

***Huckleberry Finn* Unit Plan Introduction**

Huckleberry Finn has been called America's greatest novel and a novel not fit for the trash all in the same decade. If nothing else, it is worth studying for its lessons in human interaction and conflict. However, it has more educational benefits than can ever be utilized in one lesson or in a single course. Huck Finn is so expansive as a book and as a character that both can be taught from middle school through the college level all while bringing new ideas and considerations to the table. Because it is so often taught, and so often taught incorrectly, I believe every teacher should have to take a class on Twain. We have all had to study Shakespeare. Perhaps with a little devotion, the misconceptions can be put down about the most American author of all time.

My unit on *Huckleberry Finn* is an advanced one. In order to truly appreciate all of the aspects of the book you must first bring to the table a perception greater than that of a thirteen year old. This is difficult, though sometimes possible, if you are a thirteen year old. For this reason, and because of the work I have included, I designed my unit for any group from eighth to eleventh grade. The idea being that differentiation of pedagogy and content will have to be conducted regardless of the level. Parts of this unit were used in an eighth and a tenth grade classroom. Ideally this unit might be paired up with an American history class since I base my lessons on historical and student-level personal connections. None of my lessons deal with the book as a stand alone entity. Rather they often focus on necessary historical allusions or instances of direct student relation.

Every lesson has a title or daily theme. It is from this basis that each reading or assignment is discussed. The first week's lessons are more detailed as we focus on the major themes of Socratic irony, satire, and Jim's minstrel mask. We then move to character analysis,

historical connections in society and in Twain, morals and laws, and end up with major themes and results of the coming of age novel. Throughout each lesson there are many questions for the students to answer. Because this is an upper level class I have left a majority of the material to them to be discovered. Despite this high hope, I have still made a lot of writing assignments and journals. As the unit progresses the writing moves from journals to more formal papers and presentations. The overarching theme is the generation of student-to-text and text-to-world connections. My unit does not teach *Huck Finn* as a classic / historic novel, but rather as a look at human society as it was and as it currently is.

I would teach this unit towards the end of the semester. After the final project they might have a short break followed by the final assignment for the year involving all of the readings. The only thing I'm not including would be a comprehensive study guide and vocabulary list. I wouldn't focus too much class time on this list; however, I might check them every few weeks to make sure the students keep up on their reading. The vocabulary would be a must since it is such a major focus of the state standards. As I did not create the list myself, I have not included it in this entry.

Students need to love the books they read. For some literature this is idealistic. However, with *Huck Finn* students are meant to be happy and enjoy what they are reading. Anything less and the teacher needs to take a step back.

The intro lesson using the Petrified Man article is adapted with permission from an activity created by Dr. Robert Paul Lamb, easily one of the most brilliant and creative Twain scholars in this country.

Adventures of Huckleberry Finn
Unit Plan Reading Schedule

Mark Twain introduction	Satire and Socratic irony	Huck's trick	Human nigger – minstrel mask	Picture day
Read Forward – Cpt.4 (22)	Read Cpts. 5 – 8 (35)	Read Cpts. 9 - 11 (19)	Cpts. 12 – 15 (29) supplementary article 2	Read supplemental article 1 and additional pictures
Selections of <i>Born to Trouble?</i>	Initial impressions assignment		Assign short essay 1	Initial impressions due
Huck's honesty / morality	Historical connections	Character analysis	Wider perspective	Huck's parental figures
Read Cpts. 16 (28)	Read Cpts. 17 – 19 (24)	Read Cpts. 19 – 21 (33)	Read Cpts. 22 – 23 (22)	Read Cpts. 24 – 26 (27)
Short essay due		Hand out final paper options	In class writing?	Morals v. laws assignment
Re-visit Huck's honesty and morals	Most moral moment	Tom's influence	Re-visit "nigger" image: Nat and others v. Jim	Huck Finn – Tom Sawyer's Companion?
Read Cpts. 27 – 30 (34)	Read Cpts. 31 – 32 (18)	Read Cpts. 33 – 34 (36)	Read Cpts. 35 – 37 (35)	Read Cpts. 38 – 39 (14)
Morals v. laws assignment due	Most moral moment assignment	Final paper topic due	Schedule student presentations	Moral assignment due

Jim and the number 40 Twain in HF	Jim and Huck: best friends?	Freeing a free nigger? Twain's ending	"SC was white; MT was black"	Favorite line day
Read Cpt. 40 (8)	Read Cpts. 41 – end (20)	Favorite line assignment Student presentations	Student presentations Read Supplementary article 5? Assign short essay 3	Peer review day of final papers. Student presentations?

Supplemental article 1: Beverly R. David “The Relationship of Kemble’s Illustrations to Mark Twain’s Text: Using Pictures to Teach *Huck Finn*” from *Making Mark Twain Work in the Classroom* p. 216 – 229.

Supplemental article 2: Bernard W. Bell “Twain’s Nigger Jim: The Tragic Face behind the Minstrel Mask” from *Satire or Evasion?* P. 124 – 140.

