

St. petersburg essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

As the story opens, Huck Finn has been adopted by the Widow Douglas who wants to make him conform to the way and views of society. It is with this forced learning that Huck finds that he is not comfortable with the situation. Huck Finn, a boy of approximately 12 years, is the son of the town drunk. Widow Douglas adopts him so that she can civilize him and raise him to be a gentleman. Huck does not like the dull ways of the Widow.

Though she is nurturing to him, he feels confined and uncomfortable in her house. He does not like going to school, attending church, or wearing neat clothes and he despises being tortured by Miss Watson. When he becomes fed up with the ways of the Widow, he decides to run away, but is found by Tom Sawyer, who convinces him to come back. Earlier, Huck and Tom found treasure and were allowed to keep it. Huck's father comes to know of his son's prosperity and returns to St. Petersburg. Widow Douglas has little success with her attempts to reform Huck; he is just not the type of person who can tolerate civilized life. He longs for a life of freedom, without worry or constraint from society's rules. It is also the earnest wish of most adolescents to be left to their own devices, untroubled by the adult world of rules and etiquette. Later instances, with Huck and Jim afloat on the Mississippi, are indicative of the freedom that Huck is prevented from attaining this early in the story. Huck's concept of religion is also eccentric. The Widow Douglas and Miss Watson attempt to teach him the difference between good and bad, but he has trouble accepting what he hears. He is told that smoking is bad by the Widow Douglas, and yet she uses snuff. Huck sees the hypocrisy in this and decides that he prefers to be "bad." This discussion is significant to later events in the novel

when Huck will have to deal with much larger issues of good and bad as they relate to the slave Jim.

At this point Jim is introduced as Mrs. Watson's slave. Jim hears a noise, made during Huck and Tom's escape attempt, and decides to check to make sure everything is ok. He does not see anything, but he is not satisfied and sits to wait; he soon falls asleep. Tom decides to tie him up as a joke. Ignoring Huck's protest, Tom simply takes his hat and hangs it overhead from a tree branch. Jim awakes and he is certain that he has been carried away and back by witches. He spreads the story throughout the slave community, enhancing the tale each time it is told. Each time he tells it, a sense of pride comes over him. Several key facts are shown in this brief description of Jim. He is the slave of Miss Watson, who has already been pictured as nagging and mean in the way she treated Huck. Though she had been harsh on Huck, it could only be assumed that she was much more severe with Jim. As Huck was superstitious, Jim was also. Since he could come to no logical conclusion for his hat being in the tree, he blames it on witches and proudly spins the tale for his friends.

It is important to notice two things surrounding the body found floating in the river. It introduces the Mississippi as a powerful and awesome force, which Huck and Jim will fully feel as they escape down the river. Additionally, Huck takes a very pragmatic approach to the news that the body may be his Pap. His father represents only instability and cruelty to Huck; he is not bothered by the fact that perhaps it is his father who has drowned. Also Huck does not really think his dad is dead, but feels certain that he will appear again, which

foreshadows Pap's later appearance in the novel. Pap hears that Huck has gained riches and comes to St.

Petersburg to confirm the rumors. Huck denies any involvement, but Pap is not fooled and goes to Judge Thatcher's to get the money. With Judge Thatcher's help, Widow Douglas seeks to become Huck's legal guardian. The new judge denies the Widow's petition as he does not want to separate Huck from his father. The irony in this thought is that the new Judge assumes that Huck will be better off with his natural father than a kind and loving guardian. Regardless of Pap's behavioral pattern and reputation, the new judge deems it best for Huck to live with his father. It is distressing that "proper society" thinks that Huck should be forced to live with a totally corrupt and evil person, just because he is a blood relative. Huck, in fact, does not fret and moan over Pap's return; rather he is delighted to realize that he no longer fears his father and can just accept the state of affairs at face value. This means, however, that he must sometimes obey Pap, because if he does not, he knows he will be beaten.

