# The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn

## INTRODUCTION

### BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF MARK TWAIN

Mark Twain grew up in Missouri, which was a slave state during his childhood. He would later incorporate his formative experiences of the institution of slavery into his writings. As a teenager, Twain worked as a printer's apprentice and later as a typesetter, during which time he also became a contributor of articles and humorous sketches to his brother Orion's newspaper. On a voyage to New Orleans, Twain decided to become a steamboat pilot. Unsurprisingly, the Mississippi River is an important setting in much of Twain's work. Twain also spent much of his life travelling across the United States, and he wrote many books about his own adventures, but he is best known for his novels *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876) and its sequel, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885), having written in the latter what is considered to be the Great American Novel. Twain died of a heart attack in 1910.

### HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Twain began writing the novel in the Reconstruction Era, after the Civil War had ended in 1865 and slavery was abolished in the United States. But even though slavery was abolished, the white majority nonetheless systematically oppressed the black minority, as with the Jim Crow Laws of 1876, which institutionalized racial segregation. Mark Twain, a stalwart abolitionist and advocate for emancipation, seems to be critiquing the racial segregation and oppression of his day by exploring the theme of slavery in *Huckleberry Finn*. Also significant to the novel is the Second Great Awakening, a religious revival that occurred in the Unties States from the late eighteenth to the middle of the nineteenth century. Twain was critical of religious revivalism on the grounds that Christians didn't necessarily act morally and were so zealous as to be easily fooled, a critique articulated in *Huckleberry Finn*.

### RELATED LITERARY WORKS

The great precursor to *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is Miguel de Cervantes' *Don Quixote*. Both books are picaresque novels. That is, both are episodic in form, and both satirically enact social critiques. Also, both books are rooted in the tradition of realism; just as Don Quixote apes the heroes of chivalric romances, so does Tom Sawyer ape the heroes of the romances he reads, though the books of which these characters are part altogether subvert the romance tradition. It could also be said that with its realism and local color, *Huckleberry Finn* is a challenge to romantic epics like Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick*, which Huck might dismiss as impractical. Compare also Harriet Beecher Sotwe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, a novel that also treats the injustices and cruelty of American slavery but which, unlike *Huckleberry Finn*, might be considered less a literary and more a propagandistic achievement.

### KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*
- **Where Written:** Hartford, Connecticut, and Quarry Farm, located in Elmira, New York
- **When Published:** 1884 in England; 1885 in the United States of America
- **Literary Period:** Social realism (Reconstruction Era in United States)
- **Genre:** Children's novel / satirical novel
- **Setting:** On and around the Mississippi River in the American South
- **Climax:** Jim is sold back into bondage by the duke and king
- **Antagonist:** Pap, the duke and king, society in general
- **Point of View:** First person limited, from Huck Finn's perspective

### EXTRA CREDIT

**Dialect.** Mark Twain composed *Huckleberry* using not a high literary style but local dialects that he took great pains to reproduce with his idiosyncratic spelling and grammar.

**Reception.** A very important 20th-century novelist, Ernest Hemingway, considered *Huckleberry Finn* to be the best and most influential American novel ever written.

## PLOT SUMMARY

Huckleberry Finn introduces himself as a character from the book prequel to his own, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. He explains that at the end of that book, he and his friend Tom Sawyer discovered a robber's cache of gold and consequently became rich, but that now Huck lives with a good but mechanical woman, the Widow Douglas, and her holier-than-thou sister, Miss Watson.

Huck resents the "sivilized" lifestyle that the widow imposes on him. However, Huck stays with the Widow and Miss Watson because Tom tells him that, if Huck doesn't stick with his life in straight-laced civilization, he can't join Tom's gang. So Huck does as the Widow tells him and gets to play robbers with Tom and other boys once in a while.

Even as Huck grows to enjoy his lifestyle with the Widow, his debauched father Pap menacingly reappears one night in his room. Pap rebukes Huck for trying to better his life and demands that Huck give him the fortune he made after discovering the robber's gold. Huck goes about business as usual as the Widow and a local judge, Judge Thatcher, try to get custody of him so that he doesn't fall into his father's incapable and cruel hands. However, the two fail in their custody battle, and an infuriated Pap decides to kidnap his son and drag him across the Mississippi River to an isolated cabin.

Huck is locked up like a prisoner in the cabin, and he is at the mercy of Pap's drunken, murderous rages, suffering many beatings from the old man. Huck resolves to escape from Pap once and for all. After some preparation, he fakes his own death. Afterwards, Huck canoes to a place called Jackson's Island, where he finds a man he knows from home, a slave named Jim who has run away from his owner, Miss Watson, because he had overheard that she planned to sell him.

Having found a raft during a storm, Huck and Jim happily inhabit Jackson's Island, fishing, lazing, and even investigating a house floating down the river that contained a dead body. However, during trip into town while disguised as a girl to gather information, Huck learns that slave-hunters are out to capture Jim for a reward. He and Jim quit the island on their raft, with the free states as their destination.

A few days in, a fog descends on the river such that Huck and Jim miss their route to the free states. In the aftermath of this fog, Huck struggles with the command of his conscience to turn Jim in and the cry of his heart to aid Jim in his bid for freedom. At last, Huck has his chance to turn Jim in, but he declines to do so. The night after, a steamboat ploughs into Huck and Jim's raft, separating the two.

Huck washes up in front of the house of an aristocratic family, the Grangerfords, which takes Huck into its hospitality. But the Grangerfords are engaged in an absurdly pointless and devastating feud with a rival family, the Shepherdsons. When a Grangerford girl elopes with a Shepherdson boy, the feud escalates to mad bloodshed. Huck, having learned that Jim is in hiding nearby with the repaired raft, barely escapes from the carnage. He and Jim board the raft and continue to drift downriver.

A few days pass before Huck and Jim find two con men on the run. Huck helps the men escape their pursuers and he and Jim host them on the raft, where one of the con men claims to be a duke and the other a king. The duke and king take advantage of Huck and Jim's hospitality, taking over their raft as they head downriver, all the while conducting scams on shore.

One day, the king learns that a man nearby, Peter Wilks, has died, and that his brothers are expected to arrive. Hoping to collect the man's inheritance, the duke and king go to his house claiming to be his dear brothers. Though they ingratiate themselves with most of the townspeople, especially Peter's nieces, the duke and king are suspected by some of being frauds. Huck comes to feel so bad for Peter's nieces, though, that he resolves to expose the con men for what they are. As he puts his plan into effect, Peter's real brothers arrive, and, after the townspeople investigate, the duke and king are exposed. Huck escapes onto the raft with Jim, but despairs when the duke and king manage to do the same.

Desperate for money, the duke and king sell Jim to a local farmer, Silas Phelps, claiming that Jim is a runaway and that there is a reward on his head. The duke betrays to Huck that Jim is being held at the Phelps farm. After some soul-searching, Huck decides that he would rather save Jim and go to hell than to let his friend be returned to bondage.

Huck arrives at the Phelps farm where he meets Aunt Sally, whom Huck tricks into thinking that Huck is a family member she was expecting, named Tom. Soon, though, Huck learns that Uncle Silas and Aunt Sally are none other than Tom Sawyer's relatives. Indeed, Tom is the family member Aunt Sally was expecting all along. Huck intercepts Tom as he rides up to the Phelps farm, and Tom not only agrees to help Huck keep his cover by impersonating his cousin Sid, but he also agrees to help Huck in helping Jim escape from captivity.

Tom confabulates an impractical, romantic plan to free Jim, which Huck and Jim reluctantly go along with. One night, Jim, Huck, and Tom make a successful break for the Mississippi River, only to learn, however, that Tom was shot in the leg by one of their pursuers. Jim sacrifices his freedom to wait with Tom while Huck fetches a doctor, who, after treating Tom with Jim's help, insists on bringing Jim back to the Phelps farm, bound. He also presents Tom to the Phelpses wounded but alive.

After he recovers, Tom reveals to an anxious Aunt Sally and Huck that Miss Watson wrote in her will that Jim was to be freed after her death and that she had died two months earlier. Tom wanted to liberate Jim for the sake of self-indulgent adventure.

After things are straightened out, Jim reveals to Huck that Pap is dead; his was the corpse that Jim discovered in the floating house. Huck also learns that he still has six thousand dollars in Judge Thatcher's safekeeping and is free to do what he wants. Fearful of being adopted by Aunt Sally and "sivilized" again, Huck decides that he is going to go West.

## CHARACTERS

### MAJOR CHARACTERS

**Huckleberry Finn** – The boy-narrator of the novel, Huck is the son of a vicious town drunk who has been adopted into normal society by the Widow Douglass after the events of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. In his love for freedom, Huck rebels

both against his father Pap's debauchery and its seeming opposite, a sternly straight-laced but hypocritical society. Wise beyond his years, cleverly practical but nonetheless supremely humane, Huck defies societal conventions by befriending the black slave Jim while travelling with him on their raft and whom, as Huck matures, he comes to see as his equal. Huck's maturation is impeded, though, by his respectable and bright but boyishly self-indulgent friend, Tom Sawyer.

**Jim** – One of Miss Watson's slaves, Jim runs away because he is afraid of being separated from his beloved wife and daughter. Jim is superstitious, but nonetheless intelligent; he is also freedom-loving, and nobly selfless. He becomes a kind of moral guide to Huck over the course of their travels together, and, indeed, something of a spiritual father. Despite being the most morally upstanding character in the novel, Jim is ruthlessly persecuted and hunted and dehumanized. He bears his oppression with fiercely graceful resistance.

**Tom Sawyer** – Tom is Huck's childhood friend, a boy from a respectable family who is both bright and learned; he is also a seasoned prankster. As good-spirited as Tom is, he is not as morally mature as Huck, and his impracticality endangers himself and others, especially Jim. Tom is also self-indulgent, even selfish. Despite his shortcomings, however, Tom exerts a powerful influence on Huck.

**The duke and king** – The kind of people Huck and Tom might turn into were they to only act out of self-interest, the duke and king are a couple of con men that Huck and Jim travel with. The two are selfish, greedy, deceptive, and debauched, but sometimes their actions expose and exploit societal hypocrisy in a way that is somewhat attractive and also rather revealing. Though the exploits of the duke and king can be farcical and fun to watch, the two demonstrate an absolute, hideous lack of respect for human life and dignity.

**The Widow Douglas and Miss Watson** – Two elderly sisters, the Widow and Miss Watson are Huck's guardians at the beginning of the novel until Pap arrives on the scene. The two women demand that Huck conform to societal norms, which Huck resents. Miss Watson is hypocritical in holding Christian values yet cruelly keeping slaves, even separating Jim from his family. However, it would seem that she sees the light just before her death: she frees Jim in her will.

**Pap** – Huck's father, Pap is a vicious drunk and racist, demonstrably beyond reform, who wants to have Huck's fortune for himself. He resents Huck's social mobility and, when not drunk or in jail, he can usually be found harassing Huck. Infuriated by the Widow at one point, Pap kidnaps Huck and imprisons him in a cabin, where he beats Huck mercilessly, such that Huck is compelled to escape from him once and for all. Pap seems to be free from the Widow and Miss Watson's idea of society, but he is enslaved to his own wretched viciousness and alcoholism, as much a prisoner as anyone in the novel.

**Colonel Sherburn** – A cold-blooded killer, Sherburn guns down the vocal but harmless drunkard Boggs for almost no reason at all, all of which Huck witnesses in horror. When a lynch mob sets out to avenge Boggs' death, Sherburn calmly scorns the mob as being full of cowards and absolutely impotent. He is right: the mob, humiliated, disperses.

**The Grangerfords and Shepherdsons** – Two noble, pious, aristocratic families that absurdly, bloodily feud with one another despite mutual respect. Huck stays with the Grangerfords after becoming separated from Jim, but becomes embroiled in their feud after he accidentally enables a Grangerford girl to elope with a Shepherdson boy. Huck is confused by how such good, brave people could be involved in such devastating madness.

**Sally and Silas Phelps** – Tom Sawyer's aunt and uncle, respectively, who are both good people and parents, upstanding members of their community, and yet who troublingly support the institution of slavery, exemplified by their detainment of Jim. Huck and Tom trick the Phelpses when preparing for Jim's escape, much to Aunt Sally's fury and Uncle Silas's innocent befuddlement. Aunt Sally offers to adopt Huck at the end of the novel, but he refuses to be "sivilized" by anyone.

## MINOR CHARACTERS

**Judge Thatcher** –A kind of guardian to Huck at the beginning of the novel. Judge Thatcher nobly helps the Widow in her bid for custody of Huck over Pap, and, at the end of the novel, he dutifully restores to Huck his fortune.

**Judith Loftus** – A shrewd, gentle woman whom Huck approaches disguised as a girl. Mrs. Loftus exposes that Huck is lying to her, but is kind to him nonetheless. Her husband is a slave-hunter pursuing Jim.

**Jack** – A Grangerford slave who tends to Huck and kindly shows him to where Jim is hiding nearby the Grangerford estate.

**Mary Jane Wilks** – The beautiful, orphaned niece of Peter Wilks, Huck is so moved by her goodness that he resolves to expose the duke and king as the con men they are.

**Joanna Wilks** – An orphaned niece of Peter Wilks with a harelip, Joanna shrewdly catches Huck in many lies as he plays along with the duke and king's impersonation of the Wilks brothers.

**Doctor Robinson and Levi Bell** – The intelligent but somewhat condescending friends of Peter Wilks who suspect all along that the duke and king are frauds.

**Harvey and William Wilks** – Brothers of Peter Wilks who have traveled from England to the U.S. for Peter's funeral. William is a deaf mute. The duke and king impersonate them during one of their more disgusting scams.

**Peter Wilks** – Brother of Harvey and William Wilks, uncle of Mary Jane Wilks and her sisters; deceased.

**Nat** – A Phelps slave whose superstitions Tom exploits in executing his ridiculous plan to free Jim.

**Aunt Polly** – Tom Sawyer's aunt and guardian, sister of Sally Phelps.

**The new judge** – A judge who refuses to revoke Pap's custody of Huck because he does not want to separate a father and a son. The new judge later tries to reform Pap, and fails completely.

## THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.

### SLAVERY AND RACISM

Though Mark Twain wrote *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* after the abolition of slavery in the United States, the novel itself is set before the Civil War, when slavery was still legal and the economic foundation of the American South. Many characters in Twain's novel are themselves white slaveholders, like Miss Watson, the Grangerford family, and the Phelps family, while other characters profit indirectly from slavery, as the duke and the king do in turning Miss Watson's runaway slave Jim into the Phelpses in exchange for a cash reward.

While slaveholders profit from slavery, the slaves themselves are oppressed, exploited, and physically and mentally abused. Jim is inhumanely ripped away from his wife and children. However, white slaveholders rationalize the oppression, exploitation, and abuse of black slaves by ridiculously assuring themselves of a racist stereotype, that black people are mentally inferior to white people, more animal than human. Though Huck's father, Pap, is a vicious, violent man, it is the much better man, Jim, who is suspected of Huck's murder, only because Jim is black and because he ran away from slavery, in a bid for freedom, to be with his family.

In this way, slaveholders and racist whites harm blacks, but they also do moral harm to themselves, by viciously misunderstanding what it is to be human, and all for the sake of profit. At the beginning of the novel, Huck himself buys into racial stereotypes, and even reprimands himself for not turning Jim in for running away, given that he has a societal and legal obligation to do so. However, as Huck comes to know Jim and befriend him, he realizes that he and Jim alike are human beings who love and hurt, who can be wise or foolish. Jim proves himself to be a better man than most other people Huck meets in his travels. By the end of the novel, Huck would rather defy his society and his religion—he'd rather go to Hell—than let his friend Jim be returned to slavery.

### SOCIETY AND HYPOCRISY

Huck lives in a society based on rules and traditions, many of which are both ridiculous and inhuman. At the beginning of the novel, Huck's guardian, the Widow Douglas, and her sister, Miss Watson, try to "sivilize" Huck by teaching him manners and Christian values, but Huck recognizes that these lessons take more stock in the dead than in living people, and they do little more than make him uncomfortable, bored, and, ironically enough, lonely. After Huck leaves the Widow Douglas's care, however, he is exposed to even darker parts of society, parts in which people do ridiculous, illogical things, often with violent consequences. Huck meets good families that bloodily, fatally feud for no reason. He witnesses a drunken man get shot down for making a petty insult.

Even at the beginning of the novel, a judge ridiculously grants custody of Huck to Huck's abusive drunkard of a father, Pap. The judge claims that Pap has a legal right to custody of Huck, yet, regardless of his right, Pap proves himself to be a bad guardian, denying Huck an opportunity to educate himself, beating Huck, and imprisoning him in an isolated cabin. In such a case, fulfilling Pap's legal right ridiculously compromises Huck's welfare. Furthermore, Huck's abuse and imprisonment at the hands of Pap is implicitly compared to a more widespread and deeply engrained societal problem, namely the institutionalized enslavement of black people. Huck comes to recognize slavery as an oppressively inhuman institution, one that no truly "sivilized" society can be founded on. People like Sally Phelps, who seem good yet are racist slaveholders, are maybe the biggest hypocrites Huck meets on his travels.

### RELIGION AND SUPERSTITION

There are two systems of belief represented in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*: formal religion (namely, Christianity) and superstition. The educated and the "sivilized, like the Widow Douglas and Miss Watson, practice Christianity, whereas the uneducated and poor, like Huck and Jim, have superstitions. Huck, despite (or maybe because of) the Widow Douglas and Miss Watson's tutelage, immediately has an aversion to Christianity on the grounds that it takes too much stock in the dead and not enough in the living, that Christian Heaven is populated by boringly rigid people like Miss Watson while Hell seems more exciting, and, finally, that Huck recognizes the uselessness of Christianity. After all, prayers are never answered in Huck's world.

On the other hand, Huck and Jim's superstitions, silly though they are, are no sillier than Christianity. Huck and Jim read "bad signs" into everything, as when a spider burns in a candle, or Huck touches a snakeskin. Jim even has a magic hairball, taken from an ox's stomach, that, when given money, supposedly tells the future. Huck and Jim find so many bad signs in the natural world that, whenever anything bad happens to them, they're sure to have a sign to blame it on. However, one of the subtle jokes of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, a joke with nevertheless serious implications, is that, silly as superstition is, it is a more accurate way to read the world than formal religion is.

It is silly for Huck and Jim to read bad signs into everything, but it is not at all silly for them to expect bad things to be just around the corner; for they live in a world where nature is dangerous, even fatally malevolent, and where people behave irrationally, erratically, and, oftentimes, violently. In contrast, formal religion dunks its practitioners into ignorance and, worse, cruelty. By Christian values as established in the American South, Huck is condemned to Hell for doing the right thing by saving Jim from slavery. Huck, knowing that the Christian good is not ***the*** good, saves Jim anyway, thereby establishing once and for all a new moral framework in the novel, one that cannot be co-opted by society into serving immoral institutions like slavery.



## GROWING UP

*The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* belongs to the genre of ***Bildungsroman***; that is, the novel presents a coming-of-age story in which the protagonist, Huck, matures as he broadens his horizons with new experiences. Huck begins the novel as an immature boy who enjoys goofing around with his boyhood friend, Tom Sawyer, and playing tricks on others. He has a good heart but a conscience deformed by the society in which he was raised, such that he reprimands himself again and again for not turning Jim in for running away, as though turning Jim in and prolonging his separation from his family were the right thing to do.

As the novel develops, however, so do Huck's notions of right and wrong. He learns that rigid codes of conduct, like Christianity, or like that which motivates the Grangerson and Shepherdson's blood feud, don't necessarily lead to good results. He also recognizes that absolute selfishness, like that exhibited by Tom Sawyer to a small extent, and that exhibited by Tom's much worse prankster-counterparts, the duke and the king, is both juvenile and shameful. Huck learns that he must follow the moral intuitions of his heart, which requires that he be flexible in responding to moral dilemmas. And, indeed, it is by following his heart that Huck makes the right decision to help Jim escape from bondage.

This mature moral decision is contrasted with the immature way in which Tom goes about acting on that decision at the Phelps farm. Instead of simply helping Jim, Tom devises a childishly elaborate scheme to free Jim, which results in Tom getting shot in the leg and Jim being recaptured. By the end of ***The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn***, Huck is morally mature and realistic, whereas Tom still has a lot of growing up to do.

## FREEDOM

Huck and Jim both yearn for freedom. Huck wants to be free of petty manners and societal values. He wants to be free of his abusive father, who goes so far as to literally imprison Huck in a cabin. Maybe more than anything, Huck wants to be free such that he can think independently and do what his heart tells him to do. Similarly, Jim wants to be free of bondage so that he can return to his wife and children, which he knows to be his natural right.

The place where Huck and Jim go to seek freedom is the natural world. Though nature imposes new constraints and dangers on the two, including what Huck calls "lonesomeness," a feeling of being unprotected from the meaninglessness of death, nature also provides havens from society and even its own dangers, like the cave where Huck and Jim take refuge from a storm. In such havens, Huck and Jim are free to be themselves, and they can also appreciate from a safe distance the beauty that is inherent in the terror of freedom.

That being said, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* implies that people can be so free as to be, ironically enough, imprisoned in themselves. The duke and the king, for example, foils (or contrasts) to Huck and Jim, are so free that they can become almost anybody through playacting and impersonation. However, this is only because they have no moral compass and are imprisoned in their own selfishness. Freedom is good, but only insofar as the free person binds himself to the moral intuitions of his heart.

# SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in blue text throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.

## THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER

The Mississippi River, on and around which so much of the action of *Huckleberry Finn* takes place, is a muscular, sublime, and dangerous body of water and a symbol for absolute freedom. It is literally the place where Huck feels most comfortable and at ease, and also the means by which Huck and Jim hope to access the free states. The river is physically fluid, flexible, and progressive, just as Huck and Jim are in their imaginatively free acts of empathy with other

characters and in their pragmatic adaptability to any circumstances that come their way. However, in being absolutely free, the river is also unpredictable and dangerous, best exemplified during the storms that again and again threaten the lives of Huck and Jim. When he is alone, free from any immediately external influence, Huck begins to feel very lonesome and as destructive as the river itself, or, rather, self-destructive. The river, then, embodies the blessing and dangers of freedom, which must be carefully navigated if one is to live a good, happy life.

## THE RAFT

If the river is a symbol for absolute freedom, then the raft, host primarily to Huck and Jim but also to the duke and king, is a symbol for a limitation one must necessarily impose on one's freedom if one is not to be overwhelmed: peaceful coexistence. Unlike the sometimes ridiculous and hateful rules of society, the rules of the raft are simple: respect differences and support one another. The raft is a kind of model society in which one can enjoy freedom unlike in society on shore, but at the same time not drown in one's freedom. Huck says that his happiest days are spent on the raft with Jim. It is significant that the literal destruction of the raft immediately precedes Huck's fit of conscience as to whether or not he should turn Jim in. Such a consideration, a betrayal, even, threatens to break Huck's friendship with Jim just as the raft is broken. Significant also is the fact that it is after Huck learns about the insane destructiveness of human conflict from the Grangerford-Shepherdson feud that Jim pops back into Huck's life, the raft of their peaceful coexistence repaired. This is all of course symbolic for the making, breaking, and repairing of trust and good faith in people despite their differences, and speaks to the fact that it is never too late to try to mend severed relations.

## QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Dover Publications edition of *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* published in 1994.

### Chapter 1 Quotes

❝ You don't know about me, without you have read a book by the name of "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer," but that ain't no matter. That book was made by Mr. Mark Twain, and he told the truth, mainly. There was things which he stretched, but mainly he told the truth.

**Related Characters:** Huckleberry Finn (speaker), Tom Sawyer

**Related Themes:**

**Page Number:** 1

**Explanation and Analysis**

In this quote, Huckleberry Finn introduces himself to us at the beginning of the novel that bears his name. Huck really does appear as a character in a book called *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, and his mentioning the fact makes Huck all the more real to us as readers. He's more than just a character on the page – he's someone who exists outside of the books he's in. Huck's reality is also brought home to us by his speech, which is not in "literary language but firmly cast in the American vernacular, the way people really speak. It is at once conversational, gritty, and lilting.

This quote also introduces the ideas of truth in the novel. What does it mean to tell the truth? Is there such a thing as a noble lie? Huck himself lies all the time, sometimes just to keep in practice! In the Southern pre-Civil War society in which Huck lives, dangerous opinions and beliefs are often presented dogmatically as truths, most centrally that blacks like Jim are inferior to whites. In such a society, stretching the truth and telling lies are tools Huck uses to be free – just as Twain writes books about things that aren't factually true, but which nonetheless promote human freedom. Huck's probably pretty tolerant of the stretchers Mark Twain told when writing his book.

❝ 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.

**Related Characters:** Huckleberry Finn (speaker), The Widow Douglas and Miss Watson

**Related Themes:**

**Page Number:** 1

**Explanation and Analysis**

At the end of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, Huck became rich, but his riches hardly made him free. The Widow Douglas adopted him to "sivilize" him – in other words, to raise him so that he conforms to social rules and traditions.

