

## Lesson Plan – *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

### Concept: One Man Against the Crowd

Developed by: Richard McGuire, Blackhawk Middle School, Bensenville, Illinois



**Suggested Grade Level:** Middle School

**Time Frame:** Three Days

#### **Objectives:**

- The students will read an excerpt from *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: Boggs-Sherburn Incident* and write 2 response logs.
- The students will identify the reaction of the first person narrator in the excerpt.
- The students will identify the author's message and contrast it with the first person narrator's reaction.
- The students will classify and compare actions of a mob using 2 T-bar graphic organizers.
- The students will compose 3 brief responses to questions posed during reading.
- The students will participate in class discussion.
- The students will explore the paradox of Sherburn as murderer / hero and the crowd as helpful / vengeful and write a response log.
- The students will research and compose a letter to the editor or op-ed essay connecting the Boggs-Sherburn Incident with a modern day person in the same situation.

#### **State Standards:** Illinois

- 1.B.3a (Preview reading materials, make predictions and relate reading to information from other sources.)
- 1.B.3b (Identify text structure and create a visual representation (graphic organizer) to use while reading)
- 1.C.3a (Use information to form, explain and support questions and predictions.)
- 1.C.3c (Compare, contrast, and evaluate ideas and information from various sources.)
- 2.A.3b (Describe how the development of theme, character, plot, and setting contribute to the overall impact of a piece of literature.)
- 2.B.3a (Respond to literary material from personal, creative and critical points of view.)
- 2.B.3c (Analyze how characters in literature deal with conflict, solve problems, and relate to real-life situations.)
- 5.C.3a (Plan, compose, edit, and revise document that synthesizes new meaning gleaned from multiple sources.)

**Assessment/Evaluation:** Each student will complete a Reader's Response Log which will include graphic organizers, responses to reading, and vocabulary notes. To complete the log the student will research a present day example of a person who stood up for his beliefs against violence in a connection analogous to the way Colonel Sherburn stood up against the mob in either a letter to the editor or op-ed essay format.

**Language/Vocabulary:** mob, lynching, tar and feathering, literary devices (similes), paradox

**Integrated Curriculum:** Social studies discussions of lynching and vigilante actions during post Civil War America.

**Background Information:** Use of the "N-word"

**Materials:** Three excerpts from the *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain, University of California Press. 2001

Part I— Chapter 21, p. 183 (beginning with “All the streets and lanes was just mud. . . .” through p. 186 “Colonel Sherburn he tossed his pistol. . . .”)

Part II— Chapter 21, p. 186 (beginning with “They took Boggs to a little drug store. . . .” to the end of chapter 21.)

Part III— Chapter 22, p. 189 (beginning with “They swarmed up the streets, toward Sherburn’s house. . . through 191 through “I could a staid, if I’d a-wanted to, but I didn’t want to.”)

Newspaper account of Chicago store owner standing up to gangs and making a statement for the community (Week of July 17, 2008)

**Technology Support:** Video—*Young Mr. Lincoln*, Criterion Collection, 1939, Director John Ford  
Alternate videos—*Fury*, 1936, Director Fritz Lang

*The Oxbow Incident*, 1943, William E. Wellman

(All videos are available at Amazon.com and through NetFlix)

Video Example—News broadcast (WGN—Channel 9) of Chicago store owner standing up to gangs and making a statement for the community (Week of July 17, 2008)

**Related Twain Quotes/Other Readings:** *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain  
*The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* by Mark Twain

Mark Twain Quote: **“The pitifulest thing out is a mob; that’s what an army is—a mob, they don’t fight with courage that’s born in them, but with courage that’s borrowed from their mass, and from their officers.”** (p. 190-191, Chapter 22, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*)

