The Adventure of Huckleberry Finn : A study Guide

The novel begins with [Huck Finn](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/character-analysis/huckleberry-finn) introducing himself and referencing [*The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-tom-sawyer/book-summary). "You don't know about me," Huck narrates, "without you have read a book by the name of "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer," but that ain't no matter." He tells readers that, for the most part, [Twain](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/mark-twain-biography) told the truth in Tom Sawyer but that everyone tells some lies, even people like Aunt Polly and the Widow Douglas.

Huck gives a brief summary of how he and [Tom](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/character-analysis/tom-sawyer) got six thousand dollars each at the end of Tom Sawyer. Judge Thatcher has taken Huck's money and invested it with a dollar of interest coming in each day, and Huck now lives with the Widow Douglas and her sister, Miss Watson. The sisters are, as Huck puts it, trying to "sivilize" him, and his frustration at living in a clean house and minding his manners starts to grow. Miss Watson tells Huck he will go to "the bad place" if he does not behave, and Huck thinks that will be okay as long as Miss Watson is not there.

During the evening, Huck accidentally kills a spider that was on his shoulder and worries that bad luck will follow. When the town clock strikes twelve midnight, Huck hears a noise outside his window and climbs out to find Tom Sawyer waiting for him.

Analysis

The opening sentence of the novel notifies readers that Huck Finn is the narrator and will tell his story in his own words, in his own language and dialect (complete with grammatical errors and misspellings), and from his own point of view. By using the first person narrative point of view, Twain carries on the southwestern humor tradition of vernacular language; that is, Huck sounds as a young, uneducated boy from Missouri should sound.

This first sentence also alludes to The Adventures of Tom Sawyer. The allusion reminds the reader of a novel about boys and their adventures, the purpose of which, according to Twain, was to rekindle in adults memories "of how they felt and thought and talked, and what queer enterprises they sometimes engaged in." Then Huck — and Twain — dismiss the work with "But that ain't no matter." Although the boyish type adventure episodes tend to reappear as a plot motif in Huck Finn, especially in the sections including Tom, their primary purpose is more to communicate criticism of Twain's contemporary society than to evoke fond memories. This statement also makes clear that it does not matter whether readers have read Twain's earlier book or not. Huck Finn is Huck's story, and he will tell it from his natural, unsophisticated perspective.

This first chapter introduces several major literary elements. Humor is used in various ways in the novel, but Huck's deadpan narration and pragmatic personality juxtaposed to events and beliefs that make no logical or practical sense to him provide much of the novel's humor. Because Huck is young and uncivilized, he describes events and people in a direct manner without any extensive commentary. Huck does not laugh at humorous situations and statements simply because his literal approach does not find them to be funny; he fails to see the irony. He does not project social, religious, cultural, or conceptual nuances into situations because he has never learned them. For example, when Miss Watson tells Huck that "she was going to live so as to go to the good place [heaven]," Huck, applying what he knows about Miss Watson and the obvious lifestyle that makes her happy, responds that he "couldn't see no advantage in going where she was going," and makes up his mind to not try to get there. Huck does not intend his comment to be disrespectful or sarcastic; it is simply a statement of fact and is indicative of the literal, practical approach to life that he exhibits throughout the novel

The first chapter also serves to introduce an important thematic image that pervades the work: natural, free individualism contrasted with the expectations of society. Huck feels confined by the social expectations of civilization and wants to return to his simple, carefree life. He dislikes the social and cultural trappings of clean clothes, Bible studies, spelling lessons, and manners that he is forced to follow. Huck cannot understand why people would want to live under such circumstances, and he longs to be able to return to his previous life where no one tries to "sivilize" him.

The contrast between freedom and civilization permeates the novel, and Huck's struggle for natural freedom (freedom from society) mirrors the more important struggle of [Jim](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/character-analysis/jim), who struggles for social freedom (freedom within the society). Both Huck and Jim search for freedom during their adventure down the Mississippi, and both find that civilization presents a large obstacle to obtaining their dream. From the beginning, readers realize that civilization is filled with certain hypocrisies, including religion and the practice of slavery.

Huck's candid narration gives Twain the opportunity to make barbed comments about literary and social institutions of the nineteenth century. The barbed comments range from his literary aversion to the novels of authors such as [James Fenimore Cooper](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/l/the-last-of-the-mohicans/james-fenimore-cooper-biography) ([*Last of the Mohicans*](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/l/the-last-of-the-mohicans/book-summary)) to overt religious hypocrisies such as the Christian acceptance of slavery in his boyhood town.

The historical realities of slavery and racial division are, without doubt, the most important and most controversial elements in Huck Finn. Imbedded in the contrast between freedom and civilization is the issue of slavery, and the inclusion of the pejorative slang term "niggars" in the first chapter prepares readers for the similar coarse language that will follow. In order to depict the region and the attitude in a realistic manner, Twain makes a conscious choice not to edit regional bigotry and the language that accompanies it.

The reader should remain aware of two major points while reading this novel: First, the novel is a satire; that is, irony, sarcasm, or caustic wit are used to attack or expose folly, vice, or stupidity. Second, the novel is first person narrative (told from Huck's point of view). Confusing either of these issues can lead the unsophisticated reader to drastic misinterpretations. The feelings and interpretations of situations, issues, and events advanced by Huck are not necessarily those the author is advocating.

By the end of this first chapter, the reader has gathered a good deal of data about Huck: his mother is dead, his father is the town drunk, he has "a dollar a day . . . all the year round" income, he lacks "book learning," hates the "sivilized" ways, is keenly observant of details around him, and is a realist.

As [Huck](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/character-analysis/huckleberry-finn) and [Tom](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/character-analysis/tom-sawyer) sneak off from the Widow Douglas' house, Huck trips, and the noise alerts Miss Watson's slave, [Jim](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/character-analysis/jim). Jim tries to find what made the noise and almost discovers the boys, but after a while he falls asleep. While Jim is sleeping, Tom takes Jim's hat and hangs it on a tree-limb. Afterwards, Jim tells everyone that witches put a spell on him and took him all over the state. Jim's story grows with each telling until finally slaves come from all over to hear Jim's tale of being bewitched. After this episode, he is considered an authority on witches.

Huck and Tom meet the rest of the town boys, and they all go to a hidden cave two miles down the river. In the cave, Tom declares that the band of robbers will be called "Tom Sawyer's Gang" and "Everybody that wants to join has got to take an oath, and write his name in blood." The boys all swear that, if a gang member tells the gang's secrets, they will cut his throat and then kill that boy's family. One of the boys says the oath is not fair because Huck Finn does not have a family unless you count a father who can never be found. A solution is found when Huck offers Miss Watson as his family and says, "they could kill her."

Using pirate books as a reference, Tom describes the future business of the gang as robbery and murder. The other boys wonder why everything must be so complicated and involve ransoms and guards, and Tom replies that he's "seen it in books; and so of course that's what we've got to do."

Analysis

Chapter 2 introduces Jim, Huck's future companion and friend. In Missouri, most slaves were domestic servants, not workers on plantations that most people today identify with slavery. Jim's initial behaviors as interpreted through Huck are stereotypical traits attributed to blacks at the time: laziness, a tendency toward exaggeration, and conceit. Jim's belief in superstition mirrors that of Huck, and his explanations of what had happened to him that night could be interpreted to reveal either a gullible nature or an opportunist who makes the most of the circumstances that he encounters. [Twain](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/mark-twain-biography) not only taps Huck's prejudices in the early portrayal of Jim, but he also taps the prejudices of the reader. Jim gains handsomely from his witch adventure and wisely uses the fictional kidnapping to boost his stature among his peers. Nevertheless, the suggestion that Jim displays negative traits has been partially responsible for the opposition to teaching Huck Finn in the classroom.

The character of Jim, however, is much more complex than the sleepy man who has seen the devil and been kidnapped by witches. Moreover, this simplistic interpretation of Jim in the beginning of the novel enhances the prejudicial nature of the stereotype when the true depth of his character is revealed later in the novel. As readers learn about Huck, they also learn about Jim and the admirable character he is.

Also introduced in Chapter 2 is the character of Tom Sawyer. Tom is a contrasting character (a foil) to Huck, despite their obvious bond and friendship. Tom is a romantic, insensitive representative of the society Huck dislikes. His tendency is to take control, romanticize, and exaggerate all situations. Tom bases his expertise in adventures on the many pirate and robber books he has read. His humorous exaggerations symbolize Twain's dislike of popular and glorified romantic novels. Later, in Chapter 3, Tom mentions [*Don Quixote*](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/d/don-quixote/book-summary) as a model of the romantic novels. Ironically, Cervantes was satirizing romantic adventure stories in this work much the same as Twain does in this work. Obviously, Tom was unaware of the satiric nature of the novel, but Twain was not.

Unlike the playful humor of Tom Sawyer, the humor of Huck Finn is bitter satire using the hypocrisy, violence, and squalor in the society that Twain observed. For example, when Tom decides that the gang will rob and murder people "except some that you bring to the cave here and keep them till they're ransomed," the boys discover that no one, including Tom, knows the meaning of "ransom." The boys assign a meaning to the word by conjecturing what it means ("keep them until they are dead"). This meaning, of course, is wrong, but, as in the greater society, because the group believes it to be true, it becomes their truth, and the rest of their action is based on this error, a serious subject matter undercut by humor.

The next day, [Huck](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/character-analysis/huckleberry-finn) receives a scolding from Miss Watson because of his dirty clothes, but the Widow Douglas does not reproach him at all. Miss Watson explains to Huck that, through prayer, he can have anything he wants. She makes Huck pray for the next few days, and Huck does not understand why the fishhooks he prays for never arrive.

During this time, Huck is told that his father, Pap Finn, has been found drowned in the river. Because the body was floating on his back, the superstitious Huck does not believe it is Pap and worries that the violent Pap will show up again. The Tom Sawyer Gang disbands because the only adventure they have is attempting to rob a Sunday-school picnic.