However, as Huck's misspelling of "sivilzie" would suggest, he wants nothing to do with what he experiences as the dismal regularity and suffocating decency that society has to offer. He is too lively and freedom-loving for that, and already he intuits that what society holds up as good and moral can actually be offensive and oppressive to the human spirit. Huck will soon return to Widow Douglas's care, however, when prompted by Tom Sawyer. At this early point in the novel, Huck is still too immersed in the rigid logic of society to truly break free.

So here Huck's lighting out, or leaving, is something of a false start. It won't be until the end of the novel that Huck knows himself well enough to know what freedom really is. In this sense, the novel is a Bildungsroman, or a novel about growing up and spiritual education.

## Chapter 3 Quotes

❝ I went and told the Widow about it, and she said the thing a body could get by praying for it was "spiritual gifts." This was too much for me, but she told me what she means—I must help others, and do everything I could for other people, and look out for them all the time, and never think about myself...but I couldn't see no advantage about it—except for the other people—so at last I reckoned I wouldn't worry about it any more, but just let it go.

**Related Characters:** Huckleberry Finn (speaker), The Widow Douglas and Miss Watson

**Related Themes:**

**Page Number:** 8

### Explanation and Analysis

As part of being "sivilized," Huck is given a religious education in which he's instructed to pray. However, he gets mixed messages on this point. Miss Watson, for one, tells him to pray for whatever he wants, but Huck soon realizes we only very rarely get what we pray for. The Widow Douglas betters Miss Watson's instructions, and says that people can't get the material things they want through prayer, only "spiritual gifts." That Miss Watson and the Widow disagree suggests that religious truth is not self-evident and absolute, but dependent on interpretation.

Huck is too practical to have much use for spiritual gifts, however. We might say that he is self-sufficient, that he has everything he needs inside of himself already. Moreover, Huck comes to think that serving others and acting selflessly isn't all it's cracked up to be: people who constantly serve society become bound by society's customs and sacrifice their freedom. Ironically, it is the untamed, unchristian Huck who develops the richest, most loving relationship in the novel, with Jim. The Christianity of the Widow and Miss Watson doesn't exactly practice what it preaches.

## Chapter 5 Quotes

❝ "And looky here—you drop that school, you hear? I'll learn people to bring up a boy to put on airs over his own father and let on to be better'n what *he* is."

**Related Characters:** Pap (speaker), Huckleberry Finn

**Related Themes:**

**Page Number:** 15

### Explanation and Analysis

The Widow sends Huck to school, but when Huck's biological father, Pap, comes back to town, the greasy old man opposes his son receiving an education. Why? Because Pap resents the fact that Huck is breaking with the family tradition of ignorance and, more to the point, that Huck is "put[ting] on airs" over him, that is, acting like his own father's social superior.

Pap talks like Huck, he seems to live freely outside the bounds of society like Huck, but he couldn't be more different. While Huck is an authentic free spirit, Pap is just as committed to maintaining rigid social structures as the Widow Douglas is. He wants the ignorant to remain ignorant – especially if they're related to him. More broadly, he wants to maintain his social position, low as it is, by ensuring that all those lower than him on the social hierarchy *stay* lower. In contrasting Huck and Pap, Twain suggests that living a wild life like Pap doesn't make one free at all. (Indeed, Pap is enslaved to his alcoholism.) Rather, freedom involves an ability to see through the falsehoods of society and a commitment to the humanity of others.

The novel as a whole advances a vision far more democratic than Pap's. It believes in a world of social mobility, where people like Huck can become educated and where people like Jim can rise out of slavery into freedom.

❝ The judge he felt kind of sore. He said he reckoned a body could reform the ole man [Pap] with a shot-gun maybe, but he didn't know no other way.

**Related Characters:** Huckleberry Finn (speaker), Pap, The new judge

**Related Themes:**

**Page Number:** 17

**Explanation and Analysis**

After Pap gets outrageously drunk and is jailed, the new judge vows to reform him – but Pap is debauched beyond reform. He takes advantage of the judge's hospitality, gets drunk, consequently falls, breaks his arm, and almost freezes to death. This quote gives the new judge's response.

On the one hand, the new judge represents the decent regularity that society stands for, and of which Huck Finn is rightly wary. It is the failure of this society, and the social pressure it creates, that lead to people like Pap sinking into wretchedness in the first place. A society that produces people like Pap, and which can't help such people, is a *society* in need of reform.

On the other hand, the judge, despite making a mistake in granting Pap custody of Huck, has gone above and beyond in giving Pap a room in his house. His quip about the shotgun is kind of funny and endearing. The novel may disagree with his rigid upholding of custom and tradition, but it nonetheless reveals the new judge's humanity. It is this kind of careful, tender artistry that constitutes the novel's freedom.

"When they told me there was a State in this country where they'd let that nigger vote, I drawed out. I says I'll never vote again...I says to the people, why ain't this nigger put up at auction and sold?"

**Related Characters:** Pap (speaker)

**Related Themes:**

**Page Number:** 20

**Explanation and Analysis**

One night, while he and Huck have dinner in an isolated cabin, Pap gets drunk and begins to rant nastily against the government. He is especially infuriated that a man of mixed race can become an educated college professor with the right to vote. The quote given here makes up a part of his rant.

Earlier, Pap berates Huck for getting an education, and he similarly resents the professor, whom he considers to be his racial and social inferior. Some historians suggest that, because the class structure was more mobile in post-Revolutionary America than in Europe, people could no longer derive a sense of identity from their position in a traditional social hierarchy. As such, poor whites in particular defined their social identity in contradistinction to that of black or mixed-race Americans, who in a slave-holding society were overwhelmingly forced into a place at the bottom. Pap certainly seems to do so, which is why the idea of a man of mixed race being more successful than him is so disturbing to him: it destabilizes his sense of social identity, his sense of superiority to others in society.

Of course, the novel as a whole completely rejects Pap's toxic racism and his perverse reliance on rigid social structures, embracing instead freedom for all and adaptability of spirit.

"People will call me a low down Abolitionist and despise me for keeping mum—but that don't make no difference. I ain't agoing to tell, and I ain't agoing back there anyways."

**Related Characters:** Huckleberry Finn (speaker), Jim

**Related Themes:**

**Page Number:** 32

**Explanation and Analysis**

Huck and Jim stumble into one another on Jackson's Island after Huck escapes from Pap and after Jim escapes from his owner Miss Watson. However, Jim is at first reticent about his escape, because he's afraid that Huck will turn him in. Huck responds with this quote.

In the pre-Civil War America of Huck and Jim's time, Abolitionism was a movement that agitated for the immediate end of slavery in the country. The movement was largely based in the North, and most white Southerners like those featured in Twain's novel denounced Abolitionism as fostering disorder and slave rebellions. Huck, however, doesn't care if he's associated with Abolitionism and despised for it; he does what he thinks is right, even if it flies in the face of social interests. When he says, "I ain't agoing back there anyways," he is at once being literal and metaphorical – he is not going to return to "civilization," nor is he going to return to the frame of mind it sponsors.

Note, however, that Huck wrestles with racism throughout the novel, not just in his society but in himself. He knows and loves Jim for who Jim is, and therefore don't turn him in; but it will take more spiritual education before he more firmly

resists and more squarely turns his back on racist patterns of thinking.

"Yes—en I's rich now come to look at it. I owns myself, en I's wuth eight hund'd dollars. I wisht I had de money, I wouldn' want no mo'."

**Related Characters:** Jim (speaker)

**Related Themes:**

**Page Number:** 36

**Explanation and Analysis**

During their rendezvous on Jackson's Island, Jim tells Huck about many superstitions, including one which holds that people with hairy arms and a hairy chest are destined for riches. Jim, who fits this description, says he feels rich even now, however, because he has escaped from slavery and owns himself now.

Jim says he is worth eight hundred dollars because that is how much Miss Watson was planning to sell him for before his escape. At the time, this was a great deal of money, enough for Jim to live on for the rest of his life. Jim's speech is funny in the sense that he of course can never get that money for himself. At the same time, the humor of the speech allows it tosuggest, without feeling like a sermon, how totally morally reprehensible it is to set a cash value on a human body, as though it were just another product to be bought and sold, given how infinitely valuable our lives are to us. In other words: it is a devastating critique of slavery.

Notice that Jim, like Huck, speaks in a carefully constructed dialect. This contributes to the novel's realism, and it is arguably a democratic gesture on Twain's part. He represents as accurately and as richly as he can the many voices of the America that he lived in, rather than writing exclusively in the literary language of the white educated class.

## Chapter 12 Quotes

"I'm unfavorable to killin' a man as long as you can git around it; it ain't good sense, it ain't good morals."

**Related Themes:**

**Page Number:** 52

**Explanation and Analysis**

One night during a storm, Huck and Jim enter a wrecked steamboat and overhear two criminals discuss whether they should kill the third who's with them because they fear that he will turn them in. They decide not to kill the man, but only because they're confident he'll drown in the storm. This quote is spoken by one of the criminals in support of this decision.

First, notice that this scene is very similar to an earlier one in which Jim fears Huck will turn him into the slavers looking for him. Everyone in both scenes is a social outcast, and the action centers on a potential betrayal. Throughout the novel, Huck and Jim will run into versions of themselves, often much more wicked versions, as here. This is a principle by which Twain structures his novel, and also a way he characterizes Huck and Jim – we know who they are by seeing people who are similar but, at the same time, different in ways that make them morally worse.

The criminal who speaks this quote is practical like Huck usually is, committed to "good sense" – but, unlike Huck, he is an outrageous hypocrite. A man whose crimes have led him to contemplate murder has clearly not given much thought to morals before. More than that, he and his partner decide not to kill the third man only because they think the storm will kill him for them! In effect, they are killing the man by leaving him in the steamboat to drown – but the speaker here relieves his own guilt by absurdly pretending that only by directly causing someone's death does one become a murderer.

## Chapter 13 Quotes

I begun to think how dreadful it was, even for murderers, to be in such a fix. I says to myself, there ain't no telling but I might come to be a murderer myself, yet, and then how would *I* like it?

**Related Characters:** Huckleberry Finn (speaker)

**Related Themes:**

**Related Symbols:**

**Page Number:** 54

**Explanation and Analysis**

One night during a storm, Huck and Jim encounter three robbers in a steamboat. Huck and Jim manage to survive the storm, but the robbers are trapped. Here, Huck

sympathizes with the three doomed men, and tries to think up ways to save them, but to no avail.

Most characters in the novel are so judgmental and self-righteous that they'd probably be glad that the criminals meet an untimely death. Huck, however, has a much larger imagination and a much freer spirit than most other characters; he can see the murderers as real people with real fears, not just as abstract undesirable elements in society. It is this capacity of Huck's that gives him his charm as well as his spiritual backbone; it is this capacity, also, that enables Huck to see how inhuman an institution slavery is.

Most people rely on scapegoats to feel good about themselves (think of the mob that assembles to lynch Colonel Sherburn in Chapter 22). They need people to judge and condemn and punish as a means of venting their own antisocial aggression. Huck does not need a scapegoat. He knows that a single human spirit is big enough to hold both the saint and the murderer at the same time, even if it's unpleasant to think about for most of us. But being able to acknowledge our own capacity for evil paradoxically makes us more merciful – or at least that's what Huck's experience suggests.

## Chapter 14 Quotes

Well, he [Jim] was right; he was most always right; he had an uncommon level head, for a nigger.

**Related Characters:** Huckleberry Finn (speaker), Jim

**Related Themes:**

**Page Number:** 57

### Explanation and Analysis

The morning after their encounter with the robbers during the storm, Huck refers to it all as an "adventure." Jim says he doesn't want any more adventures, because he could easily have been harmed. Huck thinks this is pretty level-headed of Jim.

Huck is divided between two influences, that of Tom Sawyer and that of Jim. Tom is fantastical, self-serving, reckless – the kind of person who would take any adventures that come his way. Jim, in contrast, is realistic, sensitive to other people's wants and needs, and therefore careful. In this quote, we see Huck acknowledge the rightness of Jim's perspective, the level-headedness of it. This is a sign that Huck is growing up.

This growing up on Huck's part coincides with a change in Huck's perception of Jim. Huck absorbed his society's prejudice in thinking blacks intellectually inferior to whites, but his experience with Jim is corroding this prejudice. That being said, the qualification "for a nigger" is blatantly racist; Huck is still bound at this point in the novel to society's way of looking at the world and at Jim.

## Chapter 15 Quotes

"My heart wuz mos' broke bekase you wuz los', en I didn't k'yer no mo' what become er me en de raf'. En when I wake up en fine you back agin', all safe en soun', de tears come en I could a got down on my knees en kiss' yo' foot I's so thankful. En all you wuz thinkin 'bout wuz how you could make a fool uv ole Jim wid a lie."

**Related Characters:** Jim (speaker), Huckleberry Finn

**Related Themes:**

**Related Symbols:**

**Page Number:** 65

### Explanation and Analysis

A fog sets in on the Mississippi River as Jim and Huck make for the Ohio, and the two are separated. When reunited, Huck plays a trick in the style of Tom Sawyer on Jim: you dreamed the fog, he says. Jim figures out Huck's trick, however, and responds with this quote.

Huck's trick demonstrates both his childish egocentricity and his racist callousness toward Jim, whom he as yet thinks incapable, perhaps, of the full range of human feeling. Jim's response proves just how ignorant Huck's attitude is. Jim loves Huck deeply – perhaps more deeply than anyone else in the world does. Jim is not selfish like Huck can be either: the raft, Jim's vessel to freedom, means less to him than Huck does. Huck's lies are often charming – and he lies just to stay in practice, as he says – but here he lies without thinking of the consequences of doing so.

This episode draws a great deal of its power from the fact that Jim has been ripped away from his family by slaveholders. If his heart breaks at the thought of losing Huck, it must have been shattered by that loss – even though many whites at the time of the story deny that blacks are fully human and capable of heartbreak. Twain's novel, in contrast, insists on the full humanity of all of its characters, and in this way his art imitates life and serves as a rebuke to the aspects of American society that continue to

believe in white superiority at the time he wrote the novel and even today.

> 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.

**Related Characters:** Huckleberry Finn (speaker), Jim

**Related Themes:**

**Page Number:** 65

**Explanation and Analysis**

Huck tricks Jim into thinking the two were never separated by a fog that settled on the Mississippi River, and Jim shames Huck for playing such a callous trick. Huck, albeit reluctantly, humbles himself and apologizes to Jim.

In Huck's society, a white person didn't need to treat a black person like a human being, much less apologize. Consequently, in his racist pride, Huck is reluctant to apologize to Jim for wronging him – but Huck is also very different from most other whites in his society, and he recognizes that he really did wrong Jim, and that Jim was right to shame him for it, and that an apology is the only decent thing he can do at this point. Huck recognizes in his heart Jim's inalienable humanity, despite all of the prejudices he's absorbed.

Huck says he "warn't ever sorry" for apologizing to Jim, which suggests the he expected to regret doing so. His experience is shattering his expectations, and his experience is therefore his most important teacher when it comes to understanding the iniquity of the world he lives in.

## Chapter 16 Quotes

> Jim said it made him all over trembly and feverish to be so close to freedom. Well, I can tell you it made me all over trembly and feverish, too, to hear him, because I begun to get it through my head that he *was* most free—and who was to blame for it? Why, *me*.

**Related Characters:** Huckleberry Finn (speaker), Jim

**Related Themes:**

**Page Number:** 66

**Explanation and Analysis**

As Huck and Jim drift on their raft toward Cairo, Ohio, and the free states up North, Jim becomes very excited, and so does Huck, although for very different reasons. Jim is joyous to be almost free, while Huck dreads the idea of having helped a black man escape from bondage.

Huck's spiritual education is not without regressions back into the toxic attitudes and beliefs of the racist society around him. This is one such regression. Even though Huck has recognized that Jim is wholly human, and though he is Jim's friend (whether he would admit it or not at this point), he nonetheless can't help but see himself through society's eyes. What he sees is a person who helped a slave illegally escape from his owner, someone who is blameworthy in the eyes of other whites. This makes Huck anxious, but only because he does not yet have the courage of his convictions.

Another characteristic of the racist worldview is that whites are the actors in the world, the people who make things happen, while blacks are passive, objects to be acted on and incapable of self-determination. Huck displays that trait here when he asks "who was to blame" for Jim's freedom. He acts as though he singlehandedly freed Jim, as though Jim has no responsibility for his freedom because, being black, he couldn't actively achieve it for himself. This, of course, is a fallacy: Jim is capable of self-determination, and was the actor who effected his own escape.

> So I reckoned I wouldn't bother no more about [right and wrong], but after this always do whichever comes handiest at the time.

**Related Characters:** Huckleberry Finn (speaker)

**Related Themes:**

**Page Number:** 69

**Explanation and Analysis**

Huck feels guilty about being an accessory in Jim's escape to the free states, but reasons that he would feel just as guilty had he not helped Jim escape. This leads him to conclude that conscience is not really a firm means of determining what is right, and that one therefore would do better to "do whichever comes handiest at the time."

This is an important realization for Huck, and a new height in his spiritual education. His new ethic of handiness can be summarized like this: whatever his heart tells him to do instinctually, Huck resolves to do. He is free, in this way, to

be himself. Conscience reflects the society around it, which is for the worse, in Huck's case, because his society fabricates its moral rules to justify the unjustifiable evils of slavery. The heart, on the other hand, is more primordial and innate than the conscience: it is not a social construct, but the oldest and best part of ourselves. Conveniently, it is also the handiest for someone like Huck.

Note that doing what is handiest, for Huck, does not license him to do wrong on a whim. This is because Huck has a fundamentally good heart, such that needlessly inflicting harm on others is alien to it, something that would never present itself as handy.

## Chapter 18 Quotes

"Did you want to kill [the Shepherdson], Buck?"
"Well, I bet I did."
"What did he do to you?"
"Him? He never done nothing to me."
"Well, then, what did you want to kill him for?"
"Why nothing—only it's on account of the feud."

**Related Characters:** Huckleberry Finn, The Grangerfords and Shepherdsons (speaker)

**Related Themes:**

**Page Number:** 81

### Explanation and Analysis

One day while Huck and Buck Grangerford are hunting, Harney Shepherdson rides by and Buck tries to shoot him. In this dialogue, Huck attempts to understand Buck's motives.

The Grangerfords and Shepherdsons have a long-standing feud. Buck is not clear on how the feud began, nor does he have anything other than an abstract hatred for the Shepherdson's. He himself doesn't seem wholly committed to the feud yet. "I bet I did [want to kill Harney]" sounds faintly noncommittal. Moreover, the explanation he gives for shooting at Harney relies on absurdly circular reasoning. It reduces to: There's a feud because there's a feud, which of course doesn't explain anything. But this is a vicious circle, because as soon as Buck engages in the feud, the Shepherdsons have good reason to shoot at him, and he in turn has good reason to shoot right back. The feud, which falls out of thin air into Buck's lap, can only end in bloodshed. This is an enormous waste of life.

In a sense, the Grangerford-Shepherdson feud is a metaphor for how society can corrupt people who are essentially good. Being raised on hatred makes one, of course, hateful, just as being raised in a racist society makes one racist. The novel points out the tragic absurdity of such situations, and it offers an alternative to such negative socialization through Huck's education, which is based not on passively received notions of what is right or wrong but rather on personal experience and the call of one's own heart.

## Chapter 19 Quotes

For what you want, above all things, on a raft, is for everybody to be satisfied, and feel right and kind towards others.

**Related Characters:** Huckleberry Finn (speaker)

**Related Themes:**

**Related Symbols:**

**Page Number:** 94

### Explanation and Analysis

When the duke and king join Huck and Jim on the raft, they are at first sour with one another, but soon make up. This prompts Huck to reflect on what society on the raft should look like.

Huck's experiences have inevitably led him to reflect on what a good society looks like. After all, by this point in the novel, he's met with slaveowners, murderers, and mindlessly feuding families. For there to be a hope for a good life, he thinks, people need to be satisfied and kind towards one another. In other words, people need to have their basic needs for food and the like met, and they need to treat one another kindly as individuals, rather than as abstract elements in social categories. This may seem obvious to us – but if it's so obvious, why don't more people abide by it?

The raft becomes the novel's symbol for a good society. It is in touch with nature, open to experience, and freely mobile. Jim and Huck, in turn, are the novel's vision of ideal citizens: people who are not only equals but also friends.

## Chapter 20 Quotes

"I doan' mine one er two kings, but dat's enough. Dis one's powerful drunk, en de duke ain' much better."

**Related Characters:** Jim (speaker), The duke and king

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 101

**Explanation and Analysis**

Soon after the duke and king join Huck and Jim on the raft, the two conmen get very drunk. Consequently, Jim says that he hopes no more kings come aboard the raft.

This passage is loaded with funny ironies. Jim worries that he and Huck will encounter more kings on their journey, but of course they haven't encountered any real kings, just a couple of liars. But the novel, committed to the values of democracy, seems to be further suggesting here that, in one sense, all dukes and kings are conmen, people who get special privileges without having earned them. History has seen many real drunken kings – are the conmen on the raft really any lesser in comparison?

Huck and Jim are conspicuously patient with their bad company here, which speaks to their amicability.

## Chapter 22 Quotes

"The pitifulest thing out is a mob; that's what an army is—a mob; they don't fight with courage that's born in them, but with courage that's borrowed from their mass, and from their officers. But a mob without any *man* at the head of it, is *beneath* pitifulness."

**Related Characters:** Colonel Sherburn (speaker)

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 111

**Explanation and Analysis**

Colonel Sherburn guns down the drunkard Boggs for almost no reason at all, and a mob set on lynching him marches on his house. However, Sherburn meets them head-on and delivers a demoralizing speech, excerpted here, which humiliates and breaks up the mob.

The mob that organizes against Sherburn is another image in the novel for what a bad society looks like. It draws its strength from numbers and not from anything more, like virtue. Its passions are violent but fickle, and at last impotent to bring about anything good. Moreover, the mob has no leadership, no center around which it organizes itself, and this in Sherburn's eyes makes it worse than an army, which at least has some effective people making decisions and plans.

Sherburn gives an insightful critique of the mob in this speech and, by extension, of society. But Sherburn himself is a bad man, a cold-blooded killer. He is freer than Pap from social structures and the herd mentality, but he is just as villainous, the kind of man that Huck might become if he lives a life of violence. Sherburn represents the dangers of freedom, and of what happens when free people follow not their hearts but their antisocial impulses.

## Chapter 23 Quotes

I do believe [Jim] 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.

**Related Characters:** Huckleberry Finn (speaker), Jim

**Related Themes:**   

**Page Number:** 117

**Explanation and Analysis**

Huck's adventure on the raft becomes rollicking and exuberant once the duke and king join up with him and Jim – so much so that Huck doesn't keep in mind Jim's plight. One morning, however, he wakes to find Jim mourning for his wife and children, from whom he's been separated. This quote gives Huck's reaction.

Earlier in the novel, Huck sees through his racist prejudices and recognizes that Jim can be hurt by cruel jokes and have his heart broken by loss like anyone else. However, Huck does not seem to recognize till now that Jim is capable of loving his own family as much as white people are. This error in empathy is challenged by experience, however, when he finds Jim in mourning here.

The big irony of this passage is that there's nothing more natural in the world than that people should love their family members. Huck, however, has been raised to think it unnatural for a black husband and father to care so deeply for his wife and children. Culture teaches us what to think of as natural or unnatural, and it is so effective in this – in Huck's case insidiously so – that we can become blind to what is self-evident and deaf to what our hearts tell us.

## Chapter 31 Quotes

"All right, then, I'll *go* to hell"—and [I] tore [my note to Miss Watson] up.

**Related Characters:** Huckleberry Finn (speaker)

**Related Themes:**   

**Page Number:** 162

**Explanation and Analysis**

When Jim is turned in by the king for being a runaway slave, Huck thinks for a moment that the only moral thing to do would be to write a letter to Miss Watson so that she can reclaim her human property. However, Huck reflects on how good Jim is, and resolves at last to help him reach freedom no matter what; he tears up his note.

The decision represented in this quote is the major turning point in Huck's spiritual education. At the beginning of the novel, he thinks that hell would be more interesting than heaven, anyway – but here he goes a giant step further and realizes that what society thinks of as heaven is just rigid rule-following without much of a basis in what's right, and that choosing hell is not about indulging oneself. It is about living a good and loving life, regardless of what society dictates. Huck and Jim's friendship is the most sacred thing in the novel, and embracing it over all ingrained prejudice and cowardly conformity is Huck's crowning moment.

## Chapter 33 Quotes

❝ I'm bound to say Tom Sawyer fell, considerable, in my estimation. Only I couldn't believe it. Tom Sawyer a *nigger stealer!*

**Related Characters:** Huckleberry Finn (speaker), Tom Sawyer

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 171

**Explanation and Analysis**

Huck and Tom meet up near the Phelps's farm and, after hearing that Huck plans to rescue Jim, Tom agrees to join in the attempt. Huck thinks less of Tom for helping him, because doing so flies in the face of the racist, slaveholding values of their society.

