

# Before You Read

## *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* Chapters 16–31

### FOCUS ACTIVITY

How do you go about making important decisions? Do you tend to follow your heart or your head?

#### Journal

In your journal, write about a time when you had to make an important decision. Briefly describe how you decided what to do.

#### Setting a Purpose

Read to find out what important decisions Huck faces and how he goes about making them.

### BACKGROUND

#### Satire and Irony

Satire is a kind of literature that tries to open people's eyes to the need for change by exposing the flaws of a person or society. Satirists' main weapon is humor, which is created through techniques such as irony.

Irony is the contrast between what appears to be true and is actually true, or between what we expect to happen and what actually happens. Twain created an ironic character in Pap. We expect a father to be proud of his son and provide for him, but Pap is angry that Huck is learning to read and "getting religion," and Pap wants to spend Huck's money on himself. Though we may laugh at Pap, we should also be aware of the messages behind the humor: Judge Thatcher is too easily tricked by Pap's "reformation," and there is something wrong with a system that would let Pap take Huck.

Through the use of irony, Twain develops some of the most important themes of *Huckleberry Finn*. As you read Chapters 16 through 31, look for examples of irony, and think about the flaws that Twain is attempting to expose.

### VOCABULARY PREVIEW

**blackguard** [blag'ärd / -erd] v. to insult  
**crockery** [krok'är ē] n. china  
**draft** [draft] n. check or money order  
**flapdoodle** [flap'dōōd əl] n. nonsense  
**mesmerism** [mez'mə riz'əm] n. hypnotism

discern (v) to differentiate between two or more things

Ostentatious (adj) showy, pretentious

Obscure (adj; v) difficult to see, vague

laud (v; n) revere

reticence (n) restraint in speech, reluctance to speak



# Active Reading

## *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* Chapters 16–31

In *Huckleberry Finn*, people and things are not always what they appear to be. As you read Chapters 16 through 31, make note of times when people or things appear to be one way but are actually very different underneath. In the left-hand column of the chart below, note what the character or thing seems to be. In the right-hand column, note what the character or thing actually is. Add rows to the chart if necessary.

Appearance	Reality
Huck pretends he is a boy whose family has smallpox.	Huck is actually lying to protect Jim.

# Responding

## *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* Chapters 16–31

### Personal Response

What were your feelings when Huck thought about sending the letter to Miss Watson so that Jim could be recaptured?

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### Analyzing Literature

#### Recall and Interpret

1. What does Jim plan to do when he becomes a free man? What is Huck's reaction to the plan?

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2. Briefly describe the duke and the king. What might Twain be satirizing through the use of these characters?

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3. What does Buck say when Huck asks him how the feud between the Shepherdsons and the Grangerfords got started? What is ironic about Buck's response?

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4. Who is Colonel Sherburn? Briefly sum up the speech he makes to the mob. What aspect of human nature does Sherburn criticize?

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# Responding

## *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* Chapters 16–31

### Analyzing Literature (*continued*)

#### Evaluate and Connect

5. Mark Twain makes heavy use of dialect in *Huckleberry Finn*. How successful do you feel he is? What are some advantages for an author in deciding to render speech in dialect, as Twain does? What are some possible disadvantages?

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6. How might Huck answer the **Focus Activity** question that you answered in your journal? How does this answer compare with yours?

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### Literature and Writing

#### Isn't It Ironic?

Throughout the novel, Huck is taught that "sivilized society" is right and he is wrong. As a result, he believes he will "go to hell" for rescuing Jim. On a separate sheet of paper, write a brief analysis of the irony in Huck's situation. What evil does the irony expose?

#### Extending Your Response

##### Literature Groups

In this section of the novel, Mark Twain contrasts life on the raft with life on shore. In your group, discuss the differences between what the raft represents to Huck and what life on shore is like. Cite lines from the text that describe raft life and shore life to support your argument. Then present your conclusions to others in your class.

##### Learning for Life

The Shepherdsons and the Grangerfords are unable to settle their differences, and so they resort to violence. Imagine that you have been called into help them resolve their conflict through peaceful means. What would you say to them? What would you have them do? In a small group, role-play a conflict resolution meeting between the two families.

