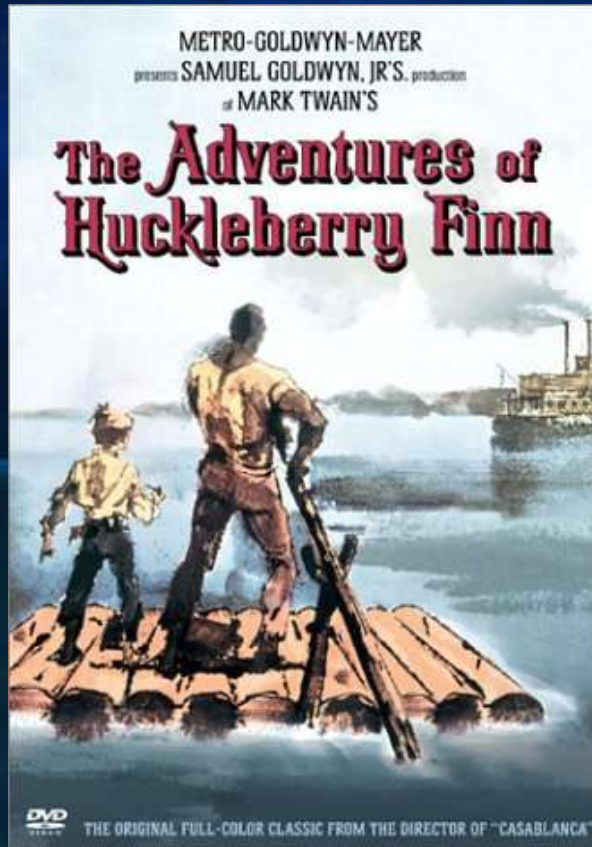


The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn

Mark Twain



“All American literature comes from one book by Mark Twain called Huckleberry Finn... it’s the best book we’ve had.”

- Ernest Hemingway

Summary

- Written in 1885 but takes place in the 1840s - Huckleberry Finn, 14, grows up in St. Petersburg, Missouri with no mother and an alcoholic father who has skipped town. Huck is being cared for by two women: Widow Douglas and her sister Miss Watson. Huck likes to skip school and hang out with his best friend, Tom Sawyer.

Summary – Part Two

- Huck's dad, Pap, returns and imprisons Huck in a cabin outside of town. Huck escapes and runs into Jim, a black slave, who is also trying to escape.
- The bulk of the story chronicles Huck and Jim's travels down the Mississippi River and the continued trouble they seem to get themselves into.

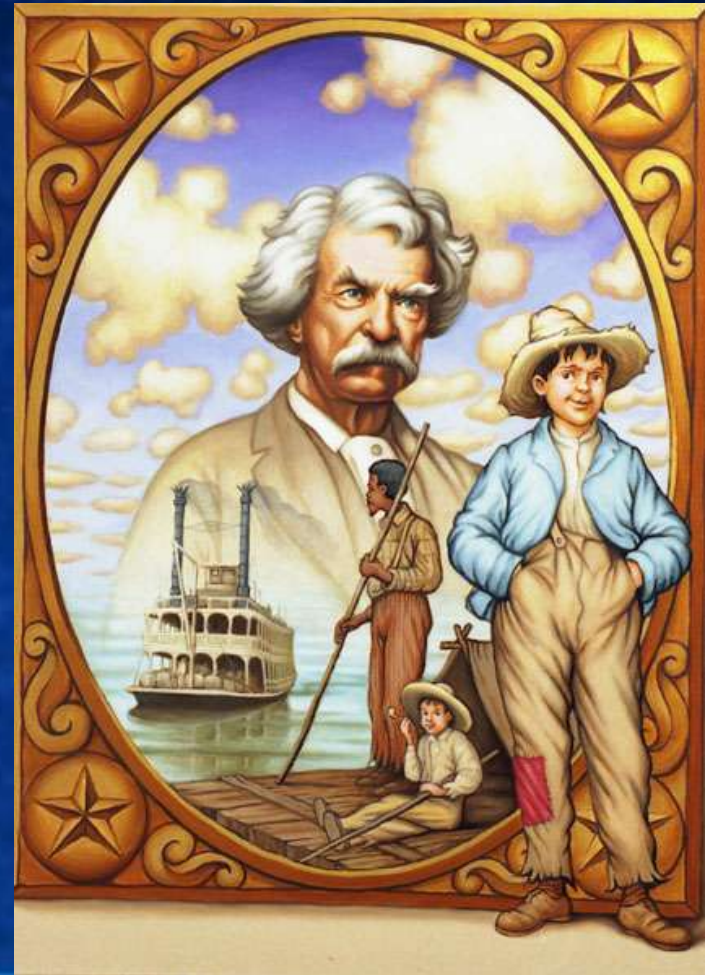
Who was Mark Twain?

Actually, he was Samuel Clemens.
b. 1835 d. 1910

Who grew up in Hannibal, Missouri
- the town that St. Petersburg is
heavily based on.

Mark Twain = 2 fathoms or 12 ft.
“safe water” riverboat term

Believed strongly that the problem
of race had to be solved.



Ex-nay on the Huck Finn-ay

Huck Finn was banned from many libraries because the content was thought to be too dark, distasteful, and unsuitable for children.

Specifically, the library in my hometown banned Huck Finn the year it came out (1885)! Official committee members of the Concord, MA library said the novel was,

"rough, coarse and inelegant, dealing with a series of experiences not elevating, the whole book being more suited to the slums than to intelligent, respectable people." Yikes!

So, what's the big deal?



The problem was that readers took Twain literally and believed he was serious! The key to understanding Twain's novel is by realizing that it's a satire.

What is Satire?

Satire - using sarcasm to denounce or expose something foolish

So what is Twain trying to denounce? Racism.

Irony - *Opposite of literal meaning:*

I have a ton of homework - how nice! (this is also sarcasm)

Or the opposite of what is expected to happen:

Twain creates a racist protagonist to prove his point that racism is wrong.

So basically, we need to take everything that Twain says, flip it around, and that's what he really means!

Twain's Writing Style

- Colloquial Language – dialects
 - Pahk the cah in Hahvahd yahd
- Picaresque novel - usually a first-person narrative, relating the adventures of a rogue or low-born adventurer (Spanish *pícaro*) as he drifts from place to place and from one social milieu to another in his effort to survive.
- Episodic structure – series of mini stories
- 1st person unreliable narrative (like Holden)

Main Ideas of Twain's Novel

- Christian religion vs. superstition
- Racism/Slavery (shown through satire)
- Individual vs. Society

Chronology of Events

1840 – Time when novel takes place

1861-1865 - Civil War: Southern confederate states wanted to form their own United States. Northern Union states fought to keep the country unified

1863 - Emancipation Proclamation: Pres. Abraham Lincoln signed this document declaring all slaves in Confederate states to be free.

1866 - 13th Amendment: Amendment to the U.S. constitution abolishing slavery.

1883 - *Tom Sawyer* was written

1885 - *Huck Finn* was written

Chronology of Events cont'd.

- **1964 - Civil Rights Act:** President Lyndon Johnson signed a law prohibiting discrimination in public places (remember Rosaleen watching President Johnson sign the document on TV?)

The Civil Rights Act was signed only 45 years ago.
Think about it.