### Lesson Plan

Time	Day 1—Teacher Activity / Questions to be asked	Student Activity				
	<b>Opening Activity</b>					
2 min	Tell the students that they are going to see a movie about a mob scene.  Ask them to prepare a T-bar with two columns to classify the actions of the mob using their senses of sight and sound.	Prepare a T-bar with sight / sound columns				
10 min	Examples of T-Bar: <table style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td colspan="2" style="text-align: center; border-bottom: 1px solid black;">sight / sound</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="border-right: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;">torchlight parade bodies fill the screen men carrying log man carrying a rope</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">roaring of the crowd shouts to lynch name calling</td> </tr> </table>	sight / sound		torchlight parade bodies fill the screen men carrying log man carrying a rope	roaring of the crowd shouts to lynch name calling	Watch the video clip, <b><i>Young Mr. Lincoln</i></b> .  Fill out T-bar with at least 3 actions for each of the two senses  Whole class sharing
sight / sound						
torchlight parade bodies fill the screen men carrying log man carrying a rope	roaring of the crowd shouts to lynch name calling					
	<b>Lesson</b>					
2 min	In this passage, students will be reading the N-word. Instruct them it is not appropriate to say or write this word because of its racist associations.	Listen to rules about the appropriate use of the N- word used in the story.				
15 min	Read aloud—Excerpt of <i>The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: The Boggs-Sherburn Incident</i> (Chapter 21, p. 183 “All the streets and lanes was just mud. . . .” through p. 186 “Colonel Sherburn he tossed his pistol. . . .”) Distribute limited excerpt (see above) from Chapter 21. <b>(Do not include remainder of Chapter 21 so that student reactions are based on what they have read.)</b>	Listen (with copy of text) to excerpt of <i>The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: The Boggs-Sherburn Incident</i>				



3 min	Follow-up question— <i>Remember yesterday's reading? What struck fear in Huck's heart yesterday? (Boggs threatened Huck.)</i>	Return to yesterday's text and locate the lines in the story that answer this question.				
3 min	Summarize story. (Now the crowd is becoming something to fear.)	Listening				
5 min	<i>(TT) Why does the author show the murder being reenacted again and again by one of the crowd members? (Every time the murder is reenacted, the crowd grows more and more incensed. These reenactments show Boggs, the unarmed man, being shot by Sherburn over and over again.)</i>	Discuss in groups and share				
2 min	Reread the end of Chapter 21 (p. 188, "Well, by and by somebody said Sherburn ought to be lynched. . .) leaving out the last words " <b>to do the hanging with.</b> "  <i>(TT) What is the crowd going to do? Summarize ( Now this is crowd is like the crowd we saw in the film clip yesterday. The people in the crowd are enraged and their single purpose is to kill Colonel Sherburn for the murder of Boggs.)</i>	Listening  Take answers from students who wish to share				
20 min	<i>(TT) Just like we analyzed the movie clip yesterday, we're going to read the beginning of the next chapter when the crowd marches to Colonel Sherburn's house.</i>  Present group tasks to be completed after reading. (T-bar of sights / sounds like the one done for the movie clip, specific words and phrases used to describe the crowd [nouns and verbs and similes], effect of the crowd on bystanders [children and women, African American and white].) Read Aloud Chapter 22, p. 189 "They swarmed up the streets, toward Sherburn's house. . . through 191 "The racket stopped, and the wave sucked back."  A. <table border="1" data-bbox="391 1478 959 1787"> <tr> <td colspan="2" style="text-align: center;">sight / sound</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;">crowd is in a swarm children trying to get out of the way man carrying a rope</td> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;">crowd yelling and whooping bystanders are crying someone yells "tear down the fence" sound of the fence being ripped and smashed</td> </tr> </table>  B. swarmed "a-whooping and yelling and raging <i>like Injuns</i> " use of the word <i>mob</i> crowd rolls in " <i>like a wave</i> "	sight / sound		crowd is in a swarm children trying to get out of the way man carrying a rope	crowd yelling and whooping bystanders are crying someone yells "tear down the fence" sound of the fence being ripped and smashed	Listening and reading (following with text) the story.  Work in groups to complete the tasks that analyze the crowd's reaction to the murder. A. T-bar of sights and sounds B. List of words and phrases C. Description of the effect on bystanders
sight / sound						
crowd is in a swarm children trying to get out of the way man carrying a rope	crowd yelling and whooping bystanders are crying someone yells "tear down the fence" sound of the fence being ripped and smashed					

