

***The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* Unit**

English 5-6

Mr. Coia

We begin our six-week study of our new novel, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. As I mentioned in class, this is perhaps the most-banned novel in public high schools today. Last year, Portland Public Schools discussed how, and if, this is appropriate for the students.

I am not going to try to convince you that it should or should not be taught (obviously, I personally think that it should be taught). Rather, I am more interested in having you arrive at those conclusions for yourself. In our class discussions and in your assignments, you can be as vocal as you like on these issues. I hope that your participation in class will benefit all of us on these matters.

In our study, we will attempt to answer these questions:

- Should *Huckleberry Finn* be taught to high schools?
- What are both sides of the argument for keeping this in the curriculum?
- How does it address the concepts of race relations for our 21st-century culture?
- What connections can we have to the hero of the novel, Huckleberry Finn?

Huckleberry Finn is not an easy novel to read; it will take effort and diligence on your part. I do believe, however, that it will be worth the effort. I believe that your work on this will manifest itself in our class discussions.

You will show your knowledge and proficiency in the following assignments:

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Date Due</u>	<u>Value</u>
Letter to School Board (CIM)	2/4 (2/5)	25
Quick 8's (10)	2/4 (2/5)	50
T Notes (8 x 5 pts each)	2/6 (2/9)	40
Huck Finn exam	2/6 (2/9)	50 (approx.)
Quizzes		80 (approx.)
Extra Credit:		
Reading Guide chapter	2/10 (2/11)	25

As usual, please come in for extra help if you need it. I'd love to help you understand this book, and don't want you to be lost early on.

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn Unit

English 5-6

Mr. Coia

Tues 1/6 (Wed 1/7)

- ◇ Review class rules
- ◇ Explain Quick 8's
- ◇ Quick8 #1
- ◇ Explain T Notes
- ◇ Show video, "Born to Trouble"

Thurs 1/8 (Fri 1/9)

- ◇ Quick8 #2
- ◇ Finish "Born to Trouble"
- ◇ Check out text, *Huck Finn*
- ◇ Pass out Character Cards
- ◇ Introduction to novel (notes)
- ◇ Read chap 1
- ◇ Reading time

Homework: Chaps 2-4

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Mon 1/12 (Tues 1/13)

- ◇ Quick8 #3
- ◇ Quiz on chaps 1-4
- ◇ Black Minstrelsy in America
- ◇ Reading Guide Signups

Homework: Chaps 5-8

Wed 1/14 (Thurs 1/15)

- ◇ Quick8 #4
- ◇ Quiz on chaps 5-8
- ◇ Film clip: "Bamboozled"
- ◇ Writing/discussion

Homework: Chaps 9-12

Fri 1/16 (Tues 1/20)

- ◇ Quick8 #5
- ◇ Quiz on chaps 9-12
- ◇ Reading: "The Black Man in Public Space"

Homework: Chaps 13-16

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Wed 1/21 (Thurs 1/22)

- ◇ Quick8 #6
- ◇ Quiz on chaps 13-16

Homework: Chaps 17-20, 23

Tues 1/27 (Wed 1/28)

- ◇ Quick8 #7
- ◇ Quiz on chaps 17-23
- ◇ Discuss deleted chapters 21,22,24-30 (Boggs, Peter Wilkes, Mary Jane)

Homework: Chaps 31-34

Thurs 1/29 (Fri 1/30)

- ◇ Quick8 #8
- ◇ Quiz on chaps 31-34
- ◇ Read "My Letter to the School Board"
- ◇ Work time on writing a letter to board: Why this novel should/should not be banned.

Homework: Chaps 35-43 (finish novel)

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Mon 2/2 (Tues 2/3)

- ◇ Quick8 #9
- ◇ Quiz on chaps 35-43
- ◇ Discussion: The perplexing end of the novel

Wed 2/4 (Thurs 2/5)

- ◇ **Due today: Persuasive Letter to Board**
- ◇ Quick8 #10 (final one)
- ◇ Turn in 10 Quick 8's
- ◇ Exam review

Homework: Study for exam

Fri 2/6 (Mon 2/9)

- ◇ Turn in T Notes (7 total)
 - ◇ *Huck Finn* exam
 - ◇ Turn in *Huck Finn*; no book = no exam
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Tues 2/10 (Wed 2/11)

- ◇ **Extra Credit Reading Guides Due** (Both on paper and online)

- ◇ Socratic Seminar

Thurs 2/12 (Fri 2/13)

- ◇ (Leave clear for now)

End of Semester One

Name: _____ Per: _____

Quick 8 Topics

50 points

10 x 5 points each

You'll work on a Quick 8 for each day for the first ten class periods. (Remember: you'll write for eight minutes at the start of each class). Below are the topics that you will write on. While all of these are due on **Wednesday, 2/4 (2/5)**, you may choose the order in which you complete them. *Be sure that the Quick 8 number, topic, and date are on each entry.* Please use a clean side for each journal.

When you turn them in, please put your work in the following order.

