

Mark Twain Boyhood Home & Museum
 Lesson or Unit Plan for *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*
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“Twain’s Viewpoint on Racism”

Pre- Reading and Writing Lesson for <i>The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn</i>	
Concept or Topic: Clarification on Twain’s purpose and intention for using the “N” word 219 times in the novel.	Suggested Grade Level(s)/Course: Jr. English, Grade 11
Subject: American Literature	Suggested Time Frame: 50 Mins. per day, 3 days
Objective(s): 1. Students in English 11 American Literature will complete and turn in a narrative that is parallel to “A True Story” and meet at least 75% of the criteria described in the rubric given for this assignment. 2. Students will be able to clarify Mark Twain’s stance on racism by using evidence from the required reading in this unit to support their claim.	
Common Core State Standards: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.1. A Introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s), establish the significance of the claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that logically sequences claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence. CCSS.ELA.LITERACY.RI.11-12.7 Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g.,visually quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem. CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.3 Evaluate a speaker’s point of view, reasoning, and use evidence and rhetoric, assessing the stance, premises, links among ideas, word choice, points of emphasis, and tone used.	
Assessments (at least two): 1) The attached rubric will assess the students’ achievement of their assignment in this unit based on a scale out of 80 possible points. 2) Students’ in-class participation along with the efficiency of their time used in class to complete their narrative will be assessed. The assessment will be completed by recording their class involvement through visual observation. It will then be calculated as a portion of their grade on the rubric based on a scale of 20 out of the possible 80 points. 3) Upon the end of the lesson, the students will complete an “Exit Ticket.” It will include 2-3 sentences that explain Twain’s stance on racism. Evidence from a reliable source (such as either one of the two articles and/ or “A True Story” by Mark Twain that were studied in this unit) is required in order to proceed with reading the novel, <i>Huckleberry Finn</i> .	

Vocabulary (Tiers 2 & 3):

Racism - The belief that one race or ethnic group is superior or inferior to another group of races.

Rubbage- a variant of rubbish; Useless waste or rejected matter

Blue Hen Chicken - State bird; nickname for the state of Delaware which is used to demonstrate the pride for soldiers or natives of the state.

Reconstruction - Reference to America's unfinished revolution 1863-1877

Subjugation- Power and subjectivity at work: From degradation to subjugation in social relations

Categorical Indictment- An exploratory technique for investigating large quantity of categorical data.

Subject Area Integration: The subject areas of English American Literature is integrated with the study of History by obtaining information relevant to the Pre-Civil War time era.

Background Information Required for Lesson: Prior to this lesson, the students will finish an extensive introduction to the novel, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.

The introduction includes:

1) A biography of Samuel Clemens/Mark Twain

Possible tool: https://www.marktwainhouse.org/man/biography_main.php

2) A brief historical review of the time era of the novel; the middle 1850's prior to the Civil War.

Possible tool: <https://the-artifice.com/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn-analysing-racial-context-reception/>

3) Familiarizing the students with the setting of both novels *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.

Possible tool:

<https://www.biography.com/news/mark-twain-early-life-facts>

4) An oral (and/or) visual summary the novel, The Adventures of Tom Sawyer.

5) An overview of the dynamics regarding the relationships between the characters in the novel, The Adventures of Tom Sawyer.

Possible tool: <http://www.schoolbytes.com/english/mark-twain/adventures-tom-sawyer/>

Materials:

- *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*
- "A True Story Repeated Word for Word As I Heard It" DVD and/or short story by Mark Twain <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2012/02/a-true-story-word-for-word-as-i-heard-it/308792/>
- <http://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/16302762-the-autobiography-of-mark-twain>

Technology:

- Create a class blog - Use Wordpress or Blogger for a class blog so they can ask each other for suggestions or share their narratives outside of class.
- Google Earth - Use the App to locate the town of Hannibal; St. Petersburg

Related Twain Quotes/Passages:

- "We had a little slave boy whom we had hired from some one, there in Hannibal. He was from the Eastern Shore of Maryland, and had been brought away from his family and his friends, half way across the American continent,

and sold. He was a cheery spirit, innocent and gentle, and the noisiest creature that ever was, perhaps. All day long he was singing, whistling, yelling, whooping, laughing - it was maddening, devastating, unendurable. At last, one day, I lost all my temper, and went raging to my mother, and said Sandy had been singing for an hour without a single break, and I couldn't stand it, and wouldn't she please shut him up.

The tears came into her eyes, and her lip trembled, and she said something like this - 'Poor thing, when he sings, it shows that he is not remembering, and that comforts me; but when he is still, I am afraid he is thinking, and I cannot bear it. He will never see his mother again; if he can sing, I must not hinder it, but be thankful for it. If you were older, you would understand me; then that friendless child's noise would make you glad.' It was a simple speech, and made up of small words, but it went home, and Sandy's noise was not a trouble to me any more."

— Mark Twain, *The Autobiography of Mark Twain*

- "I am quite sure ... I have no race prejudice, and I think I have no color prejudices, nor caste prejudices. Indeed, I know it. I can stand any society. All I care to know is that a man is a human being—this is enough for me; he can't be any worse."