Supplemental article 3: Shelley Fisher Fishkin “Teaching Mark Twain’s Adventures of Huckleberry Finn” Handout. <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/cultureshock/teachers/huck/essay.html>

Supplementary article 4: Charles H. Nilon “The Ending of *Huckleberry Finn*: ‘Freeing the Free Negro’” from *Satire or Evasion?* P. 62.

Supplementary article 5: Selections from Shelley Fisher Fishkin’s *Was Huck Black?* (1993)

Not all of the articles will be assigned as readings. Some will simply be referenced in class.

All page numbers and references are from the Mark Twain Library’s authoritative text.

Adventures of Huckleberry Finn
What's With All the Controversy?
Day 1

Rationale: *Huckleberry Finn* is constantly within the top five for most banned books in America. This is problematic for us as English teachers because HF is also one of the most taught books in all of literature. Due to this confusion among teachers, I see it as absolutely necessary that before any teacher attempt to teach HF they first inform their students about Mark Twain's use of Socratic irony as well as some information into the book's historical context. This lesson is based on a quote from the biggest name in Twain criticism, Shelly Fisher-Fishkin:

The difficulty [in teaching *Huck Finn*] is caused by two distinct but related problems. First, one must understand how Socratic irony works if the novel is to make sense at all; most students don't. Secondly, one must be able to place the novel in a larger historical and literary context – one that includes the history of American racism and the literary productions of African-American Writers

This lesson seeks to partially eliminate those problems.

Objectives:

1. Inform students of how Socratic irony works as well as how and why it was used by Mark Twain.
2. Give students an example of Twain's Socratic irony and satire to prep them for their exposure to the book.
3. Show students that Huck is NOT Twain.
4. Explain to students why a man completely against racism could write such a book as *Huck Finn*.

Resources needed:

1. A copy of "Petrified Man" (provided).
2. Paper and pencil for notes and written directions to be turned in.
3. Very, very open minds.

Timeline for lesson:

5min: See how many students have read HF or any Twain. Ask students what they remember.

5min: Hand out copies of "Petrified Man" and have students read while making a numbered list of how to have the "Petrified Man" pose. Students will examine the article and look for descriptors as to what exactly the image is of.

10min: Go over lists and have a student volunteer "act out" the position in a step by step fashion making sure to leave nothing out.

15min: Discuss Socratic irony and why it might be used. Connect activity to the greater idea of Socratic irony and why an author might use such a method instead of just coming out and saying whatever it was he or she had to say.

15min: Go over additional information about Huck and Twain. Have students list what adjectives were characteristic of the Mark Twain / HF time period. How might such characteristics influence an author's writing? Mention a few goals for the novel and answer any additional questions.

Territorial Enterprise, October 4, 1862

PETRIFIED MAN

A petrified man was found some time ago in the mountains south of Gravelly Ford. Every limb and feature of the stony mummy was perfect, not even excepting the left leg, which has evidently been a wooden one during the lifetime of the owner - which lifetime, by the way, came to a close about a century ago, in the opinion of a savant who has examined the defunct. The body was in a sitting posture, and leaning against a huge mass of croppings; the attitude was pensive, the right thumb resting against the side of the nose; the left thumb partially supported the chin, the fore-finger pressing the inner corner of the left eye and drawing it partly open; the right eye was closed, and the fingers of the right hand spread apart. This strange freak of nature created a profound sensation in the vicinity, and our informant states that by request, Justice Sewell or Sowell, of Humboldt City, at once proceeded to the spot and held an inquest on the body. The verdict of the jury was that "deceased came to his death from protracted exposure," etc. The people of the neighborhood volunteered to bury the poor unfortunate, and were even anxious to do so; but it was discovered, when they attempted to remove him, that the water which had dripped upon him for ages from the crag above, had coursed down his back and deposited a limestone sediment under him which had glued him to the bed rock upon which he sat, as with a cement of adamant, and Judge S. refused to allow the charitable citizens to blast him from his position. The opinion expressed by his Honor that such a course would be little less than sacrilege, was eminently just and proper. Everybody goes to see the stone man, as many as three hundred having visited the hardened creature during the past five or six weeks.

[reprinted in *The Works of Mark Twain; Early Tales & Sketches, Vol. 1 1851-1864*, (Univ. of California Press, 1979), p. 159.]

Adventures of Huckleberry Finn Day 2

Rationale:

Because there is such great debate over what Huckleberry Finn actually means, I want the students to decide. Rather than tell them what research has shown or what I think, I plan on giving them some time to decide. Through some time in small groups students will discuss and come up with some initial impressions about the book as well as what they think the first four chapters and front matter are trying to accomplish.

Objectives:

1. Define “front matter” for students
2. Give students a chance to talk about their initial impressions before hearing the “correct” impressions from the teacher.
3. Get students talking about the vernacular followed by an explanation

Resources needed:

1. Student journals
2. Writing interment
3. Groups of four students

Time line for lesson:

5min: Ask for a re-cap of Socratic irony from previous day.

10min: Explain front matter and its normal purpose in literature. Ask students about other types of front matter. Do students normally read it?

15min: Split students into small groups of four students each. Students will discuss three main questions:

1. What is the purpose of Twain’s front matter in *Huck Finn*?
2. Why use the vernacular or dialects in literature? Is it proper?
3. What is Twain’s main purpose in the first four chapters? What are the main actions that take place?

