

Adventures of Huckleberry Finn

Concept: Huck's Conscience vs. Society's Expectations

Carolyn Collins and Susan Holland - - Ozark High School, Ozark, Missouri
Jane Miller – Rockwood School District, Eureka, Missouri
June 2008

Time Frame: One lesson – 85 minutes

Objective: Students will analyze Huck's personal conscience vs. society's expectations and laws on slavery and friendship.

Assessment/Evaluation: Discussion connecting Huck's conscience to students' conscience in making choices that justifiably go against society's expectations and laws. Have students discuss classmates, actors, sports figures, etc, who would fit the role of Huck in today's society.

Language/Vocabulary: "...the plain hand of Providence slapping me in the face and letting me know my wickedness... You can't pray a lie – I found that out." (Huck, 268-69)

"All right, then, I'll go to hell." (Huck, 271)

Integrated Curriculum: Geography, History, Music, Psychology

Background Information: Huck's upbringing: Students will know Huck's background up through chapter 31 – Pap's influence (mean alcoholic, malicious ignorance toward those he does not understand or feels is a threat), Miss Watson influence (Hypocritical, falsely pious, and Huck could never "win" with her), Widow Douglas influence (kind and tried to understand Huck), Tom's influence (Tom had a better education and reading background and used it in his romantic adventures; Huck looked up to Tom), Jim's influence (Jim is a runaway slave, but Huck feels loyal to Jim and helps him), Duke and Dauphin's influence (Devious, greedy, selfish, and make Huck and Jim do as they tell him). Students have been working on River Map Timeline for Huck and Jim. Students will be identifying what Huck is going through according to the Kohlberg's Six Stages of Moral Development: Level 1: Fear; Level 2: Reward; Level 3: Please someone; Level 4: Follow the rules; Level 5: Considerate; Level 6: "I have a personal code of behavior and I follow it." Huck is reaching Level 6 in Chapter 31.

Materials: *Brilliance Audio CD - Classic Collection: Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* CD of Dick Hill (Amazon.com); Song: "Old Man River" (CD downloaded from iTunes) The novel *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Chapter 31

Technology Support: CD Player

Related Twain Quotes/Other Readings: “We can secure other people’s approval, if we do right and try hard; but our own is worth a hundred of it, and no way has been found of securing that.” Mark Twain

“Conscience kept me awake all night, oozing remorse at every pore.” From “Concerning the Recent Carnival of Crime in Connecticut” *Tom Sawyer Abroad, Etc.*, p. 317

Lesson Plan Format:

- A. **Introduction: (15 minutes)** Do you think people should follow laws or follow their conscience? Why? How? Then introduce lesson by asking students what they thought Huck should decide about whether to turn Jim in or to protect him during a time when society accepted slavery. Emphasize that they must keep the time period in mind.
- B. **Lesson: (10 minutes)** Ask students if they have ever struggled with a decision that others would have thought wrong. Tell them that Huck had to struggle with helping Jim escape to freedom and being his friend and what society expected, which would be to turn him in and look at him as if he were only property. **(30 minutes)** Students need to read chapter 31.
- C. **(30 minute)** Show students Twain’s quote on overhead (posted above) and discuss the value and the connection to themselves and to Huck. Discuss the changes Huck has gone through since starting their journey. Make sure students understand the struggle Huck had to endure over his relationship with Jim and what society valued. Huck finally decided to not write a letter to Miss Watson and to continue to help Jim. Ask students which level of Kohlberg’s Moral Development Huck has reached. (The answer is the 6th level.) Using cooperative learning groups, have students come up with a modern society situation that compares to Huck’s decision to not turn in Jim. Each group must share their situations at the beginning of the next class period.