

Huck finn stuff



Full Text : COPYRIGHT 1995 University of North Texas What are we to do with a book which has the audacity, unapologetically dismissed as “ old fashioned liberal humanism,” to declare that the argument over the imputed racism of Samuel Langhorne Clemens is “ urgently . . . unimportant” Is every vital issue of hermeneutics, deconstruction, and relativism to be dismissed through this merely common sense criticism Can a thoughtful scholar take the work of a once-benighted man on its own terms rather than those of the fictive strategies of race and gender Tom Quirk reminds us, in one of the six essays that make up this slim volume, that Langston Hughes, with his character Jesse Semple, was often accused of backing into the future while looking firmly into the past.

Toms book – written as “ Tom” in style and mood, not as “ Professor Quirk” – seems like a throwback to the days of Brander Matthews, when criticism could be thoughtful speculation rather than closely documented dislocation. It is a strange experience, and an engaging one, in these days of hyperlinguistic critical flatulence to read plain English which sets out to be thoughtful and considerate of its subject, and, incidentally, to throw a few new insights upon it – never too heavy a burden for a much-belabored book like Adventures of Huckleberry Finn. To read Coming to Grips with “ Huckleberry Finn” is to take a few moments for a ramble inside the head of one of the nations senior Mark Twain critics.

Throughout, Tom Quirk is disarmingly honest. For starters, he admits that he has not introduced the new finds in the first half of the “ Huck Finn” manuscript, now at the Buffalo Public Library, into essays that had been written previously, but argues that the general outlines of his essays remain

the same, and his brief summary of the new findings in his introduction suggests the simple rightness of this approach. He is also candid about admitting his admiration for Huck Finn the book, not on the basis of its structure or other neo-critical evaluative standards but rather because of the values which it brings to its readers, readers who, he will contend in the closing essay of the book, are capable of transcending local and racial identity and admiring and identifying with true virtue whether or not it comes embodied in their own sex or race. Twain, Quirk contends, “ With Huck, imagined himself more completely human than he probably was himself, and in doing so provided his readers with th same opportunity” (p. 12). What more should we expect from such a diffident approach than a modest array of thoughtful nuggets, each one helpful in explaining how a pessimist like Twain could end up writing optimistic literature One of the strengths of this book is that a reasonable reader, which I flatter myself that I am, can disagree at various points with one statement or another and still find plenty of ground to continue in overall sympathy with the analysis because of the virtue of its approach; Toms style invites speculation on the issues surrounding and intruding into the creation of a classic work of literature – through sympathy rather than critical legalisms or linguistic gymnastics. The book has some method in its construction, leading from the writing of the manuscript to issues of autobiography, structure and realism, and finishing with the novels heirs and its political correctness, the briefest of the essays not because the case is weak, but rather because this author is not the one to practice those literary slights of analysis by which a text can be derationalized to say that which it doesnt. Among constants through the six essays are a couple of noteworthy principles.

First is that Huck Finn does indeed represent the best thinking of its culture about humanity. Second is that the book is probably what it pretends to be – even if Twain was not sure that was what he was trying to do in setting out to write it, in publishing it, or in trying to follow it up later. The discussion of the follow-up attempts causes a little difficulty in that “ Jim” is here and there called “ Nigger Jim,” a phrase which occurs nowhere in Huck Finn proper. Third is the thoughtful recognition that Jim, as a character, escapes a lot of boundaries in Twains imagination and has a degree of control over the novel which is probably beyond the original comic conception, thereby substantially elevating the book. Fourth is that, to a large extent, the book is really about Mark Twain himself – and about us – and thus the power of its vision.

This idea is stated early on when the author suggests that Twain wrote in the 1870s with the overly tender conscience of a backslider rebelling against smoking, drinking, and swearing reforms that he was failing to impose upon himself for Livys sake, and invested some of this tension in Huck. At other points in the analysis, Quirk finds varying components of Twain in Huck and Huck in Twain, but always with the idea that Twain took this material and turned it into positives rather than negatives: “ Twain had resisted the pressures of reality by the efforts of his imagination and in a voice he eventually made his own” (p. 41). Elsewhere, there is room for more responsive divergence between reader and critic, for example, in treating autobiographical elements in the novel *A Tramp Abroad* and “ The Private History of a Campaign that Failed.” Was Twain making burlesque apologies for himself as a potential pariah in “ The Private History,” or was he, in the

mood of Garrison Keillor, justifying the “ just about average” Lake Wobegonian, laying out a home truth about personality that Stephen Crane could only get at through the tortured irony of *The Red Badge of Courage* It is hard to imagine, however, how any reader could not be engaged by speculation on constructive elements in Quirks third chapter, where he poses, among other ideas, the question: why not lynch Jim and be done with him as a troublesome piece of baggage heading south The answer is perhaps not only that part of Twain was in Jim, but also, that realism does demand that Jim ends as he does a different and more dissenting Jim would have been a cultural lie that Twain saw no profit in inventing. For Quirk the realism of *Huck Finn* is emotional realism, and he argues the case persuasively. Recent commentary, as well, seems to back him up, and it is worth remembering such easily forgotten details as that Huck is indeed a CAO – child of an alcoholic parent.

Twains later comment that Huck would have ended up like his pap seems pessimistic to the critic, but it has a certain truth about it which suggests why Twains later books dealing with Huck and Jim fall so far short of the mark – please pardon the pun: Twain didnt want to get into mature territory, so he struck out for the Indian one. The discussion of Hucks heirs poses a trio which, although it seemed to me unlikely at the outset – Ring Lardner, Willa Cather, and Langston Hughes – took on interest by the manner of discussion. The author covers the subjects thoughtfully and convincingly to suggest how Lardner was not, and Cather and Hughes were, capable of rising to the level of heroic vision that asserted positive values through their characters actions, even when those actions were not strictly correct and proper in

drawing room terms. For the latter two, Huck Finn provided the liberation to recognize that their own people were worthy of and capable of literary treatment.

Thus, Huck becomes a contributor to Simples fantasies of empowerment without being a source for Simple as such. In fact, in dealing with Shelley Fisher Fishkins Was Huck Black, Quirk is at his most deft in some modest demurs while still insisting on the main point: the real achievement of the novel was to get an important black voice in there at all, and Twain achieves that. Whether it was partly invested in Huck or whether it was Jims dignity, the yearnings and needs of a repressed race were brought forth in a way that challenged the readers respect, leaving us with Huck and Jim as “ twin images of nobility.” And, ultimately, this is the real question. Having just lectured to a group of high school juniors and senior citizens who read Huck Finn jointly, I can testify that they were deeply engaged by the “ let-down” of the last section of the book, and deeply impressed by the idea that through it Twain might be representing the “ stupefied . . .

humanity” which he identified in his essay on his mother, Jane Lampton Clemens (Walter Blair, Mark Twains Hannibal, Huck and Tom [Berkeley, CA: Univ. of California Press, 1969; p. 50]), as part of the history of his region.

So the heroes return of necessity back into Tom Sawyers nonsense world. What other outcome could we expect from a narrator who has as many viewpoints as Quirk demonstrates in Huck, after all, but to see Twains figures finally in a real world that is as compromised as our own And what else could Twain have intendedDAVID E. E. SLOANE, University of New HavenNamed

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Student Resource Center – Gold. Gale. UDLibSEARCH – Main Account. 27 Apr. 2010 . Mark Twain By Jessica Teisch? ? ? ? ? “ The man who does not read good books has no advantage over the man who cant read them.” –Mark Twain? ? ? ? ? In 1913, three years after Mark Twains death at the age of 75, literary critic H.

L. Mencken described Twain as “ the true father of our national literature, the first genuinely American artist of the blood royal” (The Smart Set, Feb. 1913). Through the touchstone of humor, Twain tested the innocence of boyhood, challenged institutions like slavery, denounced political and religious creeds, and distilled American adventures into universal experiences. During his lifetime he published more than two dozen novels and hundreds of short stories, articles, and essays. Each piece of work satirized different parts of human society, behavior, and ideology, from Yankee politics and Gold Rush greed to King Leopolds reign. Indeed, Twains repertoire extended far beyond Americas coming of age story as told in his most acclaimed novel, Huckleberry Finn.

He endlessly parodied human behavior in different times and places, revisiting Camelot in A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthurs Court, lampooning South Sea cannibals in his autobiography, and even rewriting Judeo-Christian history in Eves Diary. The sweeping view of human nature he

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exhibited in his childrens tales, moralistic adult stories, travelogues, and sharp critiques of Gilded Age society gives him a range of thought perhaps unsurpassed in American letters. [pic] || Mark Twain, Author, 1908 ||

| Twain was born in 1835 as Samuel Langhorne Clemens, the fifth child of Jane Lampton and John Marshall. He spent the first 25 years of his life near the Mississippi River, the carefree setting for Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn.

His father died when Twain was twelve, forcing him to apprentice as a typesetter. He soon joined his brothers newspaper. After a brief stint as a river pilot on the Mississippi River, Twain joined the Confederate Army when Civil War broke out. He deserted after only two weeks to “light out” for the Nevada Territory with his brother. Twain prospected in Nevadas silver mines and wrote for the Virginia City Territorial Enterprise (where he took his pen name) during the remainder of the Civil War. In 1864 he took a job with the San Francisco Call. While prospecting for gold in the Sierra Nevada, he wrote “The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County” (1867), which brought him international fame.

Soon after, he set off on a tour of Europe and the Holy Lands, a tale recounted in his first book, Innocents Abroad. He married Olivia Langdon in 1870 and settled in Hartford, Connecticut, where he served as editor of the Buffalo Express and wrote some of his best work: The Gilded Age, Tom Sawyer, and Huck Finn. Yet after the death of his wife and two daughters, Twain abandoned the optimism that marked his earlier work. “Often it does seem such a pity,” he wrote in Christian Science, “that Noah and his party did not miss the boat.” Twain and His Critics? Perhaps no American novelist was as revered—and as controversial—in his time as Mark Twain. He

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hated imperialism, racism, and slavery. Though he believed in neither God nor man, he held unwavering faith in democracy.

????? Certainly no American novel has been attacked by the public for as long and as vigorously as Huck Finn, which has nearly 700 foreign editions and is considered one of the great American classics. The book was first banned in 1885 from the Concord Public Library, which denounced Twain for threatening childhood innocence and the purity of the English language. Twain responded kindly; controversy meant publicity, and publicity generated sales. When, in 1905, the Brooklyn Public Library removed Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer from the childrens room because of their “deceitfulness and mischievous practices,” Twain sarcastically compared his books influence to reading the Bible at an early age.????? Twains description of African Americans as “niggers” raised new issues in the early 1900s. Nonetheless, Booker T. Washington wrote in 1910 that Twain, through Huck, “exhibited his sympathy and interest in the masses of the Negro people” (North American Review, June 1910).

Huck Finn weathered the storm through the 1930s, when it joined the ranks of classic literature. But controversy resurfaced during the Civil Rights era. In 1957 the NAACP accused Huck Finn of propagating racial stereotypes of African Americans, and the book was removed from the New York City school system. Over the following decades, schools throughout the country debated whether to keep Huck in their curricula. During the 1990s Huck went to court: *Monteiro vs.*

Temple Union High School District (1998) used civil arguments to try to ban the book. Although the case was dismissed, the federal appeals court ruled that schools could be financially liable for fostering racially hostile environments.????? Huck Finns continuing debate reveals as much about American society today as it does about the book itself. “ By and by,” Twain wrote, “ let us hope, people that really have the best interests of the rising generation at heart will become wise and not stir Huck up” (Mark Twains Autobiography). Mark Twain is unquestionably one of the greatest American writers, and his masterpiece, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884), is often seen as the incarnation of America itself. For a start, the novel is written in a colourful, energetic, freewheeling dialect that revels in the idiosyncrasies and grammatical peculiarities of American English. Secondly, the hero is the personification of independence and freedom, the instinctive enemy of Old World manners and habits.

Furthermore, the novel is a compendium of uniquely American landscapes, customs and superstitions. Borrowing the picaresque template from *Don Quixote* and *Tom Jones*, Twain takes his hero through a rich variety of loosely-connected adventures, all of them designed to show the good and bad sides of Huck Finn and the positive and negative elements of the United States. Although *Huckleberry Finn* takes place in the South, and draws on a racial and social context that is specific to Louisiana, Arkansas and Texas in the early nineteenth century, the novel is usually seen as a more general portrait of the New World, in which the young *Huckleberry Finn* stands for the young nation and its struggles to find an authentic voice, location,

lineage and identity.????? Several of Twains other novels have been similarly prized.

The Adventures of Tom Sawyer is his first attempt to analyse the national character by way of a child, and it introduces the contrarities of innocence and experience, wildness and civilisation, and obedience and autonomy that are further explored in Huckleberry Finn. A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthurs Court is a playful and popular satire of Arthurian mythology which also compares nineteenth-century America to the backward feudal culture from which it sprung. Puddnhead Wilson (1894) is a sombre tale about two children (one a slave, the other free) who are switched in their cradles.????? Of all writers, Twain probably has most in common with Charles Dickens.

Like Dickens, Twain started life as newspaperman before turning his hand to short stories and novels, works which owe much to his journalistic ability to write concisely and capture dialogue brilliantly. Like Dickens, Twain had an extremely high profile: he enjoyed giving lectures and readings, and liked to bury his private torments beneath a robust public persona. Above all, like Dickens, Twain was a superb and intuitive comedian who also took his readers to some of the darkest and most haunted parts of the national psyche.

However, if Dickens is the most pervasive presence in Twains writing, other authors also play a role. Bret Harte helped him to polish his style and tighten his narrative structures. Edgar Allan Poe influenced his short stories: both writers share a love of tall tales with Gothic elements. However, Twain has in

turn influenced nearly every major figure in twentieth-century American fiction. Ernest Hemingway famously stated: all modern American Literature comes from one book by Mark Twain called Huckleberry Finn. Twains voice can also be heard in the writing of James Thurber, William Faulkner, Stephen Crane, John Steinbeck and others.

Background? ? ? ? Twain was born Samuel Clemens in Florida, Missouri, a town so small that he later joked that he had increased the population by one per cent. His parents were John Marshall Clemens and Jane (Lampton) Clemens, both southerners, and he was the couples fourth son and sixth child. The Clemenses moved to Hannibal, Missouri, in 1839 and believed themselves to be among the better families of the area.

John Clemens, a storekeeper, speculated in land and habitually lived in the confident expectation that his investments would result in fabulous riches for his family, a bullish mentality inherited by his famous son. The elder Clemens died poor in 1847, and his children were forced to leave school for the more practical education of work. Early Career? ? ? ? ? From the beginning, this school of life provided Samuel with material that he would later use in his books. He became a journeyman printer, a steamboat pilot, and a journalist. As a printer he worked for his older brother Orion, a newspaper publisher, and also for newspapers in St.

Louis, Philadelphia, and New York, thus inaugurating an amazing career of travel that would eventually include thirty-one trips to Europe. As a steamboat pilot on the Mississippi River (1857-61) Clemens experienced what he later called the most gratifying moments of his life, and these years

furnished his literary imagination with a dazzling variety of images and motifs that would distinguish his best books. The Mississippi was, in the writers own words, his brief, sharp schooling in human nature. ? ? ? ? ? The Civil War interrupted his career as a pilot; Clemens briefly served as a lieutenant in a highly irregular Confederate unit, and this interlude became the subject of a characteristically tragicomic fiction, *The Private History of a Campaign that Failed* (Century Magazine, 1885). With his piloting and soldiering careers ended, Clemens availed himself of the opportunities that the West still richly afforded to superfluous men in the East. In 1861 he became an assistant to his brother Orion Clemens, who had been appointed secretary to the territorial governor of Nevada, where the Comstock Lode had been discovered two years earlier. It was here that Clemens, previously an occasional contributor to newspapers, began to develop his talent as a journalist and first used the pseudonym by which posterity knows him—Mark Twain, the term used by Mississippi boatmen to indicate water two fathoms deep, just enough for navigation.

? ? ? ? ? As Mark Twain, Clemens swiftly discovered his authentic voice, and he enjoyed immediate success. Beginning in 1862, when he began selling articles (many of them tall tales) to the Virginia City Territorial Enterprise, he had no trouble finding Nevada and California newspapers and magazines willing to publish his work; then, in a momentous turning point, the Sacramento Union paid his way on a six-month sojourn in the Sandwich Islands (now Hawaii) as a travelling correspondent (March-August 1866). The dying embers of that pagan Polynesian culture glowed in Twains imagination for the rest of his life. Hawaii would always be for him a romantic symbol of

paradise, lost through an excess of civilisation and Christianity. This trip also provided him with the subject matter of his first lecture tour in the West, and Twain, with his witty and deadpan lecture style, found great favour with western, and soon eastern, audiences. Almost overnight he joined the ranks of the countrys most eminent platform humorists, alongside such established performers as Josh Billings, Petroleum V. Nasby, and Artemus Ward. On December 15, 1866, Twain left San Francisco on assignment for the Alta California as a travelling correspondent, first in the eastern United States and then in Europe and the Holy Land.

The letters that he wrote for this newspaper and The New-York Tribune became the nucleus of his book *The Innocents Abroad; or The New Pilgrims Progress* (1869), the success of which helped free him from routine journalism. (His first book, *The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County, and Other Sketches*, published two years earlier, was a financial failure despite the lasting popularity of the title sketch.) At a time when many American authors were writing in a genteel Victorian style about an Arcadian Europe, Twain adopted a very different tone, humorously suggesting that the wonders of Europe had been praised out of all proportion to their actual merit. He asserted, in his flat, ironical, western style, that democratic Americans need not be intimidated by the cultural refinements of the Old World. Present in this was something of Twains visceral anti-Catholicism, which he had imbibed in the deeply Presbyterian milieu of Hannibal, but *Innocents* was essentially a defence of American democracy. In one book after another throughout his career, perhaps most notably in the too earnest *The Prince and the Pauper* (1881), Twain upheld the principles of democracy

while condemning the injustices of monarchy. Twain's next book, *Roughing It* (1872), was a narrative account of his western and Hawaiian journeys. By then he had already taken the most important domestic step of his life, his marriage to Olivia Langdon (1870).

Twain called his wife his foremost critic, editor, and censor, but it is doubtful that she exerted the dictatorial powers this implied to some critics. The daughter of a coal baron from Elmira, New York, she introduced her husband to a social and political milieu far above and to the right of anything in his experience. Twain's faith in capitalism had never been in question, but the conservative bourgeois Langdons and their circle formalised his natural frontier disposition to defend a free and open marketplace. His own venture as a newspaper editor and publisher in Buffalo, New York (the *Buffalo Express*) failed with a loss of \$10,000. In October 1871, having abandoned journalism for literature, he moved his family to Hartford, Connecticut, where he built a house in the Nook Farm neighbourhood, next door to Harriet Beecher Stowe. For the next fifteen years Twain was one of the most prolific and successful writers in America. He continued to write travel books, his best being the epic work of social realism *Life on the Mississippi* (1883), part of which had been published in 1875 in William Dean Howells's *Atlantic Monthly* magazine. His first novel was *The Gilded Age* (1873), written in collaboration with Charles Dudley Warner.

