

Huck finn: appearance versus reality



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Many people in this world will believe in the first impression they get. The appearance people see will usually satisfy them without further investigating into the reality of a situation. The difference between appearance and reality can be quite different. This also applies to literature. There are many instances where an author will describe a character as kind, but is actually deceptive and mean. In the novel *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, there are characters and situations that show how appearances can differ from reality.

The three main instances are the Grangerford and Shepherdson feud, through the Duke and the Dauphin, and Miss Watson. The difference between appearance and reality is easily seen through the Grangerford and Shepherdson feud. They are two families who appear to be very classy. Huck believes them to be noble families. Huck shows that he believes this when he says, " There was another clan of aristocracy around there - five or six families - mostly by the name of Shepherdson. They was as high-toned and well born and rich and grand as the tribe of Grangerfords" (142).

The two families show that this is not how they really are when they shoot at each other and try to kill one another. Col. Grangerford is also a man who is not who he appears to be. He is the head of the Grangerford family and in Huck's eyes, is the perfect man. Huck says, " COL. Grangerford was a gentleman, you see. He was a gentleman all over; and so was his family" (140). Huck sees a man who is kind and perfect. The reality is that Col. Grangerford allows for the continuing slaughter of two families over a feud they don't even remember how it started. Col. Grangerford is actually the exact opposite of the person he appears to be.

The Grangerford family is overall not who they seem to be. They appear to be kind and thoughtful, yet they partake in the owning of slaves. Huck finds out that the Grangerford family owns many farms with over a hundred slaves. The Grangerfords could not possibly be good people and treat hundreds of people with disdain. The Grangerford and Shepherdson families are perfect examples of people who are not who they appear to be. The Duke and the Dauphin are two men who fake their appearance for a living. As con-men, they rely on people to believe in their appearance.

The episode of the Royal Nonesuch illustrates how the Duke and the Dauphin swindle people. They put up posters around the town stating that there would be a performance of the Royal Nonesuch for three nights. The tricksters' plan was to charge the villagers to get in to the performance, and then the Dauphin would cut the performance extremely short. They achieved this and made a large sum of money. They also use their ability to fake their appearance to gain special treatment from people. This was seen when the Duke said, " I will reveal it to you, for I feel I may have confidence in you. By rights I am a duke" (163)!

The Dauphin quickly followed the Duke's lead and said, " You ain't the only person that's ben snaked down wrongfully out'n a high place/ Bilgewater (the duke), I am the late Dauphin" (164/165)! By claiming that they are people of high stature Huck and Jim believe that they should be treated like royalty. However, Huck was smart enough to be able to identify the men as fakes and see past their appearance. That prevented Huck from completely following the men as a servant. The Duke and the Dauphin also show that if

we just accept people for whom they appear to be, we could get hurt. The episode with the inheritance claim is an example of this.

The family believed the Duke and Dauphin to be the uncles of the Wilks nieces and therefore claim the six thousand dollars. People such as the Duke and the Dauphin use people's compulsion to believe in appearances to survive. Not everyone takes advantage of people's awareness toward others; some, like Miss Watson, are actually better people than their appearance dictates. In the beginning of the book Huck talks about Miss Watson in a quick description. Huck said, " The Widow's sister, Miss Watson, a tolerable slim old maid, with goggles on, had just come to live with her, and took a set at me now with a spelling-book.

She worked me middling hard for about an hour, and then the widow made her ease up" (3). Miss Watson appears tough and severe to Huck, employing harsher methods than necessary at times. From Huck's point of view she does appear like a mean old women, but she most likely had her reasons for using the methods she did. Huck was most likely not the best student and his behavior skills were sub-par. It is easy to see how Miss Watson became frustrated with Huck's struggle to be civilized. The underlying concept behind her strictness is that she cares for Huck.

There has to be a reason for her to use up so much energy to try and teach a boy without any previous knowledge. Huck does not realize that Miss Watson actually cared for him until his conscience starts bothering him about Jim. His conscience was theoretically incorrect because he was upset that he had taken Jim from Miss Watson, but he understood why Miss Watson acted the way she did in the beginning of the novel. Huck realized this when he said, "

Why, she tried to learn you your book, she tried to learn you your manners, she tried to be good to you every way she knowed how.

That's what she done" (118). Miss Watson is an example of someone who is better in reality than who she appeared to be. The appearance of something whether it is an object or a person, is not always what is true. The true reality behind something or someone may be completely different than what seemed. Some people take advantage of people who commit to a first impression. Others are actually better people than what their appearance dictates. Looking into this topic, I realized that applying the concept used in understanding literature can also be used in life.

The skill of being able to understand who a character is and why they do the things they do instead of just accepting how they appear can translate into real situations. We can do this by looking at situations through another's point of view; or commonly said, putting yourself into another's shoes. Gaining a deeper understanding of someone's actions and beliefs can help us rise above the level of just tolerance. When we gain this understanding, we reach a level of acceptance. You can always have facts bolstered by imagination, but you can never imagine facts.