This passage is troubling. Huck has just decided to save Jim, society be damned, and then he judges Tom's decision to help him from the absurd perspective of the society he's just cast off. Can Huck really be so divided in his soul that he can decide to rescue Jim, only to judge someone negatively for doing the same? This is either a considerable regression on Huck's part, a moment of reflexive thinking that doesn't reflect how he really feels, an irony on Huck's part, or a mistake on the author's. The second of these interpretations is perhaps most charitable to the novel (though many critics would argue that this final section of the novel is its weakest, and that Twain in fact did make a mistake in this entire escapade with Huck and Tom trying to free Jim).

Tom's reasons for joining the rescue attempt are very different from Huck's. Huck loves Jim. Tom thinks it would be a fun adventure to play rescue. This suggests Tom's childishness, but something more troubling. Tom treats himself like the hero of a drama and Jim like a prop. This is just a refinement of how his society sees Jim as an object to be used by whites.

❝ I was sorry for them poor pitiful rascals, it seems like I couldn't ever feel any hardness against them any more in the world. It was a dreadful thing to see. Human beings *can* be awful cruel to one another.

**Related Characters:** Huckleberry Finn (speaker), The duke and king

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 174

**Explanation and Analysis**

Huck learns that the duke and king are staging their scandalous show near the Phelps' farm, and he at once sets out to warn the con men that their gig is up. He's too late, though. On the way, he sees that a mob has tarred and feathered the duke and king; Huck pities the two immensely.

Tarring and feathering was an especially painful and humiliating punishment, common in the United States as a type of mob vengeance. Offenders were stripped to the waist, covered in scalding tar, and then covered in feathers which stuck to the tar. They were then paraded around to be humiliated, as the duke and king are. Punishments like these are one of the ways a society enforces conformity to its standards, regardless of whether or not those standards are just. As dreadful as the duke and king are, the people who tar and feather them are just as dreadful.

Huck, who knows just how exploitative the duke and king are, is nonetheless so empathetic that he pities them. As he sees it, nobody should be so cruelly abused – for such punishments amount merely to cruelty, not to justice. It is one of Huck's great characteristics to be in such a cruel

world, and to know it, and yet retain his sensitivity and gentleness and kind-heartedness.

## Chapter 43 Quotes

❝ But I reckon I got to light out for the Territory ahead of the rest, because Aunt Sally she's going to adopt me and sivilize me and I can't stand it. I been there before.

**Related Characters:** Huckleberry Finn (speaker), Sally and Silas Phelps

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 220

### Explanation and Analysis

This quote comes at the very end of the novel. Jim is free; Tom has healed from his wounds after taking part in Jim's rescue; it has been revealed that Jim had been freed by Miss Watson two months earlier; and Huck is once again in danger of being "sivilized," as he was by the Widow Douglas at the beginning of the novel.

Huck couldn't stand being civilized then, but he soon got used to it. After all, for Huck civilization meant merely dressing nicely and praying. However, he's changed a great deal over the course of his adventures. He's seen how hypocritical society is, and how social customs, traditions, norms, and beliefs – those things we absorb by being "sivilized" – often mask injustice and promote violence. When he says he can't stand being civilized this time, he really means it, because he fully understands what exactly it is he is rejecting when he says no to "sivilizing." He is rejecting the Southern society that relies on racism, slavery, and mob violence – all hypocritically in the name of order and tradition.

Huck literally plans to be a pioneer and "light out for the Territory," that is, the parts of the western United States that haven't been settled yet, where society hasn't spread. But he will also metaphorically light out for the Territory in this sense: he will strive to be intellectually and imaginatively free, never settling a matter in his mind for good, always retaining an openness to new experiences. This is the great freedom that Huck at last comes to embody.

## SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

### CHAPTER 1

Huck introduces himself as a character from Mark Twain's earlier novel, "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer." Huck says that, while the book is mostly true, Twain told some "stretchers," or lies, but that that's okay, because most people tell lies one time or another. Huck explains how, at the end of the adventure recounted in the earlier book, he and Tom Sawyer both became rich, and that the Widow Douglas adopted him and tried to "sivilize" him. However, Huck became bored with the Widow's decency and regularity and ran away, but, at last, reluctantly returned when Tom told Huck that, if he returned, he could be part of Tom's gang of robbers.

*Though society, as represented by the Widow Douglas and Miss Watson, would condemn all instances of lying, Huck is a realist, able to look beyond the rigid rules of society in forming moral judgments. He recognizes that people lie and that, in some situations, lying is okay. Huck grows bored of societal rigidity and runs away, only to be convinced to return by Tom Sawyer's imaginative games, which promise a kind of adventure (if not "real" adventure).*

After Huck returned to the Widow Douglas, she wept, dressed Huck in new clothes that made him uncomfortable, and again imposed on him a life of punctuality and manners. For example, the Widow Douglas requires that Huck not begin eating his dinner immediately after it is served, but that he wait until she "grumble," or pray, over it. Huck says, though, that the food is good, even though each dish is served by itself. He prefers it when dishes are served together so that the juice "swaps around." The Widow also imposes Christian values on Huck. However, Huck complains that the Bible is irrelevant to him because all of its characters are dead, and he doesn't take any stock in dead people.

*The rules of society are sometimes ridiculous to Huck, like praying before a meal, especially when one's prayer sounds less like thanks than a grumbling complaint. Huck is also intuitively against how society separates things with arbitrary boundaries, like food here, but, later, classes and races. Just as Huck likes the juices of his food to mingle, so too is he inclined to cross societal boundaries in service of what his heart tells him is right. Such boundaries, like religion, serve the dead. Huck cares about the living—about life.*

The Widow Douglas forbade Huck from smoking in the house as well. Huck points out that the Widow condones useless things like studying the Bible, but forbids Huck from doing good and useful things, like smoking. Furthermore, he points out that the Widow herself takes snuff, a tobacco product, and says that this is alright, not on principle, but only because she herself does it.

*The Widow Douglas is good and kind, and yet, like many members of society, she can be a hypocrite. What motivates her hypocrisy is self-interest: though she condemns Huck for smoking, the Widow doesn't condemn snuff because she herself takes it.*

Meanwhile, the Widow Douglas's sister, Miss Watson, teaches Huck how to spell, critiques his posture, and tells him about Heaven and Hell. Wanting a change in his circumstances, any change, Huck says he would rather be in Hell than in Heaven, much to Miss Watson's consternation. She responds that she is living her life such that she can go to Heaven. Huck concludes that he'd certainly rather not go to wherever Miss Watson is going, but says nothing of this so as not to further upset her. He asks Miss Watson whether Tom Sawyer is going to Heaven or Hell. When Miss Watson says he's going to Hell, Huck is glad, because that means he and his friend can be together.

*Huck is frustrated with society as represented by Miss Watson's lessons—by its strictness, its empty rules about how one must be and look—and he knows that society needs to change somehow. He wants to go to Hell because it sounds better than his current circumstances, less boring and more accepting. This choice foreshadows Huck's later choice to be damned in saving Jim.*

After Huck's talk with Miss Watson, Huck goes up to his bedroom. He sits, tries to think cheerful thoughts, but is so lonesome that he wishes he were dead. He looks out his window at nature, sees the stars, and hears mournful, ghostly sounds in the leaves and in the birdcalls. A spider crawls on Huck's shoulder. Huck flicks the spider into a candle, where it burns. Huck, frightened, takes this as a sign of bad luck. Soon afterward, he hears a meowing outside. Huck meows back and goes outside, to find Tom Sawyer waiting for him.

*When Huck is alone, away from society, free, he sometimes becomes lonesome, specifically when he perceives signs of death, like the sound of the dead leaves, as they are reflected in the natural world. Such a feeling is only exacerbated by Huck's childish superstitions, like his reading of the burning spider as a sign of bad luck. This lonesomeness is relieved when Huck is with friends like Tom.*

## CHAPTER 2

As Huck and Tom Sawyer sneak away from the Widow Douglas's house, Huck trips and makes a noise. One of Miss Watson's slaves, Jim, hears the noise and leans out of the kitchen doorway and asks who's there. Huck and Tom are silent, hiding in the dark, even though Huck needs to scratch an itch, which Huck says is even itchier because he knows he can't scratch it without making a noise. Jim comes outside and searches for the source of the sound but, finding nothing, eventually sits down and falls asleep.

*Jim is a good man: even though he detests his enslavement, he investigates the noise to make sure that there is nothing dangerous outside threatening Miss Watson or her interests. Huck's predicament shows that making a bid for freedom can be uncomfortable, but he would rather be uncomfortable now and free later than otherwise.*

Despite Huck's protests, Tom takes some candles from the Widow Douglas's kitchen, leaving five cents in payment, and then tricks the sleeping Jim by taking Jim's hat off of his head and hanging it on a nearby tree branch. Afterwards, Jim tells his fellow slaves that a witch possessed him and rode him everywhere that night, hanging his hat on the branch to show that she had ridden him so. Jim's fellow slaves would come from far and wide to listen to Jim's story.

*Tom takes risks, like stealing the candles, that Huck objects to. Huck is more practical, perhaps because Tom comes from a more privileged background than Huck. Like Huck, Jim explains unknown phenomena, like how his hat got into the tree, with superstitious explanations. It seems silly for the other slaves to believe Huck's stories, but later in the novel many religious whites will believe stories just as ridiculous.*

Tom and Huck meet up with some other boys, and, after a short excursion, end up in a cave, where Tom announces that the boys present can be members of his band of robbers, which he calls Tom Sawyer's Gang. All the boys want to be members, and, after swearing an oath that Tom fashioned after what he read in robber and pirate books, are inducted into the Gang. However, the oath requires that, if a member reveals a secret of the Gang, his family be killed. Huck doesn't have a family other than a drunkard father who no one can ever find, and so the boys debate whether he should be inducted into the Gang at all. Huck at last offers Miss Watson to be killed, which his fellows accept.

*Here, the boys play at making their own society. Like the society of the South, that of the boys is rooted in silly traditions, those Tom derived from his robber and pirate books. But the boys also demonstrate that they are more flexible than members of the society of the South. They are willing to bend their own rules so that Huck can be a member of the Gang.*

The members of Tom Sawyer's Gang debate what their purpose will be. Tom declares that the Gang's purpose is to rob people on the roads of watches and money, and then to either kill or ransom those whom they rob. One boy questions whether the Gang should ransom people, but Tom insists that it must, because that is what happens in the books that he reads. The only problem is that no one knows what it means to ransom someone. Tom concludes that it is to keep someone until they die, and the boys agree this must be the case. The boys also agree not to kill women, but to keep them in the cave and treat them very sweetly. The Gang decides to pull off its first robbery, but can't do it on Sunday because that would be wicked. The Gang disperses, and Huck returns home.

*Tom's Gang, like society, is rooted in arbitrary traditions that have lost their meaning. The boys don't know what ransoming is, but adopt it as a practice only because of tradition. While it is okay for a make-believe gang to do so, it is childish for adults in society to do so, especially considering that, while the violence done by Tom's gang is pretend, that perpetrated by society is very real, with bloody, sometimes deadly consequences. This passage also points out how ridiculous it is to obey the letter of Christianity but not the spirit: the boys are going to do something bad, rob people, but insist that they can't do it on Sunday, because Sunday is a holy day. But wicked things are no more wicked on one day than another—the boys are mixing up* looking *like good Christians with actually* being *good Christians, just as it becomes clear many adults also do.*

## CHAPTER 3

After Huck returns home, Miss Watson scolds him for having dirtied his clothes. The Widow Douglas does not scold Huck, but washes his clothes, looking so sorry as she does so that Huck resolves to behave himself. Miss Watson takes Huck into a closet to pray, telling him that he will receive whatever he asks for, but Huck concludes that this is not the case, on the grounds that, when he prayed for a "fish-line," he got one, but it didn't have any hooks and was therefore useless.

*Though they seem to hold the same Christian values, Miss Watson is strict without compassion, whereas the Widow is compassionate. As Christianity is a religion rooted in compassion, it could be said that Miss Watson and the Widow really do hold different values. Indeed, Miss Watson tells Huck that one gets whatever one prays for, but this is not a Christian conception of prayer at all. It's a superstition.*

Huck recounts how he sat down, one time, in the back of the woods and thought about prayer. He wonders, if someone gets whatever he or she prays for, why, for example, the Widow Douglas can't get her silver snuff-box back that was stolen. Huck concludes that, insofar as prayer is concerned, "there ain't nothing in it." He tells the Widow this, and she says one can only get "spiritual gifts" by praying, that is, gifts that aid one in being selfless. Huck thinks that selflessness is not advantageous, and decides to just "let it go." He goes on to say, though, that there must be two Providences, that of the Widow and that of Miss Watson, and that he would belong to the former, even though it might not help him considering that he is so "ignorant and…low-down and ornery."

*Huck realizes that Miss Watson's conception of prayer as getting whatever you ask for doesn't account for the actual effects of prayer. The Widow Douglas clarifies that one doesn't get whatever one prays for in Christian thought, but rather that one receives not material but spiritual gifts through prayer. The practical Huck doesn't value such gifts very highly, but he does conclude that, if given the choice between Miss Watson's seemingly Christian values and the Widow's real Christian values, he'd take the latter.*

Huck thinks about his father Pap, who hadn't been seen for more than a year, which is just fine with Huck. Pap is an abusive drunkard. People thought that he had drowned, because a body resembling his had been dredged from the river, but Huck doesn't think it was Pap's body after all, because the body was discovered floating on its back, and men, Huck thinks, float on their faces, so that body must have been a woman's.

*This foreshadows Pap's reappearance later in the novel, as well as the episode in which Huck disguises himself as a girl, only to be found out for what he is. That Huck knows how women and men float speaks to his familiarity with the destructiveness of nature and horrors of death, shocking given his young age.*

Huck turns to thinking about Tom Sawyer's Gang. They played robber for about a month, before all the boys, including Huck, resigned from the gang because they hadn't robbed anyone but only pretended to. They would hide in the woods and charge on passers-by, like hog-drovers and women in carts taking produce to market. Tom referred to the hogs as "ingots" and produce as "julery", but Huck sees no profit in pretending.

*More than anything, Tom loves to pretend, and he is very childlike in this way. Play is its own reward for him. In contrast, Huck is interested in material profit, which is an interest shared by the adults in the novel. Unlike Tom, Huck's childhood, it would seem, has ended prematurely, maybe because of the difficulties of his life, the poverty that he again and again contends with.*



One time, Huck goes on to recount, Tom summoned the Gang and told them about a large group of Spanish merchants and "A-rabs" who were going to camp in a nearby cave with their elephants, camels, mules, diamonds, and other exotic riches. After polishing their swords and guns, which were really just "lath and broom-sticks," the Gang set out to raid the Spanish and Arab camp, only to find a Sunday school picnic in its place. The Gang chased the children at the picnic and seized their goods. When Huck points out to Tom that there were no Spaniards and Arabs, Tom tells Huck he is wrong, that it only seemed that way because magicians transformed the Spaniards and Arabs and their possessions into "an infant Sunday school."

*Tom has a wildly active imagination, fueled by the books he has read. He can turn even something mundane like a Sunday school picnic into the object of adventure. When Huck, always the realist, challenges Tom's imaginings as fake, Tom can defend their reality with yet new imaginings, as he defends his imaginings of the Arabs and Spaniards with imaginings of magicians. In this way, Tom shows that, with the power of imagination, one can defy the logic of the real world (for better and, we will see, for worse).*



After calling Huck a "numskull" for thinking that the Sunday school picnic was just that, Tom explains to Huck that a magician could call up genies to aid them in their enchantments. Huck asks Tom if the Gang can summon genies to help them, but Tom says that, to summon a genie, one must have a lamp or ring to rub, and that the genies are powerful enough to build even palaces. Huck says that the genies are "a pack of flatheads" for serving someone when they could keep the palaces for themselves. Tom retorts that Huck is a "perfect sap-head." Later, to see if there is anything to what Tom says, Huck got a lamp and ring and rubbed them, but no genie came. Huck concludes that Tom lied about the Arabs and elephants, for the group the Gang robbed "had all the marks of a Sunday school."

*Given that they are so powerful, Huck thinks, genies are foolish for serving others slavishly when they could serve themselves. This reveals one of Huck's commitments to freedom: if one is able to liberate oneself, one should do so. Though Huck doesn't cross-apply this commitment to black slaves in bondage now, he later will. Note, also, that Huck tests Tom's claim about how genies are summoned. Huck is open but skeptical about others ideas and is keen to test what others tell him on his own terms, a trait which enables him to penetrate societal hypocrisy.*

## CHAPTER 4

Three or four months pass since the Gang's raid on the Sunday school. Huck has been going to school and learning reading, writing, and arithmetic, though he "don't take no stock in mathematics." He hated school at first, but gets used to it. He is also getting used to the regularity of the Widow's household, and even coming to like it.

*It is telling that Huck finds reading and writing valuable, both social subjects concerned with communication in the real world, but not arithmetic, a rigidly abstract subject. That said, Huck is adaptable enough that he soon comes to like what he hated at first.*

One morning, Huck overturns a saltcellar at breakfast. To ward off bad luck, he reaches for the spilt contents to throw some salt over his left shoulder, but Miss Watson prevents him from doing so, telling him that he is a mess-maker. As Huck uneasily heads out of the house, he keeps a lookout for bad things coming his way. As he walks, he sees in the snow somebody's tracks, the left boot-heel of which, because studded with nails, leaves crosses in the ground to ward off the devil.

*Miss Watson is always telling Huck about her Christian superstitions, but she sees his superstitions as ridiculous. That said, Huck does indeed encounter something bad: the telltale marks of his father's tracks in the snow (though the novel builds suspense by not revealing just what the bad thing is yet). Huck's logical misstep is in thinking that spilling the salt* caused *his father to reappear.*

Huck nervously makes his way to Judge Thatcher's house. The judge tells Huck that the six thousand dollars he has left in the bank has collected interest, and warns him against taking any money out of the bank. Huck replies he wants Judge Thatcher to have all of his money. The Judge, not quite understanding Huck's intentions, buys Huck's property for a dollar.

*In response to seeing Pap's tracks, Huck does something both reasonable and practical: he gives his money to Judge Thatcher so that the greedy Pap can't take it from him, which would otherwise be allowed by the backwards custody laws of society.*

Huck goes on to tell how Jim has a hairball, taken from the belly of an ox, that Jim does magic with. Huck goes to Jim, tells him that he saw Pap's tracks in the snow (those that leave the cross), and asks what Pap is going to do and how long he is going to be around. Jim says something over the hairball and drops it on the ground, but the hairball doesn't talk. Jim explains that the hairball sometimes needs money to talk. Huck gives the hairball a badly counterfeited quarter with brass showing through the silver, saying nothing of the dollar he got from Judge Thatcher. After Jim puts the quarter in a split raw potato to cover the brass, he and Huck put it under the hairball, Jim tells Huck that the hairball prophesies that Pap doesn't know what he is going to do, and that Huck is going to have troubles and joys in his life. When Huck goes up to his room, he finds Pap sitting there.

*It might seem that Jim is trying to con Huck out of money by telling him that sometimes his hairball requires payment before it speaks, but it must be remembered that Jim himself is superstitious, and that he gladly accepts Huck's counterfeited quarter, as though to con not Huck but the hairball itself. Huck is, again, practical here, as an adult would be, in saying nothing about his actual dollar, thereby protecting it. Finally, note that, while Jim and Huck are superstitious about the hairball, they do not attribute a supernatural explanation to the re-silvering of the counterfeited quarter. What is considered magical in Huck's world is arbitrary.*

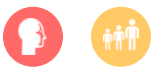
## CHAPTER 5

Huck is scared at first to see the old, greasy, pale Pap sitting in his room because Pap "tanned," or beat, him so often, but soon is not scared at all. Pap reprimands Huck for wearing nice clothes, and says that because Huck has learned to read and write he must think he's better than his own father. Pap vows to take Huck's "frills" out of him. Pap warns that Huck better stop going to school, because none of Huck's family was educated, and, therefore, neither should Huck.

*Far from offering Huck any kind of freedom from his strictly "sivilized" lifestyle, Pap imposes yet another kind of imprisonment, one based on class, where Huck is prevented from bettering and educating himself. This is counter-intuitive: Pap should want the best for his son, but he instead wants no better for Huck than what he himself had.*

Pap tells Huck that he hears that Huck is rich now, but Huck says that he doesn't have any money. Pap calls Huck a liar and says that he wants Huck's money. Huck shells out his one dollar and Pap takes it to buy whiskey with.

*Huck would rather enable Pap's drinking by giving him money than be beat for not doing so, reflecting a pragmatic commitment to being responsible for oneself.*



The next day, Pap is drunk and tries to coerce Judge Thatcher into giving him Huck's fortune, but the Judge refuses. Afterward, Judge Thatcher and the Widow go to a court of law to take Huck from Pap's custody, but the new judge whom they appeal to, so-called because he is new to the court, says he wouldn't take a son from his father. Judge Thatcher and the Widow are forced to quit the business, and Pap is granted custody of Huck.

*The new judge whom the Widow and Judge Thatcher approach delivers a hypocritical ruling: he gives Pap custody of Huck because he thinks that the tradition of parent raising child honors the welfare of the child, yet Huck's welfare is actively* endangered *by Pap. The judge ignores the actual facts in favor of a principle that doesn't hold in every situation.*

Pap is pleased with the court's custody ruling. He threatens to beat Huck "black and blue" unless Huck raises money for him. Huck borrows three dollars from Judge Thatcher, which Pap uses to get drunk, going around town "cussing and whooping and carrying on." Pap is jailed for making such a ruckus.

*As Miss Watson is stuck in her values and ways, so is Pap stuck in his cruelty, selfishness, drunkenness, and debauchery. Even having his freedom taken away doesn't deter him from acting badly.*

After Pap is released, the new judge resolves to reform him. He invites Pap to supper, where he lectures Pap on temperance and other virtues till Pap begins to cry and swears that, though he has been a fool, he is going to turn his life around. The judge believes Pap, and has his whole family shake Pap's hand, once "the hand of a hog," but no more. All cry. The judge provides Pap with a room, but soon after Pap begins to desire alcohol. He climbs out of his room, trades his new coat for whiskey, and climbs back into the room. The next morning, he crawls out of the room again, drunk, breaks his arm, and almost freezes to death where he falls. The judge is upset, and says that Pap could be reformed "with a shot-gun, maybe," but by no other means.

*The new judge, maybe regretting that he has given the debauched Pap custody of Huck, tries to give Pap an opportunity to break out of his irresponsible ways, and Pap seems to attempt to do so. But his habits are too deeply ingrained to be corrected: as soon as he is given back his freedom, Pap indulges in his literally self-destructive behaviors again. He altogether lacks Huck's adaptability. Pap may not be "regular" like the Widow and Ms. Watson, but he is no more free than they are, imprisoned in his bad ways as he is. Only in death, the judge thinks, can such a man be free.*

## CHAPTER 6

Pap continues to harass Judge Thatcher for Huck's money, and he harasses Huck for not stopping school. Huck goes to school nevertheless, with even more desire if only to spite Pap. The "law trial" Pap instigates proceeds slowly, so Huck borrows two or three dollars from Judge Thatcher once in a while to give to Pap, so that Huck might avoid a beating. With Huck's money, Pap gets drunk, and every time he gets drunk he gets rowdy and is jailed. Huck thinks this "was right in his line."

*Even though Huck is adaptable to his surroundings, he is more rebellious than anything: it's exactly because Pap tells him not to go to school that Huck insists on going to school. Huck pushes back against any rigid structure that is imposed on him. Pap, on the other hand, leads a repetitious life, getting drunk, getting, jailed, getting drunk, etc.*

When Pap loiters around the Widow's estate too much, the Widow reprimands him. Pap vows to show her who Huck's boss is, so one day he kidnaps Huck and takes him to an isolated log hut in the woods near the river. Pap is with Huck at all times, so that Huck has no chance for escape. The two live on what fish they catch and what game they shoot with Pap's (probably stolen) gun. Sometimes Pap locks Huck up to go down to the store to trade fish and game for whiskey. Huck eventually becomes accustomed to his new living situation, despite the beatings.

*The cabin that Pap takes Huck to is a symbol for imprisonment, a place where Huck's freedom is physically limited. Huck's imprisonment there is analogous to Jim's bondage: both are socio-economically motivated (Pap wants Huck's money as a slaveholder wants to profit from holding his slave), and both involve oppression and violence. Characteristically, Huck adapts to life in the cabin, because he has no other reasonable option.*

Huck comes to like the "lazy and jolly" life he leads with Pap, the smoking and fishing he does without the burden of study. His nice clothes become dirty and tattered. Huck even wonders how he ever adapted to the lifestyle endorsed by the Widow, what with its manners and rules. Though Huck had stopped cussing over the course of his "sivilizing," he resumes because Pap doesn't object.