In this brilliant satire of Washington life he introduced one of his classic characters, Colonel Sellers, the symbol of the get-rich-quick robber-baron era, which has ever since been known by the book's title. From AOK to OZ: *The Historical Dictionary of American Slang* By Jessica Weintraub “ It <https://assignbuster.com/huck-finn-stuff/>

is too late to be studying Hebrew; it is more important to understand even the slang of to-day,” Henry David Thoreau wrote in 1862. The Historical Dictionary of American Slang, the first comprehensive dictionary of its kind, is under way. From Civil War diaries and pulp fiction to the film When Harry Met Sally and the television series Melrose Place, written and spoken sources are being scoured for slang words and phrases to include in the dictionary. Its thirty-five thousand entries will provide definitions of words used by teenagers, athletes, jazz, swing, and rock musicians, blue-collar workers, students, criminals, drug users, law enforcement officers, and armed forces personnel. It is the first historical slang dictionary to include citations from television, film, and the Internet. Throughout the centuries, writers have taken opposing stands on the slang question. Samuel Johnson thought it would destroy the English language, and Daniel Defoe and Noah Webster condemned it; whereas Chaucer uses two hundred epithets in The Canterbury Tales, and Walt Whitman defends it in his 1888 essay “Slang in America.

Two language scholars, Jonathan Lighter and Jesse Sheidlower, have taken on the task of championing the much-maligned idiom. The editors are tracing the history of American slang from colonial days to the present. With NEH support, they have published the first two volumes of the Historical Dictionary of American Slang, through Oz—the slang name for Australia—and will finish the third volume, which covers P through the middle of S, by 2006, and the fourth and final volume by 2009. Sheidlower says slangs existence is dependent upon that of a standard language: because slang arises in opposition to formal speech, there must be a norm



for it to violate. “ People have a choice of what kind of language they use,” he says. “ Its not so much that people dont know the standard usages.

There are situations that require standard discourse, but those represent a small part of everyday discourse.”? ? ? ? ? “ The standard is important because it gives us a set of expectations,” Lighter says. For slang to stick there has to be a society that thinks about words as words: a mostly literate, modern, industrial society with permeable social boundaries.? ? ? ? ? Slang is often created as an in-group language. It differentiates the group from outsiders, creates a sense of commonality, and puts distance between the group and mainstream culture.

Like the language of teenagers, it is informal, irreverent, and flouts convention; and it provides secrecy and status, Lighter says. It is a “ nonstandard popular vocabulary that carries connotations and overtones of irreverence, cynicism, and humor.”? ? ? ? ? “ All slang is metaphor, and all metaphor is poetry,” G. K.

Chesterton wrote in his 1901 “ Defence of Slang.” Slang offers synonyms– often figurative–for standard English words and expressions. Most are terms for “ good,” “ bad,” “ sex,” and “ drunkenness,” as Lighter notes.

In the Atlantic Monthly, he writes, “ One rule of thumb about slang is that the more prevalent the object, activity, or behavior being described, and the more intense its psychological salience, the more numerous and diverse the slang terms available to describe it.”? ? ? ? ? Some terms are vivid and humorous, such as No-Tell Motel–a place for trysts on the cheap–or an Oklahoma credit card, which is a siphon tube used for stealing gasoline.

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Others are taken from foreign languages, such as gung ho, which means work together in Chinese, and boondock, which means mountain in Tagalog. Others derive from proper names, such as to hoover, which means to vacuum or to eat rapidly; to John Wayne, to attack vigorously; and Joe, whose entries fill three pages in the dictionary, ranging from Joe Average and Joe College to Joe Tentpeg, an Army term for “ an ordinary enlisted soldier.

“ Slang is offbeat, catchy, and non-technical. The verb to google, which replaces to search for something on the Web, is not slang, because of its intrinsic technicality. Although many dictionaries consider slang too ephemeral to document, the HDAS editors believe that once a slang term is established, it is likely to persist in the language. The first two volumes of the dictionary show the longevity of several ostensibly new terms: the use of bad to mean good has been around since 1897. Not, an interjection that acts “ to jocularly contradict ones own ironic assertion or another persons statement,” according to the dictionary, was popularized by the 1992 film Waynes World but actually dates to the 1890s—and is found in the works of F. Scott Fitzgerald, John Dos Passos, and Theodore Dreiser. Dude first appears in an 1877 letter from Frederick Remington, referring to his correspondents drawings: “ Dont send me any more women or any more dudes.” “ Okay is used constantly; the more frequently and the longer it is used, the less likely it seems dated,” Lighter says.

“ In the 50s cool was associated with jazz and beatniks, but after fifty years it is used even more. Soon the meaning will crystallize and it will become part of standard English.” The dictionary project staff is studying linguistic  
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links to culture, social psychology, and history through how people actually speak to one another. “ Language and culture are inextricably connected,” Lighter says. “ If there werent any language, there wouldnt be much culture, or any way to pass on mythology and religious beliefs.

Language helps us communicate, which helps to engender innovations and change within culture.”? ? ? ? ? Lighter calls the editors of the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) “ pioneers for inclusion.” By treating all words used in writing as equally important, the OED paved the way for the Historical Dictionary of American Slang as a historical and linguistic record. William Safire, the language columnist for the New York Times, believes the slang dictionary will follow the OEDs lead and do for non-standard language what the OED does for the whole language.? ? ? ? ? Sheidlower, the principal editor of the OED for North America, has long had an interest in slang. He discovered volumes I and II of HDAS while working as a senior editor for Random House.

He made it his goal to work with Lighter to finish the series and reach wider audiences. Volume III marks the first time the dictionary will be under the auspices of the Oxford University Press.? ? ? ? ? Lighter, the projects senior editor, began collecting slang expressions when he was in high school. His chief interest at the time was to become a novelist. He bought the single-volume OED, both available slang dictionaries–Partridges and Wentworth and Fletchers–and began to write down snappy words and phrases for use in dialog. He says, “ It became clear that those snappy words were more interesting than anything I had to say as a novelist.” He was surprised that most of the quotes he found in movies, television shows, and conversation

were not listed in slang dictionaries. “ I thought I could put together my own dictionary in five years.

“? ? ? ? More than twenty-five years later, Lighter has amassed hundreds of thousands of slang expressions, written on note cards and then digitized. “ There is the undeniable satisfaction of collecting. Plus, its done cheaply—all you need is a library card and cable,” he says. When a character uses an expression on a popular television show, millions of people are exposed to it. “ The first time this probably happened was in 1961. Alan Shepards sub-orbital flight was shown live on TV.

In Shepards communication with Shorty Powers, one or both of them said AOK, a phrase that was probably coined in NASA. Forty years later were still using it.”? ? ? ? The slang expression okay was probably created in 1839 as a “ ridiculous” synonym for “ all correct,” Lighter says.

“ Controversy about that origin continues, but our evidence is surprisingly good—no one has come up with a certifiable example to disprove it. It probably wasnt spelled as a word okay until the early part of the twentieth century, after its origin had been forgotten.”? ? ? ? Slang is often confused with other language variations: regional dialects, jargon, and cant. Informal expressions such as reckon or yall are not slang; they were once regional and are now colloquial. Jargon refers to technical terms within an industry or profession, such as quark, the word physicist Murray Gell-Mann used to describe the subatomic particle with unpredictable characteristics. The story is that Gell-Mann lifted quark from a phrase in James Joyces Finnegans Wake:

“ three quarks for Muster Mark.” The scientific term quark does not classify as slang because it is a standard word used in formal contexts.

????? In the Dictionary, Sheidlower explains, semantic development is emphasized, not etymology. “ Were interested in why cool has grown to mean new, ingenious, not the opposite of warm. Instead of tracing words back to their Indo-European roots, we are focusing on historical developments of meaning.”????? Citations are drawn from primary sources, examined for their rhetorical and sociocultural content, and then arranged in the pattern established by the OED for historical dictionaries. Each main entry consists of the lemma, or headword, a functional label indicating the part of speech, etymology, field label (when a social milieu can be established), sense divisions and definitions in chronological order of development, citations for each sense division, idiomatic phrases and habitual collocations, and pronunciation when it is not self-evident—or when the pronunciation is what makes the word itself slang, such as “ garbaaje,” a slang variation of garbage.????? “ Slang is a language that rolls up its sleeves, spits on its hands and goes to work,” Carl Sandburg told the New York Times in 1959. There may be a correlation between an increase in the written use of slang and the forging of an American style.

According to Lighter, from the nineteenth century on, writers began inventing characters that had distinctly American characteristics and actually spoke like Americans: such as Mark Twains 1884 Huckleberry Finn, which is written in first-person vernacular. Although the book was criticized for its use of language, many writers have held it up as a milestone. Ernest Hemingway

said fifty years after its publication, “ All modern American literature comes from one book by Mark Twain called Huckleberry Finn.

...All American writing comes from that. There was nothing before.”? ? ? ? ? The first American definition of slang appeared in The Century Dictionary not long after, published in 1889. “ Of obscure cant origin, the form suggests a connection with sling..

.. to sling epithets, to fling reproaches. Slang enters more or less into inferior popular literature...

. and is apt to break out even in more serious writings. Slang as such is not necessarily vulgar or ungrammatical; indeed it is generally correct in idiomatic form, and though frequently censored on this ground, it often, in fact, owes its doubtful character to other causes.”? ? ? ? ? Lighter says that slang was bolstered by the birth of hardboiled detective novels, particularly those of Hemingway, Raymond Chandler, and Dashiell Hammett. “ For the first time there was an infatuation with the tough guy as a kind of hero. Before that heroes were cultivated and refined, but Hemingway created heroes who were anything but.”? ? ? ? ? Comics also put slang terms into circulation. R.

F. Outcaults The Yellow Kid, featuring a single-toothed street urchin who narrates life in Hogans Alley—a fictional New York City slum embodying the toughness of urban America—coined the term yellow journalism. The name of the color comic strip, first printed in the New York World in 1896, became associated with sensationalist news coverage.? ? ? ? ? Many slang expressions derive from music. Hip, which according to the dictionary means

“ fully aware; in the know” or “ splendid; fine; enjoyable,” became popular in the 1960s, but was used much earlier by black jazz musicians. Its first appearance has not been traced, although the dictionary cites a 1904 novel by George Hobart, *Jim Hickey: a story of the one-night stands*: “ Say, Danny, at this rate itll take about 629 shows to get us to Jersey City, are you hip”? ? ? ? ? Jazz slang such as cool and groovy came from the music culture of the 1940s and 1950s, and Louis Armstrong popularized the words dig and cat. In response to Edward R.

Murrows question to “ What is a cat, Louis” on the CD soundtrack of *Satchmo the Great*, Armstrong says, “ He can be the lowest guy in the gutter all the way up to King, and if...he enjoys the music, then hes a cat!”? ? ? ? ? New technology is changing the way we speak.

“ The Internet has had a huge affect on slang,” Sheidlower says. “ While it is a bit overstated in the way that people think it coins words, the Internet greatly influences the spread and access to new terms.” As for which is growing faster, standard English or slang, he says, “ Standard English is a much larger corpus than slang, and both continue to grow, but percentage-growth wise-while impossible to truly calculate-more slang is being created than standard English.”? ? ? ? ? “ New words are constantly being unearthed and invented, so it is an eternally elastic process,” he continues. “ Its not science, its a rhetorical examination of a certain kind of English vocabulary.” Jessica Weintraub is a freelance writer in Knoxville, Tennessee. The *Historical Dictionary of American Slang* has received \$721, 667 in NEH support since 1988. *Life Among the Lexicographers* By Joseph M.

Romero? ? ? ? ? Dictionaries are supposed to be anonymous.? ? ? ? ? If you happen not to know what a word means, you just look it up, and a faceless, utilitarian definition wells up to the surface. But there are people known in the trade as lexicographers–Greek for “ those who write down lists of words”–who, for each potential dictionary entry, spend hours pouring over slips of paper, books, and surfing the Web to home in on a word, trace its history, and present it to you. It is a kind of writing that wants to go unnoticed, as I learned when I wrote articles for the grand-daddy (or pop-pop, as some say in mid-Atlantic coastal states) of all Latin dictionaries.

It was the Thesaurus Linguae Latinae, housed in Munich, Germany.? ? ? ? ? It may disconcert the reader to learn that there are actual people making principled and personal decisions about what to include and what to exclude in the Dictionary of American Regional English (DARE). The fourth volume was published in December of 2002 under the chief editorship of Joan Houston Hall.

“ There are always cases where what will seem regional to one editor will seem perfectly normal to another,” said Hall. “ Then you have to make a decision.”? ? ? ? ? When in doubt, DARE editors tend to err on the side of inclusion. Many words are amply attested–that is, there are plenty of recorded uses. Others appear only once. Should poorly attested words be excluded The phrase trade-last, for one–meaning a kind of quid pro quo–“ Ill say something nice about you if you say something nice about me first”–is found scattered throughout the country, especially among older speakers. A regional variant, last-go-trade, is found in the middle and south Atlantic and has an entry of its own; but what about Alaskan trade, which means exactly



the same thing but appears only once in the sources available to DARE “ It was important to include Alaskan trade even with only one instance, because its a wonderful example of the process of folk etymology,” says Hall. “

Someone who is unfamiliar with the folk tradition of trading compliments hears the phrase last-go-trade, doesnt quite understand it, and tries to make it meaningful by substituting a word that is familiar.

Since Alaska is, to most Americans, a far-away and exotic place, it makes sense to the hearer that the unusual custom would be an Alaskan trade.”? ? ? ? Some terms may be widely recognizable, but carry alternate meanings in particular regions. The back forty, which means a large, remote, often barren stretch of land, and is used throughout the north and the west, takes on a figurative cast when lumberjacks in New England use it to refer to an out-of-the-way place. And if someone is wasting your time, a Michigander might say, “ Hes been plowing the back forty.”? ? ? ? Modeled after the Oxford English Dictionary, DARE seeks to be a comprehensive source for words that will find no home in standard English dictionaries. With professional linguists, historians, museum curators, and casual researchers and committed browsers alike, the dictionary is becoming a fixture on the list of reference tools. Even actors and directors have used DARE to check the authenticity of their accents or the accuracy of their idiom—as actress Diane Keaton did for Manhattan Murder Mystery and director Michael Mann for Last of the Mohicans.

? ? ? ? ? The DARE project was founded at the University of Wisconsin at Madison in the 1960s, and a lexicographer and professor of English, Frederic Cassidy, was selected to take the helm. With graduate student Audrey

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Duckert—now a retired professor of English from the University of Massachusetts—Cassidy designed a program to collect regional words from the living language. From 1965 through 1970, Cassidy and Duckert dispatched eighty fieldworkers in selected regions of the United States, armed with detailed questionnaires and tape recorders. An archive of samples can be found on the DARE website. In addition to the nearly 3,000 interviews they conducted, the DARE staff has culled words from sources that range from eighteenth-century diaries, small-town newspapers, fiction, and folklore, to television shows, advertisements, and the Internet.

????? A page of queries on the DARE website asks readers to send an e-mail if they can give a definition for a word, name the region in which it is found, or report whether it is still in use. One current question asks about the word sloven, which may be a type of wagon: “ We have two quotations from New England (one from the 60s) and one from Canada. Is this still known, and what exactly is it” Another asks about speckled britches: “ An edible green, A source on the Web identifies this as evening primrose, but wed like to know if anyone else knows this term and what they apply it to.

“????? Some entries reveal cultural stereotypes or couch them in humor—which the dictionary marks joc.—as in the five-page list of terms beginning with Irish. An Irish nightingale is a bullfrog, an Irish hurricane refers to calm seas, Irish confetti are bricks or stones thrown in a fight, and a person might give an Irish whisper at top volume when a true whisper, or silence, would do.

????? Dictionary writing is something of an odd fish. A reader's appreciation of its writing is usually limited to utilitarian acceptance or, particularly in the case of DARE, the "Oh, neat!" effect—"I didn't know Mainers called ancestors seed folks." While an underlying goal of lexicography is certainly to delight, the chief aim is to teach.

Such lessons are stripped of the personality of the individual who collected the evidence, decided what was important enough to include, and actually wrote the definition. The lexicographer's art lies in the choices and order of evidence presented.????? How is a dictionary written? Of course, with the introduction of the computer, things are changing and are bound to change still more when the DARE archives are coded and processed electronically, but for now the business of lexicography goes on as it has for a century or more. Each editor is also a contributing author.

Editors proceed straight through the words alphabetically, working from small slips of paper, previous regional dictionaries, data culled from the fieldwork, and words submitted through the DARE website.????? After gathering the word—called a lemma, from the Greek for "a plucking"—and sorting out how many examples are available, the lexicographer plots out on a map where they came from—as with wines, this is called their provenance—and tries to establish the earliest and latest recorded uses. When that business is concluded, the lexicographer is ready to write: that is, lay out the word, its spelling, pronunciation, meanings, and a historical survey of recorded uses. To make visual the provenance and possible diffusion of a word, he or she may draw up a map: a regional linguistic map, which corresponds in a general way to the geographical map of the United States.

The author then passes the article to a second editor to review; Hall, as chief editor, has final approval over each dictionary definition. ? ? ? ? Even when we are “ just speaking English,” we are speaking varieties thereof.

Part of the mission of the DARE project is to record what is local about our language. Standard English only tells part of the story—it does not constitute the full range of American Englishes of which standard American English is only a subset. DARE offers a complex and comprehensive account of American English—and Americans—as a whole. It assembles a testimony of who we have been and who we are at our most elemental level: the words we live in. ? ? ? ? There is a pervasive myth in our society that we all talk, or need to talk, the same language. DARE shows that our language groups will always be partial, local, in short, regional.

Leaving aside slang, which it deems too evanescent, DARE sets its sights on words used consistently within specific regions, but also tracks usage within various age, gender, class, and other sub-groups. Accompanying maps that lay out the geographical distribution of words are the clearest evidence that we, as a nation, are not as homogenous as we think. Each of us could without too much difficulty make up a list of non-slang words that fell outside of our formal education—in the southern midlands, toothpicks may be called quitting sticks, in Pennsylvania a sledding slope might be called a rutschie, or out West a animal team driver might be called a skinner. ? ? ? ? How do the forces of mass culture affect the study of linguistic regionalism They do complicate matters, if only a little. Take, for example, the relatively innocuous word skrid, meaning “ a piece, scrap, bit.” With written references appearing as early as 1860 in the Atlantic Monthly (“ Theyre glass chips, and

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brittle shavings, slender pinkish scrids”) and continuing for more than a century in oral and print sources throughout Maine and New Hampshire, Hall reasonably thought she had this one nailed down as a New Englander. But with twenty years elapsing since her last citation, Hall took to the Internet to see if she could find something more recent. Lo and behold, she found a reference to a website of a printer based in California.

It turns out the printer was dating a woman from Maine who must have shared her regionalism with him. What are the chances of skrid catching fire in California Probably not very good, but the example shows how contemporary realities can alter the distribution of where we find regionalisms on a linguistic map. Will the word flower in its new home or will the bearer move back to New England with his girlfriend It is hard to predict. ? ? ? ? ? Hall manages to integrate her life with her work. She hikes in the Porcupine Mountains-known to locals as “ The Porkies”-and enjoys preparing and eating foreign cuisine.

Hall and the other editors at DARE are working steadily to complete the fifth volume (S1-Z) and a sixth and final volume of supplementary data. The life of a lexicographer is one of constant fieldwork, because you cannot, and you cannot even want to, get away from the thing that you have spent a fair portion of your life studying: you study you. Joseph M. Romero is assistant professor of classics at Mary Washington College in Fredericksburg, VA.

From 1999-2000 he was a fellow at the THESAURUS LINGVAE LATINAE in Munich, supported by the American Philological Association and NEH. the

Dictionary of Regional American English has received \$7, 107, 204 in NEH support since 1976. Its website can be found at polyglot. Iss.

wisc. edu/dare/dare. html.? Back to top ^Summary:” Throughout the centuries, writers have taken opposing stands on the slang question. Samuel Johnson thought it would destroy the English language, and Daniel Defoe and Noah Webster condemned it; whereas Chaucer uses two hundred epithets in The Canterbury Tales, and Walt Whitman defends it in his 1888 essay Slang in America.

Two language scholars, Jonathan Lighter and Jesse Sheidlower, have taken on the task of championing the much-maligned idiom. The editors are tracing the history of American slang from colonial days to the present.”

(Humanities) This article highlights the editors work. A sidebar on the process of dictionary writing is included. Racism In Mark Twains Huckleberry Finn  
In recent years, there has been increasing discussion of the seemingly racist ideas expressed by Mark Twain in Huckleberry Finn. In some extreme cases the novel has even been banned by public school systems and censored by public libraries. The basis for these censorship campaigns has been the depiction of one of the main characters in Huckleberry Finn, Jim, a black slave.

Jim, is a “ typical” black slave who runs away from his “ owner” Miss Watson. At several points in the novel, Jims character is described to the reader, and some people have looked upon the characterization as racist. However, before one begins to censor a novel it is important to separate the ideas of the author from the ideas of his characters. It is also important not to take a

novel at face value and to “ read between the lines” in order to capture the underlying themes of a novel. If one were to do this in relation to Huckleberry Finn, one would, without doubt, realize that it is not racist and is even anti-slavery. On a superficial level Huckleberry Finn might appear to be racist.

The first time the reader meets Jim he is given a very negative description of Jim. The reader is told that Jim is illiterate, childlike, not very bright and extremely superstitious. However, it is important not to lose sight of who is giving this description and of whom it is being given. Although Huck is not a racist child, he has been raised by extremely racist individuals who have, even if only subconsciously, ingrained some feelings of bigotry into his mind. It is also important to remember that this description, although it is quite saddening, was probably accurate. Jim and the millions of other slaves in the South were not permitted any formal education, were never allowed any independent thought and were constantly maltreated and abused.

Twain is merely portraying by way of Jim, a very realistic slave raised in the South during that time period. To say that Twain is racist because of his desire for historical accuracy is absurd. Despite the few incidences in which Jims description might be misconstrued as racist, there are many points in the novel where Twain through Huck, voices his extreme opposition to the slave trade and racism.

In chapter six, Hucks father fervently objects to the governments granting of suffrage to an educated black professor. Twain wants the reader to see the absurdity in this statement. Hucks father believes that he is superior to this

black professor simply because of the color of his skin. In Chapter 15 the reader is told of an incident which contradicts the original “childlike” description of Jim. In chapter 15 the reader is presented with a very caring and father-like Jim who becomes very worried when he loses his best friend Huck in a deep fog. Twain is pointing out the connection which has been made between Huck and Jim.

A connection which does not exist between a man and his property. When Huck first meets Jim on the Island he makes a monumental decision, not to turn Jim in. He is confronted by two opposing forces, the force of society and the force of friendship. Many times throughout the novel Huck comes very close to rationalizing Jims slavery. However, he is never able to see a reason why this man who has become one of his only friends, should be a slave.

Through this internal struggle, Twain expresses his opinions of the absurdity of slavery and the importance of following ones personal conscience before the laws of society. By the end of the novel, Huck and the reader have come to understand that Jim is not someones property and an inferior man, but an equal. Throughout the novel, societys voice is heard through Huck. The racist and hateful contempt which existed at the time is at many times present. But, it is vital for the reader to recognize these ideas as societys and to recognize that Twain throughout the novel disputes these ideas. Twain brings out into the open the ugliness of society and causes the reader to challenge the original description of Jim. In his subtle manner, he creates not an apology for slavery but a challenge to it.



?? The fact that a literary work written 113 years ago still stirs up intense debate in the press and the media in general is quite amazing. This may seem even more surprising if we take into account that the book was canonized some forty years ago, which should make it an uncontested classic. But it is precisely this canonization and the arguments behind it that make *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* such a polemical work.

???? If we wanted to trace back the roots of the debate, we should probably look for them in Lionel Trillings 1948 introduction to the Rinehart College Edition of *Huckleberry Finn*, which according to Arac “ changed a book, once felt as a nationally shared yet personal possession, into assigned reading” (1997: 108). And even if we did not read this specific piece of criticism, we could use any other article or work written between 1945-50, the period when *Huckleberry Finn* was canonized.???? However, most of the reasons for the canonization of the book had already been aired. in the aftermath of its publication in 1885. Indeed, the debate that took place from February to June 1885 laid the bases for the canonization of *Huckleberry Finn*.???? There are two main studies of the 19th-century reception of *Huck Finn*. The first was written by Vogelback in 1939 and was published in *American Literature*. Since Vogelback missed many of the 19th-century reviews and criticisms, he believed that “ *Huckleberry Finn* received at the time practically no critical attention in America” (266).

But he also made some good points, indicating, for instance, that “ The adverse criticism was based less on artistic grounds than on moral” (269). Vogelbacks article, though certainly limited, was not a totally wrong account of the 19th-century reception of *Huckleberry Finn*.???? The second major

article was written by Victor Fischer in 1983 and published in *American Realism*. It is very well documented and gives a clear picture of the critical reaction to *Huckleberry Finn* in 1885. Fischer uncovered numerous reviews and comments and gave a descriptive analysis of them, with some interesting conclusions in the last part of his article. He examines Twain's predictions about the behavior of the press and the way he tried to stage-manage the critical reaction to the book. Fischer also considers the way the press was divided about the value of *Huckleberry Finn* and about Twain as a writer and/or person.

????? The purpose of the present article is to review the arguments used in the 1885 debate, both for and against the book, and to assess their importance for later criticism. Not all the 1885 reviews and comments will be analyzed. I have focused on the newspapers that participated most actively in the debate, i. e. those from Hartford, Boston, Springfield, New York, and San Francisco, and also on two important magazines, the *Century* and the *Atlantic*. The critical reactions to *Huckleberry Finn* will be analyzed from both a quantitative and a qualitative point of view and important historical facts such as the Concord library banning of the book will also be taken into account.????? It is worth reviewing all the 1885 criticism again in order to clarify the extent to which it affected Twain's success. Also, it may illustrate the different attitudes towards art in the late 19th century and the reasons why the discourse that won the battle did so.

????? Anyone more or less familiar with the 19th-century debate over *Huckleberry Finn* might believe it was of little relevance for later critics or even readers since, because of several incidents and due mainly to the  
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Concord ban, the book was rarely considered on its own merits. But this is a false impression. Many reviews dealt with the intrinsic merits of the book quite profusely. Indeed, most of the reasons why Huckleberry Finn is praised today were already pointed out and discussed by 19th-century critics.

????? Some factors concerning Huckleberry Finn or Twain himself may have contributed to this apparently poor evaluation of the books merits. First, the book was not new to the reviewers; excerpts of it had been read during a lecture tour which preceded its publication and some chapters had appeared in the Century magazine and had elicited comments that probably biased readers and reviewers. Second, before the book appeared, some engravings were manipulated in a way that made them look obscene; although these engravings were not printed in the book, they reached the public through an advertising brochure that had already been distributed when the publishers realised the obscenity of the engravings.

Third, Twain sued Estes & Lauriat, a Boston publishing firm, because it had released a catalog-before the book came out-that offered the book at a lower price than the one that was supposed to be charged by subscription agents. The lawsuit was followed by the Boston newspapers, which were delighted to print full accounts of it and especially of the final verdict, which favored Estes & Lauriat. Fourth, the book was sold by subscription, a method that newspapers did not like, because it meant that the book would not be advertised in their pages.

Finally, and most important, the book was banned within a month of its publication. The Concord, Massachusetts, Public Library decided to exclude

Huckleberry Finn from its shelves on the grounds that it was “rough, coarse and inelegant, dealing with a series of experiences not elevating, the whole book being more suited to the slums than to intelligent, respectable people”. In other words, they thought it was “the veriest trash” (Boston Evening Transcript, March 17 1885, p. 6). The banning of the book was widely echoed by the press and elicited a considerable number of editorial comments and criticism.

????? To all these factors we should add the fact that Twain was already a well-known author who had supporters and detractors. This could have led to a kind of criticism based on the author and his actions, rather than the book itself.????? There were many reviews and comments on Huckleberry Finn in 1885 (cf. Fischer: 1983).

Most of them were concentrated in five cities: Boston, Hartford, New York, San Francisco and Springfield. My analysis of the 19th-century reception of Huckleberry Finn will be based on the articles published by newspapers in these cities, as well as the reviews in the Century, Atlantic and Life magazines.????? Our corpus thus comprises some thirty-five articles. They have been classified according to their predominantly positive and negative attitude towards the book. Ten categories have been established in order to quantify the presence of various arguments in the debate over the book.

These categories correspond to the lines of analysis that the articles follow. That is to say, they have not been established a priori, but after reading all the articles and seeing the arguments they use for and against. The categories are:????? 1. Comparison of the book with Twain's previous

works. ? ? ? ? ? 2. Evaluation of the portrayal of human nature in the book. ? ? ? ? ? 3.

Evaluation of the faithfulness with which Southwestern life is portrayed. ? ? ? ? ? 4. Evaluation of the use of dialects in the book. ? ? ? ? ? 5. Evaluation of the cohesiveness of the work. ? ? ? ? ? 6.

Comments on the respectability of the readers of the book. ? ? ? ? ? 7.

Comments on the tastefulness of the contents.

? ? ? ? ? 8. Evaluation of the truthfulness of the events and characters in the book. ? ? ? ? ? 9. Reference to the authors initial “ warning”. ? ? ? ? ? 10.

Appropriateness and quality of the humor in the book. Twains Career and Its Influence on the Reception Process? ? ? ? ? As has been indicated above, it was quite tempting for reviewers to measure the quality of Huckleberry Finn against Twains previous works. Fourteen articles did so, eight of them considering Huckleberry Finn to be an advance over Twains previous works.

Only three of them considered that the book was in a sense a partial sequel to Tom Sawyer. The Atlantic said, “ The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (C. L. Webster & Co.) is in some sense a sequel to the Adventures of Tom Sawyer, though each of the two stories is complete in itself”; a month previously, the Hartford Daily Times of March 9 had said, “ Everybody will want to see Huckleberry Finn, Mr Clemenss story—a sort of continuation of his Tom Sawyer”. In spite of these slightly hesitant criticisms, Huckleberry Finn was considered an advance over Twains previous works by those newspapers that praised the book, to the point that the San Francisco Chronicles review, published on March 15, shortly before the book was banned by the Concord

Public Library, described Huckleberry Finn as “ the most amusing book Mark Twain has written for years”. All these epithets could be expected from any positive article.

????? What might be more interesting is the opinion of the newspapers that criticised the book. Again, it would be quite normal for all of them to say that the book was worse than Twains previous works. Yet, surprisingly, they recognized Twains prestige and popularity, even when they regretted it.

The Springfield (Mass.) Daily Republican of March 17 said “ It is time that this influential pseudonym should cease to carry into homes and libraries unworthy productions”. The Assessment of Humor in Huckleberry Finn????? Twains prestige and his previous books were widely taken into account by contemporary critics.

This could be seen as indication that the book was not judged on its merits. However, in most cases, comparisons of Huckleberry Finn with Twains previous works was indeed followed by a discussion of the books features. Often, both supporters and detractors assessed the books particularly humorous passages as a way of reinforcing their opinion about it.

Newspapers that supported the book praised the humor, some of them more enthusiastically than others. The detractors, of course, said that it contained little humor.????? However, there was not a uniform condemnation of the book on the basis of humor. The San Francisco Evening Bulletin of March 14, the newspaper that presented the most wide-ranging and devastating critique of Huckleberry Finn, praised th