

Credits:

Chapter 2, from *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, by Mark Twain. Read by Carole Bos, creator of Awesome Stories.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/Adventures-of-Huck-Finn-by-Mark-Twain-Chapter-2-Audio-0>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/Adventures-of-Huck-Finn-by-Mark-Twain-Chapter-2-Audio-0>

Questions 2 Ponder

Why Do People Join Gangs?

Gangs have existed for a very long time, in reality and in fiction. Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer, for example, belonged to a gang of boys.

What does Chapter II, of *Huck Finn*, tell us about Huck's level of education? What about the rest of the boys?

When the gang members sign their oath, how does Huck sign his name? Is it different from the way the rest of the boys sign their names?

When Tom Sawyer suggests the purpose of the gang, what is the source of his ideas? Does he have original thoughts about what the boys could do - or - is he getting his recommendations from somewhere else? Explain your answer.

Are the boys' ideas about murder and mayhem real or fanciful? Explain your answer.

Is it important for the boys to belong to this gang? Why, or why not?

How does Huck view membership in the gang?

How Does Personal Understanding Expand "Book Learning?"

Learning about life from books helps us to "get knowledge," but our own life experiences and personal knowledge make our book-learning even more meaningful.

Take Tom Sawyer, for example, as he appears in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. If we didn't know anything about Tom—because we'd never read *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*—what can we learn about Tom from the second chapter of *Huck Finn*?

What happens when Tom doesn't know the whole story—or the real meaning—about what he reads in books?

When Tom tries to explain his position—but can't because he doesn't really understand what he's read—how does he handle what could become an embarrassing situation for him?

In your opinion, what is the best example of Tom Sawyer's lack of ability to translate what he reads in books into what is possible in real life?

What is Mark Twain telling us when he has Huck—who isn't really educated at all—effectively cross-examining Tom—his more-educated friend—to reveal the flaws in Tom's understanding of the stories he reads?

Should Authors Disregard Their Own Culture when Writing Novels?

When Mark Twain wrote *Huck Finn*, he lived in post-Civil-War America and used his book to express personal views on cultural topics like slavery and treatment of African-Americans in the U.S.

Twain wrote his story in the vernacular—meaning, he used the language of the day. When the “n” word rolls off Huck's tongue—without his giving it a second thought—is the author being disrespectful? Why, or why not?

When an author, like Samuel Clemens (Mark Twain) is writing a novel, should he disregard his own culture?

Should future generations try to change the author's words? Why, or why not?

What Does It Mean to “Own” Someone?

During America’s time of slavery, slave “owners” claimed that they “owned” their “slaves.” We can examine what “ownership” of people may have meant, in the 19th century, in a novel like *Huck Finn*.

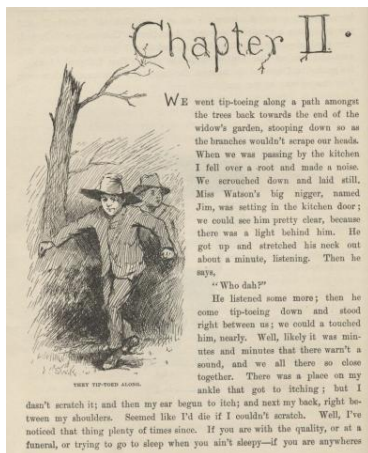
By the time of Chapter II, in *Huck Finn*, we don't-yet know much about Jim, except for one fundamental thing: Huck says that he belongs to Miss Watson. That means Jim is a slave.

How would a person's psychological well-being be impacted if someone else claimed ownership over him/her? Explain your answer.

If someone claimed to own another human being, what did that “owner” actually possess? The slave's labor? The slave's children? The slave's mind? The slave's thoughts? The slave's body?

Could someone be enslaved (in body) but free (in personal thoughts)? How would that work, in the real world?

Media Stream



Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer Together

Image, described above, online via Archive.org.

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Adventures of Huckleberry Finn - Jim

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Tom Sawyer

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Huck Finn - Jim's Stories Travel the Blue Marble

As Jim tells his stories - to Huck Finn, Tom Sawyer and many other people - he sometimes exaggerates.

On the other hand, he's such a great storyteller that people come from miles around to hear him. Maybe part of Jim's draw is his ability to make the story grow and grow.

Huck Finn gives an example of Jim's story-growing ability:

Afterwards Jim said the witches be witched him and put him in a trance, and rode him all over the State, and then set him under the trees again, and hung his hat on a limb to show who done it. And next time Jim told it he said they rode him down to New Orleans; and, after that, every time he told it he spread it more and more, till by and by he said they rode him all over the world, and tired him most to death...

Mark Twain published his Huck Finn book in 1885. At the beginning of the novel, he tells us that the story takes place "forty to fifty years ago." That puts the time frame between 1835-1845.

We can imagine Jim regaling Huck and Tom. Maybe they're sitting under the stars on a warm Mississippi-Valley night, not-long before America's "Fugitive Slave Law of 1850" went into effect.

None of them are able to see the Earth, as it appears from space, since not-even their inventor, Mark Twain, could have imagined the spectacular sight of "The Blue Marble."

This image of the Earth, as seen from Apollo 17, gives a deeper meaning to Huck's words: ...till by and by he said they rode him all over the world.

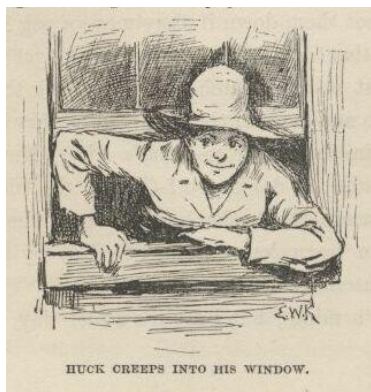
Click on the image for a better view.

Image online, courtesy NASA. It depicts an image of the world, "The Blue Marble," which the crew of Apollo 17 captured during their mission to the Moon.

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HUCK CREEPS INTO HIS WINDOW.

Huck Finn Creeps into His Window

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