- #1: Define your understanding of race issues in America.
- #2: How is race portrayed in television, movies, and music today?
- #3: In your opinion, what types of books should be banned in schools? Have you read a book that you thought wasn't appropriate for school reading? (Please focus on offensive/disturbing, rather than "boring")
- #4: How is Jim stereotyped in the novel?

Topics 5-8 are quotations from Mark Twain. Write about the meaning of them and the connections you see to our world.

- #5: "Always do right. This will gratify some people, and astonish the rest."
- #6: "A classic is something that everybody wants to have read and nobody wants to read."
- #7: "It's impossible to maintain one's innocence in a corrupt world."
- #8: "Man is the only animal that blushes. Or needs to."
- #9: Free write. Use this entry to write on any subject that you like.
- #10: "Dear Mr. Coia." Write a letter to me. We are almost halfway through the year. What are your thoughts on the class? Are we moving too quickly or slowly? Do you have ideas for a better class?

All work must be in your composition book

Huckleberry Finn Vocabulary Words

1. **prov•i•dence** *n.* 1. The care, guardianship, and control exercised by a deity; divine direction: *"Some sought the key to history in the working of divine providence"* 2. **Providence** God.
2. **tem•per•ance** *n.* 1. Moderation and self-restraint, as in behavior or expression. 2. Restraint in the use of or abstinence from alcoholic liquors.
3. **ab•o•li•tion•ism** *n.* 1. Advocacy of the abolition of slavery.
4. **thrash** *v. tr.* 1. To beat with or as if with a flail, especially as a punishment. 2. To swing or strike in a manner suggesting the action of a flail: *The alligator thrashed its tail.* 3. To move wildly or violently: *thrashed about all night.*
5. **con•trived** *adj.* 1. Obviously planned or calculated; not spontaneous; labored: *a novel with a contrived ending.*
6. **skiff** *n.* 1. A light, open boat propelled by oars, motor, or sail
7. **rap•scal•lion** *n.* 1. A rascal; a scamp.
8. **gaud•y** *adj.* 1. Showy in a tasteless or vulgar way.
9. **pen•sive** *adj.* 1. Deeply, often wistfully or dreamily thoughtful.
10. **ar•is•toc•ra•cy** *n.* 1. A hereditary ruling class; nobility. 2. **a.** Government by a ruling class.
11. **phre•nol•o•gy** *n. Abbr.* 1. The study of the shape and protuberances of the skull, based on the now discredited belief that they reveal character and mental capacity.
12. **muse** *v.* 1. To be absorbed in one's thoughts; engage in meditation. 2. To consider or say thoughtfully: *mused that it might take longer to drive than walk.*
13. **ben•e•fac•tor** *n.* 1. One that gives aid, especially financial aid.
14. **pi•ous** *adj.* 1. Having or exhibiting religious reverence; earnestly compliant in the observance of religion; devout. *a pious and holy observation.*
15. **scoun•drel** *n.* 1. A villain; a rogue.
16. **in•gen•ious** *adj.* 1. Marked by inventive skill and imagination. 2. Having or arising from an inventive or cunning mind; clever: *an ingenious scheme.*
17. **dis•po•sition** *n.* 1. One's usual mood; temperament: *a sweet disposition.* 2. **a.** A habitual inclination; a tendency: *a disposition to disagree.*
18. **shirk** *v.* 1. To avoid or neglect (a duty or responsibility). *v. intr.* 1. To avoid work or duty.
19. **im•pu•dent** *adj.* 1. Characterized by offensive boldness; insolent or impertinent.
20. **in•sur•rec•tion** *n.* 1. The act or an instance of open revolt against civil authority or a constituted government.

Letter to School Board Assignment

Huck Finn unit

English 5-6

Mr. Coia

Due: 2/4 (2/5)

Assignment: Let's imagine that *Huckleberry Finn* was being challenged in our school district. The board asked for letters stating opinions on the matter. Write a persuasive letter to the school board demanding that *Huck Finn* be removed from the North Clackamas School District's reading list, or, give reasons why it should remain in place. Attempt to persuade the board members with your words.

- Focus effort on writing clear and concise paragraphs, beginning with a strong topic sentence. Notice that the example give a topic sentence, then unpacks the meaning in the paragraph. **Highlight each topic sentence in bold print.**
- Include an introduction and conclusion to your work.
- Use the proper business-letter format. See the example for assistance.
- You are graded on use of persuasive techniques, topic sentences, interesting writing, and business-letter format
- The letter is to be typed and a minimum of 400 words. Please use standard-sized fonts and margins.

Point value: 25 points

14486 SE 122nd Ave
Clackamas, OR 97015

February 4, 2004

Ms. Carol Storment
Chair of School Board
North Clackamas School District #12
4444 SE Lake Road
Milwaukie OR 97222

Dear School Board Members,

As a teacher of Junior English at Clackamas High School, I am deeply concerned about *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*'s placement on the approved reading list. I included the novel in my class this year, and the experience showed me the problems of such material. I am aware of both the controversy and the refutations of that controversy and tried to offer both in the classroom. Students, however, failed to grasp the meaning of Mark Twain's satirical pen—whether he was intentional or not—and the “deeper” meaning of the novel passed by. Students then were left with what they saw on the written page. Because of this experience, I have three main reasons why I believe the novel should not be taught.

