

Adventures of
huckleberry finn
dialectical journal
essay sample



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Historical Context: First published in England in December 1884 and in the United States in February 1885. Naturalism (c. 1865-1900) A literary movement that used detailed realism to suggest that social conditions, heredity, and environment had unavoidable force in shaping human character. Protagonist: Huckleberry Finn was young boy in the late nineteenth century coming of age. He viewed his surroundings practically and logically without judgments. His socially simple-minded self gives the novel a satirical humor. Antagonist: The rules and laws of Society in Adventures of Huckleberry Finn makes Huck think it's ways of life are the right way and when he doesn't follow them he is doing wrong. By doing so Huck declares himself a traitor and villain, and says if this is wrong then I will go to hell for it because I think it is right. Huck follows his conscience and what he thinks is right by lying, cheating, and stealing throughout the novel. Plot Summary: Huck Finn has been adopted by the Widow Douglas, who lives with her sister, Miss Watson. Both of the women try to "civilize" him by sending him to church and school and teaching him cleanliness and manners.

Huck's drunken father Pap returns to town demanding Huck's money. Judge Thatcher and the Widow try to get legal custody of Huck. Pap kidnaps Huck and keeps him in a cabin across the Mississippi River from St. Petersburg, Missouri. When Pap leaves the cabin he locks Huck in and beats him when he returns drunk. Huck escapes Pap and the cabin by faking his own death. He hides on Jackson's Island in the middle of the Mississippi River. Huck runs into Jim, Miss Watson's slave in the woods and they stay together. Huck and Jim find a raft and house floating down the river. A dead body is in the house but Jim refuses to let Huck see the man's face. They start downriver in the

raft and run into con artist, slave capturers, and many other situations. Jim is sold, Tom and Huck try to get him back, and Huck finds out Pap is dead.

Huck decides to go West. Themes

Racism and Slavery

Conflict between civilization and “ natural life” Symbols

The Mississippi River in the novel represents freedom because as Huck and Jim travel alone on their raft, they have no one to answer to but each other.

The river can also symbolize the delights and dangers of life because Huck and Jim also encounter evils from people of the towns along the river. The

fog as Huck and Jim travel along the Mississippi represent the complex problems that make it difficult to achieve life’s goals. Motifs

Childhood: Huck’s childhood excuses him from some of his actions

throughout the novel. In some cases he tends to know right from wrong

more than the adults in the novel do even though he lacks the guidance that a family and community should have provided. Lies and Cons: Throughout

the novel Huck lies and cons many people. He soon realizes that lying can be good, depending on its purpose. Huck also realizes that some things he has

learned contradict what is right. Superstitions and Folk Beliefs: Jim tells Huck many superstitions and folktales. At first they seem crazy but end up having

some basis of reality. Jim’s superstitions serve as a different view of social teachings and assumptions that provide a reminder that mainstream is not

always right. Point of View: Adventures of Huckleberry Finn is in first person

as Huck narrates the novel. Structure: The plot of the story flows around

bends, through darkness and fog, and into bright sunlight just like the

Mississippi River itself. The novel is full of surprises and stories that brings the character's values to light for the reader.

“ The Widow Douglas she took me for her son, and allowed she would sivilize me; but it was rough living in the house all the time, considering how dismal regular and decent the widow was in all her ways; and so when I couldn't stand it no longer I lit out. I got into my old rags and my sugar-hogshead again, and was free and satisfied. But Tom Sawyer he hunted me up and said he was going to start a band of robbers, and I might join if I would go back to the widow and be respectable. So I went back.” (Twain 5)| In this quote from the first page of the book Huck describes what has happened since The Adventures of Tom Sawyer. He introduces his opposition of the Widow Douglas “ sivilizing” him. He is a young boy who wants his freedom, which may seem normal for a boy his age, but we soon realize this opposition is based on observations of the society in which he lives. This quote is important because it gives you the basis for Huck's reason of wanting his freedom and why he wants to leave and be on his own. It also shows why Huck lies throughout the novel. Huck doesn't agree with the ideas that society views as “ right”, which causes him to decide whether to do the “ wrong” things when he listens to what his conscience says, or do society's “ right” things. This is important because it influences his decisions he makes on his adventures as he travels down the Mississippi River and encounters many people of the towns along the river banks.

This quote is important for the reader because it gives us background information before the story begins to understand what has and is occurring.

It also gives the reader insight to Huck's attitude towards his life and <https://assignbuster.com/adventures-of-huckleberry-finn-dialectical-journal-essay-sample/>

society.] “ Pap he hadn’t been seen for more than a year, and that was comfortable for me; I didn’t want to see him no more. He used to always whale me when he was sober and could get his hands on me; though I used to take to the woods most of the time when he was around.” (Twain 14)“ I borrowed three dollars form Judge Thatcher, and Pap took it and got drunk and went-a-blowing around and cussing and whooping and carrying on” (Twain 23)| This quote shows that Huck’s father would leave town for long periods of time often and he was used to it. He used to beat Huck, when he would come home. Huck didn’t like his father and was fine with not seeing him. He would go in the woods when Pap came to town to stay away from him to refrain from the beatings. This explains why the Widow Doulgas adopted Huck because he needed someone to care for him and teach him the “ right” as he grows into a young man.

This helps the reader understands why Huck acts the way he does when his father later appears back in town. Huck gives his father money to get him to go away and go get drunk like he always does. Huck also could not want his father around because his actions are very embarrassing. I would be embarrassed if my parents were alcoholics and went around town causing trouble and being obnoxious. I think Pap’s “ blowing around and cussing and whooping and carrying on” is annoying because he does this when he comes to town and gets drunk.| “ When we was ready to shove off we was a quarter of a mile below the island, and it was pretty broad day; so I made Jim lay down in the canoe and cover up with a quilt, because if he set up people could tell he was a nigger a good ways off.” (Twain 49)| In this quote I realize Huck does see a big difference between his white skin and Jim’s black skin by

making him lay down in the canoe so he won't be seen from far off. I didn't understand how people would be able to tell the difference between Huck and Jim's skin color far off. I also don't understand if Huck didn't agree with slavery and racism why he would care if the people saw Jim with him in the raft. Maybe Huck hid Jim because he didn't want anyone to know they were on the island?

I don't think Jim would've been seen from far away. If Huck was so worried about him being seen then they shouldn't be traveling in the daylight. | " I hadn't had a bite to eat since yesterday, so Jim he got out some corn-dodgers and buttermilk, and pork and cabbage and greens-there ain't nothing in the world so good when it's cooked right-and whilst I eat my supper we talked and had a good time.... We said there warn't no home like a raft, after all. Other places do seem so cramped up and smothery, but a raft don't. You feel mighty free and easy and comfortable on a raft. (Twain 107)| I noticed Huck and Jim actually like being in the raft on the river. The raft symbolizes the freedom they both want. On the raft, they are able to be themselves and not worry about others judging them or telling them what to do. They say everywhere else they've been " seems so cramped and smothery". I think they feel this way because everywhere else they have to conform to society. For example when the Widow Douglas made Huck wear nice clothes and go to school and church because everyone else did it and society thought that was the " right" way.

Also, Jim was a slave to Miss Watson and had to follow her orders because he was black and that's what he was expected to do. Huck and Jim's

relationship is interesting to me now because they both agree that the raft is <https://assignbuster.com/adventures-of-huckleberry-finn-dialectical-journal-essay-sample/>

home and society would never let this occur if they knew about it. I think the freedom of the raft added to the enjoyment of their simple dinner of cornbread and greens. | “ It didn’t take me long, though, to make up my mind that these liars warn’t no kings nor dukes at all, but just low-down humbugs and frauds. But never said nothing, never let on; it’s the best way; then you don’t have no quarrels, and don’t get into no trouble. If they wanted us to call them kings and dukes, I had no objections, long as it would keep peace in the family; and it warn’t no use to tell Jim so I didn’t tell him. If I had never learnt nothing else out of pap, I learnt that the best way to get along with this kind of people is to let them have their own way” (Twain 115)| I noticed that Huck is beginning to learn how to stay out of trouble. He also shows he wants to stay out of trouble. He doesn’t say something to the cons because Jim told him not to, its because he is realizing the ways of society. I think he figures I’ve already faked my death and I have a black with me causing a fight with them could get him and him caught and sent back to St. Petersburg.

They don’t want to go back to St. Petersburg because they have no freedom there like they have on the raft. I really like that Huck didn’t say anything because it demonstrates that since he has left St. Petersburg and been living on his own with Jim he has matured. When Huck makes the decision to keep his mouth closed about the con artist not being dukes, I think he thought about the well-being of Jim and how causing a fight with them could make Jim a slave again. I noticed Huck recognizes by saying he taught him to let con artist of people get their way. I thought this was ironic of him to give his father the recognition of actually teaching him something when he was

always drunk and beating him. | “ I was a trembling, because I’d got to decide, forever, betwixt two things, and I knowed it. I studied a minute, sort of holding my breath, and then says to myself: “ All right, then, I’ll go to hell”-and tore it up. It was awful thoughts, and awful words, but they was said. And I let them stay said; and never thought no more about reforming.

I shoved the whole thing out my head; and said I would take up wickedness again, which was in my line, being brung up to it, and the other warn’t. And for a starter, I would go to work and steal Jim out of slavery again; and if I could think up anything worse, I would do that, too; because as long as I was in, and in for good, I might as well go the whole hog.” (Twain 195)| Huck decides he is going to do the “ wrong” thing and free Jim from slavery again. Huck says again, because he thinks not turning Jim back in when he first found him in the woods was freeing him from slavery. I don’t think Huck freed Jim from slavery. Jim escaped Miss Watson, on his own, Huck just so happened to find him in the woods and didn’t turn him in.

Back then Huck didn’t think it was right for Jim to be a slave and he still doesn’t agree with it. Since society has taught Huck that slavery is the “ right” way, he condemns himself to hell even though he is not doing the “ wrong” thing. This is my favorite quote because it displays Huck character growth. It shows he has grown into his own person and doesn’t conform to the ways of society when he feels they are wrong. This shows Huck has matured since he began his embark down the Mississippi River. This quote is a little humorous to me because Huck basically says if going to do badly, I might as well be totally bad. Even though Huck isn’t doing the “ wrong” thing by freeing Jim, I like that he is conscience there is a right and wrong.
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