

# Huckleberry finn: themes of religion



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### **Theme of Religion in Huckleberry Finn Relating to today's Society**

In *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Mark Twain makes a satire of some characters' absolute faith in religion compared to other characters' doubt that such beliefs are for real. Miss Watson and Widow Douglas both believe that heaven "good place" exists and they explain to Huckleberry Finn that the only way to get there is to pray and go to church every Sunday. "She told me to pray every day, and whatever I asked for I would get it. But it warn't so. I tried it." (Twain 8) On the contrary, Huckleberry Finn presumes that religion and faith are unrealistic because people cannot see them. "I went and told the widow about it, and she said the thing a body could get by praying for it was 'spiritual gifts'." (Twain 8) In relation to the issues concerning faith in religion in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain, there are still conflicts between faith in God, the Creator, and belief in scientific ideas in today's society.

Currently in today's world population, the religious "unaffiliated" category makes up the third largest group (Heneghan). This category consists of atheists, agnostics, and people with no evident religion (Heneghan). In present society, religion faces a new challenge known as scientific research. Many people still disagree on whether the Creator has created and expanded the universe or if it was caused the initial Big Bang explosion (O'Neil). Scientists have continued to search for a definite answer. On March 17, 2014, scientists announced a Big Bang breakthrough that might suggest that the Big Bang did not occur as a simple explosion caused by hot and dense matter but was a highly ordered event (O'Neil). Scientists in South

Pole working with a telescope called BICEP 2 detected gravitational waves that provides evidence for the universe's rapid expansion known today as the Big Bang theory (O'Neil). The evidence found was that the universe expanded faster than the speed of light when it was a trillionth of a trillionth of a trillionth of a second old (O'Neil). Christian scientists claim that the evidence ensures that there was a beginning (O'Neil). In terms of cause and effect, if there was a beginning, there must have been a beginner according to the Christian scientists (O'Neil). This struggle between religion and science relates to Huck's disbelief in religion due to him not being able to see it. Huck Finn is especially realistic as he would not believe in religion for it could only give him 'spiritual gifts'. Presently, people continue to be unsure of how the universe began and expanded to life. As a result, 16.3% of the world's population currently is religious unaffiliated (Heneghan).

In addition to the Big Bang discovery, recent findings show proofs to the authenticity of the Bible. Advanced Physics students of Leicester University tested out if Biblical dimensions of Noah's ark in Genesis could hold 70,000 animals ("Students Surprised to Find Noah's Ark Feasible"). In Genesis, there would have been 35,000 animals needed to be saved by Noah times two concerning males and females of the animals ("Students Surprised to Find Noah's Ark Feasible"). The students constructed the ark based on estimated Biblical dimensions and found that the ark could have held 70,000 animals plus food and water ("Students Surprised to Find Noah's Ark Feasible"). The result shows some truthfulness in the Biblical stories which provides confirmation to some aspects of the Bible. Widow Douglas believed in Biblical stories such as about Moses and the Bulrushers and she found

importance in teaching Huck about them “ After supper she got out her book and learned me about Moses and the Bulrushers” (Twain 2). Religious stories are a part of the religion. If the stories are real, the religion itself could potentially be real. As well as Biblical stories, there are also proofs to Biblical descriptions of Earth’s structure. According to Genesis 7: 11, when the Flood began, ancient transition zone water rose up through the crust and “ all the fountains of the great deep were broken up” (“ Water Deep in Earth’s Mantle”). A new discovery reveals that mineral of earth’s mantle material can store great amounts of water (“ Water Deep in Earth’s Mantle”). This means that the subterranean Flood could have originated from ancient reservoirs in the upper earth mantle (“ Water Deep in Earth’s Mantle”). Moreover, Scriptures suggests that Earth was created by God with water (“ Water Deep in Earth’s Mantle”). The research reveals that the mantle could hold two oceans’ volumes of water (“ Water Deep in Earth’s Mantle”).

The idea opposing creationism, the idea that the universe and life originates from a grand design, is evolution. Evolution disproves the belief that all living things and the universe are created by God, the Creator. Scientists sequenced the genome of the vesper bats to identify the cause of their vast diversity (“ Going batty for jumping DNA as a cause of species diversity.”). The researchers found jumping elements in their genome called DNA transposons (“ Going batty for jumping DNA as a cause of species diversity.”). The results prove that changes and mutations in DNA cause evolution in living organisms (“ Going batty for jumping DNA as a cause of species diversity.”). It also proves that different species of living organisms were not created by the Creator but organisms evolved into diversified

species. In support of Darwin's evolution theory, modern researches indicates that there are 338 known species of hummingbirds and they are still evolving based on habitats ("Hummingbirds' 22-million-year-old history of remarkable change is far from complete.").

The conflict continues as Creationists in Texas education board refuses approval of a commonly used biology textbook due to the belief that the textbook portrays evolution as a fact and not as a theory (Rich). Several reviewers for the textbook refused to accept evolution and climate change as scientific fact (Rich). In today's society, there are still disagreements on whether schools should incorporate creationism into their teachings. In regards of the state's creationism law called the Louisiana Science Education Act, Governor of Louisiana Bobby Jindal allows the teachings of creationism in Louisiana public schools (Kopplin). Some people believe that this is wrong and that schools should not blur the lines of science facts and religious beliefs in their education (Kopplin). "If I catch you about that school I'll tan you good. First you know you'll get religion, too. I never see such a son." (Twain 15) In *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Pap sensed that Huck will learn religion as along with education because schools in those times incorporated religion with education.

Throughout history, there has been continuous conflict between religion and realism. People have always searched for truth and answers to the mysteries of creation and being. In today's society, human beings call belief in religion, faith, because it is simply trust in its existence without actually knowing its existence as a fact. There have always been believers such as Miss Watson and Widow Douglas and doubters such as Huck Finn and Pap. The real

question, though, is do human beings really need to know religion as a fact when it could make people behave better? In *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Huckleberry Finn does not believe in the existence of religion but he was taught by religious people such as Widow Douglas that stealing is wrong. As a result, he developed a conscience and realizes he is stealing. For this reason, he calls stealing “borrowing” and only steals what he necessarily needs.