The novel fails to measure up to the accepted standard of good literature. I understand that we all have different measures of what makes a good book, but I find it difficult to believe that *Huck Finn* fits anyone's definition. While it may be an exciting adventure of a boy escaping from “sivilization,” the novel is filled with flat characters with little development. Pap is the always-evil father without any human qualities. The King and the Duke, two men pivotal to the progress of the plot, are typical con men that we have seen countless times before. Huck Finn himself, the boy around whom controversy swells, is as distant to his readers as freedom is to him. These plain, flat characters make it difficult to see the noteworthiness of this novel.

The novel reinforces negative stereotypes of African-Americans. While I shudder to be lumped into the same category of countless others who have preceded me, I cannot sit silent on this matter. *Huck Finn* is filled with derogatory words, commentary, and characterization of blacks. I do welcome discussion of racial matters in my class, but the book does not provide for intelligent dialogue, or helpful discussions to develop ideas; rather, it encourages anger and arguments and hurt feelings. Twain's portrayal of Jim is nothing more than a minstrel buffoonery for the enjoyment of white audiences. Because of this, students cannot see past the author's comedy to feel the pain of the deeper message: that blacks were not treated as humans in the South.

Our school population does not reflect a diverse enough class to have proper discussions on racial matters. At this time, our school does not have the opportunity of a culturally-diverse population that would make discussions of race helpful. Our classes are filled with mostly white students who lack the experience and sensitivity to discuss what it is like to be the target of discrimination. Until this changes, a study of *Huck Finn* amounts to little more than simply watching an episode of “Roots” during a Civil Rights unit.

Please consider the matter that I have presented to you. I am willing to work with the District in selecting another choice to fill the void left if *Huck Finn* is removed. I believe that all students will benefit from this action.

Sincerely,

Ron Coia
Teacher, Language Arts

***Huck Finn* Reading Guide**

Mr. Coia

English 5-6

Due 2/10 (2/11)

25 extra credit points

In class, I'll randomly assign you a chapter from our novel. Your task is to provide a study guide for other students to use for a deeper understanding of this book. For your chapter, you will come up with the following pieces of information to present:

- A summary of events
- Characters Involved
- Two discussion questions for the chapter (not fact questions; rather, deeper questions for discussion)
- Two passages that are important to the story (and why)
- Controversial elements / Things to Notice / What Twain is satirizing

Include chapter number

Turn in your work, both email and paper, by class on 2/10 (2/11).

I'll compile these and post on the Internet.

Remember: You only have to do your chapter

Chapter : _____

- Turn in paper copy to class**
- Send email to : _____**

Example from Chapter One:

Chapter One:

Contributor: Ron Coia

A summary of events

- Huck tells us that he himself is writing this story
- First person narration. Will it be true? Could be like "The Tell-Tale Heart"?
- Summarizes Tom Sawyer: Tom and Huck find \$12,000 in a cave. They split it. Judge Thatcher is guardian of it.
- Widow Douglas is Huck's guardian. She tries to "sivilize" Huck
- Miss Watson teaches Huck about the "bad place"
- Huck is lonely
- He kills a spider and he won't be able to keep the bad luck away
- Tom Sawyer has a secret call for Huck
- Huck leaves by sneaking out of the window

Characters Involved

Huck: narrator of the story.

Widow Douglas: Huck's legal guardian

Miss Watson: Mrs. Douglas's sister.

Tom Sawyer: a good friend

Two discussion questions for the chapter

1. What is Huck's attitude towards religion?
2. The spider incident seems to point to the superstition of Huck. How could it be a part of the novel to come?

Two passages that are important to the story

1. "Pretty soon I wanted to smoke, and asked the widow to let me. She wouldn't. She said it was a mean practice and wasn't clean...She took snuff too; of course that was all right, because she done it herself."

It is unclear to tell whether Huck was being sarcastic or not. One thing is clear: Huck shows that he knows the difference between what people say and what they do. Perhaps this is an early indication that Twain is poking fun of the people who go to church, for example, and yet condone slavery.

2. "I felt so lonesome I most wished I was dead."

Even though Huck is being taken care of physically, he longs for something beyond school, church, and nice clothing. He wants an adventurous life; this is opposed to the "civilized" one he is currently experiencing.

Controversial elements

1. It is clear that Huck doesn't use standard English. How can students use this reading as a model for themselves?
2. Huck smokes, and there is no narrator to condemn that action.
3. First use of the N-word: "By-and-by they fetched the n___ in and had prayers..."
What is the point of this usage? If Twain was purposely using this word, why is this chosen as the first appearance?

T Notes
Huck Finn

Chapters:

Pages:

Notes from My Reading:

Notes from Class Discussion:

Chapters:

Pages:

Notes from My Reading:

Notes from Class Discussion:

T Notes
Huck Finn

Chapters:

Pages:

Notes from My Reading:

Notes from Class Discussion:

Chapters:

Pages:

Notes from My Reading:

Notes from Class Discussion: