

# The adventures of huckleberry finn

Literature, American Literature



**ASSIGN  
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## The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn Essay The Fate of the King and the Duke

The characters of the King and the Duke are most likely the most important after Huck and Jim in the Adventures of Huckleberry Finn by Mark Twain.

These two men come into Huck's story in chapter nineteen when he leaves the Grangerfords, a family who is fighting a continuous and everlasting war against their neighbors, the Shepherdsons. Huck sees the King and the Duke being chased by some dogs, and he decides to take them aboard the raft, which Huck and Jim are using to travel down the Mississippi River. Huck eventually realizes that the two men that he helped are con artists. Towards the end of The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, the two phonies are tarred and feathered by a mob who was finally able to catch them. The punishment of the Duke and the King was suitable because the scams they performed were sickening, and they obviously were not bothered by what they did.

Mark Twain shows his disrespect for the two imposters through Huck's first impression of them, and how he reacts to the small scams they carry out.

The appearance of the King and the Duke is negative from the moment he sees them. His impression of the King is that " He had an old battered-up slouch hat on, and a greasy blue woolen shirt, and ragged old blue jeans britches stuffed into his boot-tops, and home-knit galluses—no, he only had one. 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 carpet bags."(Page 120) This impression The two of them go on to make up stories how one is actually the Duke of Bridgewater and that the other is the rightful King of France. Huck later comments that " It didn't take me long to make up my mind that these liars warn't no kings nor dukes at all, but just low-down

humbugs and frauds."(Page 125) The next day, the Duke and the King go into the town of Pokesville, where they go to a town meeting in the woods. The King tells the people at the meeting that he is an ex-pirate of the Indian Ocean who has found his true path and wants to dedicate his life to converting other pirates to this true path of life. Everyone cries for him, and he ends up collecting \$87. 75 for this scam and a jug of whiskey. Another time, the Duke decides to perform a " low comedy" to the people of Pokesville called the " Royal Nonesuch." At the bottom of the handbill, it says that women and children are not admitted, in attempt to get a large group of men to come. The people feel cheated because the Duke and the King only act a small skit and then leave. The following two nights, the show is sold out but on the third night, Huck realizes that the crowd has rotten eggs and cabbages stuffed in their pockets. He tells the Duke and the King, and they are able to escape with a total of 465 dollars. At supper, " the king and the duke fairly laughed their bones loose over the way they'd served them people."(Page 152) The scams that the two frauds performed showed how low-down and rotten they actually were. Huck is hurt by the following two greedy cons that the King and the Duke pull off. The first was one where they found out that a man named Peter Wilks had died and they pretended to be his long lost brothers in order to steal the inheritance from the three Wilks daughters. They actually stooped this low just to gain some money. They only thought of themselves without even considering future of the girls who were relying on them to take them back to England and care for them. Obviously, the plan of the King and the Duke was that once they collected enough money, they would just abandon the three, orphan sisters. This was

the reason that their plan failed. Once they received six thousand dollars in gold, they wanted to stay longer to make more money. Eventually, the real brothers of Peter Wilks came, and everyone realized that the King and the Duke were just impostors. Mark Twain showed his disgust for these men through Huck when he said, " It was enough to make a body ashamed of the human race."(Page 162) Another instance in which the Duke and the King displayed their gluttony was when they sold Jim to Mr. Phelps in order to make forty dollars. Even after Huck and Jim had done so much to help the crooks, they stabbed them in the back. Then, Huck found out that they were going to the bar with the money they made from every scam and that they were getting drunk. This crushes Huck especially because he is so emotional and has such strong morals. " After all this long journey, and after all we'd done for them scoundrels, here it was all come to nothing, everything all busted up and ruined, because they could have the heart to serve Jim such a trick as that, and make him a slave again all his life, and amongst strangers, too, for forty dirty dollars."(Page 211) The reader really sees for the first time with the Wilks scam and what the Duke and the King did to Jim how dishonest they really are. The ending of the Duke and the King was appropriate because they were such horrible people. All the cons that they pulled off were more than enough for them to deserve a tar and feathering even though Huck did not believe so. " Well, it made me sick to see it; and I was sorry for them poor pitiful rascals, it seemed like I couldn't ever feel any hardness against them any more in the world."(Page 230) The King and the Duke had outraged every town in which they performed a scam. They had to run from the people and dogs following them before Huck and Jim helped

them, after the "Royal Nonesuch," they had to flee from the mob, and the mob at the town where they tried to rip off the Wilks, they were almost lynched. If they felt that they were brave enough to try to scam all those towns, they must have known that they would have to face the punishment if they were finally caught. The Duke and the King deserved what they got because they cared for no one but themselves. The tar and feathering that the con artists received was a reasonable punishment because they were so greedy, and in their actions they showed that they had no morals or conscience. What was even worse was that they used the money that they stole poorly. They went and wasted it all every time just to get drunk. They were also the reason for slowing down Huck and Jim's adventure down the Mississippi River because they were forced to stay with the King and the Duke. The characters of the King and the Duke were despicable and self-absorbed.