

Huck Finn
Discussion Questions
ch. 32-43

1. Define the words “adventure” and “heroism” as Huck would and as Tom would. Then compare each boy’s idea of how Jim should be rescued, according to these definitions. Who is the hero of this novel, Huck or Jim? List ways in which each has proven his heroism.
2. Why does Tom Sawyer so readily agree to rescue Jim, when Huck has understood that Tom hates abolitionists? Is Tom changed by his effort to save Jim?
3. How are heart and conscience in conflict in Huck’s seeing Jim as his friend and family, and as a slave? What details of their trip down the Mississippi does Huck recall that soften him towards Jim? How has Jim helped Huck be a better person?
4. Compare Pap and Jim as father figures to Huck. How has their treatment affected Huck’s view of family? (Is Jim’s mistreatment of his deaf daughter comparable to Pap’s abuse of Huck?)
5. Several characters have kept secrets from others in the novel. Jim doesn’t tell Huck he is free of Pap. Tom doesn’t tell Jim he was freed on Miss Watson’s death. Huck doesn’t tell Jim that the King and Duke are scoundrels and conmen. How would these truths have changed the outcome of the novel and the characters themselves had they been revealed? Is keeping a secret the same as a lie in these cases?
6. Which characters are dynamic? Chart them and the ways in which they have changed during the novel. What has each character learned? How has Twain used them in the novel to change his readers?
7. Critics have complained that the rescue at Phelps’ farm is rife with coincidence and is overall problematic to the rest of the work. What do you see as the problems this section presents to readers? Does this section change your view of the main characters’ moral development? If so, how? How has Tom Sawyer’s insistence on “regulations” for escape forced him into the role of colonizer, Huck into the role of agent of the colonizer, and Jim into the role of the colonized/oppressed?
8. Since a central theme of the work has a lot to do with escape from “civilization,” discuss in what ways Jim and Huck have explored being uncivilized? Have the two avoided civilizing at the close of the novel? Have the two civilized one another? What part does the river play in this discussion? What point is Twain making about freedom?

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