

# About huck

[Literature](#), [American Literature](#)



Although Huck is white, he is poor, which makes him out of touch with civilized society, and although the Widow Douglas attempts to “civilize” Huck by giving him the schooling and religious training he has missed, he resists her attempts and maintains his independent ways. He has not been indoctrinated with social values like a middle-class boy like Tom Sawyer has been. Huck’s distance from civilized society makes him skeptical of the world around him and the ideas it passes on to him. He has more practical values than the members of the middle class; for example, he doesn’t care about the Widow’s story about Moses because he “don’t take no stock in dead people” (2). Huck distrusts and questions the things society has taught him. For example, according to the law, Jim is Miss Watson’s property, but according to Huck’s sense of logic and fairness, it seems “right” to help Jim. He draws his own conclusions that would shock white society: Huck discovers, when he and Jim meet a group of slave-hunters, that telling a lie is sometimes the right course of action.

Huck is willing and eager to question the “facts” of life and of human personality, such as the tendency to lie. Though Huck always remains open to learning, he never accepts new ideas without thinking. He is skeptical of social doctrines like religion and willing to set forth new ideas. For example, he doesn’t “see no advantage” in going to heaven with Miss Watson, especially since he wants to stay with Tom Sawyer (3). Huck speaks in simple terms but is intelligent enough to question society’s value of religious ideas and follow his own heart; he values his friend over a biblical standard of the afterlife.

However, Huck is inevitably tainted by the Southern white conception of the world. He genuinely struggles with the question of whether or not to turn over Jim to the white men who ask if he is harboring any runaway slaves. In some sense, Huck still believes that turning Jim in would be the “right” thing to do, and he struggles with the idea that Miss Watson is a slave owner yet still seems to be a “good” person. As he spends more time with Jim, Huck is forced to question the facts that white society has taught him and that he has taken for granted. He realizes that he would have felt worse for doing the “right” thing and turning Jim in than he does for not turning Jim in. When Huck reaches this realization, he makes a decision to reject conventional morality in favor of what his conscience dictates. This decision represents a big step in Huck’s development, as he realizes that his conscience may be a better guide than the dictates of the white society in which he has been raised.

As a narrator, Huck views his surroundings logically and pragmatically. His observations are not filled with judgments; instead, Huck observes his environment and gives realistic descriptions of the Mississippi River and southern culture. Huck simply accepts, at face value, the social and religious tenets pressed upon him by Miss Watson until his experiences cause him to make decisions in which his learned values and his natural feelings come in conflict. When Huck is unable to conform to the rules, he assumes that it is his own deficiency, not the rule, that is bad. He observes Pap saying he’ll never vote again because a black man was allowed to, but Huck does not condemn this because it is the “accepted” view in his world. Huck simply

reports what he sees, and this narration allows Twain to depict a realistic view of common ignorance, slavery, and the inhumanity that follows.