Analysis

In Chapter 3, the practical Huck again struggles to understand religion. When Miss Watson tells Huck he can receive anything he wants through prayer, the literal Huck believes he can receive fishing gear. He contemplates the concept of prayer and wonders why, if someone can get anything, he cannot get any fish-hooks, the widow cannot reclaim her stolen silver snuff-box, and Miss Watson cannot "fat up"? The humorous moment is another example of Huck's literal approach to his surroundings. Because Huck takes everything at face value, he cannot understand the concept of prayer or "spiritual gifts." He does not reject religion, but his literal mindset has difficulty with beliefs that, on the surface, appear to be impractical or untrue.

More important, Huck's struggle compares and contrasts the religions of the Widow Douglas and Miss Watson as he begins to see that religion is practiced differently by his guardians. Through Huck, [Twain](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/mark-twain-biography) is exploring his own reservations about religion and its ties to the institution of slavery. It is not incidental that it is Miss Watson who owns [Jim](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/character-analysis/jim) and not the Widow Douglas, and Huck continues to question religion and the rules of his society. Huck eventually decides that there are two kinds of Providence, and he would like to avoid Miss Watson's and go to the one the Widow Douglas describes.

Chapter 3 continues to establish [Tom](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/character-analysis/tom-sawyer) and Huck as contrasting characters. Whereas Huck takes a literal approach to everything he sees and hears, Tom's knowledge comes solely from the books he reads. At the same time Huck questions religion, he begins to see Tom's "magicians and A-rabs" as fabrication. For Huck, Tom's imagination has the same quality as Miss Watson's religion, and he distrusts the superficial nature of both. This approach serves Huck well throughout the novel. Although he does not completely understand prayer, he does understand the widow's explanation that he "must help other people . . . and look out for them all the time, and never think about myself." By applying his own conscience and beliefs, Huck grows as a character and is able to form his own opinions and not blindly accept society's values and the status quo.

Three or four months have passed when [Huck](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/character-analysis/huckleberry-finn) finds a suspicious footprint in the snow outside of the widow's house. Because of a cross carved in the heel, the print looks exactly like Pap Finn's boot, and Huck begins to worry that Pap has returned. To protect the reward money from Pap, Huck goes to see Judge Thatcher and tries to persuade Judge Thatcher to take the money for his own.

Because [Jim](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/character-analysis/jim) is rumored to have the ability to do magic, Huck asks him if he can predict what Pap will do and where he will stay. When Huck asks Jim about Pap's plans, Jim places a hairball on the ground and listens for Huck's fortune. Jim says that there are two angels hovering over Pap — one white and one black — and he does not know which way Pap will decide to live his life. Jim also says that, just like Pap Finn, Huck has two angels over him, trying to help him decide the right path. When Huck returns to his room that night, he finds Pap waiting for him.

Analysis

When Pap's tracks appear, Huck would rather give his money away than risk confronting Pap. He knows that Pap is inspired only by whisky or greed, and if Huck is poor, perhaps Pap will leave him alone. In the previous chapter, Pap is described as a town vagrant who "used to lay drunk with the hogs in the tanyard" and Huck is not affected by the description. But Huck's indifference to Pap's reputation changes when he realizes Pap is back in town. Huck's fear is understated, but it suggests that his previous life with Pap was violent and dysfunctional. Moreover, the subtle threat of abuse underscores the theme of a chaotic and violent environment after the Civil War, an environment that Huck cannot entirely avoid despite his plans and cunning.

Chapter 4 continues to document that Huck and Jim are superstitious and are products of their society and their circumstances. When Jim uses the hairball to discover Pap's intentions, Jim ends up forecasting Huck's future more than Pap's, and the similarities between the two are obvious. According to Jim, both Pap and Huck have "two angels hoverin'" over them, and the future is uncertain. Jim warns Huck to stay away from the water because it is his fate to be hanged. The darkness in Huck's future, then, relates directly to the Mississippi River, and it is predestined ("down in de bills") that Huck will suffer because of it. The inclusion of predestination reflects [Twain](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/mark-twain-biography)'s Calvinist background. More important, however, the battle of the two angels foreshadows Huck's future battle with his conscience in terms of Jim's freedom.

That evening, [Huck](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/character-analysis/huckleberry-finn) discovers Pap in his room. After the initial shock, Huck decides Pap is too disheveled to be a threat. Pap's hair is "long and tangled and greasy," his face is extremely pale, and his clothes are in rags. Pap immediately notices how clean Huck is in comparison and then begins a tirade about Huck attending school and trying to be more of a man than his father.

Over the next few days, Pap tries to get Huck's money from Judge Thatcher and gain custody of Huck. Pap is unable to get any money, except when he takes a dollar or two directly from Huck. Although the widow wants to raise Huck, Pap convinces a new judge that he has changed and will start a life free from alcohol and sin. The new judge decides that "he'd druther not take a child away from its father" and grants custody to Pap. The new judge finally realizes he has been taken for a fool, however, when Pap sneaks out and breaks his arm after getting "drunk as a fiddler."

Instead of avoiding school, Huck attends just to spite Pap. When the widow tells Pap to stop loitering around her house, Pap kidnaps Huck and takes him upriver to the Illinois shore. The widow discovers Huck's location and sends a man to rescue him, but Pap drives the man off with a gun.

After a couple of months, Pap's beatings become too harsh and too frequent, and Huck decides to escape. The same night as Huck's decision, Pap gets extremely drunk and begins to denounce the government for its laws and the positive treatment of African-Americans. Eventually both Pap and Huck fall asleep, and Huck wakes up to find Pap screaming about snakes and calling Huck the "Angel of Death."

Analysis

Upon discovering Pap, Huck's first thoughts are of the beatings that Pap used to give him. When Huck sees Pap's appearance, however, he immediately is put at ease. Pap's disheveled appearance does not frighten Huck; instead, Pap appears as a clown or buffoon with exaggerated features. The appearance is similar to other exaggerated frontier characters in American humor, but Pap is more than a caricature; he is the most evil character in the novel, and he is white, "a white to make a body sick, a white to make a body's flesh crawl."

Pap's threats are humorous because of the obvious irony; how could a father not be proud of his son learning to read? But as in Chapter 4, the threats are laced with the realization that Huck has been beaten by Pap before. Huck stays captive for the next couple of months and begins to enjoy his old life, free from manners, education, and religion. Huck's "free" life with Pap, however, comes at the price of physical abuse.

Pap's miserable character represents yet another negative element of society. Pap exudes bigotry and hate. His ludicrous tirade against the government and blacks is pathetically comical because of his obvious arrogance and ignorance and the slapstick humor involved in Huck's description. The irony, however, is more painful than it is humorous because it symbolizes a common racist attitude built on ignorance and insecurity.

When Pap calls Huck the Angel of Death at the end of Chapter 6, the name appears to be one of Pap's hallucinations. The label is important, however, and foreshadows thThe next day [Huck](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/character-analysis/huckleberry-finn) finds a drifting canoe on the rising river. When Pap leaves for the night to go drinking, Huck escapes through a hole he sawed in the cabin wall. He takes all the cabin's supplies and puts them in the canoe; he then shoots a wild hog and uses its blood to make it look as if he were murdered. By staging his own murder, Huck thinks he can escape without the threat of being followed. At dark, he leaves in the canoe and eventually lands downstream at Jackson's Island.

Analysis

[Twain](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/mark-twain-biography) gives the readers another literary glimpse of the river that enchanted him throughout his life and career. The quiet Mississippi quickly lulls Huck to sleep. The river becomes symbolic of Huck's more peaceful, natural life. The description is important, because it underscores the serenity of the river and of nature in general as opposed to thc harsh and chaotic world on shore. Throughout the novel, Twain continues to outline the difference between the two worlds, and the juxtaposition of the peaceful river and brutal shore has often been described as the "raft/shore dichotomy."

Huck's flight shows his creativity and cleverness, but it also establishes a logical method of escape. Every action Huck performs, from placing blood on an axe to dragging a bag full of meal, is practical and works to help his plan. The escape is efficient, and although Huck wishes [Tom](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/character-analysis/tom-sawyer) were there to "throw in the fancy touches," readers realize that Tom's additions would create more problems than solutions. Huck's practicality is evident not only in his narrative reaction to events but also in his physical actions. The self-reliant characteristic aids Huck well in the future, as he faces decisions that require individual thought and rejection of accepted belief.

[Huck](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/character-analysis/huckleberry-finn) wakes up on Jackson's Island to hear a ferryboat firing a cannon. He knows that this will bring a drowned body to the surface and realizes that they must be searching for him. Huck also remembers that another way to find a body is with a loaf of bread filled with quicksilver. He scouts the shoreline and finds a large loaf, then wonders if prayer really works. Someone, after all, had prayed that the bread find his body, and that prayer had worked.

Confident that he is now safe, Huck explores the island until he stumbles upon fresh campfire ashes. Huck climbs a tree for safety but curiosity sends him back to the site, and he discovers Miss Watson's slave, [Jim](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/character-analysis/jim). After convincing Jim that he is not a ghost, Huck learns that Jim has run away because Miss Watson was going to sell him down the river to New Orleans.

During the evening, Jim impresses Huck with his knowledge of superstition.

Analysis

Huck's contemplation of prayer brims with humor as he tries to fathom the logic of how the quicksilver bread found him. The combination of a superstitious practice (quicksilver bread) and a religious custom (prayer) shows that Huck's beliefs include a portion of both. As reluctant as he is to embrace Miss Watson's religion, he still holds a fearful respect of its power. The same is true for the practice of superstition.

When Huck first stumbles upon Jim, he does not immediately ask why Jim is on the island, nor does he worry that Jim will tell anyone he is alive. Instead, Huck's first reaction is one of joy at the companionship. More important, Jim's reintroduction extends the important theme of freedom and civilization from Huck to Jim, and sets up the circumstances that will lead to their odyssey down the Mississippi.

Huck's continued struggle with society's restrictions and laws now includes the more serious issue of race and slavery. Huck's comment that "people would call me a low-down Abolitionist and despise me for keeping mum" shows that his society does not tolerate those who denounce slavery. This is Huck's first important break with society, but a break that would make his return nearly impossible, as he realizes. The stance is similar to [Twain](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/mark-twain-biography)'s own boyhood experience where slavery was an accepted practice in the South. Although Huck has shown the tendency to reject society's beliefs, he cannot immediately dismiss its influence and teachings.

This chapter also serves to establish the relationship between Huck and Jim and their roles in contrast to one another. Whereas Huck's initial representation of Jim was stereotypical, in this chapter, Jim quickly reveals himself as an authority on superstition. Huck's literal nature does not allow him to be impressed easily, but his belief in signs and superstition elevates Jim, who "knowed all kinds." In addition, Twain was fond of using a twin image in order to develop his themes. In some works the image is obvious (for example, Pudd'nhead Wilson and The Prince and the Pauper). In others, the image is more subtle. In this work, [Tom](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/character-analysis/tom-sawyer) and Huck are twins with differing dominate personality characteristics: Tom, the romantic, and Huck, the realist. Likewise, Jim and Huck are twin-like, each searching for his own kind of freedom, but one black, the other white.

After exploring Jackson's Island, [Jim](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/character-analysis/jim) and [Huck](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/character-analysis/huckleberry-finn) find a cavern to hide in high on a steep ridge. They hide the canoe and then haul their traps and supplies up to the cavern. Huck thinks the location is too difficult to reach, but Jim argues that it will help protect them against people and the rain. Just as Jim predicted in Chapter 8, a large storm comes.

The river rises for 10 or 12 days, and the flooding waters give Jim and Huck the opportunity to explore and capture useful debris. One night, they discover a two-story frame house drifting along. Inside the house, Jim sees a dead man and instructs Huck not to look at the dead man's face because " . . . it's too gashly." Avoiding the body, they search the house and find an "old speckled straw hat," among the clothes, bottles, and other household items.

Back at the cavern, Huck tries to get Jim to discuss the dead man, but Jim avoids the subject saying it would bring bad luck and the man could "ha'nt us." They search the odds and ends they took from the floating house and discover eight dollars in an overcoat.

Because of the money and supplies, Huck argues that they are having good luck despite what Jim has told him. Later, Huck tries to play a prank on Jim and places a dead rattlesnake at the foot of Jim's blanket. When Jim lies down to sleep, the snake's mate is there and bites him. Jim is sick for several days and uses Pap's whisky to kill the pain of the snakebite. Eventually, he regains his strength, and Huck realizes the danger of defying superstition and Jim's expertise.

After a few days, Huck and Jim decide to sneak into town to learn of any news. Huck disguises himself as a girl and goes to the shanty of a woman he does not know.

Analysis

Jim's ability to predict the storm is an understated but important moment in the novel. As readers are aware, Pap Finn does not fulfill the role of father or parent except when it is convenient to Pap. In contrast, Jim's protective and caring nature is clear throughout the novel. An example of Jim's parental role is when he does not allow Huck to view the face of the body on the floating house. The motion is subtle, but the protective action is more apparent later in the last chapter of the novel when readers learn that the dead man is Pap.

With the discovery of the dead man, Huck's earlier label as the "Angel of Death" comes into play again in Chapters 9 and 10. Despite the fabrications of death and the superstitions surrounding it, Huck does not confront death until he and Jim discover the body inside the house. Huck's initial reluctance is replaced by a strong curiosity with the man and the events that caused his demise. "I couldn't keep from studying over it wishing I knowed who shot the man, and what they done it for," Huck says.

In contrast to Jim's protective nature, Huck plays the first of three failed pranks directed at Jim. Despite his respect for Jim's knowledge of superstition, Huck still acts in a careless and impractical manner, and the first prank results in Jim's snakebite. Huck's regret at the outcome demonstrates the growth of his character and indicates that Huck does value Jim as a companion and a friend. This value, however, is pitted against Huck's belief that he should turn Jim in to authorities. The result is a constant clash between Huck's feelings of admiration and friendship for Jim and his fear of being judged for helping a runaway slave.

Still in disguise, [Huck](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/character-analysis/huckleberry-finn) enters the woman's house and introduces himself as "Sarah Williams from Hookerville." Accepting Huck as a girl, the woman talks freely about the town's events and eventually reaches the subject of Huck and [Tom](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/character-analysis/tom-sawyer), the reward money, and Huck's "murder." Suspicion began with Pap Finn, she says, but after [Jim](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/character-analysis/jim) escaped, the town decided that the runaway slave had murdered Huck. With both Pap and Jim still suspects, the town has announced a reward of $300 for Jim and $200 for Pap.

The woman tells Huck she thinks she knows where Jim could be hiding, for she is sure she has seen smoke over at Jackson's Island. Huck becomes nervous when he learns that the woman's husband and another man are heading for Jackson's Island to search for Jim. Before Huck can leave, the woman figures out that he is not a girl, and Huck makes up yet another wild tale for explanation.

Huck rushes back to Jackson's Island and wakes Jim with the news that "There ain't a minute to lose. They're after us!" In complete silence, the two runaways pack their camp and head down the river on the raft.

Analysis

Chapter 11 displays yet another facet of Huck Finn's humor; that is, the ability of Huck to disguise himself and convince gullible adults to believe his preposterous stories. Huck is, indeed, an imaginative trickster who lies and fibs his way along the Mississippi. (These traits are one reason that authors such as Louisa May Alcott condemned his character as being unsuitable for young readers.) Huck is also prone, however, to forget his early stories, and therefore he is forced to invent new tales in order to continue his deception. The constantly changing fabrication is certainly comical and displays the creative ability of Huck as well as the ignorance of the people he meets.

The fact that the woman fools Huck into revealing his identity as a boy also provides much of the humor in the chapter. Despite his maverick nature, Huck is a product of the environment and thus is subject to the same type of manipulation that he performs on others. The tricks that the woman uses force Huck to reveal his male nature, his "boy" characteristics (the inability to thread a needle, for example). Even though the woman discovers Huck is not a girl, Huck is still able to save his story by donning another disguise as an orphaned and mistreated apprentice. The added story is yet another example of Huck's ability to succeed and adapt in a world of scams and con artists.

The readers should note that Chapter 11 ends with Huck and Jim functioning as a team. When Huck discovers that Jim is in danger, he does not think about society's judgment and simply reacts. In Huck's view, the pursuing men are after both of them, even though the consequences for Huck would be minimal. In other words, Huck unconsciously places Jim's safety above his own, and their separate struggles for freedom become one. As Huck and Jim slip "past the foot of the island dead still, never saying a word," [Twain](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/mark-twain-biography) takes another step away from the childish adventures of [*Tom Sawyer*](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-tom-sawyer/book-summary) and cements the relationship between the two outcasts.

[Jim](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/character-analysis/jim) and [Huck](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/character-analysis/huckleberry-finn) continue down the river between the Missouri mountains and the "heavy timber" of Illinois, hiding the raft during the day and running several hours at night. The fifth night after they pass St. Louis, they come upon a steamboat crippled on a rock. Although Jim does not want to board the wreck and argues that they should ignore it, Huck convinces him that they need to explore.

On board, they overhear voices and see that two men have tied up a third and are discussing his fate. Certain that the wreck will come loose and sink, the two men decide to leave the tied man to a watery death. When Jim tries to untie the men's skiff and trap them on the wreck, he discovers the raft has broken loose and floated away. While the men are inside the cabin, Huck and Jim take the skiff and leave the wreck. Eventually they find the raft and pull the skiff and the men's supplies up on the deck.

When they come upon a village, Huck finds a ferryboat watchman and begins another elaborate story. He tells him that his family is up on the steamboat wreck, which readers learn is named the Walter Scott. The man hurries off to sound the alarm with visions of a reward in front of him.

Later that evening, Huck sees the wreck, which has come loose from the rocks and is quietly sinking as it drifts down the river.

Analysis

[Twain](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/mark-twain-biography)'s decision to name the boat the Walter Scott continues his mockery of romantic novels and their authors. The wreck's importance to the novel, however, is found in the contrasting images of peace and brutality and Huck's inevitable deliberations on death.

Chapter 12 signals a separation from Huck and Jim's familiar surroundings as the two begin their journey down the Mississippi. The peaceful images of the river are similar to those that readers have seen in the many film adaptations of Huck Finn: Huck and Jim on a large and comfortable raft, free from outside interference and enjoying the serenity of their new life. Although the river is seen as a safe haven for Huck and Jim, the viciousness of the shore arrives in the form of the Walter Scott wreck. In this manner, Twain is able to interrupt the peaceful environment of the river by combining it with the brutality of men. The pattern is one that will recur when the duke and the king board the raft in Chapter 19.

## Despite their savageness and unfeeling attitude, Huck cannot help but "worry about the men" as he leaves them to die. Huck's compassion is evident, and he does attempt to save the men by alerting the ferryboat watchman. The "Angel of Death," however, claims more victims as the Walter Scot reports.

## Summary and Analysis Chapter 14

Summary

The next day, [Jim](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/character-analysis/jim) and [Huck](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/character-analysis/huckleberry-finn) go through the spoils they got from the gang on the *Walter Scott*. Huck's excitement about their new treasure is tempered by Jim's fear that they might have been caught or drowned. After listening to Jim, Huck realizes that, as usual, Jim is right.