15min: Have students describe what their groups thought about the questions and any additional areas of interest. Direct students to consider implications of Socratic irony and satire.

5min: Assign Initial Impressions Assignment.

Adventures of Huckleberry Finn
Initial Impressions Assignment

Now that you've had the chance to read the first eight chapters of *Huck Finn*, what do you have to say? In a paper of 300 – 500 words you will:

- 1) Describe two initial impressions you had about the book
- 2) Discuss whether these impressions were supported or not by the first eight chapters
- 3) Mention at least one book that you may have read in the past, or have heard about that is in some way similar to *Huck Finn*.

This is a fairly informal paper so a traditional introduction and conclusion is not required. However, you must use correct grammar and sentence construction. There is no right or wrong answer. All opinions should be explained or supported with some kind of evidence (quote, anecdote, personal story, etc).

Adventures of Huckleberry Finn
Tricks and Pranks: Huck's relationship with Jim
Day 3

Rationale:

Tricks, myths, folklore, and scams are major reoccurring themes in Mark Twain. Because of this we will spend a day considering the impact of these constructs on the first eleven chapters of the book.

Objectives:

1. Prompt students to look critically at what are otherwise funny and entertaining aspects of the book.
2. Have students describe their own superstitions.
3. Have students look critically at how Jim is portrayed.

Resources needed:

- Characteristics list in their journal
- Personal superstitions or myths

Questions to be answered over the course of the lesson:

- 1) What characters are superstitious?
- 2) What do Jim's reactions do to his characterization?
- 3) How do people treat Jim when he is superstitious?
- 4) Are the superstitions ever wrong?
- 5) What is the point of Huck wearing a dress?
- 6) What is the relationship between Jim and Huck?
- 7) Is Jim made to look like a fool? If so, why?

Time line for lesson:

5min: Re-visit satire and its usage

10min: Introduce minstrel mask and minstrel shows (more tomorrow)

10min: Have students talk to a partner about one superstition that they have or that they know of.

10min: Relate some of the students' superstitions to Jim's. What happens because of their superstitions? What happens to Jim?

10min: Ask students how Jim gets his way. Why does he have to resort to his tactics? Why can't he do something else?

5min: Return to minstrel mask and previews for tomorrow.

Adventures of Huckleberry Finn
Jim's Minstrel Mask
Day 4

Rationale:

Much of the controversy around *Huckleberry Finn* involves the portrayal and treatment of Jim. One side says that Jim is purposefully portrayed to look like a stupid slave while the other believes that Jim is simply playing a role.

“Twain fitted Jim into the outlines of the minstrel tradition, and it is from behind this stereotype mask that we see Jim’s dignity and his complexity”

Objectives:

1. Get students thinking about the major controversy over the book.
2. Have students examine examples of the Huck / Jim relationship.
3. Have students think critically about why Jim acts the way he does. What does he have to gain or lose?

Book examples:

P. 6 – 8: Jim as a crazy black slave or a smart man that made the best out of a given situation. He ended up famous and got a little money out of it. What else could he have done?

P. 20 – 22: Jim as superstitious or again a smart mad that not only appeared to be right all along but also got a little money and maybe even a little respect?

P. 50 – 57: Does Jim really think Huck is a ghost? Does Jim need Huck? Gun? Jim v. “Misto Braddish’s Nigger.”

P. 61 – 62: Why doesn’t Jim want Huck to see the man? Huck would have seen much worse.

Chapter 14 - 15: Huck’s feelings for Jim

How does Huck treat Jim differently as the book moves along? P. 21 v. 75. P. 93 v. 98

Time line for lesson:

5min: Review previous discussion about superstitions and tricks

15min: Split class into groups and assign each to an example section (see above). Have students think about why Twain had Jim act that way, and what Jim has to gain from looking so foolish. Is he really stupid or is it all an act?

15min: Have groups explain their opinions. Include discussion of the minstrel mask. Be sure to point out Jim’s obvious motivation fro each instance.

10min: Connect Huck’s transformation to Twain’s. Do they both start to care about African Americans? Do they see slaves as people? Is Huck racist? Is Twain? Bring in some historical connections.

5min: Assign short essay 1. This essay should be an opportunity for students to give their opinion for why Twain made Jim the way he did. At least two examples from the book should be cited. Direct quotes are not necessary as long as the example is clear. Pass out supplementary article if appropriate for the current class. Preview picture day. Ask students to pick one picture that they fond interesting for the next day.

Adventures of Huckleberry Finn
Picture Day
Day 5

Rationale:

Most of the editions of HF in the classroom today do not include the original illustrations. However, Twain supervised and personally approved their inclusion, location, and captions. The pictures not only further the story line, but they also tell us a great deal about how Mark Twain saw his characters.

Objectives:

1. Introduce students to some of the most important images in the book.
2. Have students explain how the pictures further the story. What do the pictures say? Are the HF pictures another form of social commentary / Socratic irony?
3. Have students examine the pictures in the context of the supplementary article.
4. Prompt students to consider the images while keeping in mind racism, the time period, the front matter, and sexuality.

Resources needed:

- Copies of HF pictures if the original text is not being used.
- Supplemental article 1: Beverly R. David “The Relationship of Kemble’s Illustrations to Mark Twain’s Text: Using Pictures to Teach *Huck Finn*” from *Making Mark Twain Work in the Classroom* p. 216 – 229.
- Student journals

Time line for lesson:

5min: Ask students to find a particular picture of interest if they have not done so already. Have them pay special attention to what else the picture might be saying in addition to what is explicit in the text.

10min: Examine student images. Ask students what they think is furthered by the use of certain pictures. What does it do to the story when the pictures are left out?

20min: Go over slides of some of the major Twain pictures. Include pictures from the David article as well as major Huck / Jim interaction pictures.

10min: Have students write a journal entry about their opinion on the supplementary article’s ideas. Why did Twain include pictures? What was his goal?

5min: Collect journals. Remind students about short essay being due. Preview chapter 16.

Adventures of Huckleberry Finn

Huck's honesty / morality

Day 6

Rationale:

It has been argued that *Huck Finn* is a coming of age novel in which a young racist boy overcomes social stereotypes and finds his own set of beliefs. We constantly see into Huck's thought process as he reasons between playing by the rules and doing what he sees as right.

Objectives:

1. Engage students in critical thinking about Huck's decision making process.
2. Have students list some of Huck's defining characteristics.
3. Have students consider Huck's actions keeping in mind the idea of Socratic irony.
4. Introduce Twain's upbringing as it is similar to Huck's.

Resources needed:

- Student journals
- Twain chronology handout
- Twain / Huck travels map

Time line for lesson:

10min: Have students list Huck's major decisions up to this point. After this is done arrange decisions based on magnitude. P. 79 is a good example.

10min: Focus on chapter 16's honesty and decisions. P. 123 – 4, P. 125

10min: Ask students to journal on why a young white racist boy might go through such great effort to free a slave. Does Huck really want to free Jim or does he just want an adventure?

5min: Introduce bildungsroman and give definition.

10min: Return to major decisions chart. Show how Huck has evolved to this point. Has he changed? Relate Huck's actions and life experiences thus far to Twain's life.

5min: Introduce historical connections. Mention feuding. Plant seed for Grangerford / Shepherdson conflict.

Adventures of Huckleberry Finn
Historical Connections
Day 7

Rationale:

Revisit the idea presented on the first day: “One must be able to place the novel in a larger historical and literary context [in order to fully understand what it is trying to say]” – Shelley Fisher Fishkin

Objectives:

1. Revisit Socratic irony. Consider how Twain makes use of such a technique in chapters 17 – 18.
2. Examine who the Grangerfords / Shepherdsons might represent in 19th century America. Include discussions of Twain’s main audience and own personal class.
3. What might the futility of the feud parallel in American society? What might Twain be poking fun at if this was a case of Socratic irony? What comments are being made about the antebellum South and genteel North?
4. Introduce students to historical analogies.

Resources needed:

- Historical *Roughing It* advertisement
- Commentary articles of *Huck Finn*?
- Twain’s parents’ bio information

Time line for lesson:

5min: Split class in half. Each side will represent one side of the feud. One side will be the Grangerfords and one the Shepherdsons. Using information from the text; what is going on?

20min: Have students journal on any other type of feud or conflict. What was the reasoning behind the conflict? Who might these two groups represent in American culture? How might Twain have used these two families to make statements about social culture or class. Draw connections to how Twain used the Petrified Man to make statements about wider society.

10min: What actions in American history have had such little basis? Begin discussion and definition of literary analogies. Make both present and past connections. Include current day war connections.

10min: Hand out short Twain biography and highlight certain aspects that might influence the book or cause Twain to use specific analogies or references.

5min: Consider characters as analogies. Can students think of any examples where this happens? Why might you base a character on a person you know?

Adventures of Huckleberry Finn
Character Analysis
Day 8

Rationale:

Huckleberry Finn contains some of the most detailed and historically accurate characters in all of literature. Twain uses these characters both to tell a story, and to make a statement about society. Jim and Huck are the two most common characters of discussion while Pap, Tom Sawyer, Miss Watson, the Widow Douglas, the King and Duke, and many others all act as different mediums for Twain's commentary.

Objectives:

1. Have students break down the main characters into archetypes.
2. Have students examine the major characters from the standpoint that Twain meant to use them to comment on society.
3. Get students to pair each character with their historical connection.

Resources needed:

- Character "top 5" sheet to be created

Time line for lesson:

5min: Remind students of the historical connections discussed last time in class.

10min: Go over the different groups of which Twain was a part including any audiences he might be writing to and any people he might want to please / annoy.

10min: Split into groups and assign each group a character (5max). Have each group come up with the top five defining characteristics for the person. Have the students then link this character with a historical person or group of persons.

5min: Have students put their top five on the board. Allow for other groups to make additions to other groups' lists.

15min: Go over main examples from the book:

Pap: 33 – 36

Miss Watson / Widow Douglas: 2 – 5 and 13 – 14

African Americans (Jim, Braddish, S&G slaves): p. 55, 61, 127 – 8,
S&G: 137, 142 – 155, 187?

King and Duke: 159 – 165, 169, 173, 177 – 179

5min: Wrap up by revisiting historical references and introduce wider perspective.
Hand out final paper options.

Final Paper (see descriptions below):

- 1) Analogy research paper
- 2) Student presentation / classroom discussion
- 3) SMITY

Adventures of Huckleberry Finn
Wider Significance – In class writing day
Day 9

Rationale:

Some have argued that Twain finally enters the text in chapter 22 and leaves the satire and Socratic irony by the wayside through the figure of Sherburn. This in-class writing assignment will serve as a chance for students to put it all together. Students will be asked to apply the last few days discussion on historical connections to an analysis of the Sherburn speech and incident. No answer is wrong as long as some connections are made and facts / quotes from the text are used.

Objectives:

1. Have students make a specific connection between fiction and history.
2. Give students practice in critical analysis.
3. Give students an opportunity to show off with their knowledge and their writing skills.

Resources needed:

- Writing prompt(s)
- Other texts or supplementary articles if used

Time line for lesson:

5min: Hand out prompts and explain what is required.

25min: Student writing time

15min: Consider Twain speaking directly through Sherburn. Why would he do this while utilizing Socratic irony and satire throughout the rest of the book? How does Sherburn as a medium affect the impact? Why not Huck or Judge Thatcher?

5min: Bring back idea of Huck's honesty and the coming of age novel.

Writing prompt:

P. 189 para 3 – P. 191 para 1.

Adventures of Huckleberry Finn
Huck's parental figures
Day 10

Reasoning:

Through out the book Huck has several different people acting as his guardians. They include Pap, Miss Watson, the Widow Douglas, the Duke, the King, Judge Thatcher, and maybe even Jim. In chapters 24 – 26 the family of the estranged brother act as Huck's family and he must constantly work not to expose the Duke and the King.

Objectives:

1. Have students compare and contrast Huck's many parental figures.
2. Have students refer back to their characterization sheets and notes on Jim when considering who truly cares for Huck. What are each person's motivating factors in caring for Huck?
3. How does Huck treat each of the figures? Does he care for them? Who is the most honest parental figure he's ever had? Who should be? How has Huck been influenced by each of these people?

Time line for lesson:

5min: Have students briefly review their character analysis sheets for the main parental figures.

10min: Have students list characteristics of what makes good parent. Consider safety, health, happiness, etc.

10min: Split class into five groups that are different from the characterization groups. Have students judge the five character groups on the basis of the characteristics they just came up with. Be sure they answer the objective questions. Each group must have a group leader that will present their group's opinion and position.

15min: Have each group leader present their group's opinion to the class. Allow for outside positions. Pay particular attention to the group with Jim. What would it be like for a book to come out in the 1880s talking about a black slave being the father figure to a white boy?

10min: Wrap up and assign morals v. laws assignment.

Morals v. Laws Assignment:

Students will choose one moment in Huckleberry Finn where Huck makes a moral decision that is against some greater authority. An example might be his decision to run away from the Widow Douglas in the very beginning of the book. With this example student's will write a 300 – 500 word paper on Huck's moral reasoning and how through his reasoning he constantly decides to go against society's laws. As long as you support your position there is no wrong answer. Don't be afraid to go out on a limb.

Adventures of Huckleberry Finn
Re-visit Huck's honesty and morals
Day 11

Rationale:

The idea of Huck Finn as a bildungsroman requires that Huck succeed in his search for an identity. He must mature from the position of an ignorant child to that of a mature adult. On some occasions the story is also autobiographical.

Objectives:

1. Have students examine Huck's moral and ethical progression through the book thus far.
2. Engage students in examining how Huck's parental-figure interactions have changed throughout the book.
3. Consider P. 234 and what it says about Huck's feelings for slaves at this point as opposed to earlier in the book.
4. Consider P. 239 and Huck's honesty as compared to chapter 16.
5. Consider the differences between Huck caring for Mary Jane (257) and Huck caring for all the other main characters (Day 8)

Time line for lesson:

15min: Go over bildungsroman with students. Explain other examples such as *Great Expectations*, *Jayne Eyre*, and *Little Women*. Mention how the two most influential books of the century were bildungsromans. Ask for student connections and examples.

10min: Give students some time to find examples from chapters 27 – 30 of how Huck is acting differently. (230 – 231: Huck using Watson / Douglas morals, P. 234: Huck feeling bad about auctions and random strangers, P. 235: Huck lying to help others, P. 239: Huck's honesty reasoning, P. 240: Huck caring for Jim, P. 260: Huck just wanting to be with Jim.

10min: Go over examples that were found and those that were not brought up. Chart Huck's progress as a developing moral character. Discuss supporting article two and Huck's morals with regard to Jim.

15min: Have students choose one older example of Huck's actions or honesty, and one example of the new Huck's actions. Students are to journal on comparing the two and what they think has led to the change in Huck.

HW: Have students go over a list of rules with their parents. These might be rules they actually had, or rules that might be made if they themselves had a Huck age child.

Adventures of Huckleberry Finn
Most Moral Moment
Day 12

Reasoning:

Some critics have said that chapter 31 is the most moral moment in all of world literature. Not only is it the culmination of the bildungsroman, but it also shows a character rejecting all social concern and even moral beliefs on behalf of another person. Because this is such a monumental chapter, students will consider their own parental rules and under what conditions they might choose to break those rules.

Objectives:

1. Have students make personal connections to Huck's final decision.
2. Get students' opinion as to why this is such an important chapter.
3. Link all of the connections students have made so far to this culminating moment.
4. P. 279: Decide if this single usage makes Twain or Huck fail at becoming a better person.

Time line for lesson:

10min: Go over student rules. Discuss what would have to happen for students to break these rules. Do the same things with society's norms or laws.

10min: Make connections between rules, laws, ethics, and morals. What codes of conduct of Huck's fall under each category. What rules does Huck follow? How does he rationalize his decisions? Rank the four main areas in order of supremacy. Which are the most important to follow? Who enforces each area of rules? What happens if they are broken?

15min: Hand out new rules for society and classroom. Have students look them over and then comment on them. Match new rules with each individual category as listed above.

15min: Go over major book sections – P. 268 – 271 and P. 279. Why is this all such a big deal? Has Huck fallen back on his forward progress?

HW: Remind students that their final paper topics are due today.

Most Moral Moment Assignment:

It has been argued that this chapter contains the most dramatic and profound moral decision in all of literature. Students will write a short (250 – 400 words) paper describing their own most moral moment. After which they will compare and contrast their moment to Huck's.

Adventures of Huckleberry Finn
Tom's Influence
Day 13

Rationale:

Part of *Huckleberry Finn* is that it is a sequel to *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. In order to address this, students must know who Tom is and also see how he holds major influence over Huck. Doing this requires some information be given from Tom Sawyer.

Objectives:

1. Have students examine the style that dictates all action on the part of Tom.
2. Have students compare sections of *Tom Sawyer* with sections of *Huck Finn*.
3. Engage students in thinking why it is that Tom is so interested in making things difficult. Why does he want to be involved with freeing Jim?
4. Compare Tom's dishonesty (287 – 288) with the dishonesty Huck has shown throughout the book. Tom lies for entertainment. Huck lies out of necessity.
5. Have students examine both Huck's and Tom's plans. Why are they so different? Would they both work?

Resources needed:

1. Excerpts from *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*

Time line for lesson:

5min: Revisit Huck's dishonesty and reasoning for it. Ask students to list some of Huck's major lies and why they were told.

10min: Have students read excerpts from *Tom Sawyer*. Have students then list obvious characteristics about Tom. What motivates his honesty? His personality? Is he acting and playing a role?

10min: Look at Tom's involvement in *Huck Finn*. Why does he want to help Huck on P. 284? Why does he scam his relatives on P. 287 – 288? P. 288

15min: Examine Huck and Tom's different plans on P. 292. Have the class split into groups to look at the different plans and to have them come up with their own plans if they were Jim. What do the plans say about the respective planners? Characterize Tom as the class had done for the Huck characters previously.

10min: Turn to look at Jim's actions on P. 295 – 297. Is he still wearing the mask? How are his actions in line with Jim still trying to get free? Is he acting any differently?

Adventures of Huckleberry Finn

Re-visit the Slave Image

Day 14

Rationale:

By chapter 35 the characters should have developed a great deal. This lesson will be devoted to looking at Jim's image as well as that of the other slaves in the book. Is Jim made to look better or worse than the others? This lesson will also have students continue to examine the rescue plan. However, this chapter has the most slaves in it of any. Why is that?

Objectives:

1. Have students compare and contrast Huck and Tom. Focus specifically on Huck's description of Tom's plan and Huck's commentary on it. What does this indicate about their social dynamics?
2. Have students look at the involvement of black slaves in chapters 35 – 37. Why are slaves so prevalent here? How is Jim's character different from that of the rest of the slaves? Re-visit supplementary article two and discuss excerpts from supplementary article four.
3. Have students locate instances of the minstrel mask in chapters 35 – 37. Have students decide if all slaves are using the mask or if it is just Jim.
4. Engage students in a debate as to Twain's feelings about African Americans. How much of their portrayal is Twain's opinion or personal feeling versus Socratic irony?

Time line for lesson:

10min: Ask students to characterize the slaves other than Jim. Compare them with the other characters in the book especially Pap, Miss Watson, and the Widow Douglas. When does Twain / Huck break with social norms with regard to these other slaves?

10min: Split students into small groups and have them debate and decide who in the book is racist. Is the book itself racist? Is Mark Twain?

15min: With students still in groups ask them to decide why this book might be seen as racist and why it might be seen as anti-racist? Which standing do they take? Have them find at least two examples to support their pinion.

10min: Compare and contrast Huck's motivation for freeing Jim. Compare Huck's lines on P. 307 to Tom's implicit motivation throughout chapter 36. End by preparing for student presentations and remind students of Most Moral Moment assignment being due tomorrow.

Adventures of Huckleberry Finn
Huck Finn –Tom Sawyer’s Comrade?
Day 15

Rationale:

The original copy of *Huckleberry Finn* included in the title “Tom Sawyer’s Comrade.” It has also been argued that one of the book’s two roles is to serve as a sequel to *Tom Sawyer*. While Tom is absent for the vast majority of the book, his influence on Huck is very important. Toward the end Huck finally begins to think Tom’s ideas are just a waste of time. In order to look at Tom as a character we must investigate him through his master plan to free Jim.

