

# Questions You Have About *Huck Finn*

## Chapters 1-4

- 📖 Why didn't we read *Tom Sawyer* first? *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* is written at a 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grade reading level and is really just the story of a young boy. *Huck Finn* is much more difficult and has a deeper meaning for us to analyze. You do not really need to read *Tom Sawyer* to understand *Huck Finn*, this is why Twain gives us a brief amount of background in the first chapter.
- 📖 Why does Huck have all of the fortune? Chapter one starts with a reminder that this is a loose sequel to *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. In that story, the boys find a fortune. In chapter one, our narrator tells us that each boy received \$6,000 from finding the hidden gold and that Judge Thatcher put it out at interest. Each boy receives one dollar a day. In chapter 4, Huck "sells" his fortune to the judge so that his father will not take it.
- 📖 How do Huck and Jim know each other? Jim is Miss Watson's slave (Miss Watson is the Widow Douglas' sister who came to live with the Widow Douglas. Remember – the Widow Douglas took Huck in as an adopted son).
- 📖 How old is Huck? Huck is around thirteen years old when the story begins.
- 📖 Why does Huck's father abuse him? Huck's father is a drunk and that is the only reason we can infer that he abuses him. It is this abuse that causes Huck to fear his father.
- 📖 What happened to Huck's mom? We don't know for sure, especially just from reading this novel. In *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, Huck speaks about the constant fighting that occurred between his mother and his father before his mother's death. His mother seems to have died when he was very young.
- 📖 Why isn't Huck in school if he is "civilized"? We see in the beginning of chapter 4 that the Widow Douglas puts him into school. He says that he learns a lot, like that  $6 \times 7 = 35$  (a comment on schooling of the time).
- 📖 Why is Huck staying with the widow? The Widow Douglas adopted Huck because he has no mother and his dad (Pap Finn) is in and out of the picture.
- 📖 Why does Huck talk so weird? Huck speaks (Twain writes...) in a DIALECT. It is meant to express the accent and speaking patterns of a young, uneducated boy in the south in the pre-civil war era (1840s).
- 📖 Why was the book so controversial? It seems like a bunch of nonsense from little kids. When first published, the book was controversial because it questioned long standing traditions like religion, slavery, and a child's thought process. Now, it is controversial because of its language. The "n-word" appears over 200 times in the pages of *Huck Finn* and it is often argued to be an extremely racist text. Let this argument frame your reading – do you find it to be a racist text?
- 📖 Why did Pap leave? Due to his drinking habits, Pap is in and out of Huck's life – he is not a stable father figure – this is why he is adopted by The Widow Douglas.
- 📖 Where did Mark Twain live? Twain lived in Florida, Missouri
- 📖 How will Pap affect Huck's choices in the story? Pap doesn't directly affect any choices, but he will be briefly mentioned. He is the reason that Huck is in the "civilized" place of The Widow Douglas' house.
- 📖 Why are they calling the oracle a hairball? Jim says that this hairball that he has IS an oracle. He thinks the hairball can tell the future.
- 📖 How does Huck Finn know so much about life? As the reader, we do not know, I guess he is just wise beyond his years  
☺ Twain is using the naiveté of a young boy to point out the problems he sees in society
- 📖 How do you follow what is being said and understand it? Use the audiobook as a tool, as well as the No Fear *Huck Finn* on sparknotes. If you do not have these tools available, read it out loud. If you read a chapter and do not understand, sparknotes and shmoop are helpful tools for solidifying comprehension (TOOLS FOR AFTER READING – NOT IN PLACE OF READING!)
- 📖 What is the point of this book? Ernest Hemingway writes, "All modern American literature comes from one book by Mark Twain called 'Huckleberry Finn'... There was nothing before. There has been nothing as good since." It is a staple of American Literature. It provides topics for discussion, it captures the use of dialect, regionalism, and makes the reader question previous notions through the observations of a teenage boy. It is also a great example of satire. The text is used to help us learn all of these skills.