Among the blankets, clothes, and cigars, Huck finds a few books and reads to Jim about romantic figures like kings, dukes, and earls. When the discussion turns to royalty and King Solomon, Huck and Jim debate Solomon's logic and refuse to agree on his wisdom.

Analysis

Chapter 14 continues to define Huck and Jim's roles, with Jim constantly proving himself as the more practical and mature person despite Huck's ability to read. Initially, Huck accepts Jim's rationale when he describes why the *Walter Scott*presented so much danger. Huck's admission that" . . . he [Jim] was most always right" is undercut, however, by his statement that Jim " . . . had an uncommon level head, for a nigger." The vulgar label — which, of course, Huck does not recognize as vulgar — shows that Huck still has not accepted Jim as an intellectual or human equal, in spite of the fact that Jim continues to show superior logic, and Huck continues to grow fonder of him.

When the two discuss King Solomon, Jim's practical but single-minded approach cannot convince Huck that Solomon "*warn't*no wise man nuther." Readers, however, are able to see that it is Huck, and not Jim, who misses the point. The real point, as Jim says, "is down furder — it's down deeper." The statement foreshadows the debate of conscience that Huck undergoes later in the novel.

Glossary

**the texas**a structure on the hurricane deck of a steamboat, containing the officers' quarters, etc. and having the pilothouse on top or in front.

**dauphin**the eldest son of the king of France, a title used from 1349 to 1830.

**polly-voo franzy**parlez-vous Francais, "Do you speak French?"

art and sinks.

## Summary and Analysis Chapters 15-16

Summary

[Jim](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/character-analysis/jim) and [Huck](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/character-analysis/huckleberry-finn) believe that three more nights will bring them to Cairo, Illinois, and, from that point, they can take a steamboat up the Ohio River to the free states. On the second night, however, a dense fog rolls in, and the strong current separates Huck and Jim. After calling in vain for Jim, Huck decides to take "one little cat-nap" and wakes up several hours later under a clear sky.

He eventually finds Jim, who is in tears over seeing Huck again. Instead of celebrating their reunion, Huck decides to act as if Jim has been dreaming and Huck has been on the raft the entire night. Jim's concern turns to confusion, but he finally realizes Huck is lying. He admonishes Huck for the prank and says that only "trash" would treat a friend like that. After a few minutes, Huck feels so ashamed that he apologizes to Jim.

Jim and Huck decide that Huck must go ashore to check their progress. Jim's excitement is obvious, and Huck struggles with his shame of helping a slave escape. When Jim says he will steal his children out of slavery if necessary, Huck decides he must go ashore and turn Jim in to the authorities. Instead of rushing ashore at dawn to free his conscience, however, Huck covers for Jim when he runs into townspeople.

Shortly after, Huck and Jim see the clear water of the Ohio River and realize they have passed Cairo in the fog. They decide to buy another canoe to head upriver, but a steamboat wrecks the raft and the two are once again separated.

Analysis

Before 1991, critics largely believed that [Twain](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/mark-twain-biography) stopped writing after Chapter 16 and set the manuscript aside. The assertion appears logical, for Cairo is, indeed, the original destination of Jim and Huck. If Huck and Jim make it to Cairo, they can head north up the Ohio River, and the story heads toward its conclusion. It is obvious that Twain was struggling with the novel's direction, but the 1991 discovery of the first half of the Huck Finn manuscript revealed that Twain had continued through Chapter 18 and then set aside the manuscript for two years.

Although Huck is distraught at the thought of losing Jim, he does play the horrible prank, which contrasts sharply with Jim's parental demeanor. [Tom](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/character-analysis/tom-sawyer), no doubt, would have been proud of Huck's creativity and imagination, but Huck realizes that he has done more than embarrass Jim; he has taken advantage of his trust and friendship. The elaborate joke wounds Jim, and Huck is not prepared for Jim's confession that his "heart wuz mos' broke bekase you wuz los', en I didn' k'yer no' mo' what become er me en de raf'." Jim's somber comment serves, in a sense, to break the heart of Huck, and readers realize, just as Huck does, that Jim would give his life for the young boy who has always been on the opposite side of societal laws.

Huck's comment that it took him 15 minutes to apologize is overshadowed only by the fact that he actually does. In Jim and Huck's squalid world, an apology from a white person to a slave is not only unnecessary, it is scandalous. Huck, however, does not regret his decision to apologize and learns another lesson about Jim's loyalty. He does not play another prank on Jim, but he continues to feel guilt over helping a slave. The irony of the situation is painful, as Huck condemns himself for protecting Jim instead of recognizing the heroics involved.

By passing Cairo, Twain is able to navigate the familiar setting of the Mississippi River and the South. The passage down-river also allows Huck to continue his battle between his instincts and what society dictates he should do. Despite his shame from the prank, Huck still struggles with his conscience. His decision to turn Jim in details the twisted logic of slavery that condemns a man for wanting to rescue his children from captivity. The biting satire is obvious, as is the realization that Huck cannot defy society's moral code of racism without a struggle. He is, after all, resisting all the social and cultural reasoning that made slavery possible.

When the two men searching for runaway slaves surprise Huck, however, he develops an elaborate story that saves Jim. Once again Huck's actions mirror his natural conscience. Huck is constantly pulled between what he is supposed to think and feel (that is, what he has been taught either by lessons or social example) and what he actually feels and thinks (that is, what he has developed through his personal and natural experiences). He finds himself aiding Jim, who grows more certain of Huck's loyalty and friendship.

Glossary

**Cairo**city in southern Illinois, at the confluence of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers.

## **buckle**to paddle hard.

## Summary and Analysis Chapters 17-18

Summary

Once on shore, [Huck](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/character-analysis/huckleberry-finn) finds himself at an impressive log house owned by the Grangerford family. After they are convinced that Huck is not a member of the Shepherdson family, the Grangerfords take Huck in, give him warm clothes, and feed him. Huck tells everyone that his name is George Jackson and that he fell off a passing steamboat.

The Grangerfords have a son named Buck, who is about Huck's age, and the two become close friends over the next few days. Huck admires the stately house with its large fireplaces, ornate door locks, and elaborate decor. The morbid paintings and poetry of Emmeline, a deceased daughter of the Grangerfords, also fascinate him.

Huck soon learns that the Grangerfords share a steamboat landing with another aristocratic family named Shepherdson. When Huck and Buck go hunting, Buck takes a shot at young Harney Shepherdson and misses. While the boys run away, Huck notices that Harney has a chance to shoot Buck but rides away instead. Huck wonders about Harney but finally decides he was going after his hat. In response to Huck's questions, Buck explains that the Grangerfords and Shepherdsons have been feuding for so long that no one remembers why it began in the first place.

After Huck delivers a message for Sophia Grangerford, he is taken over to the swamp by one of the family's many slaves. Among the trees, Huck finds [Jim](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/character-analysis/jim), who says that he has found the raft. The next day, Miss Sophia elopes with Harney Shepherdson. The bizarre feud escalates, and several men on both sides of the family are killed, including Buck. Huck regrets ever coming ashore and cannot tell us "all that happened" because it would make him sick to do so. He rejoins Jim, and the two decide a raft is the best home.

Analysis

The introduction of the Grangerfords and Shepherdsons adds a new element of humor to [Twain](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/mark-twain-biography)'s novel. Whereas earlier Twain satirizes the actions of "common" townspeople, the stately families provide a perfect opportunity for Twain to burlesque the Southern code of chivalry and aristocracy of the antebellum South. The Grangerford's house represents a gaudy and tasteless display of wealth, and Huck's appreciation of the decor only adds to the humor. The decor that exemplifies the Grangerford's taste is the artistic work of Emmeline, the deceased daughter who pined away after failing to discover a rhyme for "Whistler." In contrast to Huck's practical fascination with death, Emmeline's work displays a romantic and sentimental obsession that even gives Huck the "fantods."

Twain also uses the families to underscore his subtle satire on religion, as the two families attend the same church, leaning their guns against the walls during the sermon about "brotherly love." The mixture of theology and gunplay is ironic, as is the family's subsequent reaction that the sermon was filled with positive messages about "faith and good work and free grace and preforeordestination." Twain's Calvinist background resurfaces in his combination of predestination and foreordination.

The feud between the Grangerfords and Shepherdsons is one of the more memorable chapters in Huck Finn because of its extreme violence. The fact that the two noble families do not know why they continue to fight is ironic, but the irony deepens when the families actually draw blood. Huck's casual observance turns into participation, and when he witnesses the death of his young friend, Buck, he is unable to recount the story to readers. The hated calls of "Kill them, kill them!" prompt Huck to wish that he had never gone ashore, despite his affection for the Grangerfords. The theme of death and brutality, then, is present in all facets of society, including the wealthy, and the peace of the river is never more apparent to Huck.

When Huck returns to the raft and he and Jim are safe, Huck wearily observes that " . . . there warn't no home like a raft, after all . . . . You feel mighty free and easy and comfortable on a raft." The unaffected statement solidifies the raft/shore dichotomy and reinforces the idea that society, despite its sophistication, is cruel and unjust.

Glossary

**dog-irons**iron braces used to hold firewood.

**Pilgrim's Progress**a religious allegory by John Bunyan (1678).

**mud-cat** a catfish.

**liberty-pole**a tall flagstaff planted in the ground.

**bowie** a steel knife about fifteen inches long, with a single edge, usually carried in a sheath.

**nip and tuck** so close that the outcome is uncertain.

**predestination** the theological doctrine that God foreordained everything that would happen.

**foreordination** predestination.

**puncheon floor** floor made of a heavy, broad piece of roughly dressed timber with one side hewed flat.

**Muddy**the Mississippi River.

## Summary and Analysis Chapters 19-20

Summary

After two or three peaceful days on the raft, [Huck](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/character-analysis/huckleberry-finn) is searching for some berries in a creek when he comes upon two desperate men. The men are obviously being chased, and Huck tells them how to lose the dogs, and they escape. The men, one around 70 and the other around 30 years old, join Huck and [Jim](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/character-analysis/jim) on the raft.