*Huck lives in the present, unbound by the past: he lives whatever life he thinks is currently best, and has no nostalgia for his previous ways of life. One consequence of this, though, is that Huck is something of a slow learner: it's because he doesn't change readily in response to past experiences that Huck is so slow to accept Jim not as a black slave inferior to whites but as an equal human being deserving of freedom.*

However, Pap eventually begins to beat Huck so often and so severely that Huck, covered with welts, can no longer stand the abuse. Pap also begins to leave Huck alone too often, locking him in the cabin, such that Huck is often "dreadful lonesome." Scared one time that Pap has drowned and that he might never be freed from the cabin, Huck begins to look for ways to escape. There is no way out of the cabin, though, so Huck looks for tools to make an escape. He finds a rusty old saw which he carefully begins to use an old saw he finds to remove a section from a log of the cabin, big enough for him to squeeze through. Soon after he begins, Huck hears Pap's gun go off in the woods outside. Huck hides all evidence of his work, just before Pap returns home.

*It is only when a way of life becomes untenable for Huck that he seeks to change it. Here, for example, it is only after living with Pap becomes unsafe that Huck seeks means of escaping from Pap, which he could have done anytime in the past but neglected to do. Huck formulates a very practical plan for his escape, resourceful and efficient. This plan is contrasted later with Tom's plan to liberate Jim from the Phelps Farm, which is maybe more stylish than Huck's, but much more romantic, less practical, and more dangerous.*

Pap is characteristically in a bad mood when he comes in. He rants that his lawsuit to get Huck's money is proceeding too slowly, and that it looks as though the Widow and Judge Thatcher may be successful in another bid to win custody of Huck. This shakes Huck up "considerable," because Huck doesn't want to return to being "sivilized" at this point. Pap then begins to cuss violently, saying that he'd like to see the Widow *try* to get custody of Huck, threatening to take Huck to an even more isolated location. Huck is worried, but consoles himself that Pap won't get the chance to take him away, because Huck will have escaped by then. Pap tells Huck to load their skiff (a kind of boat) with supplies required for a journey, prompting Huck to further plan his escape.

*That Huck wants to live neither with the Widow, where he is not free enough, nor with Pap, where he is too free, reveals that freedom for Huck can be either deficient or excessive, and that the ideal degree of freedom is somewhere between those two extremes, between living only by rigid rules or flouting such rules altogether. However, at this point, Huck has not yet learned which rules he should live by, and it is education in this regard that constitutes a major part of his maturation.*

After Huck loads the skiff, he and Pap sit down to dinner, during which Pap becomes drunk. He begins to rant against the government for taking Huck from his flesh-and-blood father, just as Huck is becoming useful to him, and also for supporting Judge Thatcher in keeping Huck's money. Pap then goes on to denounce the government for allowing a man of mixed race to become a wealthy, educated college professor with the right to vote, because Pap doesn't think a person of mixed race should have opportunities and rights as good as those of white people. Indeed, he thinks the professor should be put up at a slave auction and sold.

*Pap thinks of himself as a victim of bad government policies, but in doing so he neglects to take into account the people who have tried to help him salvage his life, like the new judge, nor does he accept responsibility for his bad decisions. Pap is also resentful of all people more successful than he is; a vicious racist, he doesn't believe a black man should be more materially successful than him, and is resentful of successful black people in general.*

As he rants, Pap wanders around the cabin, eventually tripping on a tub of salt pork, which makes him cuss even more. He hops around the cabin, kicks the tub with his boot that has "a couple of his toes leaking out of the front end," howls even more, and ends up rolling around in the dirt. After supper, Pap gets his jug of whiskey, and Huck predicts that he will be very drunk by the end of the night, at which point Huck could make his escape. But Pap stays up late thrashing and moaning, and Huck himself, exhausted, falls asleep. He wakes to Pap screaming that snakes are crawling up his legs. Pap hops around the cabin some more till he falls down, and, after rolling violently on the floor, lies still, saying soon thereafter that the dead are after him. Pap rises and crawls, begging the dead to leave him alone, and starts to cry.

*Pap's self-destructiveness is exemplified in this scene: he hurts himself, but, rather than tend to his injury, he, rather hypocritically, only exacerbates it by lashing out and, in lashing out, hurting himself even more This resembles how he refuses the new judge's help in being reformed and, falling back into drunkenness, literally hurts himself after falling out of his window. As for Pap's hallucinations, the first may draw on Pap's religious beliefs. In the Bible, the snake is a figure for the Devil and sin, which Pap is haunted by. Pap's hallucination of the dead touching him foreshadows his own death by drowning chapters later.*

After some time passes, Pap jumps up "looking wild," and he goes after Huck with a knife, calling him the Angel of Death. Huck tells Pap that he's not the Angel of Death, but Pap only laughs and continues to chase Huck. At one point, Pap grabs Huck by the back of his jacket. Huck thinks that Pap is just about to kill him, and so he slides out of his jacket and succeeds in saving himself. Pap soon drops down with his back against the door to rest, guarding the knife under him, and falls asleep. Huck grabs Pap's gun, loads it, and points it at the sleeping Pap, waiting, as time slowly drags on, for him to wake up.

*Pap is clearly not in his right mind at this point, drunk and despairing as he is, so much so that he thinks Huck is the Angel of Death. An irony here is that, though Pap's hallucination pertains to a Christian image, Pap is acting most unlike a Christian: he does not accept death tranquilly, with the promise of redemption and eternal life in Heaven in mind, and he is viciously violent toward Huck.*

## CHAPTER 7

Pap wakes Huck, who fell asleep in the night, and asks him what he's doing with the gun. Huck lies and says that someone tried to break in and that Huck was lying in wait for the intruder, which Pap accepts. He tells Huck to go check the fishing line for breakfast. Huck does so, scanning as he does the rising river. Seeing a passing canoe, Huck jumps into it and paddles it ashore, thinking Pap will be pleased. But then another idea strikes Huck: he decides to hide the canoe and use it in his escape.

*Huck tells many lies in the novel, usually, as here, white lies that are practical and motivated by Huck's desire to protect people, including, sometimes, himself. His lie to Pap here no doubt protects Huck from an undeserved beating. Huck's skill in lying is part of his adaptability and love of freedom. When rigidly adhering to the truth would cause undo harm, Huck sacrifices the truth.*

After Huck returns to shore, Pap berates him for taking so long with the fish. Huck lies that he fell in the river. Huck and Pap get five catfish off the fishing lines and head hone. As the two Finns lay about and Pap says that Huck should rouse him the next time an intruder comes prowling, Huck has an idea to prevent Pap and the Widow from pursuing him after he makes his escape.

*As earlier, Huck again tells a white lie to Pap to cover up his escape plans. Huck is more committed to freedom than he is even to truth. But Huck is not committed to freedom in an idealistic, impractical way: he is willing to do whatever it takes to execute his escape plan efficiently, without a trace.*

Pap and Huck collect nine logs from the river to sell and then eat dinner. Pap is content to do so, even though any other man would keep scanning the river for things to sell from it. After dinner, Pap locks Huck up in the cabin again and boats to town to sell the nine logs. After Pap has gotten a ways, Huck retrieves his saw from its hiding place and finishes making his hole in the cabin, through which he then escapes. Huck takes provisions from the cabin, anything "worth a cent," and stores them in his hidden canoe. He hides any trace of his escape by covering his tracks and sealing the hole he made in the cabin.

*Pap, like Huck, proves himself to be practical, collecting only as many logs to sell as he needs before quitting. But, unlike Huck, Pap's practicality serves self-destructive ends, like the purchase of whiskey, as opposed to a nobler end like freedom. This is the end Huck's practicality serves as Huck takes what he needs from Pap's cabin and hides all traces of his escape by covering his tracks, literally and otherwise.*

Huck takes Pap's gun into the nearby woods, kills a hog, and takes the hog back to his camp. He smashes in the door of the cabin with an ax, takes the pig inside, and slits its throat so that its blood covers the dirt floor of the cabin. Huck wishes Tom could join him to "throw in the fancy touches." Huck then bloodies the ax, sticks some of his own pulled-out hair onto the blade, and slings the tool into a corner of the cabin. He also takes a sack full of rocks and the pig carcass and dumps both in the river. Finally, Huck takes the bag of meal out of his canoe and back to the house, rips it open, and carries the sack about a hundred yards from the house, trailing meal as he does so. He also drops Pap's whetstone at the spot where he stops trailing the grain. Then Huck ties the bag of meal so it stops sifting out and returns to his canoe.

*Freedom, as Huck's actions prove here, is not free. Huck literally sacrifices a hog to make sure that his escape goes unnoticed, and that he himself can successfully disappear into his newfound freedom. Though Huck now wishes his escape to be stylish as Tom would have it, later, when freeing Jim from the Phelps Farm, Huck will wish Tom were more practical, suggesting that he has an immature attitude about style now that he grows out of over the course of the novel. Certainly, though Huck has what could be called a "practical imagination"—he thinks of how to tie up every loose end in his escape.*


As Huck waits for the moon to come out so that he can travel by its light, he eats, smokes, and thinks to himself that people looking for him after his escape, thinking him dead, will follow the trail left by the sack full of rocks to the river and afterwards dredge the river for his body, as well as the trail of meal in order to find the "robbers that killed [him]." He is sure, though, that nobody will think that he is alive, much less find him. He plans to paddle to a place called Jackson's Island on the river, and to visit towns at night to stock up on supplies. Huck soon falls asleep, only to soon wake. It looks late to Huck, and "*smelt* late" too, though Huck acknowledges that he doesn't know how to put the sensation in words.

*Huck reveals himself to be very empathetic here. He imagines how people would react to a set of circumstances, like the trail left by the rocks leading down to the river. However, Huck's empathy is limited. It may extend to a search party, for example, but it will not extend to people like Jim, who Huck thinks of as being, in some ways, inferior to white people, until Huck matures. That being said, Huck does have a unique imagination that will enable him to so mature, as indicated by the strangely imagined sensation he has of "smelling" lateness.*


Huck hears a sound. It is Pap paddling back to the cabin. Huck loses no time in slipping quietly down the river in his canoe, shaded by the bank. He paddles down the center of the river to avoid being hailed by people on the ferry landing before, at last, reaching Jackson's Island, "like a steamboat without any lights." Huck lands and conceals his canoe. In the darkness, he sees a raft go by the island and hears a man on the raft shout commands to someone onboard with him. Huck goes into the woods to get some sleep before breakfast.

*Huck at last stages his escape into freedom. The place he lands, Jackson's Island, is hospitable to him, as a steamboat is hospitable, but is not functional as society is, and it is also lonely for Huck. This is all indicated by the fact that Jackson's Island is like a steamboat without lights, lights being a sign of human presence. Nature offers Huck a society consisting only of himself.*


## CHAPTER 8

Huck wakes and takes in his surroundings, like a couple squirrels, Huck says, that "jabbered at me very friendly." Soon Huck hears a "boom!" sound. Looking upstream, he sees a ferry firing a canon, which, Huck figures, is being done to make his own carcass come to the river's surface. Hungry, Huck remembers that people looking for carcasses in the river put quicksilver in loaves of bread and float them down the river, because they always go right to the drowned body and stop there. Huck retrieves such a loaf and is pleased to learn that it tastes better than the "low-down corn-pone" that he usually eats.

*After being locked up with the hostile Pap, Huck finds even squirrels to be welcoming. However, this scene is later contrasted with scenes in which nature is very dangerous. Although Huck is free in nature, he could not survive there without human society for very long. It's ironic, though, that here society provides Huck, albeit unknowingly, with better food to eat when he is presumed dead, than when he is alive.*

Huck thinks that the Widow or parson must have prayed for a loaf of bread to find his body, and, indeed, one did. He figures that when somebody like the Widow or parson prays, the prayer is answered, but that when someone like him prays, the prayer goes unanswered.

*Huck's thoughts on prayer have changed by this passage: whereas before he puts no stock in prayer, here Huck comes to think that good people's prayers are answered, and that bad people's are not. He sees himself as bad, because society has long equated his poverty and wildness with badness, though it is obvious to readers that Huck is not bad at all, revealing society's hypocrisy.*

Huck hides behind a long near the island's shore to observe the ferry as it passes. Many people he knows are onboard, including Pap, Judge Thatcher, and Tom Sawyer, all of whom are talking about Huck's "murder." The captain tells them to scan the shore of Jackson Island for the corpse, and all of them do so, but none see Huck even though he is very close by. The cannon is fired, and Huck imagines that, had it been loaded, the blast would have killed him. The ferry drifts on downstream.

*Huck is maybe too curious about how society thinks about his "murder" for his own good. Overhearing discussions onboard the ferry almost gets Huck wounded, after all, and he could have even been killed. He would do well to enjoy his freedom at a distance from people, at least for now.*

Huck makes a tent, catches a catfish to eat, and puts in more fishing lines to catch breakfast. He begins to feel lonesome, however, and decides to go to bed. Such is his routine for the next three days and nights. He thinks of himself as the "boss" of Jackson's Island. One day, however, after running across a snake and trying to shoot it, Huck comes across the yet-smoking ashes of a campfire. He nervously returns to his camp and hides his things. He himself hides in a tree. When it gets dark, Huck paddles to the Illinois bank of the river, prepares supper, and decides to stay put for the rest of the night.

*Huck is not as free in nature as would make him comfortable. He has to contend with life-threatening dangers like snakes, and also other people out in nature, like those looking for him who could revoke his freedom, or, even more dangerous, violent fugitives. Huck is in need of people he can trust and who can help him at this point. He will experience difficulties impossible to overcome without friends.*

Suddenly, Huck hears the sound of horses and human voices. He shoves out in his canoe and ties up back to his old place. There he tries to get some sleep, but can't, "for thinking." Restless, Huck goes into the woods with his gun, to re-find the campfire ashes he discovered earlier. Though he has no luck, later he does see a fire. A man is sleeping nearby: it is Jim. Huck greets him, but Jim jumps up, then falls to his knees, begging Huck not to hurt him, for he thinks Huck is a ghost. Huck succeeds in convincing Jim that he is not, in fact, a ghost. Huck also finds that he is no longer lonesome having found Jim.

*Just as things become desperate for him, Huck discovers a friend in Jim, with whom he can negotiate the difficulties of nature and of society alike. With characteristic superstition, however, Jim, thinking that Huck was murdered, is afraid that Huck is a ghost.*

Huck learns that Jim came to Jackson's Island the night after Huck was allegedly killed, and that the runaway slave has been living on nothing but strawberries. Huck sets up camp and brings out his provisions of meal, bacon, and coffee, all of which Jim thinks is done by witchcraft. Huck also catches a catfish, which he and Jim enjoy for breakfast. The two eat till they're stuffed and laze in the grass.

*That Jim thinks that Huck summons creature comforts by witchcraft speaks to how poorly Jim has been faring; because the target of racial oppression, Jim can't eat as well as Huck, and so can't fathom doing so without magic being the cause. Together, Huck and Jim can live in relative peace.*

If it wasn't Huck killed in the cabin, Jim asks Huck, who was killed? Huck then explains his escape to Jim, who praises the plan as being worthy of Tom Sawyer himself. In turn, Huck asks Jim how he came to be on Jackson's Island. Jim, reticent at first, has Huck swear to silence, which Huck does, and he assures Jim that he will honor his oath even if people call him a "low down Abolitionist." Jim explains that Miss Watson treated him poorly and often threatened to sell him to a slaveholder in New Orleans. One night, Jim overheard Miss Watson say that, even though she doesn't want to sell him, she could get eight hundred dollars for him, and so has decided to sell. Consequently, Jim fled, doing so by water to avoid being tracked by men and dogs. He eventually swam up to Jackson's Island.

*While it is good of Huck to swear to keep Jim's secret, it is ironic that he thinks of being called an abolitionist a bad thing. Abolitionists fight for the freedom of the oppressed, which, the novel holds, is better than fighting to oppress. Though Huck doesn't understand that now, he will later in the novel. This section of the novel also reveals some of the cruelties of slavery as an institution: Miss Watson, who claims to be a Christian, values money more than she does a human who, in Christian belief, has an immortal and infinitely valuable soul. Jim is also treated cruelly, and hunted like an animal.*

Some young birds fly by Jim and Huck. Jim says that this is a sign that it is going to rain, for chickens flying by signify rain, and so, Jim figures, the same must be the case with young birds. Huck makes to kill one of the birds, but Jim stops him saying that doing so would be death. Jim explains that his father was once very sick, and one of Jim's relatives caught a bird, and Jim's grandma said his father would die, and his father did. Jim goes on to list things that bring bad luck, like counting what one is going to eat and shaking a tablecloth after sundown.

*In the wild, Huck and Jim need to do whatever they can to survive, but superstitions sometimes get in the way of common-sense survivalist actions, like Jim's superstition about birds. Huck and Jim could eat the birds, but, because of an irrational, impractical superstition, they refrain from doing so. Jim's list of superstitions reveals how arbitrary superstitions are.*

Huck asks if there are any good-luck signs. Jim says there are very few, and that they're not very useful, because there's no reason to know if good luck is coming one's way. For example, Jim says, if you have hairy arms and a hairy chest, it's a sign that you will be rich. Huck asks Jim if he has hairy arms and a hairy chest, which Jim does. Though Jim admits he isn't rich now, he says he was once rich, recounting how he lost his money speculating in livestock and a bank. But at last, Jim thinks, he is rich now, because he owns himself, and he is worth eight hundred dollars. He wishes he had that money, because then he "wouldn' want no mo'."

*Here Jim reveals that underlying his superstition is an expectation that bad luck is always around the corner, which is well founded considering that Jim is socioeconomically and racially oppressed. He expects bad things because he is often afflicted with bad things. Jim also reveals here how a concept like wealth is relative. Even though he is not wealthy by societal standards, he knows that he is wealthy if only because he's free. Freedom alone makes one sufficiently rich. The concept of Jim getting $800 for himself also, though, highlights the craziness of* anyone *getting money for selling anyone else. Jim is worth more than $800—he's worth an infinite amount as a human being. By having Jim value himself according to slavery's terms, the novel shows how slavery makes no sense.*

## CHAPTER 9

In the morning, Huck wants to find the middle of the island, so he and Jim set out and find it. This place is a high hill or ridge with a cavern in its side. Jim convinces Huck that the two of them should hide their gear in the cavern in case people come looking for them. He also convinces Huck to hide the canoe nearby. Having hidden everything, Huck and Jim eat in the cavern.

*While freedom is very important to Huck, it is all the more so for Jim, who faces severe punishment if he is caught, and a life of enslavement and separation from his beloved family. For this reason, Jim is all the more protective of his freedom and so takes extra precautions, like hiding the gear in the cavern.*

Outside, it begins to rain fiercely. Huck is very content, however, and Jim points out that Huck wouldn't be in the cavern were it not for him, that Huck would be out in the woods drowning in the rain. During subsequent days, Huck and Jim paddle all over the flooded island in their canoe. Animals abound, meek with hunger. Jim and Huck see saw-logs drift by, but leave them for fear of being discovered. Indeed, the pair never goes out in daylight.

*At the beginning of the novel, Huck is racist and has little respect for the intelligence of black people. However, Huck is forced to acknowledge his own prejudice as Jim proves again and again that he is just as reasonable and practical as his white companion. He saved Huck from the storm, and his cautiousness protects Huck too.*

One night a two-story cabin floats by. Though Huck and Jim board the cabin through a window, it is too dark to see anything, so they lash their canoe to the cabin and wait to explore till morning. At dawn, the two look into the cabin. They see furniture and what Jim identifies as a dead man, shot in the back, whose face, Jim tells Huck, is too "gashly" to look at. Also on the floor of the cabin are cards, whisky bottles, black masks; and on the walls there are words scribbled in charcoal. Jim and Huck take some men and women's clothing from the house into the canoe, along with other supplies. Huck and Jim then shove off from the house, Jim lying down in the canoe and covered with a quilt to avoid discovery, and the pair drifts safely downriver.

*Though it is not revealed here, the corpse that Jim discovers is that of Huck's father, Pap. Jim, shows a kind of parental care for Huck by refusing to reveal this to Huck, to protect Huck from the scene of his father's brutal murder. The evidence Jim and Huck discover in the cabin suggests that Pap was drunk, maybe cheated at cards for personal gain, and was murdered by the men whom he cheated, who wore masks to commit their crime. Pap was vicious to the end. Despite the gory scene, Huck and Jim are resourceful enough to take from the cabin what they can use.*

## CHAPTER 10

Huck wonders who shot the dead man he and Jim discovered, and why, but Jim doesn't tell him because "it would fetch bad luck." The pair finds money stashed in a coat, which leads Jim to speculate that the people in the house stole the coat; otherwise they would have known money was in it and wouldn't have left it. Huck wants to discuss the dead man more, but Jim refuses.

*Jim withholds the identity of the dead man from Huck not because he superstitiously thinks that doing otherwise "would fetch bad luck," but to protect Huck. In doing so, Jim shows himself to be a caring, loving, gentle, and emotionally intelligent human being—traits that slavery never grants to slaves.*

In response, Huck reminds Jim of how, a few days earlier, Huck had fetched a snakeskin with his bare hands, which Jim thought would bring the very worst luck. However, Huck says, all it's brought are the eight dollars, and, on account of that, Huck wishes he had such bad luck every day. Jim warns that the bad luck is coming. And it does. That Friday, Huck finds a rattlesnake in the cavern he and Jim are hiding in and kills it, curling it up on Jim's bed as a prank. When Jim throws himself into bed that night, however, the dead snake's mate is there and bites Jim's ankle. Huck kills the second snake as Jim gulps down some of Pap's whisky, yelling in pain, his foot swelling up all the while. Jim is incapacitated for four days and nights, by the end of which Huck resolves never to touch a snakeskin again for fear of bad luck, nor do other things that bring bad luck, like look over his left shoulder at the moon.

*While Jim sometimes invokes his superstitious-ness to protect other people, like Huck, Huck sometimes invokes his superstitious-ness to relieve himself of responsibility for his actions. After all, he plays a mean prank on Jim by putting the snake in Jim's bed, but, instead of holding himself responsible, he blames the bad luck he generated by touching the snakeskin. Also note how Jim, held by slavery to be sub-human, always treats Huck kindly, while Huck, held by slavery to be superior to Jim because of his whiteness, plays mean pranks. The novel continues to eat away at the idea that slavery's categorization of blacks is in any way accurate.*


The next morning, bored, Huck wants to go exploring, which Jim thinks is a good idea, but he reminds Huck that he mustn't get caught. Huck decides to dress up as a woman using clothes found in the drifting cabin, an idea that Jim praises. Huck practices acting like a girl all day, and paddles in his canoe up the Illinois shore just after dark. He lands at a town, and, after walking around, peeps in at a window to see a woman, later identified as Mrs. Judith Loftus, knitting. She is a stranger, so Huck decides to ask her about what he wants to know. He knocks and reminds himself not to forget that he is pretending to be a girl.

*Just as Huck likes to mix up all the foods on his plate, crossing boundaries others wouldn't cross because of arbitrary rules, so too is he willing to cross the boundary of gender by dressing up and acting like a girl. It is by acting with such freedom that Huck preserves his freedom. However, this scene foreshadows later scenes in the novel in which dressing-up is not an expression of freedom, but rather a means of conning people and satisfying one's desire for money.*


## CHAPTER 11

Judith answers the door and asks Huck his name and where's he's from. Huck lies to the woman, giving a girl's name. The woman is hospitable, and she begins to talk about herself and the goings-on in town, including Huck's alleged murder. She says some people think that Pap murdered Huck, while others think that Jim murdered Huck. There is a reward for the capture of either. In fact, the woman's husband went to Jackson's Island to hunt for Jim, which makes Huck very uneasy. The woman begins to look at Huck curiously. She asks Huck's name again, and Huck accidentally gives a different name from what he gave at first. The woman points out as much, so Huck comes up with another lie to account for his self-contradiction, wishing very badly to leave.

*Huck is very good at lying and, though once in a while he contradicts himself, as when he identifies himself to Judith by two different names, his fibs are often effective. This is because Huck has an uncanny ability to put himself in other people's shoes and imagine what life would be like from perspectives other than his own. That being said, Huck doesn't lie for pleasure or even profit, but only practical reasons, as when he lies to Judith to get information so that he can protect his and Jim's freedom.*

Judith then tells Huck how hard times are for her and her family, how poor they are and how the rats "was as free as if they owned the place." She's right: there are rats everywhere. The woman shows lump of lead she uses to throw at rats and kill them. After throwing the lump, she invites Huck to do so. Huck throws the lump very well. Having retrieved the lump, and after talking for a bit, the woman drops the lump of lead in Huck's lap. Huck claps his legs around the falling lump. The woman asks Huck, again, for his real name. She reveals that she knows he's a boy, but promises not to hurt him or tell on him, thinking him a runaway apprentice whose master treated him badly. Huck plays along with the woman's assumption, lying more.

