

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn
Discussion Questions

Chapters 1-5

1. How and why does Twain establish Huck's voice as storyteller? What do we learn about Huck from what he reveals of other characters' assessments of him?

2. Make two columns, listing Huck's clear likes and dislikes as he reveals them in these chapters. What things does he have trouble understanding?

3. What are Huck's feelings about his adoption by the Widow Douglas and her sister, Miss Watson? As a motherless boy, does he need their influence?

4. Huck's upbringing is at issue in the book. What has he been taught that forms his core self? What do other characters want to teach him and how do they wish to change him?

5. These chapters establish components of Huck's self that others hope to influence: his emotions, his intelligence, his fiscal responsibility, his spirituality, his social self, and his physical health and habits. To what and whom does Huck conform and when/how does he reject conformity in these chapters?

6. Setting is important in establishing a novel and a narrator's voice. Consider how elements of place are revealed in the opening chapters. How do these elements help develop the voice and characters of Huck, Tom, Jim, and others?

3. Read the scene introducing Jim. Discuss: Is Jim stereotyped? What is Huck and Tom's assumption about Jim before they get to know him?

Chapters 6-12

1. What sort of person does Huck reveal his father to be? What is Huck's relationship with his father?

2. Why does Huck stage his own murder rather than simply running away? What repercussions could this choice have on those who care about him?

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3. What are Huck's feelings about the river and living closely with nature?

4. Why does Huck tell Jim he won't turn him in, when he is so frankly opposed to abolition? What does this reveal about Huck's character?

5. Huck and Jim are runaways seeking freedom. In two columns, list the reasons and differences in their motivation to escape.

6. Although Huck paints himself as a blockhead—unsure of himself and easily led by others, he has a great deal of ingenuity. List ways in which he proves his ingenuity.

7. Review irony and satire. list as many ironies and objects of satire as you can in the chapters thus far. With each point on your list, state in one sentence the message that comes through the use of satire and/or irony.