Objectives:

1. Have students examine Tom’s plan. Why does he want Jim to do all of these seemingly unnecessary things? Is he hateful? Does he want amusement?
2. Why does Huck agree to Tom’s plan without any fight? Why does Jim agree to it? Is Jim too stupid to realize that plan is nonsense?
3. Have students examine the idea of book knowledge and learning verses practical experience? Which normally wins out?
4. First set of student work days / meetings with teacher about their final papers or student presentations.

Time line for lesson:

10min: Have students list all of the steps to Tom’s plan. Once this is done have them list Jim’s or Huck’s response. Have students postulate why it is that they both put up with these ideas when Huck’s original idea is the safest and easiest.

10min: Ask students to find places where Huck’s actions appear to be similar to that of Tom. How are the two boys different? Were they similar at the beginning of the book? How do they both see Jim both at the beginning and now?

10min: Pick three students to give examples where book knowledge has won out against practical knowledge in their life. Then pick three other students to do the opposite. How does this relate to Tom? Where does he get all of these ideas? Does this at all relate to why Huck and Jim go along with it?

20min: First set of student conferences / student final assignment work day. This time will be used to see what the students are thinking about their final project topics.

Any student wishing to give a class presentation as their final project will have to meet with the instructor and the rest of their group. Groups can be no larger than three. The presentations must center around one of the major themes of the book. Outside research is required including non-internet sources. Presentation ideas must be approved by the instructor first.

Students choosing the analogy paper option will meet with the instructor starting next week.

Adventures of Huckleberry Finn
The number 40 and Jim's Smartest Moment
Day 16

Rationale:

The last ten chapters have all been leading up to this moment. This is where it all goes down. In this chapter we finally see Huck's true opinion for Jim as well as we see Jim's true motivation showing through. While it is only eight pages it is one of the deepest and most meaningful chapters in all of literature.

Objectives:

1. Give students an example analogy using Twain's constant reference to the number 40 on P.341 and back on 268 as well as the chapter itself.
2. Have students act out the final moments as if they were the characters. What would they do if they were Jim on P. 341?
3. Have the class split up and debate Jim's actions as for the sake of Tom or for his own.

Time line for lesson:

10min: Split the class into groups and tell them they are all Jim. Tom has just been shot in the leg. You demand that they stop running and get a doctor. Why do you do this?

10min: Ask groups to switch the matter as Jim does. What if a different person had been shot?

10min: Give students an example analogy research topic using Twain's repeated use of the number 40 (P. 268, 274, 341, 360, notes on P. 443 and in Twain's journal).

20min: Second set of student conferences / student final assignment work day. One group may go to the library to do research.

Adventures of Huckleberry Finn
Jim and Huck as Best Friends?
Day 17

Rationale:

Now that we've reached the end of the book, the time has come for us to make some final decisions about Huck and Jim's relationship. We have just seen Jim appear to sacrifice himself for Tom; or did he? At this point students will have to make some final judgments about the three main characters.

Objectives:

1. Have students decide on the motivation for Jim's actions throughout the book.
2. Have students discuss why Huck, Jim, and Tom are not punished. Huck would have been hung. Jim would have been whipped at best.
3. What do we find out is Tom's true reasoning for this entire scheme?
4. Does Jim finally become free? Has he escaped? Did he free himself?
5. Does Jim really care about Huck? Does Huck really care about Jim?

Time line for lesson:

10min: Split students into three groups; one for Tom, one for Huck, and one for Jim. Have them each discuss their character's true motivation in regards to each other now that they've finished the book. Have students give examples.

10min: Have students examine who it is that frees Jim. Is there any good will or realization behind the action? Does Miss Watson, Huck, Tom, or anybody else realize how terrible slavery is? Did Jim have any influence on being freed or was he once again at the mercy of whites?

10min: Does Jim really fool anybody? Is he really the smartest character in the book? Who is the cruelest person in the book? Who is the most moral and caring? Who is the most apathetic towards Jim? Split the class up and have them look at these issues.

20min: Third set of student conferences / student final assignment work day. Some groups may write during this period. All presentations should be ready to go tomorrow. People working on papers should work on peer review.

Adventures of Huckleberry Finn
“He’s as free as any creatur that walks this earth!”
Day 18

Rationale:

With the book finished, the class will turn their focus to their own personal interpretations. This will be the first day of student presentations. The remaining time will be spent discussing some of the major themes that have been touched upon throughout the unit. If there are no presentations then the class will continue with the lessons.

Objectives:

1. Engage students in the highest form of critical thinking and analysis; teaching.
2. Engage students in analyzing major themes in a major literary work.
3. Have students explore the ending of the book. Does it follow along with the themes of the rest of the novel?
4. Assign the favorite lines assignment.

Time line for lesson:

Student presentations will take as much of the class time as necessary.

10min: Have students list the major themes discussed so far. Ask them to offer up other themes or connections to other literary works that have not yet been discussed.

10min: Revisit the bildungsroman. What are the key moments that develop Huck’s character. Are there any other characters that have gone through a transformation? Find evidence in the book.

