

约克文学作品辅导丛书

YORK NOTES ON

HUCKLEBERRY FINN

哈克贝利·费恩历险记

Mark Twain



LONGMAN
LITERATURE
GUIDES

00020910

YORK NOTES

*General Editors: Professor A.N. Jeffares (University
of Stirling) & Professor Suheil Bushrui (American
University of Beirut)*

Mark Twain

THE ADVENTURES OF HUCKLEBERRY FINN

Notes by Brian Donnelly

BA MPhil (ESSEX)

Lecturer in English, Carysfort College, Dublin

57



LONGMAN
YORK PRESS

W 世界图书出版公司

北京·广州·上海·西安

©Librairie du Liban 1980
This edition of York Notes on
The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn
is Published by arrangement
with Addison Wesley Longman
Limited, London. 1998
Licensed for sale in the
mainland territory of the
People's Republic of China only.

约克文学作品辅导丛书: 哈克贝利·费恩历险记(马克·吐温)

B·唐纳利 著

英国朗文出版公司出版
世界图书出版公司北京公司重印
北京朝阳门内大街 137 号 邮编: 100010
北京中西印刷厂印刷
世界图书出版公司北京公司发行
各地新华书店和外文书店经销

*

1990 年 5 月第 1 版 开本: 850 × 1168 1/32
1998 年 8 月第 2 次印刷 印张: 2.5
印数: 1001 - 3000 字数: 53 千字

ISBN: 7 - 5062 - 0448 - 7/I·64

著作权合同登记 图字 01 - 98 - 0565 号

定价: 4.80 元

《约克文学作品辅导丛书》介绍

《约克文学作品辅导丛书》(York Notes)系 Longman 集团有限公司(英国)出版。本丛书覆盖了世界各国历代文学名著,原意是辅导英国中学生准备文学课的高级会考或供英国大学生自学参考。因此,它很适合我国高校英语专业学生研读文学作品时参考。

丛书由 A. N. Jeffares 和 S. Bushrui 两位教授任总编。每册的编写者大都是研究有关作家的专家学者,他们又都有在大学讲授文学的经验,比较了解学生理解上的难点。本丛书自问世以来,始终畅销不衰,被使用者普遍认为是英美出版的同类书中质量较高的一种。

丛书每一册都按统一格式对一部作品进行介绍和分析。每一册都有下列五个部分。

① 导言。主要介绍:作者生平,作品产生的社会、历史背景,有关的文学传统或文艺思潮等。

② 内容提要。一般分为两部分:a. 全书的内容概述;b. 每章的内容提要及难词、难句注释,如方言、典故、圣经或文学作品的引语、有关社会文化习俗等。注释恰到好处,对于读懂原作很有帮助。

③ 评论。结合作品的特点,对结构、人物塑造、叙述角度、语言风格、主题思想等进行分析和评论。论述深入浅出,分析力求客观,意在挖掘作品内涵和展示其艺术性。

④ 学习提示。提出学习要点、重要引语和思考题(附参考答案或答案要点)。

⑤ 进一步研读指导。介绍该作品的最佳版本;版本中是否有重大改动;列出供进一步研读的参考书目(包括作者传记、研究有关作品的专著和评论文章等)。

总之,丛书既提供必要的背景知识,又注意启发学生思考;既重视在吃透作品的基础上进行分析,又对进一步研究提供具体指导;因此是一套理想的英语文学辅导材料。

Contents

Part 1: Introduction	<i>page</i> 5
Mark Twain and <i>Huckleberry Finn</i>	5
A note on the text	8
Part 2: Summaries	10
A general summary	10
Detailed summaries	11
Part 3: Commentary	52
Social, historical and literary aspects	52
Structure, plot and language	55
Characterisation	62
Part 4: Hints for study	68
Arrangement of material in your answers	69
Part 5: Suggestions for further reading	75
The author of these notes	76



Part 1

Introduction

Mark Twain and *Huckleberry Finn*

Mark Twain's real name was Samuel Langhorne Clemens. He was born in Florida, Missouri, in the central region of the United States of America on 30 November 1835. His father was a lawyer from Virginia; his mother came from Kentucky. When he was four the family moved to Hannibal, Missouri, where he continued to live until the age of eighteen. Hannibal was a small, backward, riverside town and Twain's recollection of his years there exerted a powerful hold on his imagination. He once said that his memory always held 'a picture of it as clear and vivid as a photograph'. It was the model for St Petersburg in both *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn*.

When his father died in 1847 he became a printer's apprentice and worked for a time on the Missouri *Courier* under the editorship of his elder brother, Orion. He later worked for newspapers in St Louis, New York and Philadelphia. As the result of a steamboat journey down the Mississippi in 1857 he decided to embark on a career as a riverboat pilot. He gained his pilot's licence in 1859 after an eighteen-month apprenticeship. Twain worked as a pilot until 1861 and then set out on yet another career as a newspaper reporter and correspondent in Virginia city and in San Francisco. It was during his early years as a newspaper man that his first imaginative work was published. It was a humorous story called *Jumping Frog* (1865), and it marked the beginning of a long and distinguished career as a novelist, humorist and man of letters. Twain died in 1910.

Twain's greatest work, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, was published in 1884. His original intention was to write a 'kind of companion to *Tom Sawyer*', his successful boys' adventure story which appeared in 1876. The novel was written intermittently over a period of seven years and, although it grew into something larger and more ambitious than its predecessor, it never abandoned its original theme of a boy's adventure in the Mississippi valley some 'forty or fifty years ago'. During the years of the novel's composition Twain's imagination was focused on his own boyhood and the world of the old Mississippi before the Civil War (1861–5) between the Northern and the Southern

6 · Introduction

states. The whole setting and atmosphere of the novel drew on Twain's own childhood and on his experience as a steamboat pilot in the four years from 1857–61. Before completing *Huckleberry Finn* he paid a visit to the river valley in the spring of 1882. As a result of this trip he wrote the first instalment of *Old Times on the Mississippi* and it probably sparked off the writing of the great middle section of the novel (Chapters 17–31). Twain was fully aware of the power which boyhood and the river exercised over his imagination. In a letter of 1890, he wrote, 'I confine myself to the life with which I am familiar . . . I confine myself to boy-life out on the Mississippi, because that had a peculiar charm for me . . . Now then: as the most valuable capital . . . in the building of novels is personal experience, I ought to be well equipped'.

Nostalgic memories of earlier days on the big river clearly lie behind much of the best writing in *Huckleberry Finn*. Such moments as the wonderful, lyrical description of life on the raft at the beginning of Chapter 19 testify to the power and vividness of Twain's recollection of that time. In a letter of 1877 he wrote that thinking of the old days in Hannibal made him feel like 'some banished Adam, revisiting his half-forgotten Paradise and wondering how the arid world could ever have seemed green and fair to him'. This yearning after a lost past was intensified for Twain by a growing disillusionment with his own success as a writer and public personality. In *Life on the Mississippi* he expressed a forlorn wish that 'there had been no war, no mining days, no literary adventures'. He adds that he would rather be back again as a pilot on the river as he had been twenty years before:

A pilot in those days was the only unfettered and entirely independent being that lived on earth . . . writers of all kinds are manacled servants of the public. We write frankly and fearlessly, but then we 'modify' before we print. In truth, every man and woman and child has a master, and worries and frets in servitude; but in the day I write of, the Mississippi pilot had none.

This, of course, is an overstatement of the truth. But it does clearly reflect Twain's disappointment with his own great success and it also shows his preoccupation with the whole question of personal freedom and the limitations which society places on the individual. It is not surprising that this concern should constitute the real theme of his best book, *Huckleberry Finn*.