*Ms. Loftus reveals herself to be as clever as Huck in exposing Huck's real identity, and also moral in protecting Huck from what she thinks is his master's cruelty. Of course, she is really protecting Huck from a much more desperate condition, the loss of his freedom. It is sad that, although Judith is among the most moral characters in the novel, Huck does not trust her enough to give her his real name, reflecting his deep lack of trust in other people, which itself originates from Huck's bad experiences with a broken society and people like the murderous Pap.*

Judith gives Huck a snack and some advice. She tells him to remember his name next time, that he plays a girl poorly, though he might be able to fool men, and she gives him some pointers on acting like a girl. Judith also tells him to contact her if he gets into any trouble. Huck leaves Judith's house, returns to his canoe, and paddles back to Jackson's Island, where he tells Jim that people are hunting them. The pair rushes to load the raft and silently paddles into the darkness of the river.

*Judith is very much like Huck, only female and more mature. She even coaches Huck in how to be better than he is in crossing boundaries, how to imagine what it's like to be a woman even more vividly than he already does. While respecting Huck's freedom, Judith also offers Huck a helping hand, which no other adult figure save Jim does for Huck in the novel.*

## CHAPTER 12

Huck and Jim drift away from Jackson's Island, undiscovered by the men looking for them. At dawn, they tie up their raft on the Illinois side of the river and hide it, lying low there all day while Huck recounts what Mrs. Judith Loftus told him. Come dark, Jim builds a wigwam on the raft, in which a fire can safely be built. By night, the pair drifts downriver on the raft, passing silent cities like St. Petersburg and St. Louis as they go, the inhabitants of which are all asleep.

*To remain free from their pursuers, Huck and Jim have to impose rules on themselves, like not lighting fires save for in the wigwam and only travelling by night. Freedom isn't so much an absence of rules here, as self-reliance and discipline. Huck and Jim are also uncannily distant from society: while others sleep, they are awake.*

At nights, Huck goes into town to buy provisions and supplies. In the mornings, he slips into cornfields to "borrow," that is, steal produce. Huck says that Pap told him that it wasn't harmful to "borrow" things if you mean to pay for them eventually, but the Widow told Huck that such "borrowing" is really just stealing. Huck and Jim discuss this and consequently decide not steal any more crabapples or persimmons. Nevertheless, Huck says that he and Jim "lived pretty high."

*Huck and Jim have the perfect freedom to choose which moral system they will subscribe to: Pap's, which is convenient but harmful to others, or the Widow's, which imposes hardships on Huck and Jim but not on others. The two, committed to the well being of others, freely decide not to steal—and still live well! One can be free and good at once.*

One night during a storm, Huck and Jim see a wrecked steamboat. Huck wants to board it and have an "adventure," in the spirit of Tom Sawyer, but Jim "was dead against it." Huck, however, convinces a reluctant Jim to go against his better judgment, supposing that the pair will find valuable things onboard the boat.

*Even though Huck is morally maturing, under Tom's influence he is still childish when it comes to balancing costs and benefits. He thinks endangering himself and Jim is worth potential profits. Jim knows better, but goes with the willful Huck to protect him.*



Once onboard the steamboat, Huck and Jim realize that they're not alone. They hear voices, one of a man pleading for his life, the other two of men planning to kill the man in order to protect themselves, because they think he will betray them to the State for having broken the law. Huck eavesdrops as the two men decide not to shoot the man, but rather to escape the steamboat and let the third man drown in it as the storm raises the water level of the river. Killing a man, one of the two says, just "ain't good morals." As the men start out, Huck tells Jim to make for the raft that is lashed to the steamboat. But, when Jim does so, he discovers that the raft has broken loose, stranding him and Huck.

*In contrast to Tom's make-believe gang of children, the gang Jim and Huck encounters on the doomed steamboat are very real, vicious, and murderous—but, like Tom's Gang, this one is just as arbitrary in its moral code. It is ironic that one of the thieves refuses to shoot a man, but is willing to let a man drown. This thief seems to want to excuse himself from the guilt of murder, even though his action here has the same effect as murder. His rule is absurd.*

## CHAPTER 13

Terrified, Huck and Jim search for the skiff the men used to reach the wreck, at long last finding it. Just as they do, one of the three men pokes his head out of a door mere feet away from Huck. But the man doesn't see him in the dark. After the man goes back with his partner into the steamboat, Huck and Jim make a break for the skiff, jump in, and cut it loose. They drift in silence.

*In this suspenseful scene, it is bad luck that one of the three men aboard the boat almost discovers Huck and Jim, but good luck that he doesn't. Fortunes change like this all the time in the novel, which points to the silliness of Huck and Jim's superstitious beliefs that center only on bad luck.*

Huck realizes it must be dreadful to be in the position the robber-murderers are in, trapped on the steamboat without any means of escape. After all, he figures that he himself might become a murderer one day, and then, he says, "how would *I* like it?" He thinks of ways to save the murderers from the steamboat, but the storm threatens to make any rescue impossible.

*Whereas someone like Miss Watson would condemn the robbers, Huck's moral system, not conforming to society's, is based more on an elastic empathy. He is imaginatively free enough to truly do unto others as he would have done unto him, and is not afraid to put himself into an immoral person's shoes.*

In the darkness, Huck and Jim spot their unmanned raft and paddle towards it. Upon reaching it, Jim boards, and Huck tells him to signal with a light when he has floated two miles so that Huck, in the skiff, can meet up with him. Soon afterward, as Huck paddles toward Jim's light, Huck sees a village on the shore. After arriving there, he lies to a watchman, telling him that "pap, and mam, and sis, and Miss Hooker" are up the river in a wrecked steamboat, in dire trouble. The watchmen refuses to help, at first, but then paddles top help once Huck lies that the watchman will be paid for rescuing them.

*Huck's lies are often self-serving, but here he lies on behalf of the robber-murderers, in order to save them. Huck lies because he thinks that if he were to tell the truth, the watchman wouldn't help the people drowning upstream. The robbers would let their companion drown; society would let all the robbers drown. Huck would always prevent people from drowning if at all possible.*

Huck feels good about going to so much trouble to save the gang in the steamboat. He thinks that the Widow would be proud of him, because "rapscallions and dead beats is the kind the widow and good people takes the most interest in." Before long, the wreck is towed by the watchman's ferryboat to the village. Huck, heavy-hearted, realizes that all the robbers must have died. He shoves off and, at last, rejoins Jim, on an island, where the pair "turned in and slept like dead people."

*Huck thinks that, to be truly good, one must take an interest in marginalized and misguided peoples. Note how it is after realizing that the robbers must have drowned that Huck sleeps like a dead person himself, both because he is exhausted, but also because he is, maybe subconsciously, experiencing what it is like to be dead, taking the ultimate sympathetic interest in the robbers.*

## CHAPTER 14

The next day, Huck and Jim enjoy the things they found in the robbers' skiff, and Huck describes the night before as an "adventure." But Jim says he doesn't want any more adventures, because he could have easily drowned or been captured and returned to slavery. Huck concludes Jim has "an uncommon level head" for a black person.

*Jim's realist interpretation of the night's events convinces Huck that avoiding dangers in the future is reasonable. This is a maturation in terms of his pragmatism, but also in his regard for Jim, whose intelligence he prejudicially dismissed before.*

Huck reads to Jim about kings and noblemen. Huck explains that kings get whatever they want and go to war and "hang round the harem" where they keep their multiple wives. Huck and Jim then discuss King Solomon, whom Jim accuses of being a fool for wanting to chop a baby in two. Huck tells Jim he's missed the point, but Jim says the deeper point is this: that a man with few children thinks of children as precious, but a man with many children, like Solomon, thinks of children as being expendable as cats. Huck thinks that Jim is being stubborn, but changes the subject to other kings.

*In addition to foreshadowing Huck and Jim's adventures with the duke and king, this passage provides Jim's critique of wealth as expressed in his critique of Solomon: he thinks that people with little cherish what they have all the more, whereas those with surplus devalue what they have. In addition, Jim here criticizes a Biblical hero as being a fool on the grounds that he is not caring enough, and while Jim may be missing the point he is also not entirely wrong, either.*

Huck tells Jim about Louis XVI and his young son, who was jailed after his father's execution. Jim feels sorry for the little prince, and Huck replies that some people think he escaped and came to America. Jim is pleased, but imagines that he must be lonely, given that there are no other kings in America. Huck says that the prince could join the police force or teach French. Jim doesn't understand: don't all people speak the same language, he asks. Huck says no, and gives an argument for why that is so, but Jim pokes a hole in the argument, such that Huck is forced to conclude, "It warn't no use wasting words." Both Huck and Jim fall silent.

*Europe is represented here as a place of feudal brutality; America, as a refuge for the free, like the prince. Huck is right, of course, that not all people speak the same language, but Jim poses a valid logical argument to which Huck can't respond, indicating that while Jim may be ignorant about the world his reasoning ability is at least Huck's equal. When Huck says he won't waste words responding, it's both because he doesn't have a response and because, though he thinks Jim reasonable, he is still prejudicially dismissive of Jim.*

## CHAPTER 15

Huck and Jim judge that they are three days out of Cairo, near the Ohio River. The pair plans to take a steamboat up the Ohio into the free States, where slavery is illegal and Jim can no longer be hunted. But a fog sets in, limiting Huck and Jim's visibility. With Huck in the canoe and Jim in the raft, the two become separated, and Huck becomes lost. Huck hears whooping sounds, and thinking them Jim's signal, he whoops back, but to no avail. Huck continues to drift, "lonesome," and, at some point, takes a nap. When he wakes, Huck realizes how big the river is before spotting the raft in the distance. Huck and Jim reunite.

*The free States are Jim's beacon of hope as a place the laws of which preserve his freedom. They are also a symbol in the novel for freedom generally. However, at a crucial juncture, it is not slave-hunters, for example, who impede Huck and Jim progress to freedom, but rather nature, specifically the fog that separates Huck from Jim. Even though nature is not persecutory like society is, it is random, indifferent to human desires, and sometimes, as here, dangerous.*

Huck asks Jim if he fell asleep and why Jim didn't think to wake him. Jim says he is just grateful that Huck didn't drown. Huck asks Jim if he's been drinking, to which Jim, taken aback, responds that he hasn't. Huck tells Jim that he must have been dreaming that the pair was separated, indeed, that there was any fog at all. Jim can't believe it; he sits quietly for five minutes. At last he tells Huck he must have been dreaming, but that it was the most powerful, vivid dream he'd ever had.

*Huck has tricked Jim before, but not about something so important as this. That he is inclined to trick Jim at all demonstrates Huck's childishness, but it also demonstrates, more problematically, Huck's callousness toward Jim, maybe the product of his belief that Jim is racially inferior to him. Huck doesn't yet fully empathize with Jim.*

Huck requests that Jim tell him all about his dream, which Jim proceeds to do. Jim even interprets the dream, saying that the whoops are warnings of bad luck, the tow-heads are troubles the pair is going to get into with mean people unless the two mind their own business, and that the river clear of fog is the free States.

*Even though the fog occurred randomly and without malice, Huck's lie, that Jim dreamed the fog, encourages Jim to think of it within a superstitious interpretive framework, not as random and meaningless but as meaningful.*

Huck then asks what the leaves and rubbish on the raft mean, along with its broken oar. Jim realizes that Huck was tricking him all along. Jim hadn't been dreaming at all. He and Huck really were separated, and there really was fog. Jim tells Huck that he was heart-broken thinking that Huck had died in the fog, and that he had cried and wanted to kiss Huck's foot to see him safe and sound again. And Huck could only think about making a fool out of Jim with a lie and shaming him. When he hears all this, Huck is himself ashamed. At last, after working himself up to humble himself to a black person, Huck apologizes to Jim, and feels no regret.

*Jim is angry at Huck not for lying, but for failing to imagine the consequences of his lies, and, more generally, for failing to imagine how he (Jim) experiences the world. Jim was worried to death for Huck, even like a family member would worry, but Huck can't imagine that and sees only a cheap opportunity to trick Jim in the style of Tom Sawyer. But after Jim expresses how much he worried over Huck, Huck realizes how calloused he's been, and, as he will later in the novel to an even greater extent, he treats Jim like the equal that he is. That Huck feels no regret for apologizing shows his willingness to cross the slave/white divide and to see Jim as a true human being.*

## CHAPTER 16

Huck and Jim continue their journey to Cairo, and, as they approach it, Jim trembles and is feverish with the thought of being so close to his freedom. Huck begins to tremble and feel feverish too, because he acknowledges that he is helping Jim to liberate himself. Huck's conscience is troubled by this; it tells Huck that he should have told someone that Jim was running away, that he is meanly wronging Miss Watson, who has done nothing to harm him, by helping Jim, her property. Huck feels so mean and miserable that he wishes he were dead.

*Huck has no control over his conscience, conditioned by society. It makes itself known to him not with a reasoned argument but a bodily symptom of sickness, and, as such, Huck can't reason with himself to figure out what course of action he should take. Instead, at least for now, he can only do what conscience compels him to do. In relation to conscience, then, Huck is not free, though he will grow into such a freedom.*

Restless and fidgety like Huck, Jim talks about what he will do when he is free, how he will work and save money so that he can buy his wife and two children out of slavery, or, if the owners of his wife and children won't sell, how he would enlist the help of abolitionists to "steal them." Huck is mortified to hear Jim speak this way, about stealing his children, who belong, Huck thinks, to "a man that hadn't ever done me no harm." Huck is sorry to hear Jim lower himself in this way. He resolves to turn Jim in.

*Jim's course of action is very reasonable—he wants to liberate his family from unjust bondage—but Huck, in the throes of his Southern slave-owning conscience, can's understand the logic of Jim wanting to free his family no matter which way, and does not see as ridiculous that Jim's family should belong more to their master than to Jim. The slave-owner may never have harmed Huck, but he has harmed his slaves simply by owning them.*

Jim spots in the distance what he thinks is Cairo. Huck volunteers to paddle over and see if it is, with the intent of turning Jim in. As he does, a skiff comes along, aboard which are two armed men. They tell Huck that they're hunting five runaway slaves, and ask Huck if there are any people aboard his raft, and, if so, whether they're white or black. Huck desperately wants to tell them about Jim, but the words won't come out of his mouth. At last, Huck lies: he says the man aboard his raft is white. The men say they'll see for themselves. Huck tells them he wishes they would, because, he lies, the white man on the raft is his father, who's sick, along with his mother and Mary Ann, also aboard the raft. As the men paddle to investigate, Huck let's on that the illness that afflicts his family is both contagious and dangerous: smallpox. As soon as Huck does so, the men refuse to get anywhere near the raft, apologize to Huck, give him money, and paddle away.

*Even though his conscience tells Huck to turn Jim in, Huck has an even stronger ethical force at work in him, one that literally prevents him from producing language to turn Jim in. If conscience is conditioned by society, this stronger ethical force in Huck is deeply personal, and, as such, it is not riddled with hypocrisies as conscience is. Huck's lie to the men, which ultimately saves Jim from discovery, is an action more expressive of Huck's personality than any other he could have made. Note that the slave-hunters Huck talks to are not vicious: they do the best they can to help Huck's made-up sick family without futilely endangering themselves. It's clear that their hunt for Jim is conscience-motivated, not vice-motivated. It's just that a society that accepts slavery as okay is, by necessity, turning even good men into hypocrites.*

Huck feels bad and low when he returns to the raft, but reasons that he would feel just as bad had he done "right" and turned Jim in. He figures it is easier to do wrong than right, and that the outcome of doing either is the same, and so decides to "always do whichever come handiest at the time." Jim finds Huck hiding in the river, holding onto the raft. Jim praises Huck for his clever deception of the two men.

*Given that Huck would feel bad regardless of what course of action he pursued, he realizes that conscience is not a firm means of determining what is right. He therefore endorses an ethic of handiness: whatever his heart tells him to do instinctually, Huck resolves to do. He is free, in this way, to be himself, and by following his heart, his compassion, Huck's actions will show the depravity of the moral rules that dominate Southern society because of its embrace of racism.*

Huck and Jim resume their journey, passing two towns, only to find out that neither are Cairo. Huck tells Jim that the two of them must have passed by Cairo when lost in the fog nights earlier. Jim doesn't want to talk about and blames the rattlesnake skin for their bad luck, a judgment with which Huck agrees.

*Despite how excited Jim was to reach the free states, he gracefully accepts the bad news that he and Huck have passed Cairo. This may well be because of his superstitions: instead of blaming somebody for bad luck, he just moves on.*

Huck and Jim learn they have reached the muddy Missouri River, and figure that Cairo is upstream. They decide to canoe there after resting. But when they return to where they left the raft and canoe, they find that the canoe is missing. They are forced to raft downriver till they reach a place where they can buy a canoe. As they drift, a steamboat comes at them full-speed. Huck supposes that the captain is playing a kind of game of getting as close to the raft as he can without touching it. But the steamboat keeps coming; a bell rings and men yell and cuss at Huck and Jim to get out of the way At last, the steamboat crashes into the raft, throwing the pair overboard. Huck swims ashore and finds himself before a house, before barking dogs swarm him. Huck knows better than to move.

*Huck and Jim live in a world that doesn't seem to have a bottom on bad luck. The pair seem to be in a rough spot after missing Cairo, but that doesn't even compare to the bad luck of losing their canoe, and what's worst of all, the bad luck of their random collision with the steamboat. We might wonder, though: is it childish of Huck to think the steamboat captain is playing a game, however, or merely optimistic? Or maybe Huck has seen captains play such games before? Whatever the case, after this tense scene, Huck and Jim are once again on their own.*

## CHAPTER 17

A man, speaking out of a window into the darkness, commands the dogs to hush and asks, "Who's there?" Huck says that he's George Jackson, only a boy. The man asks if Huck knows the Shepherdsons. Huck says that he does not, but the man remains skeptical. Nevertheless, he invites Huck into the house, but tells him that, if anybody is with him, Huck better tell them to stay back lest they be shot. Huck slowly approaches and enters the house, greeted by a family, the Grangerfords, some of whom are armed. All of them agree, though, that Huck is not a Shepherdson.

*As a rule, Huck, however receptive and empathetic, distrusts the people he meets on his travels, giving false names as a matter of course. But, as this scene makes clear, it's not only Huck who is distrustful: the Grangerford who invites Huck into his home is skeptical of Huck too. While it is good of the Grangerfords to overcome their distrust, it is also sad that their society is structured in such a way as to engender such distrust at all.*

The Grangerfords are welcoming and friendly and provide Huck with a meal, clothes, and a place to stay. The boy who lends Huck clothes, Buck, is about as old as Huck is. He boasts that if there had really been Shepherdsons outside, he would have killed one. His father tells Buck that he'll get his chance to do just that, but all in good time. After changing into dry clothes and speaking with Buck, Huck goes down into the parlor to find the Grangerfords smoking and talking. He eats and talks with them. The family assures Huck that he can stay with them for as long as he likes.

*Buck is like Huck in almost every way, even in the sound of their names, except for the fact that he is embroiled in an inherited family feud. While the Grangerfords seem good, that the youngest of them should be so bloody in his thoughts is shocking. Of course, Buck cannot be held accountable for his involvement in the feud. As Huck was harmed by his father, so too is Buck harmed by his, though in a subtler way.*

Huck admires the Grangerford's home, many of the features of which, like the brass doorknob and the brick-bottomed fireplace, are more characteristic of a house in town than in the country. Huck also admires the family's collection of books, which includes classics like *Pilgrim's Progress*, which Huck finds "interesting" but "tough." Hanging on the parlor walls are pictures depicting people and scenes from Revolutionary America, like George Washington and the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

*Huck and Pap's household is contrasted with the Grangerford household: whereas the former is characterized by laziness and meanness, the latter is civil, literate, and historically conscious. Despite all their cultivation, however, the Grangerfords are still hypocritically engaged in a barbaric feud with the Shepherdson family.*

Also hanging on the walls are pictures painted by a member of the Grangerford family, Emmeline, a little girl who died young, all of which are dark in theme and color. Her masterpiece is of a woman preparing to jump from a bridge, but Huck thinks the woman looks too "spidery." Emmeline also wrote poetry about the deaths of men, women, and children; for example, a ballad for a boy who drowned in a well. Huck likes Emmeline's art, and even tries to pay tribute to her with a poem of his own, but he proves unable to write one. Emmeline's room, Huck says, is kept the same as it was on the day she died.

*If Huck is a vital realist in his speech and actions, Emmeline is a morbid romantic, whose imagination is as grandiose as Tom Sawyer's, but much darker. Could it be the case, though, that her art is about death only because it is a classical artistic subject? The literary form at which Huck is most at home is the novel, which, unlike Emmeline's poems, is stuffed to the brim with life.*

## CHAPTER 18

Huck regards Mr. Grangerford, who is the least frivolous of men, as being a gentleman, well-bred, dignified, a joy, but also the stern peace-keeper of the household if need be, though there is seldom the need. This is because all of the Grangerfords are respectful and good-spirited. The older sons of Mr. Grangerford are "tall" and "beautiful" in Huck's estimation. One afternoon, they toast their parents along with Huck and Buck. The Grangerford women are all beautiful too, one proud, grand, but good, another gentle as a dove. Three Grangerford sons have died, along with Emmeline.

*Mr. Grangerford is a foil to Pap. Where Pap is debauched and murderous toward even his own son, Mr. Grangerford is dignified and beloved, even in his just sternness. He is the kind of man who, we think, should be most self-reliant and self-governed. But, just like Pap, Mr. Grangerford is swept up by societal dictates to endanger his family in their feud with the Shepherdsons. That his children are so good and beautiful just shows how much he stands to lose.*

Huck observes that many slaves serve the Grangerford family, each Grangerford being tended to by one slave. Huck himself has a slave to tend to him while staying at the Grangerford home, though, because Huck is not used to being served, he does not give his slave much work to do, while Buck, in contrast, works his slave very hard. Mr. Grangerford, Huck learns, owns many farms and over a hundred slaves, and it is by profiting from his slave-worked farms that Mr. Grangerford has amassed his wealth.

*Just as the Grangerford-Shepherdson feud is hypocritical, so too is it hypocritical that a person as cultivated and seemingly good as Mr. Grangerford should own slaves. Indeed, the means of his and his family's cultivation is built on slave labor. Buck may have read Bunyan, but he has learned from his father that owning and being cruel to slaves is a matter of course.*

Huck learns that there is another aristocratic family living nearby: the Shepherdsons, as proud and grand as the Grangerfords. One day, as Huck and Buck are hunting, a Shepherdson named Harney rides by. Buck tells Huck to jump into the woods and Huck does so. Buck fires a shot at Harney, but only manages to knock his hat off. Harney rides toward where the boys are, gun in hand, but they run as fast as they can, not stopping till they reach the Grangerford home. Mr. Grangerford is pleased to hear this story recounted. However, he tells Buck that he does not want him to shoot Shepherdsons from behind a bush, but that he should jump into the middle of the road next time to shoot.

*This passage introduces the Shepherdson family, who are in bloody conflict with the Grangerfords. Mr. Grangerford implies that the feud is waged for the sake of honor, which is bestowed by society on its members, like how Miss Watson imposes her values on Huck. Though seeking honor is dangerous, even fatal, Mr. Grangerford encourages Buck to seek it. Honor, it would seem, is more important to the Grangerfords than life itself.*

Huck asks Buck why he wanted to kill Harney. Buck says he doesn't have a reason, that Harney never did anything to him, but "it's on account of the feud" that he would have killed him. Huck has never heard of a feud. Buck explains that it's when one two families fight till everybody's dead, and then there's no more feud. Buck explains that many Grangerfords and Shepherdsons have died in the feud, and many have been wounded. He explains how, just this year, an old Shepherdson rode down and killed a young Grangerford, only to be killed himself a week later. Huck says the old man must be a coward, but Buck says there isn't a coward in either of the two feuding families.

*Like a miniature Civil War, the Grangerford-Shepherdson feud has cost many lives, and Buck himself casually supposes that it will end only when everybody involved has been killed, which only shows how pointless the bloodshed is. More than that, Buck doesn't even know what the feud is about; he has pitifully inherited his bleak bloody fate from the society he lives in. What makes the feud all the more pathetic is Buck's insistence that all involved are rather heroic. So many good people are killing one another, and all for nothing.*

Huck goes to church with the Grangerfords and listens to a sermon about brotherly love, which he finds tiring but which the Grangerfords discuss approvingly at length. After church, Miss Sophia, a Grangerford girl, asks Huck into her room. There, she asks him to do her a favor and not tell anybody, which Huck agrees to do. Miss Sophia tells Huck to retrieve her copy of the New Testament from the church. As Huck enters the church, he notices many hogs resting on the cool floor. He observes that, while people go to church only when they have to, hogs go to church whenever they can.

*It is ironic that the Grangerfords, who are waging a feud of brotherly hate, approve of the sermon on brotherly love. Hypocritically, what they approve is the opposite of what they practice. In this case, religion could instruct the Grangerfords in leading better, happier lives, but their commitment to Christian values is less than their commitment to senseless honor; or, worse, they don't even realize that they're hypocrites. Huck's innocent observations about humans and hogs in church allow Twain to drive home this charge of religious hypocrisy.*

After retrieving Miss Sophia's Testament, Huck shakes it and out falls a note, on which is written: "*Half-past two.*" Huck gives the Testament and note to Miss Sophia, who lights up when she reads the latter. Huck inquires as to what the note is about, but Ms. Sophia, secretively, doesn't respond, and she sends Huck off to play.