— Mark Twain

Day 1

- Ask the students to think about a time in the past that they have gotten the wrong impression of someone's character or personality or if anyone has gotten the wrong impression of them; share and discuss.
- Inform the students that they will be reading a short story entitled "A True Story - Repeated Word for Word as I Heard It" By Mark Twain written in 1864.
- Explain that the story is about how the narrator (Samuel Clemens) once had the wrong impression of his uncle's slave (Mary Ann Cord) in his life.
- Instruct the students to: 1) think about the ways in which "Misto C" got the wrong impression of Aunt Rachel while we read the story in class together. 2) Ask students to be prepared to journal their thoughts and feelings about the story once we have finished reading it.
- Read the story -Time: 20-25 mins.
- Journaling Time 10-15 mins.
- Follow-up by having students choose a partner and read their entries to each other. Time: 7-10 mins.
- Conduct a class discussion by instructing students to share what they found to be interesting in their partner's journals with the rest of the class. During our class discussion, I will:
1) ask students to express their opinions on if they believe the narrator is sympathetic to Aunt Rachel's character or not.

- 2) I will reiterate to the students that the novel, *The Adventures of Huck Finn* has been banned from reading in several schools throughout the country.
- 3) I will connect “A True Story” with the novel *Huck Finn* by stating that the author (Mark Twain) wrote both literary pieces.
- 4) I will ask them to consider their ideas based on what the author is conveying in the short story and if they believe that he would be considered a racist or not. Discussion Time: 10-15 mins.

Day 2

- Students will listen to “My conscience got to stirring me up hotter than ever...” from the Mark Twain: Words & Music CD (Disk 2, Track 9).
- Begin a discussion on the interpretation from the students about what they heard. Questions to ask during discussion:
 - 1) What if society in this time period had the roles reversed?
 - 2) What if, during the mid 1850’s, colored people were taking white families and forcing them to separate from their families?
 - 3) Is it difficult to picture a reversal of race roles in your mind?
- Hand out the the Role Reversal Assignment.
- Read aloud (See Handout Below) the instructions to the Racial Role Reversal Assignment and Rubric. Explain that the students will have time to work on it in class. However, if the assignment isn’t completed during class time, it will need to be done as homework and turned in at the end of the week. Instruct the students that this assignment will require them to stretch their views on society and take them in another direction.
- Reiterate that this might be a challenging (or even difficult) assignment for many students because of the sensitivity of the issue. Due to this fact, all students are required to complete the assignment in a serious and respectful manner.
- Allow time for Q&A and instruct students to begin working. Time: 10-15 mins. They will have nearly all the remaining class time to work on their narratives. Time: 25-30 mins
- Before the end of class, I will ask students if they have any further questions or comments about their assignment. Time: 3 -5 mins.

Day 3

- Begin class with a class discussion about how the students are doing on their Role Reversal Narrative Assignment. Give words of encouragement and suggestions. Remind them that the assignment is to be turned in at the end of the week.
- Hand out the following two articles:
 - 1) The New York Times; “From Twain, A Letter on Debt to Blacks” and proceed to read them together in class and encourage annotation while reading. www.nytimes.com/1985/03/14/books/from-twain-a-letter-on-debt-to-blacks.html?
 - 2) “Twain was No racist—Not even Close” <http://betterlivingthroughbeowulf.com/twain-was-no-racist-just-the-opposite/>
Time:15-20 mins
- Once we have read the articles together, instruct students to gather into groups and discuss their thoughts about them.
- Before the group discussion, advise students to choose a spokesperson for their group who will take notes from their discussion and be prepared to share their discussion with the class. Note: All students in the group are responsible for contributing and helping their spokesperson with his/her note taking. I will

be walking around the room to observe and record student participation.

Time: 15-20 mins.

Review/Closure:

- Choose each group's spokesperson to share their group's findings. Encouraging the students to share any additional thoughts on the topic.
- Hand out Exit Tickets to be completed and turned in by the end of class. Time 7-10 mins.
- Upon the completion of their Exit Tickets, they should be turned in along with their completed narratives at the end of class. (See Exit Ticket Handout below)
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Homework: Assigned on Day 1: Complete narratives for homework if extra time is necessary.

Strategies for Exceptional Students: Read *The Connecticut Yankee* (or sections of the text) and write an essay about its relevance to the issue of slavery and/ or racism.

<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/86/86-h/86-h.htm>

Suggested Follow-Up Activities:

- View CBS News "Huckleberry Finn" and the N-Word debate
<http://www.cbsnews.com/news/huckleberry-finn-and-the-n-word-debate/3/>
- Read article: Mark Twain's Multiple Dialects / Living Language article
<https://livingwithlanguage.wordpress.com/2009/05/01/blog-assignment-2/>
- Read article: Mark Twain inexcusable racist or man of his time
<http://www.latimes.com/nation/nationnow/la-na-nn-mark-twain-racism-20140519-story.html>

Handouts located on pages 6-9

Racial Role Reversal Assignment

Try, for a moment, thinking about Aunt Rachel's story and the separation between her and her son. Also, try to picture society and the racial challenges as being reversed during the time era that slightly precedes the Civil War. For example, imagine a person telling a story like Aunt Rachel's only picture her is as a white woman whom you are friends (or family) with. Now, imagine you are sitting on a porch, hearing the same type of story from her. Is it difficult to envision a white woman telling a story about being torn from her family and forced into living a life that involves doing what black people tell her to do?

