

Huck finn analysis

[Literature](#), [Russian Literature](#)



Superstition and Religion in The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn In the novel, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, written by Mark Twain, superstition is used throughout the story. Mark Twain uses superstition to show the difference between an organized religion, such as Christianity, and believing in superstition. As Huckleberry Finn and Jim escape to freedom from civilized living and slavery, religion and superstition have a strong effect on them. As they go back and forth between the two faiths, the reader gets an idea of the system of beliefs that people followed living along the Mississippi River.

Belief in the supernatural and superstition are the marks of many characters in the storyline. It is Jim and Huck's shared belief in superstitions that originally draws them together. Jim and Huck explain things using superstition that they cannot otherwise explain. It is possible that the novel parodies religion by comparing it to superstition, since some characters take advantage of both belief systems to influence and mislead. Most often, superstitions are used as an attempt to explain why bad things happen.

When a character has something good happen, most likely religion takes credit for that positive outcome. When someone is punished, or something terrible happens, it is a lot more comforting to put the blame on superstition. Religion, as defined in the Merriam-Webster Dictionary Online, is defined as “ a personal set or institutionalized system of religious attitudes, beliefs, and practices” and “ the service and worship of God or the supernatural: commitment or devotion to religious faith or observance” or “ a cause, principal or system of beliefs held to with ardor and faith”.

Superstition, as defined in the Merriam-Webster Dictionary Online, is defined as “ a belief or practice resulting from ignorance, fear of the unknown, trust

in magic or chance, or false conception of causation” and “ an irrational abject attitude of mind toward the supernatural, nature, or God resulting from superstition”. Both notions are used throughout *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* , in some cases they do not seem to be equivalent to their particular definitions. The question that resides in the core of this novel is “ How is superstition and religion used in the *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and what defines their meaning?

Later on in chapter one, Huck is alone in his room watching a spider crawl up his shoulder. Huck flips the spider off and it falls into the candle, shriveling up and dying. Huck says, “ I didn’t need anybody to tell me that that was an awful bad sin and would fetch me some bad luck, so I was scared and most shook the clothes off of me. I got up and turned around in my tracks three times and crossed my breast every time: and when I tied up a little lock of my hair with a thread to keep witches away. But I hadn’t no confidence. Huck shows us his superstitions and his belief in them. These beliefs have been ingrained in him from his father, Pap. In chapter four, Huck turns over the salt-cellar at breakfast. When he goes to throw some of the salt over his left shoulder, Miss Watson stepped in and crossed him off. She tells him to take his hands away and to stop making a mess. The widow Douglas puts in a good word for Huck, but he feels that it will not be enough to ward off the bad luck. After the salt spilling, Huck was feeling worried and shaky and wondering what bad luck would befall him.

Since he was unable to perform his ritual, (throwing the salt over his left shoulder) he felt he had to be on the lookout all day. It seems as though Huck’s views on superstition revolve around bad luck more so than good.

Huck blames bad happenings on superstition, while good happenings are “natural” or have been earned in some way. Huck doesn’t trust religion to explain life’s negatives, so he uses his belief in the supernatural. Huck finds tracks in the snow in chapter 4, a boot print with a cross in the left boot-heel made with big nails, to ward off the devil.

He finds the footprints all around then and he follows them, before it struck him who they belonged to. Pap had been checking on Huck and was watching him. This is when the reader finds out that Jim isn’t the only source of Huck’s superstitions beliefs. Some of the superstitions that Huck follows have been passed on to him from his father. Huck uses superstition to justify and explain why some bad events happen. Take the situation with the rattlesnake, Huck thinks to himself, “ We didn’t say a word for a good while. There warn’t anything to say.

We both knowed well enough it was some more work of the rattlesnake-skin; so what was the use to talk about it? It would only look like we was finding fault, and that would be bound to fetch more bad luck – and keep on fetching it, too, till we knowed enough to keep still. Both Jim and Huck continue to expect bad luck because of the rattlesnake skin that Huck touched. In chapter one, the Widow and Miss Watson try to teach Huck about religion. They try to teach him all about heaven and hell. They explain to him that the things you do on earth will decide where you go after death.

Huck inevitably decides that since Tom wasn’t going to the good place, he didn’t care to go there either. Huck treats the philosophies of heaven and hell impartially and seems to be a bit immature about the whole idea. All Huck knows is that he does not want to be lonely and he wants to be with his

friend, Tom Sawyer. In chapter two, Ben Rogers says that he could not get out much, only on Sundays so Tom Sawyer's gang could begin then. Surprisingly, all the boys said that it would be wicked to do such a thing on Sunday, as it is a holy day.

The interesting part of this logic is that the boys don't care much about being in a gang, stealing, or murdering, yet they care enough not to do it on a holy day. In Huck's case, he seems to care more about the smaller issue of not starting a gang on a holy day, yet does not care much of bigger issues such as heaven and hell, or Noah and the Bulrushers. In chapter 3, Huck is sitting alone in the woods trying to figure out the logistics of religion. He wonders about prayer and how it works.

He thinks to himself, " if a body can get anything they pray for, why don't Deacon Winn get back themoneyhe lost on pork? Why can't the widow get back her snuffbox that was stole? Why can't Miss Watson fat up? " After Miss Watson tells him that he must help people, do everything he could for others, and never think of himself, Huck decides that he does not see any advantage to living that way. He debates over every part of religion and does not accept it all just because it's part of the whole. He chooses what he does and does not believe, and doesn't look at it as all or nothing.

Huck's view on religion starts to evolve in chapter eighteen. He thinks to himself, " If you notice, most folks don't go to church only when they've got to: but a hog is different. " Huck starts to realize that people just use religion when it's good for them. He sees that people use religion to manipulate and get what they want. The Grangerfords and the Shepherdsons sit in church together. Mark Twain shows us how extraordinarily important religion in the

South is during this era. The only time that the Grangerfords and Shepherdsons don't fight is during their time at church.

They view their religious gatherings as a common ground and their respect for religion is the only thing that quiets their feud. Huck is perplexed at how these two families can live in the Christian way by following the church and the bible; yet continue to kill each other. Huck sees the king use religion as a tool of deception. While the king is pretending to be Harvey Wilks', He tells the town about his congregation in England and how they were sweet on him and he must hurry and settle the estate right away and then leave for home.

Again, Huck sees religion being used to manipulate and control people. Although Huck is bombarded with superstitious beliefs and religion, he chooses to go on his own path. He weighs each piece of information he gets and decides to take it all for what it is. Huck believes in different parts of each belief system. Though Huck feels that organized religion is stifling, he still clings to it in his times of despair and uses it as a comfort mechanism. When all is said and done, Huck searches for what is right in his heart and he considers all possibilities, and in the end chooses his own moral code.