Pap's Cabin
Aside from the beatings and the lock-ups, Huck adjusts to life in the cabin with his father. Truthfully, Huck finds that he is more comfortable with being in the wilderness, out of society's grasp and away from the constraints of the Widow. Huck feels, however, that he must get away from his father's cruelty; he must run away. Carefully, he plans his escape. He locates a rusty saw and uses it to cut a hole in the back wall of the cabin. He knows that he must wait for the appropriate time to leave and works only when his father is away. In a drunken fit one night, Pap tries to murder Huck. In order to ensure that he lives, Huck knows that he

must escape now. His method of escape shows that he is both smart and quick-thinking. These traits save him numerous times throughout the novel. The traits also prove to the reader that Huck Finn will be able to take care of himself in the world beyond St. Petersburg, for he has a good head on his shoulders.

Jackson Island Huck decides to take a canoe to Jackson Island, where he spends three idyllic days. On one of his explorations of the island, he meets the Widow's slave, Jim. Jim decides to run away when he hears news that the Widow is planning on selling him down the river for eight hundred dollars.

From this point, Huck and Jim decide to travel by raft down the Mississippi. On the river, the "initiation" of Huck is completed. Even though he has been taught that black slaves are only a piece of property, he rejects the values of society and accepts Jim as his friend. He learns to think independently and to be compassionate.

In Huck's desire to know what reaction was provoked by his disappearance, he dresses up like a girl and goes to the mainland. Judith Loftus informs this "girl" that everyone is convinced that Jim has killed Huck because they both disappeared the same day. Upset by the revelation, Huck rushes back to the island and tells Jim. The two of them board a raft and head down the river to New Orleans.

Sinking Steamboat On the fifth night, it rains heavily. Leaving the raft to take care of itself, Huck and Jim seek shelter under a tent. In the glare of lightning, they see a steamboat knocked against the rocks. Huck wishes to investigate

and see if they can salvage anything of value; even though he does not want to, Jim follows Huck's lead.

They hear voices, as they board the steamboat, that are in dispute over splitting some loot. Not waiting to hear more of the conversation, Jim backs away, but Huck is curious to learn more. He advances, looks through a window, and sees three men inside. One man is lying on the floor with his hands and feet tied. Two other men are standing over him, one holding a gun. The man on the floor, Jim Turner, is begging the other two to spare his life. The second man, Bill, wants to kill him, but Jake Pickard, the other man, does not want to. Once Huck realizes that the three men are obviously scoundrels, he rushes back and asks Jim to untie their boat so the men will be unable to escape. When Huck tells Jim that they should get on their raft and leave, Jim says that the raft has drifted away.

Huck shows his basic kindness in this part of the story. In hopes of saving Jim Turner from being murdered by the other two scoundrels, he wants to notify the authorities quickly about the wreck. He makes up a tale to insure that the watchman will go in search of the wrecked steamboat and find the three men before they all die. Though Jim, Jake, and Bill are scoundrels, Huck has sympathy for them being stranded out on the steamboat.

When the wreckage floats by, he paddles around and calls out to anyone still on board; he wants to make sure that there is no one alive and trapped. In this he shows that he values all of humanity, regardless of their social class; this is the trait that allows Huck to totally accept Jim as his friend later in the novel.

Cairo Huck, revealing his immaturity, plays another cruel trick on Jim.

Thinking still of Jim as a piece of property, it has not dawned on Huck that Jim has real human feelings. When Jim tells Huck how hurt he is by the trick and reveals how much he has worried about him, Huck feels terrible and asks for forgiveness; this apology to Jim is the first sign of real responsibility in Huck. Though he still does not view Jim as an equal, in Huck's mind he has at least begun to receive a human status, and Huck vows never to be cruel to him again.