Each man quickly discovers that they both are con artists, and they decide to work together. Shortly after their agreement, the youngest breaks into tears and claims that he is the Duke of Bridgewater and must be treated with respect. After a thoughtful moment, the oldest uses the same tactic and claims to be the Dauphin, the rightful heir to the French throne. Huck believes the men are simple con men but decides not to challenge them in order to keep the peace.

The duke and the king begin scheming, and with new plans, they land the raft below the one-horse town of Pokeville, which is practically deserted because of a nearby camp meeting. When the duke heads off to find a printing shop, the king decides to attend the meeting. At the meeting, the townspeople sing hymns and go up to the pulpit for forgiveness. The king joins the festivities and professes to be an old pirate who has reformed and seen the errors of his past. He burst into tears and passes around his hat and collects $87 dollars and a jug of whisky.

When they return to the raft, Huck and Jim find that the duke has printed a handbill that describes Jim as a runaway slave from New Orleans. The handbill, the duke argues, will allow them to run the raft during the day without intrusion. The next morning, Jim says he can abide one or two kings but no more than that.

Analysis

Chapter 19 continues to outline the carefree and unaffected environment aboard the raft. The days pass "smooth and lovely," and [Twain](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/mark-twain-biography) uses the opportunity to portray the beauty of the Mississippi and its natural surroundings. During this time, Huck's narrative is filled with calm images of approaching dawn, small breezes, hot breakfasts, and a sky "speckled with stars."

The peaceful environment of the raft is shattered by the arrival of the duke and the king. At this point, the raft, which has been a kind of sanctuary, is invaded by society. The two men symbolize the stark contrast of the river to the shore and once again outline the raft/shore dichotomy. In a larger sense, the duke and the king represent the confidence men that roamed both the urban and rural landscape of nineteenth-century America, always attempting to prey on the gullible and naive. The confidence man of early frontier literature used not only society's vices but also its convictions and trust to employ his schemes, and the duke and the king exemplify the trickster who takes advantage of an ignorant society.

At first, the men appear harmless, and Huck quietly rejects their preposterous claims of royalty. Huck's gesture of kindness is similar to his compassion for the doomed men aboard the Walter Scott, but he quickly realizes the danger that the frauds present. His recognition of their true character is important, for he understands that the two pose a particular threat to Jim. Huck's insight, however, is not surprising, for the men are simply exaggerations of the characters that Huck and Jim have already encountered during their journey. Huck has learned that society is not to be trusted, and the duke and the king quickly show that his concern is legitimate.

The inclusion of the camp meeting is a perfect example of the confidence man. Along with its playful burlesque of religion, the camp meeting shows a gullible audience that is swindled because of its faith. The ensuing scene is reminiscent of George Washington Harris' "Sut Lovingood's Lizards" and Johnson J. Hooper's "Simon Suggs Attends a Camp Meeting." Both authors were influential for Twain and reflect a society that is scammed because of its misplaced faith or hypocrisy.

Glossary

**gar**needlefish.

**galoot**[Slang] a person, esp. an awkward, ungainly person.

**carpet-bag** an old-fashioned type of traveling bag, made of carpeting.

**tar and feather**to cover a person with tar and feathers as in punishment by mob action.

**mesmerism**hypnotism.

**bilgewater**water that collects in the bilge of a ship, slang for worthless or silly talk.

**tick**a cloth case covering that is filled with cotton, feathers, or hair to form a mattress or pillow.

**gingham**a yarn-dyed cotton cloth, usually woven in stripes, checks, or plaids.

**calico**a printed cotton fabric.

**camp-meeting**here, a religious revival.

## Summary and Analysis Chapters 21-23

Summary

Preparing for their next scam, the duke and king practice the balcony scene from [*Romeo and Juliet*](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/r/romeo-and-juliet/romeo-and-juliet-at-a-glance) and the sword fight from [*Richard III*](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/r/richard-iii/play-summary). As an encore, the duke also teaches the king a jumbled version of [*Hamlet*](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/h/hamlet/hamlet-at-a-glance)'ssoliloquy. A few days later, they go ashore in Arkansas and decide to display their knowledge of Shakespeare. The town is a squalid place with streets of mud and loafers spitting tobacco. As [Huck](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/character-analysis/huckleberry-finn) explores, a drunken man named Boggs races into town vowing to kill a man named Colonel Sherburn. The local townspeople laugh at Boggs and remark that his behavior is common practice, and he is harmless. After a brief period, Sherburn comes out of his office and tells Boggs to stop speaking out against him. Boggs continues to swear at Sherburn, and, in retaliation, Sherburn levels a pistol and kills him.

The town immediately decides that Sherburn must be lynched, and they storm to his house in an angry mob. When they arrive, Sherburn greets them from the roof of his porch and stands up to the mob. The crowd quickly disperses after Sherburn calls them cowards and declares they do not have the "grit enough" to confront a real man.

After the [Shakespearean](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/shakespearecentral) Revival fails to bring in any significant money, the duke and king advertise a show where no women and children are allowed. Unable to resist, several men show up for the first show to find the king on stage, naked and painted with colorful stripes. The men soon realize they have been scammed, but instead of revealing their ignorance to the rest of the town, they convince the other townsmen to attend the show. After two successive scams, the townsmen arrive at the third show with plans to tar and feather the duke and king. While the men prepare to barrage the stage with rotten vegetables, the duke sneaks out with Huck, and they join the king and [Jim](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/character-analysis/jim) and leave the town.

Analysis

As with the satire of the camp meeting, the parody of Shakespeare is another staple of frontier humor that [Twain](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/mark-twain-biography) uses for comic effect. The duke's version includes a mixture of Hamlet and Macbeth, and the resulting soliloquy contains misplaced phrases such as "To be, or not to be; that is the bare bodkin."

The irony of the two frauds attempting to quote Shakespeare is surpassed only by the irony of their attempt to present it to the small Arkansas village. Huck's description of the barren town and its inhabitants reminds readers of the squalid and cruel nature of society. The men are not only cruel to defenseless animals, they are also vicious with one another as is revealed in the death of poor Boggs. Similar to Twain's use of the Mississippi, the murder of Boggs is based on a real event that Twain witnessed as a young man. The incident illustrates the dangers of pride and a mob mentality, and also symbolizes human's contempt for one another. The fact that Boggs' earlier actions are deemed harmless further illustrates that no one in Huck's world is immune from corruption and hatred.

The cruelty of the Boggs episode is easily recognized by Huck, as is the general squalor of the town. Huck's reaction is noteworthy, for it contrasts sharply with the "evils" of his companion, Jim. Among the string of characters that Huck encounters — from Pap to the Grangerfords to Sherburn — Jim stands above them despite society's condemnation. Huck's inability to transcend his environment and give way to his instincts forces him to struggle with Jim's plight. Even in comparison to the disorder and injustice of the towns and their inhabitants, Huck still cannot reconcile his abolitionist actions and Jim's freedom. Huck's character further matures as he watches Jim mourn for his wife and children because he misses them. Huck observes that blacks possibly love their families as much as whites love theirs. Huck's observation underscores the depth of ignorance and bigotry exhibited in a society that does not believe blacks to be as capable of strong emotions as whites.

The King's Campelopard and the Royal Nonesuch are based upon degrading and bawdy humor, and thus they are appropriate for the townsmen. As mentioned earlier, the strategy of the confidence man is to play upon the virtues and vices of society. By appealing to the base nature of the men, the duke and the king are able to lure them into their scam and then escape before retaliation.

Glossary

**Capet**Hugh Capet, king of France (987-996); here, the duke's reference to the king.

**jimpson weed**jimson weed; a poisonous annual weed (Datura stramonium) of the nightshade family, with foul-smelling leaves, prickly fruit, and white or purplish, trumpet-shaped flowers.

## **sold**scammed, to be made a fool

## Summary and Analysis Chapter 24

Summary

The next day, the duke paints [Jim](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/character-analysis/jim)'s face solid blue so they can navigate the river during the day. To complete the disguise, the duke posts a sign on the raft reading "Sick Arab — but harmless when not out of his head."

The two con men decide to scout the surrounding towns, and while the king and [Huck](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/character-analysis/huckleberry-finn)are heading to the steamboat, they pick up a young boy in their canoe. The king questions the talkative boy thoroughly about the town and discovers a local man, Peter Wilks, has just died and left all his fortune to his English brothers.

After learning the details of the Wilks family and its friends, the king sends Huck to fetch the duke, and the con men pose as Peter Wilks' English brothers, Harvey and William. They enter the town and begin to cry and moan when they hear of their "brothers" death. The cruel approach of the scam surprises even Huck, and he comments that "it was enough to make a body ashamed of the human race."

Analysis

The events of Chapter 24 reveal that the duke and the king have taken complete control of the raft and its travelers. The fact that the duke unties Jim and uses a disguise to give him freedom during the day is overshadowed by the latest ploy to inherit a dead man's fortune.

Similar to their earlier methods that played off of faith and conviction, the duke and the king plot to earn the confidence of an entire town. The task becomes ludicrous when readers realize that the duke and king must convince everyone of their English heritage and that William (the duke) is "deef and dumb." The humor of the con men's upcoming scam is apparent, as is the realization that this plot is more callous than their previous pranks. [Twain](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/mark-twain-biography)'s burlesque on the ignorance of humankind is evident, for to succeed, the con men need a community of fools.

Huck's somber observation that "it was enough to make a body ashamed of the human race" alerts readers that he has again been forced to evaluate his society. Whereas earlier events took place with little judgment, the Wilks scam, coupled with the death of Buck Grangerford, forces Huck to condemn the entire race. The statement underscores Huck's constant struggle.

