americans the true history of our nation would be an act of ignorance. What good is an American citizen who does not know the true harshness and acts of cruelty that made our country into what it is today? People continue to read classic stories like these to this day because of their uniqueness, distinct style of writing, and life lessons that will carry with you. By ignoring the true words used, you lose the intensity of what life was really like back then and how much it has changed. I agree that "

nigger" is not a nice word, but, at that time, whites were no where near nice to the people the word was referred to. In order for kids to get the whole picture of what life was like and get complete understanding of it, it is necessary for them to be acquainted with all the aspects to a certain degree. By changing the slang words, you are some what changing the way people look at history. The comic below brings a good point to the surface. That is, if they change one story to make it more friendly, how many more will they change until they are satisfied? What will people perceive our history as by reading these " new and improved" books? The word " nigger" may be indecent, but in the 1800's when this book was written, the things going on were exactly that, indecent and vulgar. The black race may no longer be discriminated against, but for a long while they were, and just because they don't exactly appreciate the discrimination, does not mean that they can erase it from history. By leaving the " N" word in the book, Americans would be constantly reminded of all of the hardships that not only the blacks, but every race at one point or another, had to overcome in order to make our country what it is today. Works Cited Bors, Matt. Cartoon. mattbors. com. N. p., 10 Jan. 2011. Web. 1 Mar. 2011. D'Souza, Dinesh. " Equality and the Classics. " The Well Crafted Argument. Eds. Fred D. White and Simone J. Billings. Boston, MA. Houghton Mifflin Company, 2008. 417-420. Print. Uba, George. " Removing N-Word ruins ' Huckleberry Finn'. " the-signal. 22 Jan. 2011. Web. 28 Jan. 2011.