*This scene foreshadows Miss Sophia's elopement with a Shepherdson boy. The note in the Testament is right at home there: its contents give Miss Sophia information about meeting with her beloved, whish is consistent with the ideal of brotherly love.*

Huck heads down to the river, only to notice that the slave tending to him, Jack, is close behind him. Jack tells Huck that, if he comes down into the nearby swamp, he (Jack) will show him a lot of water-moccasins (a kind of snake). Huck, though suspicious, agrees, and follows Jack through the swamp. Instead of leading Huck to snakes, however, Jack leads him to Jim, hidden on a densely vegetated piece of land. Jim tells Huck that their raft survived the steamboat crash, patched up by Jim himself, and is hidden.

*Right after Miss Sophia makes to rendezvous with her partner, Jack, of his own free will, and with benevolence, unites Huck with Jim. We might think that Jack is eager to help Huck because he has not been cruel as Buck is to his slave, and that he helps Jim because, like Jim, he also has a love for freedom. This scene also foreshadows Huck's escape from the feud on the repaired raft with Jim.*

The next day, Huck notices he is alone in the Grangerford's house. He goes outside, where Jack tells him that Miss Sophia has run away to marry Harney Shepherdson. All the Grangerfords are out and about trying to prevent the marriage. Huck runs after the Grangerfords to the river road, where he finds mounted and armed Shepherdsons shooting at Buck and another Grangerford hidden behind a woodpile. Huck hides in a tree and watches one of the Grangerfords shoot a Shepherdson out of his saddle. The other Shepherdsons tend to the man, and eventually ride away. Huck calls to Buck, who begins to cry, saying that his father and brothers are dead, and that he wishes he had killed Harney the day he saw him on the road.

*Like Romeo and Juliet, Miss Sophia and Harney come from feuding families but love one another nonetheless. Their families try to put an end to their love for no reason other than the feud, as if to protect the family name, but all their actions to that end only consume the families themselves in senseless bloodshed. Most of the male Grangerfords are wiped out, Buck becomes personally embittered towards the Shepherdsons, and it seems that he was right when he said that the feud will be over only when everybody's dead.*

The Shepherdsons ride back and shoot at Buck and the other Grangerford boy. Wounded, the two boys jump into the river. Huck feels so sick he almost falls out of his tree. He regrets, he says, ever having seen such things, and dreams about them often. After dark, Huck climbs out of his tree and vows never to return to the Grangerford house. He feels guilty for having ignited the day's violence by not telling anybody about the note in Miss Sophia's Testament, which he figures must have meant that Miss Sophia was to meet Harney at the time specified. As Huck creeps along the riverbank, crying, he finds two dead bodies, one of them Buck's. Huck covers their faces, thinking how good Buck was to him.

*Even though Huck hates the mindless violence he witnesses to the point that he feels sick, and the part of human nature that gives rise to such violence, he only does so because he has such a deep love for human goodness, like Buck's as expressed before his tragic, senseless death. It is difficult to keep in mind, also, that Huck is just a boy, yet he feels as though he's bearing the weight of so many deaths for not exposing Miss Sophia's elopement with Harney. Huck grows from this experience, however: in the future, instead of even considering idealist solutions to problems, he will more and more privilege practical consequences.*

Huck goes to where Jim is hiding. Jim is so glad to see Huck that he hugs him. Huck tells Jim to lose no time in shoving the raft off into the river so that the pair can leave the violence and danger of the feud behind them. Huck is nervous until he and Jim drift two miles away from where the Grangerfords and Shepherdsons live, at which point he feels safe, and he and Jim share a meal. Huck meditates that all homes seem "cramped up and smothery" except for a raft, aboard which "you feel mighty free and easy and comfortable."

*Even though the Grangerfords were a welcoming surrogate family to Huck, their lives were so cramped up with their mindless feud that no one could feel free in their company. Indeed, it is only on the raft, on the wide-open river, in the company of his surrogate father Jim, so to speak, that Huck can feel free and comfortable at all.*

## CHAPTER 19

One morning, while canoeing through a creek in search of berries, Huck encounters two men running, pleading with Huck to let them on his canoe, begging for their lives. Huck tells the men not to jump into the boat but to run through the bushes and then wade through the creek before finally meeting up with him later, to throw the pursuing dogs off their scent. The men do so.

*This scene recalls the earlier scene in which Huck and Jim flee from the slave-hunters who have arrived at Jackson's Island. And, indeed, Huck's shared experience with these men might be one of the motives he has for helping them to secure their freedom.*

After meeting up with the two men, Huck learns that the older one got into trouble for selling "an article to take tartar off the teeth," while the other, younger, one for running a religious "temperance revival" against drinking alcohol while, his devotees discover, drinking himself. The two con men agree to work together. The older one specializes in cons that involve doctoring and preaching.

*The con men play society against itself for personal gain: they exploit silly trends, like oral cosmetics, as well as societal religiosity. Unlike most people Huck has met, these two men are not hypocrites, even though they are liars. Indeed, in some ways they seem similar to Huck and Jim!*


When the younger con man learns this, he bemoans the fact that he is forced to con people, having once been "so high." He claims to have been born the Duke of Bridgewater. Huck and Jim pity the man after he begins to cry, and the duke tells the pair that they should bow when they address him, and do so by his official titles, and to wait on him, which Huck and Jim do. Later, the older con man claims, also crying, that he is "the late Duphin," or King of France. Huck and Jim begin to comfort the king as well as the duke.

*As Tom creates a miniature society with his Gang, so too do the con men make a miniature society of the raft, with themselves as rulers and Huck and Jim as servants. Huck and Jim opt into this arrangement out of pity, and maybe genuine credulity on Jim's part.*

The duke becomes sour, but the king tells him that he should cheer up. Life on the raft is comfortable, with plenty of food and ease. The king asks for the duke's hand, and the duke gives it to him. Huck and Jim immediately feel more comfortable after the unfriendliness on the raft dissipates; for, as Huck thinks, "what you want above all things, on a raft, is for everybody to be satisfied, and feel right and kind towards the others." Indeed, even though Huck knows that the duke and king are con men, he doesn't say anything, so as to avoid conflict.

*The duke gets sour at the king because the king managed to lie himself into a higher rank than the duke. After Huck witnesses the Grangerford-Shepherdson feud, maybe as a result of witnessing it, he becomes very wary of human conflict, actual and potential. In his ideal society, people would be kind toward one another. Even though he knows that the duke and king are con men, he doesn't expose them, because they seem harmless and because exposing them may only cause unnecessary conflict.*


## CHAPTER 20

The duke and king ask Huck and Jim if Jim is a runaway slave. Huck says that Jim's not and tells a lie, that he is an orphan traveling with a family slave. The pair, Huck goes on to say, has to travel at night, because so many people stop their raft to ask if Jim is a runaway. The duke proposes to invent a way that the four of them can travel in the daytime. Afterward, the duke and king overhaul the wigwam on the raft and decide to sleep in Huck and Jim's beds. It begins to storm; Huck and Jim are posted as lookouts while the duke and king sleep.

*The duke and king immediately reveal themselves to be selfish and exploitative, taking Huck and Jim's beds and sleeping while Huck and Jim work. Huck doesn't trust them, and he lies about his relationship with Jim, presumably to protect him from whatever the duke and king might have in store for him. But Huck's commitment to non-conflict prevents him from disobeying the duke and king.*

The next morning, the duke and king scheme as to how to make some easy money. They decide to put on a production of Shakespeare and begin to practice for a performance at the next town they reach. Having reached a little town down the bend, however, they're surprised to find that no one is around. A sick black person in town tells them that all the townspeople have gathered for a religious revival camp-meeting back in the woods. The duke goes to a printing office in town.

*Like Huck, the duke and king are fantastic performers, which requires of them a kind of freedom, the freedom to transform into different characters. The two are also adaptable: though they don't find an audience to play to, they quickly and productively change their plans. While these are good traits, however, they can be misused, as the duke and king misuse them to selfish ends.*

With Jim still on the raft and the duke at the printing office, Huck and the king go to the meeting in the woods and find thousands of people there. A preacher and his congregants are singing a hymn, and the preacher soon begins to preach. The crowd goes wild. The king joins the preacher on the platform and proclaims to the congregants that he is a reformed pirate who, if given enough money, will return to the Indian Ocean to convert other pirates to Christianity, at last bursting into tears. A hat is passed through the congregation, and the king makes eighty-seven dollars.

*The king turns society on its head. By pretending to represent its values, he really serves what* he *values, which is solely his own, usually material, interest. Even though the king's story is wildly improbable, the worshippers give him their money, maybe because they are so zealous in their faith that they fail to see the truth before them, which Huck sees all the time: that people are not trustworthy.*


Meanwhile, the duke is in town at the printing office, selling bills and advertisements in, and subscriptions to, a town newspaper, making, in total, nine and a half dollars. He also printed a wanted poster describing Jim, so that he and the king and Huck and Jim can travel by day; for if anyone were to stop them concerning Jim, they could say that they have captured him and are returning him to his owners. All agree that the duke is pretty smart.

*The duke's plan that enables him and his companions to travel by day subverts labels of freedom and enslavement as they are established by society. It is by pretending that Jim is captured that his freedom can be preserved. To generalize this, the duke and king present a way of life in which playing along with society enables one to be free.*


That night, as Huck comes up to replace Jim as the lookout, Jim asks Huck if he expects them to run into any more kings on their journeys. Huck says he doesn't, much to Jim's relief. Jim says that two kings are bad enough, drunk as they currently are. He also tells Huck that he asked the king to speak French earlier, and that the king told him that he had been out of his country for so long that he had forgotten his native language.

*As good and understanding as Jim is, he recognizes that the duke and king are deeply selfish and, like Pap, debauched. That being said, Jim invests such a pure trust in people, despite knowing how bad they can be, that he accepts the con men as what they claim to be, even though the king himself can't back up his claim to be French.*

## CHAPTER 21

The duke and king continue to practice Shakespeare. After a few days, the group arrives at a small town, where the duke posts a bill advertising his and the king's performance. Huck notices that the town is dilapidated: the houses aren't painted, weeds grow in the gardens, and hogs loaf around everywhere. In town, Huck overhears a conversation in which one man tries to bum tobacco off of another.

*In contrast to the Grangerford estate, which is well-kept and beautiful, the town Huck explores in this passage seems neglected and impoverished, and its citizens are immediately portrayed as lazy and aimless.*


By noon, many townspeople are drinking. Huck witnesses three fights. One townsperson cries out that "old Boggs" is riding into town, drunk, much to everyone's excitement. Boggs has a reputation for insulting people. He even asks Huck if he's prepared to die. Though Huck is scared, a townsperson assures Huck that Boggs is good-natured and harmless. Boggs begins to shout for a man called Colonel Sherburn, whom he says he will kill. People laugh and talk, that is, until Sherburn steps out of a shop and tells Boggs he is tired of his antics but will endure it, if only till one o'clock.

*Boggs is a kind of harmless Pap, debauched but non-violent. While he seems scary to Huck, one has no real need to fear him; he is not what he seems. In contrast to Boggs is Sherburn, who is maybe the most sincere character in the novel. He says what he means and does what he says. In this sense, Sherburn, in his sincerity, stands apart from the hypocritical society of which he is part,*

Boggs continues to carry on about Sherburn. Townspeople try to shut him up, telling him he only has fifteen minutes till one o'clock, but to no avail. A man runs to fetch Boggs' daughter. About five or ten minutes later, Huck, having walked down the street, sees Boggs, no longer on his horse, nervous-looking. Sherburn calls out Bogg's name, and, just as Bogg's daughter arrives on the scene, Sherburn shoots Bogg to death. The townspeople resolve to lynch Sherburn.

*True to his word, Sherburn tolerates Boggs's antic till one o'clock, after which he murders the innocent man. He makes laws, however unjust, and enforces them with brutal surety. Society, in turn, resolves to enforce their law against murder by lynching Sherburn, but, as we will see, society is not so firm as the fiercely constant Colonel.*

## CHAPTER 22

The lynch mob tromps through town, scaring women and children as they go, till they arrive at Sherburn's home, where they tear down his fence. Sherburn calmly steps out onto the roof above his porch with a gun in hand, and is silent for a long time. Then he slowly and scornfully addresses the mob. He says he is safe from them as long as it is daytime and they are not behind him, because they are cowards and he is a "'*man*'." He tells them they are not really courageous but borrow courage from their mass. Sherburn goes back into his house and the mob, humiliated, disperses.

*Sherburn calls the mob out on their hypocrisy, giving a psychological explanation for their (false) sense of empowerment as a group and a critique of their deficiencies as individuals. This is the most persuasive analysis of society in the novel. But its source, Sherburn himself, has just murdered a man in cold blood. Sherburn is free, but a danger to society in his freedom, a dark vision of what Huck could become if he follows a path of violence.*

Huck goes to the circus, which he thinks splendid. A drunk man approaches the ringmaster of the circus and says he wants to ride a horse, impeding the progress of the circus such that the men in the audience swarm to throw the drunk man out. But the ringmaster lets him ride. The audience laughs save Huck, who trembles to see the drunk man endangered. But soon the drunk man stands on top of his horse and does tricks; he himself is a member of the circus. Huck is deeply impressed.

*If Sherburn reveals the mob's cowardice, the circus reveals its audience's cruelty. Everyone save Huck laughs at the drunk man's endangerment, when Huck's empathetic trembling is maybe the more humane response to such a spectacle. But, we learn, the man is part of the circus all along. The boundary between the real and artificial is disturbingly porous in Huck's world.*

That night, the duke and king put on their performance of Shakespeare in town, but only twelve people show up, and they laugh the whole time. The duke says that the people of Arkansas aren't cultured enough to appreciate Shakespeare, and he devises a way to give them the low comedy they want. He posts another bill in town, advertising: "THE KING'S CAMELEOPARD [giraffe] OR THE ROYAL NONESUCH." The biggest line of the bill announces that ladies and children will not be admitted to see the show.

*The duke and king's performance of Shakespeare invites comparison with the circus: what makes the latter fun but the former ridiculous? The circus misrepresents itself just as the duke and king do, and the duke and king don't endanger anyone as the circus does. It seems that the novel concludes that The Royal Nonesuch is harmless enough as a money-making scheme, and that the duke and king's unique vice is in their ruthlessness when it comes to exploiting innocent people.*

## CHAPTER 23

All day the duke and king prepare for their performance of "The Royal Nonesuch," rigging up a stage with a curtain and lighting. Many men are in attendance that night, and, after the duke talks the show up, the king enters on all fours, naked, and painted "as splendid as a rainbow." The audience laughs wildly, so much so that the king performs his "capering" act three times.

*Thus far, the duke and king have seemed, while vaguely seedy and selfish, harmless enough and farcically silly, a perception strengthened by the king's ridiculous performance, which the audience finds hilarious. The duke and king seem to know what society wants (low farce), and they deliver.*

After that, the duke thanks the audience members and asks them to spread the word about the show. The audience members, however, are dissatisfied with how short the show was. They begin to storm the stage before a big man jumps up on a bench and shouts that they have been cheated, yes, but that they don't want to be the laughing-stocks of the town. He proposes that they talk the show up to the other men in town, which they all proceed to do.

*The men in the audience resent having been defrauded, but instead of limiting the damage the duke and king can do to their community, they maximize it to protect their own externally derived sense of dignity. They know that what the duke and king are doing is wrong, but hypocritically become complicit in it.*

The next day, the duke and king play to a full house and scam them in the same way as they did the audience before. As they eat later that night, the duke and king tell Jim and Huck to float the boat two miles below town and to hide it. On the third and final night of performing "The Royal Nonesuch," the house is crammed again, but Huck notices that the men in the audience all have rotten eggs and produce and dead cats hidden in their pockets and coats. Just before the show is scheduled to start, the duke tells Huck to make a run for the raft. He does so, and the duke does the same.

*The duke and king must expect that the men in the town will use the third show as a way to exact revenge against the con men themselves; otherwise, they would not know to make an escape plan for the night of their final performance. The townspeople, then, are woefully predictable in their selfishness, which the duke and king rather cunningly exploit. We can't help but think that society had it coming, so to speak.*

Back at the raft, Huck and the duke meet up with Jim and the king, who didn't even go to town for the performance. The duke revels in how well he and the king pulled off the scam, and mocks the townsmen for thinking that they would get the last laugh by throwing their eggs and cabbages and cats at the con men. All in all, the duke and king make a little less than five hundred dollars.

*The duke's mockery of society is reminiscent of Colonel Sherburn's critique, though Sherburn's centers on the cowardice of society, whereas the duke's centers on people's overestimation of themselves and their cleverness. Huck might agree with these critiques, but he would not exploit society out of selfishness as Sherburn and the con men do.*

Huck knows that the duke and king are really just con men, but he doesn't think it would do any good to tell Jim that, and anyway, Huck thinks, "you couldn't tell them from the real kind." The next morning, Huck wakes to find Jim mourning, thinking about his wife and children. Huck realizes, even though it doesn't seem natural to him, that Jim must care just as much about his family as white people do for their own. Jim recounts to Huck how one time he asked his daughter to shut the door and she didn't do it but just smiled at him. Jim slapped her, only to learn soon after that the girl is deaf and dumb. Jim doesn't think he'll ever forgive himself for harming her.

*Huck implies here that anybody who exploits society for purposes of self-interest, from a con man to a monarch, is villainous: social standing doesn't reflect one's character. For example, Jim, who is oppressively marginalized, reveals here that he is maybe the most morally sensitive character in the novel, supremely loving of his daughter and ashamed for having hurt her out of ignorance. In what is central to his growth, Huck learns that blacks are just as capable of love as whites.*

## CHAPTER 24

As the duke and king devise another con, Jim tells the duke that it is uncomfortable to be tied up every day. In response, the duke invents a new way for Jim to stay by himself during a day without risking capture. He dresses Jim up in a costume for King Lear, a character in Shakespeare's play *King Lear*, and paints Jim blue. The duke then makes a sign saying that Jim is a sick Arab. When people approach him, Jim is to jump out and carry on and howl till they leave him be.

*It is maybe surprising that a man as selfish as the duke would go out of his way to help Jim feel more comfortable, but he nevertheless does so, demonstrating a kind of moral freedom uncommon in the novel. The duke tends to other's interests as long as doing so isn't inconsistent with pursuing his own interests.*

The king, dressed in black clothes that make him look "swell and starchy," rafts to a nearby town with Huck. As they drift in, the two run across a young country boy. The king says he'll give the boy a lift and invites him on the raft, which the boy accepts.

*The king dresses in respectable black to trick people into thinking, based on his appearance, that he is himself respectable. He exploits society's overvaluation of appearance.*

On the raft, the boy tells the king that he resembles Mr. Wilks. The king lies and says that he is a reverend, and that he is sorry if Mr. Wilks is late for something. The boy then reveals that Mr. Wilks's brother Peter Wilks has died, and that, as he died, he wished to see his brothers from England, the living ones being Harvey and the deaf mute William. The king asks more questions about the Wilks family, and the boy obliges in answering.

*By tricking the boy into trusting him with his clothes and false identity as a priest, the king exploits the boy for information to be used in a con. In contrast to the boy's gullibility is Huck's gentle skepticism of everyone he meets. Huck doesn't care about appearances but about substance.*

After dropping the boy off, the king tells Huck to fetch the duke. Huck knows what the king is up to (conning the Wilks family), but he retrieves the duke anyway. The king tells the duke everything the boy told him, all the while imitating an English accent. After hailing a yawl, the duke, king, Huck and Jim all travel to the town where the Wilks family lives. There the duke and king claim to be Peter Wilks's brothers Harvey and William. The townspeople sympathize and help them, while Huck thinks their con "enough to make a [person] ashamed of the human race."

*Though Huck earlier denounces the duke and king as rapscallions, he is now mature enough to know that none of their cons compare in depravity to their defrauding of the Wilks family, where, in a time of tragedy, the two are not only emotionally exploiting grieving people, but are also stealing the possessions of two men whose brother has just died, nothing less than everything that remains of Peter's life.*

## CHAPTER 25

The duke and king, pretending to be Harvey and William Wilks, are received by Peter Wilks's family, including his niece Mary Jane, whom Huck thinks is very beautiful. When the duke and king approach Peter's coffin, all the people gathered go quiet, and the two con men begin to cry their eyes out, and everyone else starts to cry too. The duke and king work the crowd, and Huck finds the situation "disgusting."

*Huck seems especially disgusted by this scene because the duke and king are not exploiting the badness of society, as they did with their Royal Nonesuch con, but rather its goodness, the love of people for other people. This is an important lesson for Huck in determining how to act well and live a good life.*

The king addresses the crowd, saying how hard it was to lose Peter and how grateful he is to those gathered. Someone begins to play music, and the king resumes, inviting close friends of the family to supper that night. As the duke makes signs with his hands and goo-goos like a baby, the king goes to the townspeople and addresses mostly all of them by name, and informs them about what Peter had written to him.

*One of the duke and king's strategies to protect their cover is to ingratiate themselves with society, to make people like them so that, if their integrity comes into question, people trust their own emotional responses rather than the facts. The con men do so by inviting people to dinner, for example, and personally addressing them; in general, by making people feel special.*

Mary Jane fetches the letter her uncle left behind, and the king reads it and cries. In the letter, Peter Wilks bequeaths to his nieces his house and three thousand dollars in gold, and, to his brothers, three thousand dollars in gold. The letter also says where the gold is hidden.

*The duke and king's scam appears to have a significant payoff: lots of gold, which in turn promises to free the duke and king from financial worries. The king's tears may seem false, but could they also be tears of vulgar joy?*

The duke and king, along with Huck, go to the cellar and find the hidden bag full of gold, and, even though anybody else would be satisfied with the mere sight of that much gold, the duke and king count it. They discover that there's about four hundred dollar worth of gold missing. The two agree to make up the deficit with their own money so that, when counting the sum before the townspeople to prove that everything is being done fairly, no one will question what happened to the missing gold. The duke and king also agree to give their part of the treasure to Wilks's nieces so that no one will even suspect them of fraud.

*The duke and king express their greed in several ways here, from counting the money to counter-intuitively agreeing to give their part of the treasure to the Wilks girls. Of course, they do so to further ingratiate themselves with society and to gain more with that trust than they would be able to do otherwise. The duke and king manage to make seemingly good deeds serve selfish, wicked ends.*

Upstairs before the townspeople, the duke and king announce that they are giving what Peter seemingly bequeathed them to his nieces, because otherwise the two would feel as though they were robbing the girls. The Wilks girls hug the two con men, thinking the two their very loving uncles. The king goes on to invite all the townspeople to Peter's funeral obsequies, which he mistakenly refers to as "orgies" until the duke discreetly corrects him. The king explains he uses "orgies" instead of "obsequies" because that is the word used in England, based on Greek and Hebrew etymology.

*The duke and king's ploy to earn the trust of society works with devastating efficacy, demonstrating again just how skillful the con men are at exploiting the folly of society. When the king almost blows his cover by referring to obsequies as "orgies," with dark wit he covers his error by exploiting the language of worldly learning, which he rightly assumes to be over his audience's head.*

A man, Doctor Robinson, laughs in the king's face after he gives his etymology of "orgies." The townspeople are shocked, but the undeterred doctor goes on to accuse the king of being a fraud. The townspeople tell him he's wrong, and the Wilks girls cling to the king and begin to cry. But Doctor Robinson tells the girls that, as their father's friend, he begs them to get the king out of their house. Mary Jane responds by giving the king Peter's six thousand dollars to invest on her and her sister's behalf. Doctor Robinson tells the girls that they will regret this day and takes his leave.

*Doctor Robinson stands apart from society in his learnedness and shrewd evaluation of other people. These qualities allow him to expose the king, but they also lend him a condescending air that is shocking and abrasive. Even though the doctor is right in this case, he is not as good as earning people's trust as the king, and so he fails to help people see the error of their ways. He would better be able to serve the greater good were he more empathetic.*

## CHAPTER 26

The duke and king and Huck are all given rooms in the Wilks home to sleep in. Later that night, the duke and king host a supper for a group of townspeople. The Wilks girls say that they have cooked poorly, but Huck thinks the food is fine and that the girls are just fishing for compliments.

*The girl's fishing for compliments is a very minor kind of fraudulence, where they say one thing while thinking another in order to exploit those around them. The duke and king are different from most people not in kind but degree.*

One of the Wilks girls, Joanna, whom Huck calls "the hare-lip" because she is afflicted with that condition, asks Huck about England. Huck lies, but the hare-lip catches him in a contradiction, which Huck just barely wriggles out of with yet more lies. Huck resumes, but gets caught in another inconsistency, which he again wriggles out of, only to be caught in yet a third contradiction, all because he is forgetting his earlier lies.