	<p>C. --children try to run ahead of the mob  --woman are in every window  --African American boys are in trees  --young African and American women are watching from behind fences  --woman and girls are crying and upset</p>	
	<b>Closure</b>	
2 min	<p>Assign homework (Read pages 189 to 191 through "I could a staid, if I'd a-wanted to, but I didn't want to.")</p> <p>Present homework question.</p> <p><i>(TT) Colonel Sheburn at the end of chapter 21 is reviled as a murderer. How does our idea of him change after he confronts the mob?</i></p>	<p>Read assigned passages</p> <p>Response Log—One page limit</p>
	<b>Day 3—Teacher Activity / Questions to be asked</b>	
	<b>Opening</b>	
10 min	<p><i>(TT) At the end of yesterday's session, I asked you to answer this question. How does our idea of Colonel Sheburn change from the end of chapter 21 to the end of your reading yesterday?</i></p>	<p>Share Response Log in groups. Each group picks a log to present to the class. The student who wrote the log will read it aloud.</p>
	<b>Lesson</b>	
15 min	<p>Discussion questions:  <i>(TT) How does Sherburn quiet the mob? Let's look at the T-bar. What is the mob like just before Sherburn appears? (Reponse--The "racket of ripping and tearing and smashing" the fence and rolling in to Sherburn's yard like a wave. There is a lot of noise.)</i></p> <p><i>(TT) Where do we first see Sherburn and what is he carrying? (Response—He is on the roof and he is carrying a shot gun. The mob is paying attention to Sherburn and quieting down because he is standing above the crowd on the roof. He is also carrying a gun. Since the crowd knows he has shot Boggs, they are afraid he will shoot again.)</i></p> <p><i>(TT) What else does Sherburn do to show his superiority before he addresses the mob? (Response—He looks at individual members of the crowd and stares them down.)</i></p>	<p>Class discussion</p>
10 min	<p><i>(TT) After the mob grows quiet, Colonel Sherburn speaks to the mob. How does he insult the mob and make its members feel inferior?</i></p> <p>Response List  --He laughs at the crowd.  --He scoffs that they have the courage (pluck) to hang a man.  --All they can do is tar and feather helpless women.  --He calls them average men and cowards</p>	<p>Return to the text and make a list of the examples found there.</p>

Cont-	<p>--He singles out one man, Buck Harkness, but insults him by calling him "a part of a man. . .only <u>half</u> a man."</p> <p>--He tells the crowd to leave and to emphasize that he cocks his rifle.</p>	
10 min	<p><i>(TT) How do we know what the author's point of view is? What does Huck the narrator do? (Response--Huck thinks the show is over because the crowd disperses. He heads off to the circus.)</i></p> <p><i>(TT) Sherburn tells us "The pitifulest thing out is a mob; that's what an army is—a mob, they don't fight with courage that's born in them, but with courage that's borrowed from their mass, and from their officers." Is he right? Does the mob disperse? Take out your logs and write a 3 minute response to the questions..</i></p> <p><i>(Response—Colonel Sherburn has become the author's mouthpiece. His disarming of the mob shows the author's view of the horror of the mob and the courage one man to oppose the mob.)</i></p> <p><i>(TT) Why does the author make Colonel Sherburn his mouthpiece? Isn't this paradoxical? (Response—Colonel Sherburn is a murderer. He's a bad man. But the mob is even worse because it is many men committing murder. To use a bad man like Colonel Sherburn to insult and finally disperse the mob makes the mob seem far, far worse.)</i></p>	<p>Class discussion</p> <p>Write 3 Minute Reader's Response Log (Individual)</p>
<b>Closure</b>		
2 min	<p><i>(TT) Let's extend the lesson to our times. The mob mentality stops many of us from doing the right thing. Doing the right may not be the popular thing and that may bully many of us into doing nothing like a mob bullies its victim.</i></p> <p><i>(TT) Who are the present day people who have stood up against the mob mentality? A mob could be a gang who controls a neighborhood through fear. Recently a store owner stood alone to protest the shootings and violence in his community.</i></p>	Listening and discussing
3 min	<i>(TT) Let's watch the following video, a WGN news clip, to learn more about a local hero.</i>	Watch video
5 min	<p><i>(TT) Your task is to find an example of a person who stood up for the good and right thing against the tide of evil. You may consult resources such as Robert Coles two books Women of Crisis, Studs Terkel and other resources that feature stories of heroes.</i></p> <p><i>(TT) As your model of writing, you will use the format of letter to an editor or an op-ed essay.</i></p>	<p>Listen</p> <p>Research and begin paper during the next class period</p>

**Strategies/accommodations to support students with exceptionalities:** More support for explicit questions to be answered. Use starter phrases in graphic organizers.

**Possible Follow-up Activities:** Research additional examples of people who have shown courage against mob action from print and news media. For example - Studs Terkel's portraits and memoirs.

**Possible Guest Speakers/Other Resources:** A field trip to the DuSable Museum in Chicago. (The DuSable Museum is devoted to the African-American struggles.) Speakers from the DuSable asked to visit the class and explain lynch mobs in the south.