American Literature

The Adventure of Huckleberry Finn Final Paper

For this paper, you will choose ONE of the following prompts to build a thesis-driven essay that is supported by specific, well-chosen textual evidence, and literary analysis.

The requirements for this paper include:

* Length Requirement = 750 words
* MLA Formatting with a separate Works Cited Page
* Times New Roman (or Candara) 12 pt font; double spaced
* Creative Title

1. Mark Twain said of *Huck Finn* : “it is a novel where a sound heart and a deformed conscience come into collision and conscience suffers defeat. The conscience – that unerring monitor—can be trained to any wild thing you want it to approve.” In light of these comments, trace Huck’s moral development throughout the novel. Your essay could examine Huck’s lies, Huck’s decisions regarding Jim, Huck’s refusal to be “sivilized,” Huck’s relationship with Jim, or the differences between individual and society.
2. Consider the quotation “it is on shore that Huck encounters the worst excesses of which ‘the damned human race’ is capable, but with each return to the raft comes a renewal of spiritual home and idealism” (Magill 13). Examine the difference between society’s dictates as embodied by Huck and Jim’s encounters on the shore and the relative freedom they experience on the river. Your essay could examine the irony that what is thought to be civilized is in fact not or compare and contrast encounters on the shore with descriptions of life on the river.
3. Mark Twain makes masterful use of satire and irony in his novel. Discuss examples of satire and irony in the novel, and explain what Twain is satirizing in the particular episodes.  How do these satirical episodes contribute to the overall theme (message) of the novel. What is the most important message of the novel?
4. Discuss Huck’s reasons for rejecting civilization.  Make specific references to incidents that influenced his decision. What exactly is Huck choosing instead of civilization?   Is his choice a good one?  Why or why not?
5. Some critics have attacked Mark Twain's portrayal of the runaway slave Jim as a racist caricature who does whatever is asked of him and exhibits little intelligence. They argue that Jim's portrayal dehumanizes African Americans. Other critics argue that Twain’s portrayal realistically reflects the social context in which the novel is written and criticizes society’s racist treatment of Jim—not Jim himself. Upon close reading, some critics argue that Jim himself is, in fact, the most moral and caring individual in the text which suggests that Twain was sympathetic towards African Americans. What do you think?
6. *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* gives us a glimpse of one summer in the life of Huck. During that time, Huck develops an extraordinary friendship with Jim, a runaway slave. Although Huck never comes to a final awareness that his society is wrong to enslave another human being, he ultimately chooses loyalty to a friend over the legal and moral code of his land. Discuss Huck’s “journey” in this changing relationship with Jim. You might want to address some of the following: The way Jim is depicted in the earliest chapters and how both Huck and Tom treat him; Huck’s decision to turn Jim in, then his decision to trick the slave-hunters as they approach the raft; Huck’s apology after the fog incident; Huck’s surprise over Jim’s misery regarding his daughter; Huck’s argument with Jim over King Solomon and the French; Huck’s decision to tear up the letter to Miss Watson; Huck’s tolerance of Tom’s escape plan; Huck’s rationalization after Jim sacrifices his freedom for Tom.
7. At the end of the novel, Huck says, “But I reckon I got to light out for the Territory ahead of the rest, because Aunt Sally she’s going to adopt me and sivilize me and I can’t stand it. I been there before.” Why, at the end of the book, does Huck once again reject “civilization”? You should show instances of hypocrisy, cruelty, and social satire in the novel.
8. Ernest Hemingway once said that all American literature came from one book: The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn. According to Hemingway, it’s “the best book we’ve got.” Examine the novel Huck Finn as a masterpiece of American literature. Does it deserve a place in the canon of Great Books? Support or refute Ernest Hemingway’s claim. Take a stand for or against the inclusion of this novel as required high school reading. Provide specific and intelligent reasons and support those reasons with specific examples from the novel, as well as relevant quotations. You will also need to examine American society (and its students) today, as contrasted with society in the past.
9. Which two minor characters play a major role in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*? Analyze their significance to Twain’s purpose for writing the work.

**DUE DATES:**

Monday, 11/5:  **Outline Due** @ the end of the period

Wednesday, 11/14:  **Rough Draft Due @ 10:10am\*** Peer Editing (hard copy to class)

Sunday, 11/18: **Paper Due @ 11:59PM\***

Monday, 11/19: **Hard Copy of Paper WITH Rubric, Peer Edited Rough Draft, & Outline Due**

**\*turnitin.com submission**