

# How huck has changed during the novel

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## **Huck vs. Tom, a Show of Maturity**

In *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain, Huck's level of maturity and overall independence drastically changes throughout the novel. Huck begins the novel very immaturity with a misdirected moral compass and even less intellectual independence. As he travels down the river, his experiences vastly improve his maturity, morality, and most importantly his intellectual independence. The slow but steady change is almost imperceptible while the novel unfolds but becomes clear when Huck rejoins with Tom and their now very different personalities clash. . . .

In the final chapters, Tom and Huck arrive at a compromise that makes clear that Huck is no longer the immature character he was in the beginning. At the end of the novel, Huck and Tom are breaking Jim out of jail. Tom wants to use a case-knife like he read about in the books he has read, but Huck disagrees with him and wants to use the proper tool for the job, the pickaxe:

‘ It might answer for you to dig Jim out with a pick, without any letting on, because you don't know no better; but it wouldn't for me, because I do know better. Gimme a case knife.’ He had his own by him, but I handed him mine. He flung it down, and says: ‘ Gimme a case-knife.’ I didn't know just what to do—but then I thought. I scratched around amongst the old tools, and got a pickaxe and give it to him, and he took it and went to work, and never said a word. He was always just that particular. Full of principle.’ (Twain 247)

Even though Huck gives Tom a pickaxe when he asked for a case-knife, Tom just pretends it is a case-knife. Tom goes right to work and does not say

anything like he is aggravated by Huck's foolish behavior. Huck says Tom is "full of principle" this is just Huck calling Tom stubborn; however, he uses the word "principle," which has a positive connotation, instead of the word "stubborn," which has a negative connotation. Huck does this because he understands that if he calls Tom stubborn he will get angry. Huck carefully measures the words he uses with Tom so both of them are not sidelined by a futile verbal argument.

At the beginning of the novel, however, Huck would not have been this mature, he would not have reacted very differently instead of taking Tom's word as gospel. Before the scene below, Tom had formed his so-called gang of robbers that were going to rob a stagecoach, But there was no stagecoach, just kids playing, Tom imagined the whole thing. Huck describes the whole incident as follows.

' I didn't believe we could lick such a crowd of Spaniards and A-rabs, but I wanted to see the camels and elephants, so I was on hand next day, Saturday, in the ambuscade; and when we got the word we rushed out of the woods and down the hill. But there warn't no Spaniards and A-rabs, and there warn't no camels nor no elephants. It warn't anything but a Sunday-school picnic, and only a primerclass at that. We busted it up, and chased the children up the hollow; but we never got anything but some doughnuts and jam, though Ben Rogers got a rag doll, and Jo Harper got a hymn-book and a tract; and then the teacher charged in, and made us drop everything and cut. I didn't see no di'monds, and I told Tom Sawyer so. He said there was loads of them there, anyway; and he said there was A-rabs there, too,

and elephants and things. I said, why couldn't we see them, then? He said if I warn't so ignorant, but had read a book called Don Quixote, I would know without asking. He said it was all done by enchantment. He said there was hundreds of soldiers there, and elephants and treasure, and so on, but we had enemies which he called magicians; and they had turned the whole thing into an infant Sunday-school, just out of spite. I said, all right; then the thing for us to do was to go for the magicians. Tom Sawyer said I was a numskull.' (Twain 21)

In this incident, Huck hesitates to attempt to talk sense into Tom, but gives up as soon as Tom pushes back. Huck says " I didn't see no di'monds, and I told Tom Sawyer so." This shows how Huck was not able to imagine the whole scene and he told Tom so. Huck then says " He said if I warn't so ignorant, but had read a book called Don Quixote, I would know without asking." This means that Huck attempted to tell Tom that he was being stupid but Huck looked up to Tom so much that Tom was able to simply tell Huck that he was wrong and Huck just went along with it. Tom talks about the book Don Quixote a satire on the adventure novels of the middle ages.

The way Huck reacted to the Case-knife incident and the Stagecoach incident shows how Huck developed from the beginning to the end of the novel. Huck shows a significant amount of intellectual development from the beginning to the end of the novel. Huck had a contradictory personality in which he was very immature and only acted to better his self-interest without any thought for those around him while treating Tom like a god. Even when he saw that Tom was being foolish he did not doing anything

about it because he saw Tom in rose-tinted lenses. Tom tells Huck about the book Don Quixote, which tells the tale of a man who was obsessed with chivalrous adventures, he decides to put them into action. This book was a satire of these novels; however, I don't believe that Tom understood this. The book's attitude closely patterns Huck's mature vision at the end of the book then he realizes that Tom is bewitched by imaginary delusions of grandeur. This is how Huck is making a satire of Tom at the end of the book. Just like how Don Quixote was a satire on the chivalrous action of the knights in the middle ages.

The contrast between the original Huck and the mature Huck is exemplified by the fact that Huck says that he does not want to go to heaven because he wants to be with Tom in hell, but by the end of the book Huck is disagreeing with Tom — something unthinkable at the beginning of the book but he is mature enough to keep this quiet in order to help Jim escape. This shows just how attached Huck was to Tom. He was willing to go to hell just to be with him. Jumping ahead to the end of the book Huck is disagreeing with Tom and is able to stay quiet and go along with Tom foolishness so they can help Jim. He calls Tom “ full of principle” because Tom would view it as a compliment and not stop digging Jim out, however, this was the equivalent of Huck calling Tom stubborn. By saying this he was able to vent his feelings and control his emotions in order to complete his goal of getting Jim out. This is a clear show of maturity because a common trait of children is that they are unwilling to let things go. In addition, it is considered a good personality trait to pick your battles and not argue with everyone especially if it won't accomplish anything productive. Huck was able to just allow Tom to act out

his fantastical adventures because it will be quicker than if Huck was to get into an argument with Tom.

Twain uses the character Tom from his previous book, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, a less ambitious adventure novel, to contrast with Huck and show a much deeper understanding of the development of maturity and moral understanding that Huck gains throughout the novel. Huck learns to think on his own and make logical decisions that cause Huck to have major intellectual developments as he becomes independent not longer bound by the ideas and decisions of others.

In the beginning of the novel, Huck is just as immature and childish as Tom and looked at Tom as if he had unchecked power. As Huck went down the river he had many new experiences along the way and over time drastically changes into the mature person we see at the end of the novel. Twain brings Tom back at the end in order to show the reader just how much Huck has changed. It is very difficult to see Hucks progression because there is no one moment that Huck changes, it's much more gradual. When Huck and Tom reunite it allows Huck to be contrasted with Tom, who has not changed at all, and it becomes clear the immense and drastic change that happened to Huck along his journey.