30min: Have students journal an alternate ending to the book starting right after Tom is shot. Look at supplementary article four. Why is the ending though of as disappointing?

Adventures of Huckleberry Finn
Sam Clemens was white; Mark Twain was black
Day 19

Rationale:

The best Twain scholar, Shelly Fisher Fishkin has argued that Twain himself, either literally or metaphorically was black on the inside. This standing comes from the idea that Twain's writing actually helped African Americans and he was one of their most steadfast supporters in his later years. Students will examine selections from this theory and discuss how this changes how we as readers might see the book. We will use this for a basis of looking back at why the book is such a hot topic in the classroom.

Objectives:

1. Engage students in examining literary criticism.
2. Have students consider the book as a whole from an original standpoint of a major Twain scholar.
3. Have students go back and re-journal their last entry as if they were a person of a different race. Focus on cultural influences.
4. Look in the text for evidence to support or disprove Fishkin's argument.

Time line for lesson:

Student presentations will take as much of the class time as necessary.

20min: Have students read supplementary article 5 in groups of three.

10min: As a class, have students consider how thinking of the author as a black man alters the books perception. Does it change much? Does it not make any difference?

15min: Have students return to their previous journal and re-write if from a different perspective. Students will be labeled as one of any number of minorities using random selection.

5min: Ask for students' feelings when writing this second journal. Did a lot change? Was it hard to envision themselves as a different race or gender? Would writing as a person of a different race be easy or even possible?

Adventures of Huckleberry Finn

Favorite Line / Scene Day

Day 20

Rationale:

Huck Finn and Mark Twain together give the literary world some of the most memorable scenes of all time. Now that students have spent a great deal of time looking at those lines we will spend an entire class period discussion what makes their lines so influential on the book itself, and on all of literature. Some of these lines or discussions may help students greatly with their final papers.

Objectives:

1. Allow students to dictate control of the class.
2. Have each student give and explain their favorite line or scene from the book.
3. Have students ask each other any final questions about their papers or about the scenes in question.
4. Students will finish up final presentations.
5. Peer review on final papers at whatever point they are in the process.

Time line for lesson:

- Student presentations will be completed first
- Secondly will be the favorite line discussion. Each student will have brought in their favorite line or scene. After they have read it to the class they will explain its internal and external significance.
- Lastly will be the peer review or discussion. This may roll over to the next day if it is going well.

Adventures of Huckleberry Finn
Final Project / Paper
200 Points

Option 1:

Huckleberry Finn, just like many other classic novels, is full of analogies or references to historical figures, authors, places, inventions, and time period common clichés. For this assignment you will first have to choose an analogy from the book that you believe you can research in order to give a fuller account of its usage. An example would be the use of the number forty in reference to Jim throughout the final chapters of the book. Twain's family had a slave when he was a child that was sold off for forty dollars. Twain never forgot this event as it damaged him for life.

You must first research your chosen analogy. Using the internet is acceptable, however, be wary of what sites you use. Once you have found some explanation of this analogy you will explain why it was chosen by Twain and also why it has any deeper meaning (the name Huck may be analogous to another person, however, it is not meaningful to the story).

Your paper will be three to five pages long double-spaced in MLA format. Parenthetical citations are required as is a reference page. Any altered margins, spacing, or page format will result in loss of credit. Any plagiarism will result in loss of credit and a referral to the assistant principal's office.

Option 2:

At any point in the last week of the unit, you and your group (no more than three) may choose to lead a lesson / discussion / presentation. While this may only require fifty minutes of class time it will require much more out of class time. Your group will be required to meet with the instructor in and out of class to plan the discussion. Before you begin you will have to research several topics and then write a proposal explaining what you plan to do. A good idea might be to talk about the vast history involving the controversy about the book. You could also present on the larger life and historical context of Mark Twain. While these seem simple there is a great deal of information available and it will take time. Students considering this option should meet with me as soon as they have a group together.

Option 3:

SMITY (Something More Important to You): If neither of the above listed options match with your interests, you may propose your own final project. To do so you must prepare a written proposal outlining the following areas: how the project will show what you've learned, what sources you will use, what format your project will take, who will be involved, what will the division of labor be, what are the approximate issues / areas you will cover, etc. While the openness of this option may be appealing, you will be judged on your own criteria of how well you meet what you set out to do. People wishing to pursue this option should schedule to meet with the instructor no later than two weeks into the unit. The project proposal is due at least one week before the end of the unit with a due date of the Monday following the unit's completion.

Adventures of Huckleberry Finn
Extra Credit Options

Option 1:

You may choose to read a young adult novel that in some ways parallels *Huckleberry Finn*. Because this may take some time, there is no time limit on when it must be turned in. However, you must inform me of your intentions to do so no more than one week after the end of the Twain unit. There are about twenty books from which you may choose. Once you have read the book you can then write a two page double-spaced paper explaining the connections made between the two. Successful completion of this option can raise your grade up to a full letter.

Option 2:

Option two is the same for option one except that instead of a young adult novel you may choose to read any of Twain's shorter works. Almost anything is acceptable, however, it must be approved by the instructor first. A longer option would be *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. A more common example would be the short story "Those Extraordinary Twins." You will then write a two page double-spaced paper drawing any number of connections between the two books / stories.