

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn
Reading Guide Questions

You are not required to answer the following questions. However, I strongly recommend that you use the questions to heighten your understanding of the novel as you read.

Chapters 1-3

1. From the very beginning, how does Huck separate his narrative voice from that of the author's voice, Mark Twain? What might be Twain's purpose in this?
2. From the first chapter, Huck begins his exploration of race and society. Pay attention to these themes and his moral development throughout the novel.
3. How does Huck feel about religion (the Bible, prayers, Sunday school, morality)?
4. Huck and Tom are foils (characters that contrast each other). How does Tom represent the romantic ideals of literature and fiction? How does Huck represent the realist movement in literature?
5. Tom alludes to Cervantes' *Don Quixote* (a work that satirizes romance, society, literature, and human nature through the wild adventures of its protagonist). What is Twain's purpose in referencing this book at the very beginning? As you read the novel, remember that Cervantes' text can serve an archetype for Twain's novel.

Chapters 4-5

1. Superstition is a recurring theme in the novel. Analyze Twain's satiric treatment of the hairball scene. Examine the answers Huck receives about his life. How does Jim keep the hairball's comments believable?
2. Analyze the relationship of Huck and his father. In what ways was he different from the ideal? How did this influence Huck's feelings about society as a whole? Explain your reasoning.
3. Analyze Judge Thatcher's reactions to Huck's request to take his money. Why did the judge exchange one dollar for six-thousand dollars? Was he cheating Huck? Explain your answer.

Chapters 6-7

1. Huck seems to adapt to almost any situation. He has become accustomed to civilized life with the Widow Douglas. Later he finds life in the woods carefree and easy. Analyze the character of Huck. Discuss possible reasons for his adaptability to different situations. Use examples from the novel to support your argument.
2. In the novel Pap does not appear to be a civilized man. Discuss ways in which he does, however, fit into the larger society. Does he compare to the Widow

Douglas in any way? Explain your answer.

3. Huck wishes Tom Sawyer were with him to add some “fancy touches” to his plan of escape. Discuss the difference between Huck’s scheme of faking his death and the attack on the “A-rabs” and “Spaniards” in Chapter 3. Cite examples from the novel to support your ideas.

Chapters 8-9

1. If Huck keeps Jim’s secret of his escape, people will call him a “low-down Abolitionist.” In what way are those words more effective when spoken by a young narrator? Explain the irony in Huck’s statement. What is Twain’s message about the hypocritical values of his society? Explain your answer with examples from the novel.

2. Miss Watson could sell Jim for eight hundred dollars. He, therefore, feels rich because he owns himself. Explain Twain’s use of satire in Jim’s statement. What was Twain’s attitude toward slavery in this passage? Explain your answer.

Chapters 10-11

1. Huck’s growing concern for Jim’s welfare is evident in many ways. Discuss the events where this concern is reflected in Huck’s behavior. In what ways does he protect Jim from danger? Cite examples from the novel to support your argument.

2. Huck’s ability to tell a story in order to get himself out of a “tight” situation is one of his greatest strengths. How does this apply to his encounter with Mrs. Judith Loftus? What does he do when she realizes he is a boy? Explain your answer.

3. When Huck curls up the snake at the foot of Jim’s blanket, he does not tell Jim that he has done it. What is his reason for keeping his little joke a secret? What lesson does Huck learn from it? How would Jim have felt if Huck had told the truth? Discuss your answer.

Chapters 12-13

1. Huck’s journey on the river is filled with adventures, but it is also a symbolic journey. What does his journey symbolize? How does his relationship with Jim tie in to the symbolism? Compare the symbolism of the shore to that of the river. Use examples from the novel to support your view.

2. Twain uses satire to expose people’s ability to rationalize their wrongdoings. In what way does Twain employ that device in the incident where Huck “lifts chickens” and “borrows watermelons”? What do the words “lifts” and “borrows” connote? Give examples from the novel to support your argument.