Twain's relationship with the past was, however, more complex than most of his nostalgic reminiscences tend to suggest, and this complexity is very evident in the novel. As he grew older he became more and more disenchanted with the new United States. He disliked the industrial

capitalism of the North and wrote a novel with Charles D. Warner entitled *The Gilded Age* (1873) which set out to expose American business politics in the post Civil War era. In contrast to the 'Gilded Age' of his own personal success his earlier days in Hannibal and on the Mississippi were endowed with a pre-lapsarian aura. They seemed, as he wrote, like his 'half-forgotten Paradise'. But there was a very different side to Southern life of which, in more sober moments, Twain was fully aware. Life in the pre Civil War Southern states was often sordid, barbaric and, worst of all, hypocritical. The mean little riverside townships could conceal ignorance and cruelty behind an outward show of Christian observance. The old, aristocratic families often lived in the past. They organised their lives on outmoded notions of a feudal order. Families, like the Grangerfords and Shepherdsons in the novel, lived by a code of honour that was insensitive to real human needs. Worst of all, the pre Civil War South was a slave-owning state. It permitted the continuation of a system which reduced some men, women and children to the status of farm animals and machinery. It was a system which was built into the fabric of Southern life and demeaned those who operated it as well as those who suffered under it.

Huckleberry Finn was a very personal novel for its author. This story of a young boy and a runaway slave journeying on the Mississippi river involved Twain's complex attitudes to the bygone times of his own youth. More significantly, it was written out of a deeply felt concern with the whole question of personal freedom and integrity. At the deepest level it explores the possibility of creative independence within the confines of human society. Yet, the book never loses the directness and simplicity appropriate to a work that was intended to be a 'kind of companion to *Tom Sawyer*'. It is this combination of simplicity and subtlety, directness and complexity that has given the novel its status as *the American 'classic'*. The critic H.L. Mencken, in 1913, called it 'one of the greatest masterpieces of the world'. Lionel Trilling admirably summed up the book's appeal when he wrote:

Certainly one element in the greatness of *Huckleberry Finn* . . . is that it succeeds first as a boy's book. One can read it at ten and then annually ever after, and each year find that it is as fresh as the year before, that it has changed only in becoming somewhat larger. To read it young is like planting a tree young—each year adds a new growth ring of meaning, and the book is as little likely as the tree to become dull. . . . There are few other books which we can know so young and love so long.*

*Lionel Trilling, *The Liberal Imagination*, Anchor Books, Doubleday & Co., New York, 1953, p.102.

8 · Introduction

In spite of its undoubted greatness, *Huckleberry Finn* is not without a flaw. One aspect of the work in particular has led to a good deal of critical debate and disagreement. The dissatisfaction is concerned with the final twelve chapters which describe the attempts of Huck and Tom Sawyer to free Jim from his captivity on the Phelps' farm. Some critics argue that this return to the 'boys' adventure' element of the story is appropriate in a book that began as a boys' tale. Others find that Tom Sawyer's silly, childish fantasies trivialise the serious issues of Jim's freedom and Huck's moral dilemma which take up the central chapters of the novel (17-31). Even among readers who are willing to concede that a return in the end to the earlier atmosphere is appropriate, there are some who think that Twain allowed his final chapters to become too long and tedious.

Each reader's response to the impact of the last section on the novel as a whole will, ultimately, depend upon his reaction to the first two parts. Most readers will find it beneficial to test their own attitudes against those of other readers. For this reason Part 5, Suggestions for further reading, lists some of the major critical studies which deal with this issue.

A note on the text

Mark Twain began work on *Huckleberry Finn* in July 1876, immediately after the publication of *Tom Sawyer*. He described his new work as 'another boys' book' and wrote that he had started it 'more to be at work than anything else'. He wrote 400 pages in one month which he considered to be about half of the total work. However, he was not very enthusiastic about what he had completed and considered either putting it aside for the time being or burning it. This was fairly typical of his method of composition. He always liked a book to 'write itself', meaning that he liked ideas and words to come freely into his mind. When they didn't flow in this way he turned to writing something else.

He had probably written up to about the end of what is now Chapter 16 when he stopped. It was about three years before he looked seriously again at the manuscript. In all it took him seven years, working 'by fits and starts', to finish the story. Even by 1883 he had little idea of the great merit of his novel. In a letter to a friend he referred to it as no more than a 'kind of companion to *Tom Sawyer*'. Indeed, when it was finally published few of his early readers realised how fine a novel he had written. Many 'respectable' Americans thought it 'rough, coarse and inelegant . . . more suited to the slums than to intelligent, respectable people'. In fact many libraries banned the work.