## Summary and Analysis Chapters 25-26

Summary

The king and the duke put on a dramatic display and convince the family and most of the town that they are, indeed, Wilks' brothers. Sobbing, they greet Peter Wilks' daughters as their nieces and cry over the coffin. The king gives a speech that, according to [Huck](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/character-analysis/huckleberry-finn), is "all full of tears and flapdoodle."

Peter Wilks' will gives all of his possessions to his brothers and divides $6,000 in gold among the daughters and Harvey and William. In order to cement the confidence of the town, the duke and the king offer their portion of gold to the daughters, and the king invites everyone to Peter's funeral "orgies." The misuse of "obsequies" confirms the suspicions of the local doctor, who laughs as he realizes the two are frauds. When the doctor tries to convince the daughters to reject the duke and the king, the daughters give the money back to prove their faith in their "uncles."

The next morning, Joanna quizzes Huck about England, the king, and church. Similar to his disguise as "Sarah Mary Williams," Huck becomes confused trying to keep up with his lies, and the trust and kindness of the daughters makes him realize that he has to act. Later that evening, Huck discovers where the duke and the king hid the gold. He takes the $6,000 and waits for the opportunity to restore it to the rightful owners.

Analysis

The king's "tears and flapdoodle" speech is a hilarious example of a con man at work, preying on the faith and the perceptions of conventional grief of his victims. Despite the obvious fraud recognized by readers, the family and the town easily accept the king and the duke as English. Huck is appalled by the act, but he also recognizes the persuasive power of "soul-butter" (flattery) and its effect on the ignorant townspeople. The humor increases when the king confuses "orgies" with funeral "obsequies," and his explanation of the Greek and Hebrew origins of the word only adds to the ridiculousness of the scene. In a sense, [Twain](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/mark-twain-biography) is commenting on humankind's capacity for ignorance, for everyone except the doctor falls victim to the scam.

After viewing the king's speech, Huck realizes how clever, and thus how dangerous, the duke and the king actually are. To act against them clearly jeopardizes his own well being, but, more important, it also jeopardizes the chances of freedom for [Jim](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/character-analysis/jim). Despite the danger, Huck concludes he must return the gold to the daughters.

Glossary

**doxolojer**the doxology; a hymn of praise to God.

**soul-butter**flattery.

**yaller-boys**gold coins.

**obsequies**funeral rites or ceremonies.

**Congress-water**mineral water from Saratoga said to have medicinal properities.

## Summary and Analysis Chapters 27-28

Summary

The same evening, [Huck](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/character-analysis/huckleberry-finn) sneaks downstairs to try and hide the bag of gold. The front door is locked, however, and when Huck hears Mary Jane coming, he is forced to hide the gold in Peter Wilks' coffin. Because so many people are in the house, Huck does not have the opportunity to retrieve the money.

The funeral proceeds, and Huck realizes he does not know whether the gold is still in the coffin or if someone else has discovered it. After the funeral, the king announces that the estate will be sold in two days. The daughters appear to accept the sale until the king breaks up a slave family and sells them to different traders.

Mary Jane cannot bear to think of the separated family and the mother and the children never seeing one another again. Because he wants to comfort her, Huck blurts out that the slave family will see each other in the next two weeks. When Mary Jane promises to leave the house if Huck will tell her how he knows this, Huck tells the entire story of the king and the duke and how they have fooled everyone.

Mary Jane wants to tar and feather the con men immediately, but Huck reminds her of her promise and explains that "I'd be all right; but there'd be another person that you don't know about who'd be in big trouble." She honors her promise, and Huck gives her a note that explains where the missing gold can be found. The other daughters are confused about Mary Jane's absence, and the confusion grows when two more men arrive claiming to be Harvey and William.

Analysis

In Chapter 27, [Twain](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/mark-twain-biography) extends his satire to the pomp and circumstance surrounding the funeral service of Peter Wilks. The dark humor of the funeral scene is evident with the actions of the undertaker and the comical interlude of the dog and the rat. When the service is interrupted by the noise of the dog, the undertaker solves the disturbance and then proceeds to tell the mourners that "He had a rat!" Huck's following comment that "there warn't no more popular man in town than what that undertaker was" is yet another satiric barb directed at the subject of death.

In contrast to the burlesque humor of the funeral and its concerned mourners, Chapter 28 serves to establish Mary Jane's sense of compassion, an important example for Huck to follow. In witnessing her reaction to the plight of the slave family, Huck learns another valuable lesson about the humanity of slaves and their close familial bonds. The scene provokes memories of [Jim](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/character-analysis/jim)'s own claim that he will steal his children out of slavery in order to preserve his family. More important, the scene forces Huck to act based on both his instincts and his conscience. Not only will he tell the daughters where to find the gold, he will also tell them of the entire scam so that the slave family will not be separated.

Huck's decision to help the daughters should not be overlooked. To this point, Huck has generally aligned himself with tricksters and con men; he displays, after all, all of the huckster qualities that the duke and the king use. When the duke and king dupe the people of Bricksville, Huck feels no remorse because the town is morally void and generally squalid. When the duke and the king con the Wilks daughters, however, Huck is outraged and realizes he must intervene, regardless of the consequences.

One of the more powerful human statements is the act of sacrifice, and Huck's resolve to help the daughters illustrates the change that has come over his character. His decision to act foreshadows the novel's climatic moment in Chapter 31.

Glossary

**smouch** steal.

**melodeum** melodeon; a small keyboard organ.

**erysipelas** an acute infectious disease of the skin or mucous membranes caused by a streptococcus and characterized by local inflammation and fever.

**consumption** tuberculosis.

**harrow** a frame with spikes or sharp-edged disks, drawn by a horse or tractor and used for breaking up and leveling plowed ground, covering seeds, rooting up weeds, etc.

**muggins** a fool.

## Summary and Analysis Chapters 29-30

Summary

Even [Huck](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/character-analysis/huckleberry-finn) recognizes that the new claimants to Peter Wilks' fortune appear to be English compared to the duke and the king. The older gentleman introduces himself as Harvey and says they can prove their identity when they retrieve their baggage. In response, the king laughs and tells the crowd it is not surprising that the new "brothers" cannot immediately prove their claim. At this point, the crowd still believes the duke and the king are the true brothers, but the doctor convinces everyone that they must investigate further. After questioning Huck about his English heritage, the town lawyer, Levi Bell, tells Huck that he obviously is not used to lying.

The older gentleman says he can prove who he is because he knows what is tattooed on Peter Wilks' chest. The king says it is a small blue arrow, and the older gentleman says it is a dim "P" and "B." The lawyer decides the only one way to be positive is to exhume Peter Wilks and have a look at his chest.

When they open the coffin, they discover the bag of gold on the body's chest. The crowd becomes so excited that Huck is able to slip away, and he and [Jim](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/character-analysis/jim) escape on the raft. Before they can get very far, however, they see the king and duke have also escaped. Jim and Huck realize they are not free from the con men. The duke and the king blame one another for stealing the bag of gold, but after getting drunk, they again become comrades and start working their schemes on new villages.

Analysis

The introduction of the new Harvey and William adds another element of hilarity to the con men's inheritance scam. The contrast between the two sets of "brothers" is obvious, and the ensuing investigation underscores both the ignorance of the town and the eagerness of the townspeople to witness a dispute. Instead of reacting with anger, the town enjoys the added confusion and as the questions continue, the humor and suspense build.

Huck's role as a servant is called into question, and unlike previous escapades, Huck is unable to convince the doctor and lawyer of his English ancestry. Instead of accepting Huck's story, the lawyer tells Huck, "I wouldn't strain myself if I was you. I reckon you ain't used to lying . . . You do it pretty awkward." Although Huck's entire journey has been based on lies and deception, he is unable to fool intelligent men for even a moment. The irony is apparent, as is Huck's reluctance to try and adapt his story. Instead of attempting to lie his way out of another predicament, Huck chooses to remain quiet and observe the comical investigation.

The con men's unwillingness to leave without selling all of the family's possessions represents the greed of the two men. Ironically, it is this same type of greed that allows Huck and the duke and the king to escape. When the townsmen see the gold in Peter Wilks' coffin, they are unable to resist and the ensuing melee is reminiscent of Bricksville. [Twain](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/mark-twain-biography)'s commentary on the greed and ignorance of the mob mentality is solidified with the duke and the king's escape.

Glossary

**cravats**neckerchiefs or scarves.

**shekel**a half-ounce gold or silver coin of the ancient Hebrews.

## **gabble**to talk rapidly and incoherently; jabber; chatter.

## Summary and Analysis Chapter 31

Summary

With the temperature rising and the landscape scattered with Spanish moss, [Huck](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/character-analysis/huckleberry-finn) realizes that they are a long way from home. The new schemes of the duke and the king barely bring in enough money for liquor, so the two men begin to plot and whisper about their next scam. Huck and [Jim](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/character-analysis/jim) are concerned about the clandestine behavior of the con men, and when Huck finally sees a chance to escape, he discovers that the duke and the king have made a fake handbill and turned in Jim for a $40 reward.

Huck is furious with the con men because "after all we'd done for them scoundrels . . . they could have the heart to serve Jim and make him a slave again all his life." As Huck ponders his choices, his conscience begins to trouble him again. He cannot help but feel guilty for assisting Jim, despite the fact that his instincts constantly force him into that role. After trying to pray for resolution, Huck writes a letter to Miss Watson detailing where Jim is and signs it "Huck Finn." After he finishes the letter, he feels momentary relief and is confident that he has saved himself from going to hell for helping a slave.

Instead of being satisfied with his decision, however, Huck begins to replay their trip down the river. He reminisces about the two of them "a-floating along, talking and singing and laughing" and cannot force himself to see Jim as someone disgraceful. Huck trembles as he again picks up Miss Watson's letter and realizes that the struggle must stop: He must decide forever between two things: heaven and hell. He pauses for a minute, then declares "All right, then, I'll go to hell" and tears the letter to pieces. Once Huck makes his decision to betray society for Jim, he immediately plots to steal Jim back out of slavery.