Chapters 14-15

1. The relationship between Huck and Jim is brought into focus in these chapters. How does their frightening separation in the fog draw them closer together? How do they feel about each other at this point in the novel? Give examples from the novel to support your viewpoint.
2. Huck and Jim carry on a lengthy conversation about royalty. In what way does Twain satirize royalty in these chapters? What is Jim's opinion of King Solomon? Why does he feel that way? Give examples from the novel to support your argument.
3. Why does Huck find it hard to argue/reason with Jim?
4. At the end of chapter 15, Huck reflects, "It was fifteen minutes before I could work myself up to go and humble myself to a nigger – but I done it, and I warn't ever sorry for it afterwards, neither." How does this quote show both how Huck is still affected by the norms of society and how Huck is beginning to move away from the norms of society?

Chapters 16-17

1. As they get closer to Cairo, Huck begins to feel worse and worse. Why? How do you react to his comments about his conscience?
2. When Jim talks about his family, Huck remembers the old saying, "give a nigger an inch and he'll take an ell." This should be familiar to you. Which book did we read earlier this semester with this?
3. Huck has the chance to turn Jim in but does not take it, instead making up a story about a contagious disease to protect Jim. Why does Huck do this?
4. What happens to Huck and Jim's plans to reach Cairo?
5. At the end of chapter 16, how are Huck and Jim separated?
6. How does Huck trick Buck into telling him what name he has come up with?
7. List three things you learn about Buck's house and/or family from Huck's descriptions.

Chapter 18

1. How does Buck define a feud?
2. What is ironic about Buck's explanation of his family's feud with the Shepherdsons?
3. Describe the religious hypocrisy of the Shepherdsons and Grangerfords.

4. What favor does Huck do for Miss Sophia?
5. Who does Huck reunite with out in the swamp?
6. Why does Huck blame himself for Buck's death?

Chapters 19-20

1. Pick one descriptive sentence (with imagery) from the beginning of chapter 19 and write it out as an example of Huck's more romantic musings.
2. Describe the physical appearance of the two met who Huck and Jim encounter.
3. Why do the "Duke" and the "King" tell Huck and Jim they are royalty? Why does Huck decide that he does not want to contradict these men, even though he realizes they are lying?
4. What story does Huck tell the Duke and King about why he is traveling with Jim?
5. How does the king take advantage of the people at the camp meeting? How much money does he make?
6. What did the Duke do while the others were at the camp meeting, so that they can travel during the day?

Chapters 21-22

1. What do you notice about Hamlet's soliloquy?
2. List at least three claims Huck makes about the atmosphere of "Arkansaw." From those claims, how do you think you are supposed to react to the townspeople of Arkansaw?
3. Why does Colonel Sherburn shoot Boggs?
4. List at least three details Huck includes about the lynch mob that goes after Sherburn (you may want to pay close attention to the first two paragraphs of chapter 22).
5. How does Sherburn react to the crowd?
6. What social commentary does Mark Twain make through the use of Sherburn's character?
7. Why do you think Twain follows the Boggs-Sherburn episode with the circus episode? What do the two episodes seem to have in common?

Chapters 23-24

1. What is the king's role in the Royal Nonesuch?
2. How does the Royal Nonesuch episode demonstrate the Duke and King's understanding of human nature?
3. When Huck realizes Jim is homesick, he claims, "I do believe he cared just as much for his people as white folks does for their'n. It don't seem natural, but I reckon it's so." What does this tell you about Huck's character?
4. What does Jim tell Huck about his daughter?
5. What disguise does the Duke come up with for Jim at the beginning of chapter 24?
6. How does the king find out so much information about the Wilks family? What does he plan to do with the information?
7. How does Huck feel about the duke and king's new plan of deception?

Chapters 25-26

1. How does Mary Jane respond to the doctor's accusations against "Harvey"?
2. How are Huck's lies in this situation different than his lies in previous situations (think specifically about his conversation with Joanna)?
3. Why does Huck feel he needs to steal the money?
4. How does Jim become even more "human" to Huck? How is Huck's belief system changing?