They slept most of the next day, but awake and head to Cairo, where Jim believes he will find freedom. Excited now, he begins to talk about how he is going to work hard and save his money to buy back his wife and children; he says that he will steal his children out of slavery, if necessary. Suddenly, he is troubled over the fact that he is helping a run-away slave to gain freedom and he wonders what harm Miss Watson had done to him that he is helping Jim to escape. He decides that he must ease his conscience and take Jim ashore to turn him in. Just as he is about to leave, Jim tells him what a good friend he is and that for the first time in his life, a white man has kept a promise to him. His kind words stop Huck instantly.

Ironically, Huck and Jim float past Cairo, the point of freedom for Jim. The canoe has been lost and there is no way to paddle back up-river.

To make matters even worse, their raft is hit by a steamboat. Jim and Huck are separated as they both go overboard. Huck swims to shore. It is important to notice the significant irony that Twain weaves throughout this leg of the journey. It is ironic that Jim says he will steal his children if he

cannot buy them. Twain makes it so that the reader realizes the sin of enslaving people, especially young ones, is much greater than any "sin" a father can commit in order to regain custody of his own children.

Unfortunately, the childish Huck does not realize this.

Steamboat Crashes into Raft A skiff comes along with two armed slave hunters, but Huck cannot bring himself to betray Jim. One of the men asks Huck if he belongs on the raft and he replies that he does. When they ask him who else is on board, Huck says that his father is on board and suffering from smallpox and needs immediate attention. When they hear of the smallpox, the slave hunters are frightened; they quickly give Huck twenty dollars and depart. Huck again finds himself feeling miserable when he saves Jim, not because he is helping him escape, but he feels he has done something wrong; he wonders if he would have felt better if he had given Jim up. He returns to the raft and does not see Jim. To hide from the slave hunters, Jim has concealed himself in the water. He comes out and says that he will never forget Huck for saving him.

Feud One day when Huck and Buck are out in the woods hunting, they encounter Harvey Shephardson. Buck shoots at Harvey, but misses his mark.

Harvey chases after them and fires in their direction; Huck and Buck manage to escape unharmed and reach home safely. Huck asks Buck the reason he fired the first shot because he is confused at this unnecessary exchange of fire. Buck replies that they and the Shephardsons have been involved in a feud for nearly thirty years, but he does not recall how or why it

started. A few months earlier there had been a death as a result of the feud, but the killings had caused a great deal of loss for both families. The next Sunday, the Shephardson and Grangerford families attend church with their guns. The sermon ironically about brotherly love, leads Huck to think that it is one of the most bizarre Sundays of his life.

Towards the end of his involvement with the feud, Huck is totally disgusted when he learns all the Grangerford men, including his friend Buck, have been murdered by the Shephardsons. The task of pulling Buck's body from the river is left up to him. Huck does not comment on his feelings about Buck, but this is one of the most touching scenes in the novel. Twain takes this opportunity to criticize the senseless violence and the ridiculous sense of honor.

It is important to notice that while Huck is on land, he again takes a false identity, George Jackson. He can see society through the eyes of this assumed person and sharply criticize it. In contrast to society, Huck sees the river as pure. It is also important to notice Jim's devotion to Huck in this experience. He remains in the woods, as to not intrude on Huck's personal life, receiving news and food from Huck's servant. Though he could easily have taken the raft and headed down the river on his own, he is faithful to Huck and depends on him for safety. With this devotion, he waits on the young boy to return.

Camp Meeting Huck again shows his sympathetic nature when the Duke and Dauphin are being chased. Huck wants to help them and advises them to run toward the river.

He is unaware that the two men will join Jim and himself on the raft. The two frauds and liars quickly take charge of things, telling preposterous stories about who they are. Huck shows his practical side once again when he decides it is best not to interfere with this sort. He also realizes that, if given the opportunity, they would sell Jim.

