

Before You Read

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn Chapters 1-15

FOCUS ACTIVITY

Freedom means different things to different people. What does it mean to you?

List Ideas

With a partner, examine what the concept of freedom means to you. Brainstorm a list of statements that describe the idea of freedom.

Setting a Purpose

Read to find out what freedom means to a boy and a man living during the 1800s.

BACKGROUND

Point of View

Point of view is the relationship of the narrator, or storyteller, to the events of the story. *Huckleberry Finn* is told by the character Huck, using words like *I* and *we*. Therefore, it is told from the **first-person** point of view. The reader sees everything through Huck's eyes and is given his perspective on events.

When examining a narrative point of view, it is important to distinguish the narrator from the author. Huck is an uneducated fourteen-year-old boy living in a village in the 1840s. He has the knowledge, beliefs, and experiences of such a boy. Twain, on the other hand, was a well-traveled writer and experienced lecturer. He was well aware of how to use narrative techniques, adopt different points of view, and speak in the role of different characters, and he used that knowledge to create a narrator who is very different from himself.

Unreliable Narrator

Huckleberry Finn is also an example of an **unreliable** narrator—one who does not understand the full significance of the events he describes and comments on. Huck is not intentionally unreliable; his lack of education and experience makes him so. Much of the humor in the first chapters comes from Huck's incomplete understanding of the adults around him and their "sivilized" ways.

VOCABULARY PREVIEW

- dismal** [diz' mæl] *adj.* gloomy; depressing
- notion** [nō' shən] *n.* theory; belief
- raspy** [ras' pē] *adj.* harsh; grating
- seedy** [sē' dē] *adj.* shabby; run-down
- skiff** [skif] *n.* small boat; flat-bottomed rowboat
- thrash** [thrash] *v.* to strike; to beat
- victuals** [vit' əlz] *n.* food

- altruistic *adj.* unselfishly concerned for the welfare of others
- Ambivalent *adj.* having contrary feelings; undecided
- engender *v.* to cause, to produce, to create
- innocuous *adj.* harmless, producing no injury
- insipid *adj.* boring and stupid
- repudiate *v.* to reject, to disown, to disavow

Active Reading

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The first chapters of a novel introduce readers to the conflicts, or struggles, that the characters will face throughout the course of the story. **External conflicts** are struggles between characters who have different goals or between a character and forces of nature. **Internal conflicts** are psychological struggles that characters experience when they are unhappy or face difficult decisions. External conflicts often trigger internal conflicts.

As you read the first fifteen chapters of *Huckleberry Finn*, use the chart below to keep track of the conflicts that the characters experience. Add boxes on a separate sheet of paper if you need to. Recognizing major conflicts will help you understand the major themes, or ideas about life, that are developed in the novel.

_____ Huck _____	vs.	_____ Miss Watson and the Widow _____
Explanation of conflict: the sisters want to "civilize" Huck; he wants to be free		

_____	vs.	_____
Explanation of conflict:		

_____	vs.	_____
Explanation of conflict:		

_____	vs.	_____
Explanation of conflict:		

_____	vs.	_____
Explanation of conflict:		

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Responding

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Personal Response

What is your first impression of Huck? Why?

Analyzing Literature

Recall and Interpret

1. At the beginning of the novel, with whom is Huck living? In what ways do they try to change Huck? Do you think they succeed? Explain.

2. Briefly describe Pap. What is his ultimate goal in harassing Huck?

3. How does Huck escape from the cabin in Illinois? What does his ability to escape suggest about him?

4. Where is Huck reunited with Jim? In what significant ways are Jim and Huck alike? In what significant ways are they different?

5. Why does Huck put a dead snake on Jim's blanket? What harm comes to Jim as a result of the incident? In your opinion, is Huck sorry for the harm he caused? Explain.

Name _____

Date _____

Class _____

Responding

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Analyzing Literature (*continued*)

Evaluate and Connect

6. How successful do you feel Mark Twain is in creating the character of Jim? Does Jim seem like a real person to you? Explain why or why not.

7. Huck takes to the river to find freedom and escape from people and situations that restrict his liberty. What are some ways that people today can find personal freedom? Is Huck's way still possible? Explain your answer.

Literature and Writing

Analyzing Relationships

Review Chapters 2 through 15, paying special attention to Huck's relationship with Jim. Note how Huck treats Jim as well as how Huck feels about him. Then, on a separate sheet of paper, write a brief analysis of their relationship. What changes does it undergo? What do you think causes these changes? Support your opinions with quotations and other evidence from the novel.

Extending Your Response

Literature Groups

Nature plays an important part in Huck's life. In your group, find passages in Chapters 1 through 15 in which Huck describes nature and natural elements. Then discuss what meanings these elements seem to have for Huck. Pay particular attention to what Huck finds in nature that is lacking in his relationships with people. Present your examples to the rest of the class.

Geography Connection

Draw or photocopy a map of the Mississippi River Valley. Then track Huck and Jim's journey on the Mississippi River. Put a star or other symbol next to towns that they visit.

