

Huck finn argument essay

Literature, American Literature



The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn explores the longing for freedom. Huck and "nigger" Jim want nothing more than freedom from the proper ways of society and the lives they once lived. Thus, resulting in their travel down the Mississippi River in search for family and adventure in Cairo, Illinois.

Although, Jane Smiley states that Jim was not acknowledged as a human by Huck due to his racism and continuous use of the word "nigger", Huck concludes by the end of the novel that Jim is a human and friend in his mind. Jane Smiley argues how Jim's treatment by Huck was morally wrong and there can be no excuse for it. She states that Huck using the word "nigger" leads to a bigger development of racism in Huck and Mark Twain, thus wishing the novel was censored. Smiley expresses the use of the word "nigger" suggests Huck and Twain do not care about Jim's need for freedom enough to change their own plans, which, to Smiley, exploits the dominant "racial insight that Americans in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are capable of is a recognition of the obvious...." Smiley continues her argument by using Uncle Tom's Cabin as an example of how after this book came into our culture, the "secretive voice" of Huck replaced it, who, to Smiley, only noticed Jim when they are on the raft together. Smiley questions whether the novel should be taught in schools, deemed appropriate, because to her, Huck does not even acknowledge his "sidekick" as human, "let alone act in the interests of his humanity." Jane Smiley's argument of Huck being racist and unaware of his actions towards Jim can be a valid argument but evidence in the story shows otherwise. Huck Finn's use of the word "nigger" does not hide a "deeper racism" in the novel, it merely shows the century that he lives in, one where everyone uses the word "nigger" to

describe a black slave. Huck does allow Jim to travel down the river with him, knowing Jim desires to be free and find his family, and risks being caught with a run-away slave. Twain writes that they get separated because the novel centers around Huck's adventures, not Jim's. Smiley states that Twain and Huck do not change their plans for him when Huck does not have a set plan, only to travel South to Cairo, Illinois to escape his past life which he allows Jim to accompany him on. Smiley argues that Huck does not acknowledge Jim beyond the raft, this due to Huck not wanting to "out" Jim. Huck knows that if he spoke to Jim around people, Jim could be captured and brought back to the Widow who would sell him, stopping Jim's search for his family. Smiley questions whether the novel should be taught in schools despite the lack of discussion of racism and American history. Although Huck uses the word "nigger" to set the background of the novel, American history does not play a role in the major themes. Racism has its place as a theme and to Smiley, Huck is racist because he fails to acknowledge his "sidekick" as a human. But in the end of the novel, Huck says, "He ain't no bad nigger, gentleman; that's what I think about him," which effectively objects Smiley's conclusion that Huck treats Jim inhumanly. Although, Jane Smiley has a valid argument, she did not effectively analyze Mark Twain's novel. She does not realize the evidence in the text shows that Huck considers Jim his friend, and his use of "nigger" does not make him racist. Huck's actions towards Jim are for acceptable reasons, therefore Smiley's argument, while compelling, does not have enough support to be true.