The Duke and Dauphin wonder if Jim is a runaway slave and question Huck as to why he is trekking down river on a raft. Huck refuses to give them answers but poses them with a question: why would a run-away slave head further south? To appease the two frauds, he concocts a story about the death of most of his family after which his father, brother, and Jim start on their journey south. He continues that both his father and brother drowned in the river after being struck by a steamboat. Since then, he says, people have been trying to take Jim from his custody because they believe he is a run-away. So, he says, this is why they are trying to avoid being seen on the river during the day and travel only after dark.

The Duke and Dauphin continue to act as masters of the raft. Huck and Jim have to spend the nights alternately keeping watch as they continuedown the river. The Duke and the Dauphin spend their time trying to come upwith a plan to fool the people when they reach the shore. When they reachthe next village, all four go ashore. The Dauphin poses as a reformedpirate, who is trying to help change other pirates; he takes up an offeringfor his cause. When he goes back to the raft, he learns that he is richerby eighty-seven dollars and seventy-five cents. The Duke makes fakeadvertisements to sell and prints a picture of a run-away slave that fitsJim's description, offering a reward of two hundred dollars. Now they cantravel during the day because

anyone questions them, they can tie Jim up and that they are returning him to his owner to collect their reward.

Colonel Sherburn Shoots Boggs Evening approaches and Huck overhears someone call out that Boggs, the jovial town drunk, is coming. He calls out to Sherburn, who has swindled him. A crowd of people follow Boggs as he progresses down the street, waiting to see what will happen. Colonel Sherburn comes out with his pistol, aims at Boggs, and shoots him in full view of his daughter and other villagers. Later, a Bible is placed on the man's chest, but Huck seems to be the only one who notices. Huck witnesses the whole scene as an innocent observer.

Someone in the crowd suggested that Sherburn should be lynched for his action. The crowd agreed and goes yelling and screaming towards Sherburn's house. Sherburn comes out and stands on the patio without uttering a simple word. The crowd quiets down. Sherburn, in a voice filled with scorn, calls the mob cowards and pitiful people who do not fight with courage. The crowd breaks up under this attack and goes its separate ways. Huck shows his revulsion when he describes the morbid curiosity of the crowd in recounting the murder and crowding around the body to get a better glimpse. This is merely one incidence that convinces Huck that life on the raft is more peaceful and happy than living in town.

Royal Nonesuch Play The house is crammed with people and the play begins. The Duke augments the expectations of the audience and then hoists up the curtain.

Naked and painted wildly, the Dauphin comes onto the stage. The audience goes wild as he prances around and they cannot stop laughing. The Duke lowers the curtain and instructs the audience not to mention the "great tragedy" to anybody, for they will be performing for two more nights. In fact, they repeat their act on the next two nights and flee the town, making a profit of four hundred and sixty-five dollars. It is important to note that Huck is not a participant, only an observer.

He also realizes that the townspeople are gullible and easily swayed, causing some of their own problems. It is also important to note Huck's descriptions of royalty. He often mixes up history with fiction. His telling is quite comic and his point is satiric. He makes the decision that all kings and politicians are "mighty ornery" and seemingly no different from the scoundrels, Duke and Dauphin.

Finally it is important to note the tenderness in Jim's story about his child. It amazes Huck to know that Jim has such deep feelings. "I do believe he cared just as much for his people as white folks does for their'n," Huck thinks to himself. This realization deepens the closeness that Huck feels for Jim.

Wilk's Funeral In an attempt to make it possible for Jim to stay on the raft by himself and not be judged a runaway slave, the Duke disguises Jim as a sick Arab. The Dauphin tells Huck to row him out to the steamboat. They meet a young man on their way to the steamboat and the Dauphin introduces himself as the Reverend Alexander Boldgette. Mr. Wilk's brother Peter has just passed away, and the man was hoping the one of them was Mr. Wilk's. A couple of months before, when Peter turned ill, word was sent to

his brothers to return immediately. Harvey, one of Peter's brothers, is a preacher, and the second, William, is deaf and dumb; they stood to receive a great inheritance from Peter.

The Dauphin inquires about the Wilks family and the town, and the young man willingly supplies all the information. Immediately, the Dauphin decides to try and gain the Wilks fortune. He concocted a plan that he would pretend to be the preacher and the Duke would pretend to be the dumb brother. Huck is sent to retrieve the Duke. Huck realizes what they are up to, but knows that he can do nothing about it. When they come to shore, the Dauphin asks if anyone knows where Peter Wilks lives. They tell him that Peter has passed away and he pretends to be heart-broken, making wild signs with his hands to the Duke.

Huck turns moralist in this chapter. His concern falls on the three nieces, whom he sees as simple, honest people who are being exploited. He judges the Duke and Dauphin's actions as being immoral and unethical. It is ironic that Huck gets drawn into the episode with the Wilks girls due to monetary considerations because he never before associated with any concern of money. The girls will be destitute if he fails to help, and he knows this. Once again, Huck's instinctive understanding and kindness are evident. Because he sees how trusting and innocent the girls are, he chooses to help them by stealing the bag of gold from the Duke and Dauphin, hiding it only until he can return it to the girls. An essential goodness is seen here in Huck's genuine effort to help these three girls in distress. This instance is also important because Huck no longer chooses to be a blameless onlooker;

though it may put him in danger, he commits himself to the girls. Twain is foreshadowing the fact that Huck will later help Jim.

The girls receive their first jolt only a day after the funeral. A transaction handled by the Dauphin, slave traders come and buy their servants. Huck keeps silent because he knows that the sale is not one of validity, which means the slaves can be returned to the farm in a matter of days. Another day passes and the Dauphin decides to hold an auction to sell the farm. Huck is awakened by the noise made when the Dauphin and the Duke discover that their gold is missing. He is asked if he has seen anyone near the room where the gold was kept, or if, perhaps, he might have wandered in there. After a short time of thinking, Huck replies that the servants have gone in there several times. The Duke and Dauphin make the assumption that the Negroes have stolen the money and become furious with themselves for not adequately safeguarding the gold. The clever Huck is happy that he has shifted the blame to the black servants, who are no longer around to be hurt by his insinuation.

When Huck sees Mary Jane in tears he breaks down and cannot hold back the truth any longer; he reveals everything to her. He does not want her to be tempted to give the secret away, or even accidentally reveal the truth, so he asks her to go away for a few days. Even with her gone, he must still persuade Mary Jane's sisters not to reveal their sister's whereabouts and does so by weaving a plausible story. Huck plans most of his moves vigilantly and leaves little to chance.

Robinson and a lawyer, Levi Bell, conduct an investigation as the true heirs are waiting for their bags. They are convinced that the Duke and Dauphin are frauds, even to go so far to say that Huck conspires with them.

The Duke is asked by the doctor to hand over the bag of gold and is told that he has no idea where it is, for one of the servants has stolen it.

Huck tries to lie his way through it, when he is questioned, but he is caught. They also question them about the tattoo marks on Peter Wilks' chest. To determine who the real Wilks brothers are, they decide to dig up the grave.

The group begins to dig up the coffin. To their surprise, when they open the coffin, they find the bag of gold. In the ensuing confusion, Huck is able to escape and runs towards the river. He meets Jim on the way, and they both manage to escape and avoid confrontation. The Duke and the Dauphin, however, soon follow them again. The Duke and the Dauphin begin to argue, marring the carefree life on the raft. One accuses the other of deception but neither of them suspects Huck. Rather, they find solace in their failure by getting drunk.

The Phelps' Farm The final action in the journey takes place at the Phelps' farm, where Jim is detained in captivity as a runaway slave. Huck makes his way to the Phelps' farm in an attempt to save Jim once again. He is delighted to discover that Mrs. Phelps is Tom's aunt and that she is expecting Tom to visit soon. She mistakes Huck to be Tom and welcomes him.