Analysis

If Chapter 18 is the end of the first segment of the novel, Chapter 31 is the end of the second segment and one of the most important chapters in Adventures of Huckleberry Finn. Up until this point, the novel has wavered back and forth between the river and the shore, with humorous and cruel events constantly bombarding the reader. The conflicts of individual versus society, freedom versus civilization, and sentimentalism versus realism, as well as Huck's struggle between right and wrong, are all revealed in Huck and Jim's journey. And all come to a head in Huck's eventual decision. In the midst of these events rests Huck's inner struggle to ignore his conscience and transcend his environment.

The catalyst for Huck's action is the sale of Jim back into slavery. Ironically, Huck believes he will be shunned by his community and doom himself to literal hell if he aids Jim. Despite this realization, Huck's proclamation "All right, then, I'll go to hell," ends his struggle in a concise and powerful moment, which is the climax of the novel.

In light of his climatic decision, Huck's entire narrative symbolizes a search for his own conscience and identity, and this identity is shaped by his attempt to make moral evaluations despite the pressures of surrounding theological and societal codes. That Huck has not been able to reconcile his struggle should not come as a surprise to readers, for Huck's sacrifice is lost on the racist society that pervaded nineteenth-century America. The statement becomes even more powerful when readers realize that Huck's decision to recognize Jim's humanity is not shared by the rest of society.

Above all, it is important to note that Huck's declaration, despite the surrounding satire and bitter irony, elevates him to a heroic character. [Twain](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/mark-twain-biography), however, cannot help but infuse more subtle irony even after Huck's decision, and Huck's reasoning that "as long as I was in [hell], and in for good, I might as well go the whole hog" notifies readers that the novel will take yet another turn in its last segment.

Glossary

**Spanish Moss**a plant often found growing in long, graceful strands from the branches of trees in the south eastern U.S.

## **doggery**a saloon.

## Summary and Analysis Chapters 32-33

Summary

After learning of [Jim](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/character-analysis/jim)'s location, [Huck](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/character-analysis/huckleberry-finn) arrives at the Phelps farm. He surmises the Phelps' "little one-horse cotton plantation," but before he can reach the door, he is surrounded by all sorts of barking dogs. After a slave woman runs them off, another woman comes out of the house and says, "It's you, at last! — ain't it?" as if she is expecting Huck. Before Huck realizes what he is doing, he answers yes and the woman grabs him and hugs him like she has known him all of her life.

The woman, who Huck learns is named "Aunt Sally," asks him about his trip and then asks him about the family. Huck realizes he is in a bind, but just before Huck confesses, the husband arrives and Aunt Sally introduces Huck as none other than [Tom Sawyer](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/character-analysis/tom-sawyer). Huck is stunned momentarily and then realizes that he has somehow managed to stumble upon Tom's relatives. After answering several questions about the Sawyer family, Huck heads back to the river in hopes of finding the real Tom who must be on his way.

When Huck gets halfway to town, he finds Tom Sawyer. At first, Tom thinks Huck is a ghost. After Huck explains the situation with Jim, Tom declares that he will "help you steal him" out of slavery.

When they arrive at the Phelps farm, Tom makes up an elaborate story and introduces himself as Tom's brother, Sid Sawyer. Huck and Tom learn that the king and the duke are in town to perform and that Jim has warned the townspeople that the upcoming show is a fraud. Huck and Tom sneak out to try and tell the duke and the king, but they soon come upon the chaotic mob who has already tarred and feathered the con men.

Analysis

Chapter 32 begins what could be called the last segment of the novel. Huck's solemn narration is evident at the beginning of the chapter, when he describes the breeze that occasionally washes over the farm. For Huck, the breeze comes across as a whisper of spirits long dead, and readers are reminded of those that have already died earlier in the novel. The entire journey appears to weigh heavily on Huck, and at one point he "wished I was dead" after hearing the lonesome hum of a spinning wheel. In a sense, the Phelps farm is symbolic of Huck's return back to civilization. Although he and Jim have traveled hundreds of miles down the Mississippi River, they find themselves in a situation very similar to the life they left with Miss Watson and the Widow Douglas.

Huck's climatic decision to free Jim has brought about an unconscious epiphany or revelation in Huck's character, and when he nears the farmhouse, he does not pause, but looks to "Providence to put the right words in my mouth." Although Huck has always been prone to improvisation, he now credits his ability to Providence. The statement reveals that Huck, despite his own belief that he is now damned, places his fate (and Jim's) in the hands of another. Ironically, the person who arrives is the real Tom Sawyer, the nephew of Silas and Sally Phelps.

Literary critics have argued that the coincidence of Huck arriving at the Phelps farm is implausible in a "realistic" novel. It is important to remember, however, that [Twain](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/mark-twain-biography)'s original intentions for the novel included Tom as a main character. The first edition was entitled Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (Tom Sawyer's Comrade), and therefore it is not surprising that Tom reenters the novel before its conclusion.

Tom's arrival on the Phelps farm signals that a new leader will control the future of Huck and Jim. Whereas Huck and Jim shared responsibility for their fate, Tom now dictates their plans of "adventure" and escape. By allowing Tom to control the conclusion of the novel, Huckleberry Finn turns away from Huck's constant struggle with his conscience and reverts back to a story intended for boys and girls. The dramatic tonal shift can be attributed to several factors, including the fact that Huckleberry Finn was written in three stages. But it also reflects Twain's indecision over the conclusion of the novel and how to reconcile his scathing social commentary on American, and especially Southern, society.

Tom's reintroduction signals that playful and harmless pranks are soon to follow. The reunion of the two boys, however, does not completely overshadow the violent setting that Twain has carefully constructed. Huck still observes the squalid nature of "civilization" and tries to compensate through kindness, a trait reminiscent of the Widow Douglas. The tarring and feathering of the duke and the king reveals Huck's sympathetic view toward everyone, even those who have been cruel to him. Instead of standing by and watching the two con men receive their punishment, Huck tries to save the duke and the king from the town and a fate that could include death. When he fails to save the duke and the king, he comments that "Human beings can be awful cruel to one another." The statement could be applied to the entire novel, as Huck has witnessed countless incidents that were void of humanity.

Glossary

**smokehouse**a building, especially an outbuilding on a farm, where meats, fish, etc. are smoked in order to cure and flavor them.

**bars**a thing that blocks the way or prevents entrance or further movement, as in a sandbar.

**Methusalem**Methuselah, one of the biblical patriarchs who was said to live 969 years.

## Summary and Analysis Chapters 34-35

Summary

[Tom](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/character-analysis/tom-sawyer) discovers that [Jim](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/character-analysis/jim) is being held in a small farm cabin, and the two boys discuss plans to free Jim from captivity. [Huck](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/character-analysis/huckleberry-finn)'s logical plan is to steal the keys from Uncle Silas, quickly unlock Jim, and immediately leave on the raft. Tom argues that the plan is too simple and as "mild as goosemilk." After they examine the cabin where Jim is being held, Huck suggests that they tear off one board for Jim to escape. Tom again argues that the plan is not complicated enough and then decides that they should dig Jim out because doing so will take a couple of weeks. When a slave brings food to Jim, the boys go along and whisper to Jim that they are going to set him free.

Tom and Huck begin making plans for an elaborate escape, and each step becomes more complicated and time-consuming. Tom argues that Jim will need a rope ladder and other items such as case-knives and a journal, because the escape must be done just like the prison novels he has read.

Analysis

The opportunity to burlesque Tom's romanticism and infuse humor back into the novel comes at the price of Jim's perceived freedom. In actuality, Jim has already been set free by the late Miss Watson's will, and readers will learn this startling fact at the end of the novel. However, because both Huck and Jim are unaware of Jim's freedom, they agree to follow Tom's extravagant plans for a dramatic escape.

The elaborate escape plan provides Tom the opportunity to call upon several of the prison stories and adventure novels he has read. By combining unnecessary tactics such as a tunnel and devices such as a rope ladder, the entire plan becomes a comical romantic farce. The incongruity of Huck's logic in the face of Tom's imagination creates several humorous exchanges, and the farce is reminiscent of [Twain](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/mark-twain-biography)'s earlier work with Tom Sawyer. For example, when Tom says that Jim needs to keep a journal, Huck replies, "Journal your granny — Jim can't write."

Huck's practical response is both humorous and revealing at the same time. On the surface, it is obvious that Jim does not need to keep a journal, but the fact that Jim is captive during this time is an overriding shadow on the slapstick humor. The ability to read and write was not common among anyone in the mid-1800s, and because Jim is a slave, his being able to write is much more unlikely. More important, however, is the realization that Huck cannot stop the nonsensical plans because he and Jim are trapped within the confines of a racist society.

Neither Huck nor Jim is able to dissuade or alter Tom's plans except in minor ways, and their failed attempts symbolize their ill-fated efforts to truly escape civilization's conventions. The biting satire is obvious when Huck wonders about the logic of digging a tunnel with ordinary case-knives. When he questions Tom, Tom replies that "It don't make no difference how foolish it is, it's the right way . . . . And there ain't no other way, that ever I heard of, and I've read all the books that gives any information about these things." As a representative of proper society, Tom summarizes civilization's reliance on tradition and existing laws that have been recorded, despite their lack of humanity and compassion.