*Huck has been caught in lies before, but never as frequently as this. Why he is lying to protect the duke and king is strange in the first place, though, given how disgusted Huck is with the two con men. It could be that Huck contradicts himself so much here because his more mature and guilty subconscious is trying to expose the truth.*



Joanna accuses Huck of telling her lies. Huck denies the accusation, swearing on a dictionary that he has told nothing but the truth. Joanna says she believes some of what he says but not all. Just then, Mary Jane approaches and tells Joanna that she shouldn't talk to Huck in that way, because he is a stranger far from his native country. Huck feels bad, because Mary Jane is so good in defending him and yet he is letting the duke and king steal her and her sisters' money. Huck decides to return the money to the girls.

*Mary Jane conforms too much to societal convention for her own good. When she should trust her sister's intuitions, she trusts Huck blindly because he is a stranger far from home. But Mary Jane, as Huck sees, is also deeply good. Because she is a human victim to Huck, and not just an abstract victim of the duke and king's scam, Huck maturely resolves to help her.*


Huck searches the king's room for the money but doesn't find it. Just then the duke and king enter the room. Huck hides behind a curtain and overhears the two con men debate whether they should stick around to sell the Wilks home or leave right away to avoid detection. Huck thinks he wouldn't have felt bad about this an hour or two ago, but that now he does. The king convinces the duke to stick around and sell the house, because doing so wouldn't harm the Wilks girls.

*Huck reflects on how he has morally matured in just two hours: whereas before putting a human face to the duke and king's victims he would have gone along with their scam, now he feels compelled to expose the duke and king's wrongdoing. Note also how the king's tyrannical greed, seemingly boundless, prevents him and the duke from escaping with the money now, a costly mistake.*


As they leave the room, the duke tells the king that they should hide the money in another place, because otherwise some slave who comes upstairs to pack up Mary Jane's belongings might find the gold and steal some of it. Almost discovering Huck, the king takes the money from behind the curtain and hides it in a straw mattress. After the duke and king leave, Huck takes the money, planning to hide it outside. Huck slips, gold in hand, down the ladder leading from his room to the rest of the house.

*The duke and king expose their racism when they suppose that a black person might try to steal the money, when they themselves are stealing the money! It must be said, though, that, while the duke and king are racists, they do not seem to be making a moral judgment against black people here, but rather are just concerned with the practical matter of keeping the money to themselves.*

## CHAPTER 27

Huck tries to take the money outside. He makes it as far as the parlor, where Peter Wilks's corpse lies in its coffin and sleeping men sit around, before he hears footsteps coming toward him. Huck quickly hides the money in the open coffin and then hides himself behind a door. The footsteps are those of Mary Jane, who comes into the parlor, stands before her uncle's coffin, and quietly mourns.

*This scene, maybe more than any other, exemplifies Huck's indifference to social norms and his commitment to fluid, practical solutions. His act of hiding the money in the coffin is a minor desecration, a fact revealed all the more starkly by Mary Jane's respectful, loving mourning. That doesn't diminish, however, the goodness of the act.*

Huck creeps back up to his room, and night turns to day. In the afternoon, Peter Wilks's funeral is held. Mourners walk past Wilks's coffin, looking down, some crying. Huck notices how often people blow their noses, how soft and gliding and stealthy the undertaker is, and he concludes that Peter Wilks "was the only one that had a good thing." As the preacher is speaking, a dog begins to bark. The undertaker goes out reassuringly, hits the dog till it's silent, and comes back in. The townspeople appreciate the undertaker's actions; he's a very popular man in town.

*Huck, with his love of life, is disturbed by how mawkishly miserable the mourners are, and also by the undertaker, who is cruel to a harmless dog and whose cruelty is bizarrely appreciated. Mourning seems a mere societal convention to Huck, who is free from sentimentality, thinking as he does that Peter is better off than the living in this case because he is free from self-imposed miseries.*

After the king "got off some of his usual rubbage" by giving another speech, the undertaker seals the coffin. Huck can't be sure whether the bag of gold is still in there or if somebody took it out, and he's worried that Mary Jane and her sisters might never get it back. The king says he and the duke must be leaving for England, and tells the Wilks girls that they're welcome to come. The two con men, meanwhile, are in the process of selling all of the Wilks estate, house and slaves and all—they plan to keep the money from the sale, then leave the unlucky buyer to discover once they are gone that the purchase is null and void because it was sold by men who had no right to sell it. Huck's heart aches to see the girls get fooled like this, but can't think of a way to safely expose the duke and king.

*After ingratiating himself even more with the townspeople by exploiting their mawkish sadness, the king along with the duke prepares to complete the scam. Huck aches to see the girls, who are so good, get hurt, but he is not an idealist who would expose the con men without having figured out the logistics first. Huck has morally matured, but his sense of the practical is a constant in his decision-making.*

In selling the Wilks's family of slaves, the king separates a mother from her children. The Wilks girls are distraught at this, and, if Huck hadn't known that "the sale was of no account" and that the family of slaves would soon be reunited, he figures he would have had to tell on the duke and king.

*In one of his cruelest, most selfish acts, the king separates a black family for profit, just as Jim was separated from his family. The Wilks girls are nobly distraught, just as Huck is, who has matured into recognizing that black people are just people with feelings like everyone else.*

Later, the duke and king also question Huck about whether he's been in their room. Huck lies and says that he hasn't, but that he did see some black slaves go in there several times. The duke and king are upset to learn this, thinking the slaves stole the bag of money hidden in the mattress, but the two also know they can't do anything because the slaves have already been sold. The duke and king yell at each other and, as they walk off, Huck is glad to have made it seem like the slaves stole the money without bringing harm to them.

*It is hard to say whether Huck's lie reveals Huck's own racism, that blacks are predisposed to wrongdoing, or whether it merely exploits the duke and king's own racist assumptions. Such a question does not concern Huck, however, who is just happy to have pragmatically protected his identity as the thief and to have done so without hurting anybody else. Huck cares about consequences, not means.*

## CHAPTER 28

Huck comes upon Mary Jane, who is packing for her trip to England. She is also crying because, in selling the Wilks's slaves, the duke and king separated a mother from her children. Moved by her tears, Huck blurts out that the family will be reunited in two weeks, and, thinking that in this case the truth is better than a lie, he says he can prove it.

*It is maybe because Huck recognizes just how big Mary Jane's heart is here—she is crying out of an empathy with the slaves—that he decides to trust her with the truth, as he trusts only Jim. Huck's trust in Mary Jane makes telling the truth practical.*

Huck reveals that the duke and king are not Mary Jane's uncles but rather a couple of frauds. Mary Jane indignantly wants to have the duke and king tarred and feathered. Huck says he would tell on the duke and king immediately except that he would be endangering someone (Jim), and he proposes a different plan.

*Huck has grown up enough at this point that he discourages Mary Jane from immediate action, which would be efficient and practical, in favor of a course of action that is maybe less efficient but more sensitive to Jim's condition and needs.*



Huck tells Mary Jane to go away, because he is afraid that she will express in her face knowledge of the duke and king's fraud, which will in turn allow the two to escape. Mary Jane is to return in the evening, after Huck and Jim have made their escape, and expose the duke and king, sending for the townspeople of Bricksville, the site of the performance of The Royal Nonesuch, as witnesses regarding the duke and the king's trickery. Huck also gives Mary Jane a note explaining where he has hidden her bag of gold. Mary Jane promises to remember Huck forever and pray for him, and, though Huck says he has not seen Mary Jane since, he thinks of her often.

*Mary Jane has a strong sense of justice, one that in its earnestness and self-consistency strongly contrasts with that of society at large, but it is precisely the strength of her feeling that makes her a liability in exposing the duke and king. Unlike Huck, she does not have the freedom of character that would enable her to dissemble, or act, as Huck does, and so she would give the duke and king a chance to escape.*

After Mary Jane lights out, Huck runs into her sisters. Huck lies that Mary Jane has gone to visit a sick person in town, and, though the girls press Huck on the facts of his story, he at last tricks the two into not mentioning anything to the duke and king that might alert them to Mary Jane's knowledge of their fraudulence.

*Huck may decline to tell Mary Jane's sisters the truth because he doesn't trust them sufficiently, or maybe because it is more practical for only one sister to know the truth, so that there are fewer people who could tip the duke and king off, even accidentally, that their cover has been blown.*

Later that day, the duke and king hold an auction to sell off the Wilks estate. As the auction draws to a close, a steamboat lands, and a noisy crowd approaches, singing out that in their company are none other than two men who claim to be Harvey and William Wilks.

*The duke and king are astonishingly able to get away with auctioning off the Wilks estate despite the suspicion Dr. Robinson cast on them. The townspeople are so taken by the con men that they only test their assumptions when directly contradicted.*

## CHAPTER 29

Despite the arrival of the two men who claim to be Harvey and William Wilks, the duke and king persist in their fraudulence. After the king cracks a joke at the real Harvey's expense, most of the townspeople present laugh, but there a few who don't. One of these is Doctor Robinson; another is a lawyer named Levi Bell, who calls the king a liar. Doctor Robinson suggests that the two sets of men claiming to be Harvey and William be affronted with each other at a tavern so that their real identities can be determined.

*At last, when the townspeople's affection-based trust in the duke and king is called into question by the arrival of the real Harvey and William, the people society wouldn't listen to earlier, people of reason like Doctor Robinson and Levi Bell, are given the attention that their arguments merit. The townspeople are forced into rationality the hard way.*

At the tavern, Doctor Robinson asks the king to produce the bag of gold so that it can be kept safely till the townspeople determine who is who. The king says that the Wilks' slaves stole the gold, but nobody really believes him. The king then tells his story, followed by the old man claiming to be Harvey Wilks, and Huck thinks it's obvious that the king's is a liar and the old man a truth-teller. Huck, in giving his story, is interrupted by the doctor, who tells him that it is clear he is a bad liar and shouldn't strain himself.

*It is ironic that when the king tells what he believes to be the truth about where the gold is, the townspeople don't believe him, but that when he tells what he knows to be a lie, which Huck himself thinks very transparent, the townspeople less readily gainsay him, suggesting how easily mislead society is in its search for the truth. Also, Huck has been a rather proficient liar till now; it seems his strain to lie is due to moral qualms or having to lie about something regarding which he has no knowledge.*

Levi Bell begins to speak with the king, and eventually tricks him, the duke, and the other old man claiming to be Harvey Wilks to write something down. Bell then produces from his pocket a letter from Harvey, to find that *none* of the handwriting given him matches that of the letters. The old man explains that his brother William copies his letter, and Levi concedes that his plan to expose the frauds has succeeded only partially: he knows that the duke and king are frauds, but he is unsure about the other two men.

*The duke meets his match in Levi Bell, who tricks the veteran trickster into exposing his own lies. It is strange, though, that the townspeople don't act on the results of Mr. Bell's test. Whereas it would be reasonable at this point to jail the duke and king, the townspeople seem not to have followed Mr. Bell's logic at all, and allow the duke and king a chance to escape later. Society does not act logically.*

The real Harvey Wilks asks the king to reveal what is tattooed onto Peter Wilks's chest. Whitening, the king at last says that it is a pale, blue arrow. The old man says that that's false, that his tattoo is really of the letters "P.B.W." But the men who buried Peter Wilks say they saw no such mark. The townspeople become convinced that all four men claiming to be Peter's brothers are frauds, and, enraged, decide to dig up Peter's body to see if he has any tattoo at all.

*The king's guess as to Peter Wilks's tattoo is, so audacious, may be what saves him and the duke from immediate incarceration. Again, it is ironic that the townspeople don't believe the real Harvey Wilks, and they are so irrationally flammable as to denounce even him as a fraud. Their search for truth is farcical at best.*

After disinterring Peter's corpse, the townspeople discover the bag of gold that Huck hid in Peter's coffin. The man who is holding Huck by the arm to prevent him from running away lets go of the boy to get a look at the bag, and Huck immediately makes a run for it. He meets Jim by the river, and the two begin to drift away. Suddenly, though, Huck hears a familiar sound, the humming of a skiff. It is the duke and king. Huck sinks to the floor of the raft and almost cries that the two con men are not yet out of his and Jim's lives.

*Even though Huck is helping the Wilkses expose the duke and king, he is wise enough to know that the townspeople are stupidly unpredictable, so, instead of taking his chances with the mob, he makes a bold bid for freedom. But that freedom is limited by the arrival of the duke and king, whose self-interestedness has come to metaphorically imprison Huck and Jim in a life of fraud and close scrapes.*

## CHAPTER 30

After the duke and king board the raft, the king shakes Huck by the collar and asks if he was trying to give the con men the slip. Huck says he was afraid of being hanged and ran at the first chance he got. The king threatens to drown Huck, but the duke intervenes and tells the king that he would have done the same thing had he been in Huck's shoes.

*Over the course of the novel, the king has morphed into another Pap in Huck's life, debauched and, now, murderous. He is a petty, stupid tyrant, whose power over Huck is restrained only by the duke, who is himself hardly a moral authority.*

The king cusses the town and everybody in it, but the duke turns on him again and says that he should be cussing himself for almost getting the two locked up in the penitentiary. The duke is only grateful that the bag of money was discovered in Peter Wilks's coffin, which provided an opportunity for him and the king to escape.

*It is the duke who rightly identifies the price of freedom here as the need to take responsibility for oneself, which the king refuses to do. Also, society clearly has backwards priorities: they allow the duke and king to escape because they were excited by seeing gold to which they have no claim.*

It is the very reference to the bag of gold that triggers an argument between the duke and king over how the money got into Peter's coffin in the first place, each blaming the other for wanting to hide the money so he could later have it all to himself. The king, overwhelmed and exhausted, blubberingly confesses that he hid the money in the coffin. The duke shames him for letting the slaves take the blame. Then the two men take solace in drinking, till they're drunk, mellow, thick as thieves again, and literally sleeping in one another's arms. As the two sleep, Huck tells Jim everything that's happened.

*It is hard to say why the king takes responsibility for something he didn't do, hiding the gold, except that maybe he is so morally exhausted that he wants to take responsibility for something, anything. The duke rather nobly condemns the king for letting the slaves take responsibility for his actions. But just as the duke and king seem to grow out of their wicked ways, they get drunk and conspiratorial again. Like Pap, the two con men will always be morally stained.*

## CHAPTER 31

Huck, Jim, and the con men drift downriver for four days, at which point the duke and king feel safe enough to resume their scams in nearby villages, but they don't have much luck in making money and become "dreadful blue and desperate." The two whisper in private in the wigwam, which makes Huck and Jim so nervous that they resolve to leave the company of the duke and king once and for all.

*The duke and king's moral epiphany is short-lived. Mere days after the duke gives his speech in favor of taking responsibility for oneself, he and the king, chained to their debauched lifestyle, begin scamming again. Huck and Jim worry because they know the duke and king have no qualms about harming them if push comes to shove.*

The king goes up to a village to see if the people there have caught wind of The Royal Nonesuch. At noon, Huck and the duke, who's been in a sour mood, set out to join the king, only to find him in a saloon getting cussed at and threatened. The duke begins berating the king (maybe for getting into such a bad situation, maybe to buy time in formulating an escape plan from the saloon for the two of them), at which point Huck, sensing his chance, makes his escape.

*The duke, we're later led to infer, is in a sour mood because he helped the king to sell Jim back into slavery by printing a handbill for the purpose, he presumably feels guilty for betraying Huck and Jim. But, ultimately, the duke values his interests over anyone else's. That's why Huck must be free of him.*

As Huck runs to the raft, he shouts with joy to Jim that they are free. But Jim, Huck soon discovers, is gone. Huck can't help it: he sits and cries. Soon restless, he takes to the road and comes across a boy who tells him that Jim has been captured and taken to Silas Phelps' farm. Huck also learns that it was the king who turned Jim in for forty dollars, using a handbill earlier printed by the duke.

*Even though Huck is at last free of the con men, he can't enjoy his freedom knowing that Jim has been denied his. While it is disgusting that a human life should be ascribed any monetary value, Huck notices that the duke and king sold Jim out for a rather paltry sum. They made twice as much conning the religious revival as they did selling Jim.*

Huck considers writing a letter to Tom Sawyer asking him to tell Miss Watson that Jim is at the Phelps' farm so Jim can at least be with his family, but decides that Miss Watson would be cruel to Jim for running away and that Jim would be disgraced. Hopeless, Huck rebukes himself for helping Jim at all, and feels low and ornery. Huck prays, but no words come, at least not until he does what he thinks is most moral: writing a note to Miss Watson. But as Huck remembers Jim and how good Jim is, he pauses. At last, he rips up the note, and decides he's going to help Jim to freedom, even if that means going to hell. Huck never regrets his choice.

*This is maybe the most important passage in the novel in terms of Huck's moral development, where the boy decides that he would rather subvert all societal values and do what others think bad than do what society endorses and betray the inclinations of his own heart. Huck thinks that betraying the humanity of good people like Jim is a worse fate than being condemned to hell. Of course, Huck's decision is more Christian and loving in spirit than the alternative, and it is a testament to the way that slavery has warped Christianity in the south that Huck thinks that freeing a man from slavery will send him to hell.*

As Huck makes his way to save Jim, he runs into the duke. Over the course of their conversation, the duke tells Huck that the king did indeed turn Jim in. The duke eventually tells Huck that if he and Jim promise not to turn in him or the king, he'll tell Huck where Jim is. Huck agrees, and the duke begins to disclose Jim's location, when, mid-word, he changes his mind and lies to Huck about where Jim is. Huck sets out at first for the false place the duke gives him, and once he's sure the duke is no longer watching, Huck turns around and heads for the Phelps' farm.

*The duke printed the handbill he and the king used to turn Jim in long ago, suggesting that he had at least entertained the possibility of betraying Jim for profit. It is ironic, then, that after he earlier charges the king with not taking responsibility for himself, the duke blames the king and only the king for selling out Jim, even though he is obviously complicit. The duke is as hypocritical as the society he exploits and defrauds.*

## CHAPTER 32

Huck arrives at the Phelps' and feels lonesome, because the droning of bugs and quivering of leaves make it feel "like everybody's dead and gone." He says that, generally, such a feeling makes a person wish he were dead too. As he approaches the Phelps' kitchen, he hears the wailing of a spinning wheel and wishes that he himself were dead, thinking it the "lonesomest sound" in the world.

*Huck is finally free, but has no one like Jim to enjoy his freedom with. Alone, then, he experiences freedom as a meaningless blank populated only with the empty sounds of nature, and he would rather be dead than exist in that blank.*

Dogs swarm around Huck, but soon a slave comes out and yells at the dogs to scram. The slave is followed by two black children, a white woman (Aunt Sally), and two white children, who, Huck notes, respond to him in the same way the black children do. The white woman welcomes Huck, thinking that he is none other than her expected guest and nephew…a boy named Tom. Huck plays along.

*Just as Huck despairs of loneliness, he is greeted by a microcosm of society. He notices the fact that there is no difference between how white children greet him and how black children greet him, reflecting his maturation into a knowledge of racial equality.*

The woman who welcomes Huck is called Aunt Sally. She takes Huck inside where she questions him about his trip, such that Huck is forced to lie to keep his cover from being blown. Huck gets especially nervous when Aunt Sally asks him about his family, but is saved when a man, Uncle Silas, enters the room. Aunt Sally hides Huck behind a bed and pretends as though "Tom" hasn't arrived yet. But Aunt Sally is playing a trick on Uncle Silas: while he's not looking, she pulls Huck out from behind the bed and introduces him to Uncle Silas as Tom Sawyer.

*Unlike with the Wilks girls and Doctor Robinson, Huck is again able to lie fluently to Aunt Sally, maybe because he thinks his lies to be in the service of a greater good. In this scene, we also see where Tom Sawyer inherited his boyish love for pranks: family members like Aunt Sally, who here pranks her husband. Aunt Sally's prank is harmless, but, as we will see in later chapters, Tom himself hasn't learned how to balance fun with other peoples' well being.*

Aunt Sally and Uncle Silas question Huck, thinking him Tom, about their relatives, and Huck answers their questions with ease. As they're talking, Huck hears a steamboat coughing down the river. The real Tom could be aboard, Huck thinks, and he could accidentally blow Huck's cover, so Huck decides to meet him. He tells the Phelpses that he's going to fetch his baggage from where he hid it, and heads out.

*Note that Huck's impersonation of Tom is similar to the duke and king's impersonation of the Wilks brothers. Huck, however, is not exploitative as the con men were. He even feels comfortable impersonating Tom, suggesting that, in his deep, empathetic knowledge of Tom, Huck is most easy and free.*

## CHAPTER 33

As Huck walks to town, he sees a wagon coming toward him, riding in which is Tom Sawyer. Huck stops the wagon, but Tom is afraid of Huck, thinking him a ghost. Huck tells Tom that he isn't, and Tom, satisfied, begins to ask Huck about his recent adventures. Huck tells Tom that he's at the Phelps' farm to rescue Jim, and Tom, after thinking a bit, enthusiastically decides to help Huck rescue him. That Tom would help a black slave lowers Huck's opinion of his friend, and he thinks Tom must be joking, but Tom assures Huck that he is serious.

*Tom's first explanation for Huck's appearance is a superstitious one, but he is mature enough to accept Huck's rational account of his adventures. Huck's reaction to Tom's willingness to help points again at society's hypocrisy: Huck thinks that Tom is a proper member of society, which is why he thinks less of Tom for being willing to break society's rules. Huck thinks of himself as a no-good rule-breaker, and so he is ok with himself breaking those rules. Huck does not yet clearly see that it is the rules themselves that are depraved.*

Huck returns to the Phelps' too quickly after meeting Tom, but Uncle Silas, whom Huck considers the "innocentest, best old soul," and who is not only a farmer but also a preacher, is merely pleased that his mule could go to town and back so quickly. Soon after Huck, Tom arrives. He pretends to be looking for a different house, but, after being invited by the Phelpses to dinner, he accepts.

*Uncle Silas is an upstanding member of society and a person whom Huck respects very much, and yet he thinks it acceptable, even moral, to hold Jim prisoner. It's surprising that Huck still thinks he's doing wrong by helping Jim, but, even so, he is much more morally free than Uncle Silas.*

Over dinner, Tom chats and chats, lying very fluently, and at one point he goes so far as to kiss Aunt Sally on the mouth. Aunt Sally jumps up and scolds Tom, even picking up her spinning-stick as if to thwack him with it. Tom says that *they* told her to kiss her. Aunt Sally has no idea what Tom is talking about, but then he introduces himself as Sid Sawyer, Tom's half-brother. Aunt Sally is delighted to see him.

*As Aunt Sally pranked Uncle Silas about Tom's arrival, so does Tom prank Aunt Sally. This sketch of a family shows how behaviors and beliefs are passed from one generation to the next, behaviors as benign as pulling pranks, and beliefs as perniciously serious as the inferiority of one race to another.*

Later, one of the Phelps boys asks Uncle Silas if he can go to "'the show,'" but Uncle Silas says that, according to the runaway slave (Jim) and another man, the show is scandalous. Huck, realizing that the show must be the duke and king's, sneaks out of the house at night with Tom to warn the con men. As they're walking, Huck sees a mob with the duke and king "astraddle of a rail," tarred and feathered. Huck feels sick at how cruel people are to one another, and realizes that he couldn't have a hard feeling toward the duke and king even if he wanted to.

*Despite all the wrong they did him, Huck tries to save the duke and king from capture, revealing his commitment to freedom for all over even societal justice. Huck also wants to save the duke and king because he knows how disgustingly cruel people can be. Indeed, the nastiness of the punishment the townspeople inflict on the frauds—tarring and feathering—is a crime in itself. Huck, in his empathy, forgives the pitiful wretches.*

As he and Tom walk back to the farm, Huck feels humble and somehow to blame for the duke and king's fate, even though he knows he didn't do anything. Huck supposes that, when it comes to conscience, it doesn't matter whether we've done right or wrong, because our conscience will invariably make us feel bad. Tom Sawyer, Huck observes, says the same thing.

*Huck' s experience of the duke and king's punishment enables him to once and for all grow out of his enslavement to socialized conscience, which he comes to think of as a bad gauge of whether or not we're actually doing right or wrong. Free of conscience, Huck is better able to follow the intuitions of his heart.*

## CHAPTER 34

Tom deduces that Jim must be imprisoned in a hunt on the Phelps' property, based on the fact that a slave (Nat) goes to that hut with human food every day. Huck is impressed with Tom's reasoning, and thinks that he wouldn't trade Tom Sawyer's mind for anything. Tom and Huck begin to devise plans for helping Jim to escape.

*Tom proves himself to be a rational, clever boy. Despite his powers of deduction, however, Tom will show that he is dangerously impractical when it comes to making plans, mostly because he is too reliant on ideas of style inherited from his books.*

Huck suggests that he and Tom bring up the raft, steal the key to Jim's hut, and rescue Jim in the night. Tom concedes that Huck's plan will work, but insists that it is far too simple. He proposes a plan which Huck doesn't explain in his book, because, he says, Tom will just change the plan all the time anyway, throwing in flair whenever he can, which is exactly what he does. Huck still can't believe that a respectable, well-raised, ethical, intelligent, kind boy like Tom would help to steal a slave out of bondage, and he begins to tell Tom as much, but Tom hushes him and says he knows what he's about.