Huck meets Tom as he is coming back to the Phelps' farm and tells him the entire story. He says that he intends to rescue Jim, who is being held prisoner by Mr. Phelps. At the mere mention of excitement, Tom is elated.

All that they have to do to free Jim is, but Tom sets up an elaborate plan for adventure. While trying to free Jim, Tom gets injured and becomes ill.

Later in the story, Huck realizes that Jim was truly free the whole time, because Widow Douglas had willed him freedom. He learns, also, that Aunt Sally is looking to adopt him so she can bring him further civilization. He decides, again, to run away so he can be "free".

Huck no longer has to create an identity or a family for himself, for the first time in the novel. At the Phelps', he is handed one. In all of his former identities, Huck has made up large, fictional families. He has now been placed in a family well known to him. He relaxes and truthfully answers all of Sally's questions, from the perspective of Tom. He goes out on the pretext of bringing his luggage as to prevent any confusion when the real Tom arrives. He waits on the road to warn Tom of the situation into which he had been brought.

The entirety of the last section of the novel takes on a farcical tone, set by Aunt Sally. She makes Huck conceal himself when Uncle Silas arrives so they can play a trick on him. Later, though, many jokes are played on her in return.

Tom takes on the role of a leader when he realizes there can be a great deal of adventure in rescuing Jim. Huck agrees to do as Tom says and goes along

with his plans. Somehow, Huck still feels that Tom is much stronger and wiser than he. Huck is greatly astounded that his friend would be so "noble" as to help him in the illegal activity of helping a runaway slave. Huck has trouble believing that such "respectable" people, as Tom, can do evil things, but easily accepts that the wicked people such as he are capable of evil.

Tom's fondness of dramatic, elaborate solutions is contrasted clearly to Huck's yearning for the simple and practical things in life. Huck looks to Tom and depends on him to make the decisions now. As the boys plan Jim's escape, Huck recalls his escape in the early part of the novel when he successfully flees from Pap. Huck forgets that while the boys are planning their grand adventure that Jim is suffering, just as Huck has suffered the beating from his father. Tom informs Jim of the plan and Jim goes along with it, as he sees he has no other choice. Twain is drawing the reader's attention to the state of which the slaves were in. They fear being treated with cruelty and being beaten for disapproval, so they go along with what the white man says, even when they are wrong.

Huck and Tom have left Jim a prisoner for three weeks while they carry out Tom's "grandiose" plans for his escape. It is the ultimate thoughtless cruelty. Tom and Huck manage to free Jim through the hole, the same manner in which Huck escaped his father. In a melodramatic scene, they are chased by dogs and men as they head for the river. Tom is struck by a bullet, but is surprisingly glad, because he will have something permanent to remind him of his adventure. Jim is horrified that he has been hit and refuses to go any further, losing his freedom to help Tom. Because of the help given to Tom by Jim, the doctor is able to save his life.

Tom reveals, the next morning, that Jim was indeed a free man as it were willed by Miss Watson. Tom admits that he concealed the information because he wanted to have a grand adventure. At this point, Tom's selfishness shines more clearly than it has throughout the book. He does not care about anyone except himself and his romanticized pretensions.

In the melodramatic and complicated ending, the boys' assumed identities are cleared up by Aunt Polly. Huck is delighted to finally be himself. Aunt Polly also verifies Tom's claim that Jim has been granted his freedom. The novel ends with Huck deciding to "light out to territory ahead" so he could escape from the grasp of society. It is clear to the reader why Huck hates "civilized" life. In his trip down the river he has seen that hatred, violence, brutality, and filth are the characteristics of the society on shore.

Twain ends the story just as he started; he opens with a story saying that Huck is afraid that he will be civilized by Widow Douglas and now that he realizes that Aunt Sally wants to adopt and civilize him, and he decides to run away to the west, to uncharted territory. As luck would have it, it is the corrupting influence of civilization that makes Huck "uncivilized."