Glossary

**fox-fire**the luminescence of decaying wood and plant remains, caused by various fungi.

**seneskal**seneschal, a steward or major-domo in the household of a medieval noble.

**Langudoc** Languedoc, historical region of southern France.

## **Navarre**historical region and former kingdom in northeast Spain

## Summary and Analysis Chapters 36-38

Summary

The next evening, [Tom](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/character-analysis/tom-sawyer) and [Huck](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/character-analysis/huckleberry-finn) try to use the case-knives to dig a tunnel under the cabin, but after a few hours, they realize they need better tools. Tom decides they will use pick-axes and shovels and pretend that they are case-knives. The next night, Tom and Huck easily dig into [Jim](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/character-analysis/jim)'s cabin and wake him. Jim listens to Tom's plans and agrees to go along with them even though he thinks they do not make sense. Tom assures Jim that they will change the plans immediately if something goes wrong.

The boys begin smuggling "escape" tools into the cabin, and Aunt Sally notices that items are missing from the house. To confuse her, Tom and Huck continually take and replace sheets and spoons until Aunt Sally does not know how many she had to start with. Finally they tear up one of the sheets and smuggle it into Jim's cabin along with some tins plates. Following Tom's instructions on how to write mysterious messages, Jim marks on the tin plates and then throws them out the window.

The next day, Tom continues to find new distractions for Jim's escape. Tom writes down some inscriptions for Jim to carve into the wall but then realizes the walls are wooden. To be done properly and according to the books, Tom says they must have stone. The boys try to roll a large grindstone into the cabin but are not strong enough. Jim climbs out of the cabin and helps them roll the stone the rest of the way. Despite Jim's protests, Tom decides that the cabin needs other residents, including spiders and snakes, in order to make it a proper dungeon and Jim a proper prisoner.

Analysis

In Chapters 36 through 38, the novel slips further into the farce as neither Huck nor Jim understand why they must perform all of these ludicrous acts before Jim can escape. Ironically, Huck and Jim view Tom as a representative of society and education, and because of this, they feel that Tom must know the best way for them to escape.

Jim's continued enslavement is both absurd and grotesque and is a harsh comment on the racial condition of post-Civil War America. As mentioned earlier, Miss Watson has already set Jim free in her will, but the ability to transcend and change society's perception is not as easily accomplished. Jim, therefore, remains captive to others despite the fact that he has, indeed, been freed.

It is important to remember that Huck Finn was written in the 20 years following the Civil War, and the entire novel reflects [Twain](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/mark-twain-biography)'s own post-Civil War observations. Although the Union made some attempt at Southern reconstruction, the South quickly fell into a squalid and segregated ruin. Conditions for newly freed slaves were no doubt improved, but the longed-for freedom had not come with changed perceptions, acceptance, or equality.

Glossary

**dog-fennel**any of several weeds or wildflowers of the composite family, having daisylike flower heads.

**scutcheon**escutcheon a shield or shield-shaped surface on which a coat of arms is displayed.

**juice harp**jew's harp, a small musical instrument consisting of a lyre-shaped metal frame held between the teeth and played by plucking a projecting bent piece with the finger.

**mullen stalks**stalks of the mullein, a tall plant of the figwort family, with spikes of yellow, lavender, or white flowers.

## n and southwest France.

## Summary and Analysis Chapters 39-40

Summary

[Tom](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/character-analysis/tom-sawyer) and [Huck](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/character-analysis/huckleberry-finn) capture several rats to put in [Jim](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/character-analysis/jim)'s cabin, but one of the Phelps boys finds the box and lets all of the rats free into the house. After several creatures are accidentally freed in the Phelps' house, Tom and Huck finally capture enough rats, spiders, and snakes, and put them in Jim's cabin. Jim complains that there is not enough room for him, and if he ever becomes free he "wouldn't ever be a prisoner again, not for a salary."

After three weeks, everything is finally ready for the grand escape. To finish off the scheme, Tom writes an anonymous letter to the Phelps saying that a "desperate gang of cutthroats" will attempt to steal Jim out of the cabin.

Huck returns to the house to pick up some butter and finds that the Phelps have gathered 15 men to battle the gang of cutthroats. Alarmed, Huck sneaks out the window and warns Tom that the men are here, and they must all escape immediately. When the men come to the cabin, Jim and the boys slip out of the hole and head for the river amidst shouts and gunshots. They make it to the raft but then discover that Tom has been shot in the calf. Tom tells them to shove off, but Jim will not leave until a doctor has looked at Tom.

Analysis

The entire Phelps' household is in complete disarray when the escape actually begins. In this manner, the novel has moved even further from the peaceful tranquility of the raft and the river to the chaos of society and the shore. Symbolizing the clash between Romanticism and Realism, Huck and Tom continue to display juxtaposing approaches to the escape and the situation. The arrival of a town posse frightens Huck, but Tom is delighted. When Huck tells Tom that the house is full of men with guns, Tom replies, "Ain't it bully!" as if the entire escape is a dramatic work of fiction.

Although readers have already recognized Jim as compassionate and caring, Chapter 40 reinforces Jim's qualities of bravery and loyalty. When they discover that Tom has been shot, Jim adamantly refuses to leave and says, "I doan' budge a step out'n dis place 'dout a doctor; not if it's forty year!" The statement reinforces Jim as a heroic figure capable of sacrifice.

Glossary

**allycumpain**elecampane, a tall, hairy perennial plant of the composite family, having flower heads with many slender, yellow rays.

Summary and Analysis Chapters 41-42

Summary

[Huck](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/character-analysis/huckleberry-finn) quickly locates a doctor and tells him that his brother "had a dream . . . and it shot him." The doctor heads for the raft but will not let Huck come along because the canoe is too small. Exhausted, Huck falls asleep until the next morning. When he wakes up, he runs into Uncle Silas, and the two of them go back to the Phelps farm, which is full of local men discussing the strange cabin and its contents. The farmers decide that [Jim](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/character-analysis/jim) must have been helped by several slaves and the writing is some sort of "secret African" language.

The next day, [Tom](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/character-analysis/tom-sawyer) and Jim arrive at the Phelps' with the doctor and several of the farmers. Tom is on a mattress and Jim has his hands tied. The men argue whether or not to hang Jim, and the doctor explains how Jim helped with Tom instead of running away.

The next morning Tom wakes up and begins to tell Aunt Sally how he and "Tom" (Huck) orchestrated the entire escape. Tom relishes the retelling until he hears that Jim is still in captivity. Tom rises up in bed and demands that they free Jim because he has known all along that Miss Watson had died and set Jim free in her will. At that moment, Aunt Polly arrives, and Tom and Huck are forced to reveal their true identities.

Analysis

With Tom unable to direct the plans, Huck again takes control of the story and makes decisions based on his common sense and logic. Instead of listening to Tom's intricate plan to fetch a doctor, Huck trusts his own ability to tell lies and control the situation. Although the doctor is somewhat suspicious of Huck's story, when Huck returns to the farm, he finds that the entire community has been drawn into Tom's fanciful escape. The ignorance and gullibility of the farmers is easily seen as they try to reconstruct and understand the escape.

Jim's refusal to leave Tom in Chapter 40 becomes more significant in Chapter 42 when he allows himself to be recaptured. As with Huck's earlier decision to sacrifice his soul to free Jim, Jim sacrifices his freedom and, quite possibly, his life by staying with Tom. Because Jim is thought to be a runaway slave, the local men "was very huffy, and some of them wanted to hang Jim as an example." Jim is, no doubt, fully aware that if he is recaptured he might be lynched, and this realization gives more credence to his role as a heroic figure at the end of the novel. The doctor who saves Tom also lauds Jim's character, and this praise further establishes his position.

As mentioned earlier, one of the most controversial elements of the novel is the fact that Jim is already free during the escape. When Tom realizes that Jim has been recaptured, he sits up in bed and declares that "They hain't no *right* to shut him up! *Shove!* — and don't you lose a minute. Turn him loose! he ain't no slave; he's as free as any cretur that walks this earth!" The realization stuns both the characters of the novel and the readers, as it becomes clear that the entire escape was unnecessary.

The turn of events serves two purposes. On the surface, the realization finalizes the separate attitudes and beliefs of Tom and Huck. Tom's Romanticism is now viewed as harmful instead of playful, and his connection with society illustrates its overarching lack of compassion toward the plight of slaves in nineteenth-century America. Beneath the surface, however, is the subtle message that no one, regardless of race or social standing or location, is free from civilization and its misconceptions. Tom's statement, then, is one of ">Twain's harshest and most ironic comments on the American condition.

Glossary

**Nebokoodneezer**Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylonia who conquered Jerusalem, destroyed the Temple, and deported many Jews into Babylonia (586 bc).

## Summary and Analysis Chapter the Last

Summary

[Huck](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/character-analysis/huckleberry-finn) asks [Tom](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/character-analysis/tom-sawyer) what they would have done if the escape had worked, and Tom says they would have continued having adventures down to the end of the Mississippi. After they finished, they could ride back home on a steamship, in style, and they would all be heroes.

In conclusion, Huck tells readers that Tom is well now and wears his bullet around his neck on a watch-guard. He says that, if he had known how much trouble it was to write a book, he would not have tried it. Now that he is finished, he must "light out for the Territory ahead of the rest" in order to stay one step ahead of civilization and live in true freedom. Aunt Sally now wants to adopt Huck officially and "sivilize" him, but Huck says he " . . . can't stand it. I been there before."

Analysis

Although Huck and [Jim](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/character-analysis/jim) have both undergone changes in character, the novel returns to its beginnings at the conclusion with the Widow Douglas trying to "sivilize" Huck. The last chapter allows [Twain](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/mark-twain-biography) to comment on the process of writing and the difficulty of completing Adventures of Huckleberry Finn. Twain's difficulty was due, in large part, to his struggle to decide between a social commentary and a children's adventure novel. Although Huck declares that if "I'd 'a' knowed what a trouble it was to make a book I wouldn't 'a' tackled it," the suggestion is that there will be yet another adventure for Huck, and yet another novel for Twain. Always the maverick, Huck announces that he will continue to try and avoid the trappings of civilization and seek his own freedom.