This assignment is going to require you to step outside society's box and write a narrative where the roles of whites and blacks during this time period are reversed. Your story should mirror Twain's story in relation to how black people have forced an injustice upon white people. Make the time period of your story the same and your setting similar to that of "A True Story." The difference between your story and Twain's story will be that you're using different characters (people who are familiar to you in your life) and adding a twist by reversing their racial roles in society. **Note: Your story is not to re-write Twain's story in a literal sense.** In other words, you are not expected to repeat Twain's story exactly how it was written. However, *make sure the reader can see the parallels between the two stories and show a reversal of racial roles between the white and black characters . In addition, include an involvement of an extreme injustice between those races.*

In order to complete the full expectation of the assignment, please follow the Racial Role Reversal Rubric.

Racial Role Reversal Rubric

1)The length of story has 450 words or more. 10 pts. _____

2)The narrative has: 1) a title 2) is typed & double spaced (12 Times Roman Font)
or it is hand-written **legibly**) 10 pts. _____

3)The narrative includes a story with a racial role reversal between white and colored people and a severe injustice has taken place.
10 pts. _____

4)It is apparent that the narrative is set in the 1850's; The era that takes place right before the Civil War. 10 pts. _____

5)It is apparent that the (silent) in-class time allowed to complete this assignment was used efficiently. 10 pts. _____

6)There are little to no spelling and grammar errors on this assignment 10 pts. _____

7)This assignment was taken seriously and respectfully. 10 pts. _____

8) I participated fully in: 1) all class discussions 2) pair discussions and 3) group discussions during class time 10 pts. _____

Total points earned: _____ / 80

"My conscience got to stirring me up hotter than ever..."

NARRATOR: After Livy's death Twain poured his grief and rage into the social commentary that had come to define him – honest, scathing tirades against hypocrisy, dishonesty, greed, and bigotry. No subject escaped his famous "pen warmed up in hell" – politics, business, religion, education, prisons – all affronts were challenged, debated and opined. Twain's view was sought in all matters.

TWAIN: "Strange – it is just like religion and politics! In religion and politics people's beliefs and convictions are in almost every case gotten at second-hand, and without examination, from authorities who have not themselves examined the questions at issue but have taken them at second-hand from other non-examiners, whose opinions about them were not worth a brass farthing." (*Autobiography*)

HUCK: "It was a close place. I took it up, and held it in my hand. I was a-trembling, because I'd got to decide, forever, betwixt two things, and I knowed it. I studied a minute, sort of holding my breath, and then says to myself:

"All right, then, I'll go to hell" – and tore it up.

It was awful thoughts and awful words, but they was said. And I let them stay said; and never thought no more about reforming. I shoved the whole thing out of my head, and said I would take up wickedness again, which was in my line, being brung up to it, and the other warn't. And for a starter I would go to work and steal Jim out of slavery again; and if I could think up anything worse, I would do that, too; because as long as I was in, and in for good, I might as well go the whole hog."

TWAIN: "It is an odd and curious and interesting ass, the human race. [And] when the human race has once acquired a superstition nothing short of death is ever likely to remove it." (*Autobiography*)

NARRATOR: On most topics, Twain spoke candidly. But many of his controversial writings he suppressed until after his death. In his autobiography, which was published after his death, Twain wrote:

TWAIN: "I have always preached. That is the reason I have lasted thirty years. If the humor came of its own accord and uninvited I have allowed it a place in my sermon, but I was not writing the sermon for the sake of the humor. I should have written the sermon just the same, whether any humor applied for admission or not." (*Autobiography*)

HUCK: "And I about made up my mind to pray, and see if I couldn't try to quit being the kind of a boy I was and be better. So I kneeled down. But the words wouldn't come... You can't pray a lie – I found that out."

TWAIN: "I am saying these vain things in this frank way because I am a dead person speaking from the grave. Even I would be too modest to say them in life. I think we never become really and genuinely our entire and honest selves until we are dead – and not then until we have been dead years and years. People ought to start dead and then they would be honest so much earlier." (*Autobiography*)

Narrator: Garrison Keillor; Mark Twain: Clint Eastwood; Huck Finn: Jimmy Buffett
Background Score: "Indian Crow" performed by Rob Ickes (from *Mark Twain: Words & Music*)

Name _____ Date _____ Hr. _____

Exit Ticket

Mark Twain's Viewpoint on Racism

In order to complete this lesson and begin reading the novel *Huckleberry Finn*, please write 2-3 complete sentences that explain Mark Twain's stance on racism.

Important Note: Evidence from a reliable source is required.

Helpful Hint: The articles *Mark Twain is No Racist* and *From Twain, a letter on Debt to Blacks*, or Twain's *A True Story* can be used as a reliable source for evidence in order to support your claim.