*Despite being clever, Tom foolishly dismisses Huck's practical plan, which will liberate Jim soon, in favor of a fancier, more romantic plan. Tom's plan may have style, but it requires that Jim be imprisoned for longer than is strictly necessary. In this sense, Tom is being rather selfish. Huck regresses again in his disbelief at Tom's willingness to violate societal norms; we can't help but wonder if Tom is doing so not for Jim's sake but selfishly, for the adventure of rescuing Jim.*

Huck and Tom survey the Phelps' farm and think of ways to bust Jim out of the hut. Tom decides that it would be grand to dig Jim out, which will take about a week. Huck and Tom also follow Nat, who brings food to the hut where Jim is presumably kept. Nat claims that witches have been pestering him and also lets the boys take a look at the prisoner locked up there, who is, as Tom deduced, none other than Jim.

*Tom's plan is self-indulgently time-consuming. Huck is skeptical but immaturely bows to Tom's decision out of friendship. Nat, whom the boys rope into their rescue plan, is superstitious, a fact that the boys will exploit to save Jim. Of course, they wouldn't have to exploit Nat at all if their plan were more practical.*

Jim greets Huck and Tom by name, which startles Nat. He asks how it is that Jim knows who the two are. Tom pretends as though he didn't hear Jim say anything, and Huck and Jim play along, such that the slave is forced to believe that the witches made him hear things. Tom whispers to Jim that he and Huck are going to set him free.

*Even though Tom and Huck will needlessly exploit Nat later, here it is necessary that they do so, lest Nat learn that Jim knows the boys, which might compromise the whole rescue attempt. Jim obviously thinks it necessary to trick Nat as well for the sake of his freedom.*

## CHAPTER 35

Tom is dissatisfied that liberating Jim will be so easy. He wishes there were guards to drug, or a guard-dog, or that Jim were better chained down. He sighs that he and Huck will have to invent difficulties; for he wants the escape to be as grand as one of those carried out in the romantic books he likes to read.

*Exhibiting a subtle racism, Tom regards Jim less as a human being who needs aid and more as a prop in his adventure, one he imaginatively and fondly drapes in yet more chains. He has inherited societal racism, and also dangerous romantic conventions from his books.*

Tom also proposes that he and Huck make Jim a rope ladder by tearing and tying up their sheets, and that they then bake it into a pie so it can be delivered to Jim. Huck thinks this plan is unnecessary, but Tom disagrees. Huck gives in, but cautions Tom that Aunt Sally will be greatly displeased to find that the boys have torn up her sheets. Huck suggests that he and Tom steal a sheet off of the clotheslines, and Tom agrees.

*It is a sign of Huck's vestigial immaturity that he listens to Tom instead of his own heart. To his credit, he tries to reason with Tom, but we think that Huck would do better to just act independently and rescue Jim as soon as he can, without Tom's childish insistence on making a game out of a human being's freedom.*

Tom also says that Huck should steal a shirt off the clothesline, so that Jim can use it to keep a journal. Huck exclaims that Jim doesn't even know how to write, to which Tom responds that Jim can at least make marks on the shirt. He also proposes Jim be given something like a candlestick to file into a pen, that he use his own blood as ink, and that he be smuggled tin plates to write little messages on before throwing them out of the window to be read. Huck thinks all this is impractical.

*Tom's plan is as big a farce as anything the duke and king perpetrated, and it devalues human life to a similar if subtler extent. Tom has inherited a new set of conventions from his books and madly sets about satisfying them, even if absurdly so, e.g., he gives Jim things to write with even though Jim can't write. Huck's lack of resistance here calls into question the permanence of his earlier moral development.*

That morning, Huck steals things to give Jim, as well as a watermelon from the slave's watermelon patch. Tom, however, tells Huck that he can only steal what he needs to help set Jim free, and he demands that Huck give the slaves a dime without telling them that it is in exchange for the stolen watermelon. Huck doesn't see what good it does him to represent a prisoner if it means he can't even steal a watermelon.

*Ironically, nothing Tom and Huck steal is needed to help set Jim free. Tom's insistence to the contrary suggests that he is not living in the real world. It is also disturbingly uncharacteristic that Huck would steal the watermelon without needing it, something he hasn't done since he was in Pap's care.*

Finally, Tom tells Huck that they need to steal tools to dig Jim out of the hut with. Huck asks why they don't use some picks and shovels the two found earlier, but Tom says that no prisoner has ever used picks or shovels, and that what they need for digging are knives. Tom calculates it would take 37 years to dig to Jim with knives, and, knowing that he and Huck can't take that long, he proposes that he and Huck pretend amongst themselves that it takes them 37 years to save Jim. Huck says that pretending isn't impractical and doesn't hurt anyone, so he agrees. Tom tells Huck to steal three knives and, after a little protest, Huck agrees to do so.

*Huck and Tom finally seem to come to their senses and grow up a little in this scene. Tom realizes and accepts that his plan is impractical, so he resigns himself to pretending, which, as Huck rightly points out, is harmless enough. He and Tom can save Jim in a timely fashion and Tom can have his adventure too. That being said, Tom is still insistent that Huck fetch some knives to dig with, bad tools for the job, impractical, fantastical, and farcical.*

## CHAPTER 36

In the night, Huck and Tom begin digging with their knives to rescue Jim, but after a while are tired, blistered, and realize they haven't gotten hardly anywhere. The boys switch to digging with picks instead, but agree to *pretend* that those are knives.

*It is to Tom's credit that, when he realizes how absurdly impractical a given plan is, he switches to a more practical plan while pretending otherwise.*

The next day, Huck and Tom steal a spoon and candlestick from the house for Jim to use as pens, as well as some plates for Jim to write messages on. Later, at night, the boys dig into the hut where Jim is imprisoned and wake him, much to Jim's pleasant surprise. Jim asks the boys to help him cut the chain off his leg that he might escape immediately, but Tom explains to Jim his romantically stylish, time-consuming plan, which Jim accepts.

*Though Tom is willing to pretend regarding some aspects of his plan, other aspects, like the message-writing, he is childishly stubborn about. Jim makes it clear that he understandably wants to be rescued as soon as possible, but with an unimaginative and racist disregard Tom persuades Jim to go along with his ridiculous plan.*

Jim tells the boys that Uncle Silas comes into the hut once in a while to pray with him, and that Aunt Sally does likewise to make sure he's comfortable. This gives Tom an idea: he wants to trick Nat, the slave who brings Jim food, into bringing Jim a rope-ladder that's been baked into a pie. The boys talk with Jim for a while before leaving him. Tom says he is having the most fun of his life, and that he and Huck should keep their game up so for as long as possible, and even suggests that they leave Jim's rescue up to their own children.

*Uncle Silas and Aunt Sally clearly recognize that Jim has human needs, and yet remain oblivious to the fact that they are hypocritically violating those needs in keeping Jim in the first place. Tom is likewise a hypocrite: he knows Jim needs to be freed, but selfishly wishes he could draw out the rescue attempt for childish pleasure. Huck doesn't buy into any of this, save insofar as he passively accepts it.*

One night, dogs get into Jim's hut. When Nat sees the dogs, he almost faints, thinking that witches are responsible. Tom tells Nat that, to appease the witches, he should make "a witch-pie." Nat says he doesn't know how, so Tom volunteers to bake the pie for him, as long as Nat promises not to look at or handle what Tom gives him. Nat promises.

*Tom exploits Nat's superstitions in playing out his romantic game of rescuing Jim. We wonder what's worse: Huck stealing from the slave's watermelon patch, or Tom playing on a person's fears, to which there is a racial component, for the sake of personal pleasure.*

## CHAPTER 37

Tom and Huck get what they need to bake the witch-pie. Afterwards, the boys go down to breakfast, hiding a spoon for Jim to write with in Uncle Silas's pocket and nails in his hat, only to find Aunt Sally livid that things in the house are going missing. Uncle Silas suggests ways things could go missing, like rats getting them, but Aunt Sally dismisses them all. She is irritated and suspicious. Uncle Silas goes on to sheepishly produce the spoon hidden in his pocket by Huck and Tom. Aunt Sally hotly dismisses everyone from the kitchen so she can calm down.

*Tom's plan is time-consuming to execute, but it's also problematic in raising so many suspicions. Aunt Sally is at wit's end and, far from accepting Uncle Silas's charmingly naïve explanations as to how things went missing, she seems to suspect that the children in the household are involved. But, even though Aunt Sally is on high alert for funny business, Tom does not change his plan.*



Uncle Silas finds the nail in his hat but doesn't mention it. Tom recognizes that Uncle Silas has helped him and Huck conceal their plan to help Jim by producing the spoon at breakfast, and so he resolves to help Uncle Silas by plugging holes in the cellar through which rats enter and exit the house. Later, Uncle Silas comes downstairs and sees that all of the holes have been plugged. He can't remember having done that chore for the life of him.

*Tom goes out of his way to compensate Uncle Silas for helping him and Huck cover up their plans, even though he did so unintentionally. While this is not really mature of Tom, it reflects that his heart, at least, is in the right place. He may live in a fantasy-world, but he does have a sense of what it means to be good.*

Huck and Tom steal another spoon, but pretend that Aunt Sally miscounted how many there were to cover their tracks. Tom tells Aunt Sally that, even with the spoon Uncle Silas found, the spoon set is incomplete. Aunt Sally recounts, but Huck and Tom keep tricking her into thinking she has miscounted. Aunt Sally becomes mad and storms off. Huck and Tom hide the spoon they stole in her apron along with a nail, both of which she inadvertently delivers to Jim in his hut.

*Huck and Tom's pranks seem harmless enough, and also serve to prevent the Phelpses from discovering the boys' plan to help Jim, but it must be remembered that, while Huck and Jim play their ridiculous games, Jim is enchained in a hut, separated from his family.*

After a lot of trouble and experimentation, Tom and Huck bake the witch-pie, which is basically a crust under which is hidden a ladder. Nat delivers the pie to Jim, which Jim busts open so that he can take the ladder out and hide it in his mattress. He also scratches some marks on a tin and throws it out of his window, in accordance with Tom's plan.

*We might wonder why Jim goes along with Tom's ridiculous plan at all. It could be that he trusts Tom, thinking him bright and genuinely interested in helping out. But Jim doesn't respect his own judgment, maybe because he has been trained by whites to respect theirs over his own.*

## CHAPTER 38

Tom insists that Jim make an inscription with his coat of arms on the wall of his hut, because all the prisoners in romances do. Jim says he doesn't have a coat of arms, so Tom designs him one, which he describes using technical jargon that he doesn't even really understand. Tom also writes inscriptions for Jim's wall, all of which make him cry, so that he decides to have Jim carve them all into the wall.

*Tom doesn't understand much of what he reads, yet he blindly acts on his reading anyway, just as society blindly acts on untested, internally inconsistent beliefs. He may be better educated than Huck, but Huck is imaginatively freer than Tom. His immaturity lies in doing what his friend says.*

Tom changes his mind. Jim can't carve inscriptions onto the wooden walls of his hut; he must carve them into stone. Tom proposes, then, that he and Huck steal a grindstone to carve the inscriptions into, and which can also be used to file the pens and saw. Huck and Tom set out to the mill to get the grindstone and role it back to the hut.

*Tom is again a slave to the romantic convention he loves here, insisting on fetching the impractical grindstone. Huck says nothing. Does he love Tom too much to contradict him, or does he feel he just can't out-argue Tom?*

When they have the grindstone halfway home, Tom and Huck realize that they can't roll it all the way without help, because it is too heavy, so they go back to Jim's hut. There, they make it so that Jim can walk freely even though he still has a chain around his ankle, and he goes out and helps Huck roll the grindstone the rest of the way home. Tom superintends with great skill, Huck notes: "He knowed how to do everything."

*Jim achieves freedom in this scene for all intents and purposes, and yet, for whatever reason, he is bound to Tom's plan so tightly that he helps the boys realize their ridiculous fantasy instead of making a break for it. Meanwhile, Tom oversees Huck and Jim as they work. like a little king, or, more shockingly, like a slave owner himself.*

Having gotten the grindstone home and re-chained Jim to his bed, the boys are ready to go to sleep. But before leaving Tom asks Jim if he could bring some spiders, rats, and snakes into Jim's hut, so that Jim can befriend them as the prisoners do in the books. Jim begs Tom not to, but Tom insists. Jim faults Tom's plan, to which Tom responds by saying that Jim is wasting his opportunity to be the best, most famous prisoner of all time. Jim apologizes to Tom, and the boys shove off for bed.

*The boys disturbingly re-chain Jim to his bed, which, we think, people committed to his freedom would not do if they were in their right minds. But Tom doesn't seem to be in his right mind, exactly: he is happy to make Jim more uncomfortable than he already is, because he thinks that his plan will make Jim famous. His love of the conventions of romance is verging on obsessive.*

## CHAPTER 39

Jim is agitated by the creatures that Tom and Huck introduce to his hut. He says that there isn't hardly any room for him, and that the creatures are very lively when he tries to sleep. The spiders and rats bite him (he uses his blood afterward to write in his journal); he says he never wants to be a prisoner again, especially after the boys saw the legs of his bed and all three eat the sawdust together to hide the evidence, which gives them all terrible stomachaches.

*Tom and Huck dehumanize Jim in this scene by ignoring his pleas and cramming his room with various, dangerous creatures. That said, they also endanger themselves by catching the creatures and eating sawdust and the like, which suggests that their disregard of human safety is less a factor of racism, say, than general immaturity.*

After all preparations are completed, Tom says that he and Huck need to write an anonymous letter to warn the Phelpses that someone is going to try to rescue Jim. Huck mildly protests but soon gives in to Tom's plan. The boys leave notes and ominous warnings around the Phelps house that terrify the family. Tom also writes a note saying that a gang of cutthroats will try to steal Jim.

*Tom's plan of the anonymous letter is supremely immature and irresponsible: it terrorizes his family needlessly, and it jeopardizes the success of Jim's escape, which would be much better conducted in total secrecy. What is clear by now is that while Huck wants to free Jim, Tom is playing a game. For Tom, his games come before other people. For Huck, people always come first.*

## CHAPTER 40

The Phelps family is troubled and anxious after receiving the anonymous letter Tom wrote. Tom and Huck are sent to bed early, where they get ready to take a lunch they have prepared, along with a dress, to Jim. Tom notices there's no butter with the lunch, so he sends Huck to get some. As he's returning with the butter, though, Aunt Sally discovers Huck. She questions him and sends him to the sitting room for further questioning.

*Even though Tom has gotten his way in planning Jim's escape, he is tyrannical about even the smallest detail, like the butter, which he forces Huck to get despite Huck's protests. It is Tom's silly need to do everything prescribed by his books that best characterizes his immaturity.*

In the sitting room, Huck is surprised to see fifteen farmers, all with guns. Huck wishes Aunt Sally would get through with him so he can tell Tom about the farmers and commence rescuing Jim before it's too late. Aunt Sally questions Huck, but he's so nervous because the farmers are talking about heading out then and there to lie in wait for the gang that he becomes feverish. The farmers rush over to make sure Huck is alright, snatching off his hat as they do, out from under which comes the bread and butter he took. Aunt Sally is grateful Huck is okay and sends him to bed.

*Many of the Phelps' neighbors come to the family's aid in securing Jim (which is absurd given that Jim is a human being and not a piece of property to be guarded in the first place). This is a society, it would seem, that deeply honors the idea of private property; its members are willing to die to protect another member's property. The irony, of course, is that Jim belongs to himself and no one else, yet he is denied that right of self-possession.*

Huck hurries to meet Tom inside Jim's hut to tell him about the farmers. Tom is elated, but assures Huck that Jim is disguised as a woman and ready to make a run for it. Just then, the farmers come outside to the hut and open the door. Tom, Huck, and Jim escape through a hole they had made, and soon begin to make a run for the fence. However, Tom's pants catch a splinter. When he frees himself, a ripping noise alerts the gun-toting farmers who, after asking whoever's there to identify themselves without response, begin to rush over, shooting as they do.

*Tom must be very much out of touch with reality to delight in the fact that there are many armed, dangerous men keeping an eye out for people escaping with Jim, given, of course, that he is just such a person. The armed farmers prove to be indiscriminately violent, shooting in the dark at they don't know what. They mindlessly run the risk of shooting Jim, which would defeat their purpose entirely.*

Chased by both men and dogs, the three run toward the river and at last arrive at their raft. Everybody's glad to be safe and free, especially Tom, because he had the honor of being shot in the calf of his leg. He is in considerable pain and bleeding. After some deliberation, Jim says he will not leave Tom's side. Huck knew that Jim would say that, because he knows that Jim "was white inside," and, while Jim tends to Tom, Huck goes off to fetch a doctor.

*Tom idiotically revels in his wound, which he thinks is fun and exciting. It was his plan that endangered his friends and got him shot, and it's because he got shot that Jim feels duty-bound to risk his own freedom by staying with Tom. Huck's comment that Jim is white inside at once acknowledges Jim's equality, but also insidiously suggests that people who are "black inside," so to speak, are bad. Huck is able to see past society's rules to see Jim's basic humanity, but he still accepts his society's larger social laws that to be human means to be white. This dichotomy strikes the reader as ridiculous—the reader can generalize from the fact of Jim's basic humanity to all slave's basic humanity. Twain uses Huck's inability to do the same to actually underscore the point, and further condemn Southern society for its cruel, ridiculous blindness.*

## CHAPTER 41

Huck fetches a nice old doctor, telling him that Tom is his brother and that, while the two were out hunting, Tom had a bad dream and kicked his gun, which shot him. When the doctor asks Huck to tell him again how Tom was wounded, Huck says that "'He had a dream…and it shot him.'" The doctor replies: "'Singular dream.'"

*The doctor assumes that Huck misspeaks when he says that it was Tom's dream that shot him, but in a sense this is exactly what happened: Tom's fealty to his romantic, impractical dream of Jim's escape led the farmers who shot Tom to be on the lookout in the first place.*

The doctor paddles off in a canoe to the raft where Tom is, but the canoe can only carry one person, so Huck is forced to stay behind. He sleeps in a lumber pile that night, and by the time he wakes the sun is up. He decides to go to the where Tom and Jim are to prevent the doctor from exposing Jim to capture, but bumps into Uncle Silas as he sets out. Eventually, Uncle Silas takes Huck home, much to Aunt Sally's relief.

*It is noble that Huck is always concerned with protecting Jim whenever he can, just as Jim protected him during their journey on the river. But Huck is not always free to act as he will. For example, he would go with the doctor, but the canoe can only carry one person. Huck's freedom is limited in part by external circumstances.*

At the Phelps house, neighbors are gathered, talking about how crazy it is that Jim made inscriptions in the grindstone and the like, and they all reason that he must have had help from other slaves, who they also reason must have stolen things from the Phelps house. Soon, Aunt Sally wonders why Tom and Huck weren't in their room that morning. Huck gets up, thinks about it, and by way of explanation he lies to her.

*The neighbors are right to think that a person who follow's Tom escape plan is crazy, or at least, in Tom's case, disastrously immature. Note, also, that the neighbors demonstrate their racism in thinking it must have been other slaves who helped Jim, not even considering that Huck and Tom could be responsible.*

Aunt Sally grows increasingly worried that "Sid" (i.e., Tom) hasn't come home yet. Huck volunteers to fetch him, but Aunt Sally tells him he'll do no such thing. Uncle Silas goes out to look for "Sid," but he doesn't even come across his path. After Aunt Sally tucks Huck into bed, she speaks with him and begins to cry. Huck feels so bad about making her worry that he promises her that he won't go off to look for "Sid" despite himself, and he keeps his word.

*When not in the company of Tom, Huck is restored to his good senses. He realizes how needlessly stressful Tom's plan has been for the Phelpses, and with noble self-discipline he declines to act on his own impulse to go to Tom for Aunt Sally's sake. Tom is a good friend, but not a good influence, on Huck.*

## CHAPTER 42

The next morning, as Huck and the Phelpses sit around the breakfast table, Aunt Sally sees Tom on a mattress along with the doctor, Jim with his hands tied, and a bunch of people. Aunt Sally is profoundly relieved to find that Tom is alive. Men in the mob say they should hang Jim as a warning to other slaves, but others say his owner might come and then they would have to pay for him; so they all refrain.

*It is disgusting that men propose to hang Jim for fighting for his freedom, something they would do too were they in his shoes. It is also disgusting that the reason the men refrain from doing so is because they might have to pay for Jim, as though he were just a piece of property.*

The men in the mob also cuss at Jim and strike him and put him back in the cabin enchained, but Tom's doctor tells them they shouldn't be rougher with Jim than they have to be, because Jim faithfully helped to treat Tom and risked his own freedom to do it. The men in the mob soften up on Jim and thank him for helping the doctor.

*The men's cruelty to Jim softens when the doctor humanizes him. But, despite humanizing Jim, the doctor nevertheless made a point of bringing Jim back in chains, which seems hypocritical: how can he think of Jim as a human yet treat him like livestock?*

Tom begins to recover, and comes fully to as Aunt Sally and Huck sit at his bedside. He joyfully recounts to an incredulous Aunt Sally how he and Huck helped Jim to escape. However, Tom's joy gives way to grave disappointment when he learns that Jim is back in bondage; he tells Aunt Sally that Jim is as free as any creature that walks this earth. He also reveals that he's known all along that Miss Watson had set Jim free two months ago in her will.

*Tom's insistence that Jim is as free as any creature on earth seems to be the product of a change of heart, one maybe brought about by Jim's self-sacrifice for Tom. But then we learn that Tom is speaking in a legal sense. Not only has he delayed Jim's freedom with his plan, Tom has also treated Jim like a slave even though he was legally free, all for the sake of self-indulgent adventure. It really was a game for Tom, with no stakes. Tom was freeing a man who was already free.*

As Tom is speaking, he notices that Aunt Polly, his guardian, has come in, much to Aunt Sally's delight. She reveals Tom and Huck's true identities, and tells the disgruntled Phelpses all about Huck. She also confirms that Miss Watson had set Jim free two months ago. Finally, during a conversation between the adults, it comes out that Tom was intercepting letters from Aunt Polly to Aunt Sally, which is why the latter didn't know that Tom was impersonating Sid.

*At last, Tom and Huck's mess is sorted out by Aunt Polly's arrival. If Tom is an agent of deception and dangerous fancies, Aunt Polly is his opposite, an agent of truth and cold hard facts. It is good that Aunt Polly is back in Tom's life, we think, because he could benefit from a stern reality check.*

## CHAPTER 43

When Huck catches Tom in private, he asks Tom what his plan was if they had successfully escaped with Jim. Tom says he planned to have more adventures with Huck and Jim before revealing to Jim that he was free. After that, he would have compensated Jim for his lost time and reunited him with his family in style. Huck thinks it's just as well that things turned out as they did.

*It is small comfort that Tom recognizes he was denying Jim precious time with his family as a free man, but that does not change the fact that Tom exploited Jim. Huck recognizes all of this, and that they are better off having cut the games short so that Jim can enjoy his true freedom with dignity.*

Jim is unchained, and the Phelpses and Aunt Polly, upon learning how Jim helped Tom, take very good care of the newly freed man. Tom also gives Jim forty dollars for being such a patient prisoner, such that Jim can remind Huck that he predicted he would be rich, and now he is.

*Jim's rewards for helping Tom seem paltry in comparison to the time he lost and the hardships he suffered. Jim, however, rejoices, maybe because it is in his character to make the best out of a bad situation, or maybe because Twain's representation of Jim here is in some ways racist and dehumanizing. (There are many critics by the way, who would argue that the novel is fantastic up until the appearance of Tom Sawyer, and who argue that Twain didn't really know how to end the novel and ended up reintroducing Tom and focusing more on the broad comedy of the escape, and mocking Tom's romantic ideas, than with his earlier focus on Huck's development and poking holes in the institution of slavery).*

Tom suggests that he and Huck and Jim travel to the Territory for adventure, but Huck says he doesn't have enough money. Tom says that Huck still has six thousand dollars in Judge Thatcher's care, because Pap didn't take it and hasn't even been in town. Jim explains that Pap died; his was the corpse that Jim discovered in the floating house.

*Just as Jim is freed, so too is Huck with the knowledge that he has enough money to get away from society and do what he wants in the Territory, which, note, as a region not yet transformed into states has fewer rules, including rules of slavery. He also learns that he is once and for all free of Pap's tyranny, because Pap, through his own debauchery, has passed away.*

Eventually, Tom heals completely. Huck is glad he doesn't have anything more to write about, because, he says, making a book was hard work. He says that he needs to head out to the Territory soon; Aunt Sally is going to try to "sivilize" him, which he can't stand, because, he says, "I been there before."

*Huck ends his book where he began: with the prospect of being "sivilized." But, being the restless and freedom-loving spirit he is, Huck refuses to do what he's already done, and so he decides to pursue freedom in a place he hasn't been yet, a place that is itself half-formed and semi-lawless, a place where a quick-witted boy can adapt to situations as needed and follow his own heart.*

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