Chapters 27-28

1. Who does Huck allow to take the blame for the stolen money?
2. Why do you think Huck tells Mary Jane the truth?
3. What serious moral conflicts does Huck deal with in these chapters?
4. How does Twain use humor as a balance to the serious moral questions that are raised?

Chapters 29-30

1. Who has arrived on the steamboat?
2. Why do the townspeople decide to dig up the corpse?
3. Why is Huck nervous at this point?
4. What gives Huck the opportunity to escape from the town?
5. Why, at the end of chapter 29, does Huck feel upset?
6. How does the Duke defend Huck's actions?
7. In two sentences, summarize the entire Wilks scam (now that it's finally over!).

Chapters 31-32

1. Why are Huck and Jim nervous at the beginning of the chapter?
2. What does Huck realize when he tries to run away with Jim?

3. Where is Jim and what role did the Duke and King play in his disappearance?
4. During this chapter, Huck writes a short note, and then decides, “All right, then, I’ll *go* to hell,” and tears up the letter. How is this an enormous decision for Huck? What has he decided to do?
5. When Huck meets Aunt Sally, they have a brief exchange about a boat’s blown out cylinder head, ending with a clearly racist statement. Explain the irony of Aunt Sally’s beliefs.
6. Why is Huck so happy when he finds out who he is pretending to be?

Chapter 33

1. Why is Tom so surprised to see Huck?
2. Why is Huck so surprised that Tom would be willing to help Jim?
3. Who does Tom pretend to be?
4. What has happened to the Duke and King? How does Huck feel about their fate?

Chapters 34

1. How does Tom figure out where Jim is being kept?
2. What is the difference between Huck’s plan and Tom’s plan? Why is this important to the reader’s understanding of the characters?
3. Why does Huck have trouble believing that Tom is actually going to go through with the plan?
4. How does Tom trick the slave who overhears Jim talking to Huck and Tom? What does this show about his character?

Chapter 35

1. Tom claims, “You got to invent all the difficulties,” in a stressed voice. What does Tom’s obsession with making Jim’s escape harder show the reader about his character?
2. How does Tom differ from Huck?
3. What are Tom’s views on borrowing and stealing?
4. Why does Tom seem disappointed in Huck at the end of the chapter?

Chapters 36-37

1. How does Jim react when he sees Huck and Tom coming to “rescue” him?
2. How do you react?
3. Name at least three things that the boys take from the house.
4. How does Aunt Sally react to the situation with the missing items?
5. What is ironic about all of the work Tom and Huck are putting into the escape plan?

Chapters 38-39

1. What idea of Tom’s does Jim refuse to follow through with?
2. Reread the last couple of sentences in the chapter. What do you think is the point of all of this? Why do you think Twain includes these observations?
3. What happens with the snakes?

4. Twain writes, “He said if he ever got out, this time, he wouldn’t ever be a prisoner again, not for a salary.” How does this affect your understanding of Jim’s character?
5. What is a “nonnamous letter,” according to Tom?
6. What is Huck’s argument against these letters? How does Tom change his mind?
7. How does the family react to the letter?

Chapter 40

1. How does sending the anonymous letter backfire, and ruin Tom and Huck’s plans?
2. Why is Tom glad to have a bullet in his leg?
3. What does Jim sacrifice in order to take care of Tom? What does this reveal about his character?

Chapters 41-42

1. What lies does Huck tell at the beginning of chapter 41?
2. What is everyone gossiping about?
3. How/why does the doctor defend Jim?
4. Why is Tom so excited about telling Aunt Sally about his role in Jim’s escape? What is his mistaken impression about what has happened?
5. What shocking revelation does Tom reveal? How does this affect your understanding of everything that has happened throughout the last few chapters?
6. Who shows up at Aunt Sally’s house? How does her presence affect the boys’ lies?

Chapter the last

1. What is Jim’s final say about “signs” and their significance?
2. What big secret does Jim reveal to Huck?
3. What does Huck plan to do?