The first English edition of *Huckleberry Finn* was published by Chatto and Windus, in December 1884. It was published in America by Mark Twain's own publishing company, in February 1885. The late appearance of the American edition was due to an error in the engraving of one of the illustrations which rendered it 'obscene'.

The Penguin English Library edition of the novel is based upon the text of the first English edition and should prove the most useful and reliable text for students (see Part 5, Suggestions for further reading). All quotations in the present study are based on the Signet Classic edition, The New American Library Inc., New York, 1959.

Part 2

Summaries

of HUCKLEBERRY FINN

A general summary

The story is narrated in the first person by Huck Finn, the uneducated hero who lives with two old ladies, Widow Douglas and her sister, Miss Watson. He tells us that he first appeared in a book called *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* by Mark Twain. He and his friend, Tom Sawyer, have found a large treasure which he decides to put in the custody of Judge Thatcher so that his greedy, drunken father can't get his hands on it.

His father arrives in the small village where Huck lives and kidnaps the boy. They live together in a lonely cabin in the woods until Huck manages to escape, leaving evidence that he has been murdered. He meets Miss Watson's runaway slave, Jim, on Jackson's Island and the two fugitives sail down the Mississippi river together on a raft. Jim hopes to reach the Northern states where he will be a free man. However, after several adventures, their raft is run down by a steamboat and the two are separated.

Huck swims ashore and is taken in by the Grangerford family who are having a feud with a neighbouring family. Huck has to witness much bloodshed before he escapes back to the raft. Here he meets Jim again. They are not alone for long as two confidence tricksters join them on the raft. One pretends that he is the King of France and the other claims to be the Duke of Bridgewater.

The King and the Duke exploit the fugitives and make a lot of money for themselves along the river. They pretend to be reformed pirates, they stage dramatic performances and, finally, try to steal a legacy by pretending to be the brothers of a certain Peter Wilks who has recently died. Huck becomes disgusted by their behaviour and helps to save Wilks's money for his three nieces.

Huck next learns that the King has sold Jim to a Mrs Phelps, Tom Sawyer's Aunt Sally. He goes to the Phelps farm and pretends to be Tom. When Tom himself arrives he says that he is Sid Sawyer and they start to plan Jim's escape. Tom thinks up the most fantastic methods for getting Jim out of captivity. During the actual escape Tom is accidentally shot in the leg and Jim is recaptured soon afterwards.

Tom then reveals that Miss Watson has died and that she granted Jim his freedom in her will. Huck learns from Jim that his father is dead and that his money is safe with Judge Thatcher. When Aunt Sally says that she will adopt Huck he decides to run away again. He feels that he has had quite enough of so-called 'civilised' life.

Detailed summaries

Chapter 1: Huck introduces himself to the reader

Huckleberry Finn introduces himself to the reader. He tells how he and his friend Tom Sawyer had found a box of gold in a robber's cave. Judge Thatcher invested the money and he and Tom had a big allowance of a dollar a day. The Widow Douglas and her sister, Miss Watson, gave Huck a home and tried to reform him. He was not allowed to smoke or swear and had to keep himself tidy. They told him stories from the Bible such as that of Moses. Huck didn't enjoy this kind of life very much. At midnight Huck heard a soft 'me-yow' sound outside his window. It was Tom waiting for him.

NOTES AND GLOSSARY

We are introduced to the main character and narrator of the story, Huck Finn. He begins by telling us that he first appeared in a book by Mark Twain entitled *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. We learn that he is a boy who likes to be free and finds his present position in Miss Watson's house very hard to bear. He says that 'it was rough living in the house all the time, considering how dismal regular and decent the widow was in all her ways; and so when I couldn't stand it no longer I lit out. I got into my old rags and sugar hogshead again, and was free and satisfied.'

This opening chapter gives us a clear insight into the character of Huck and allows us to learn about the background to the story he is about to tell us. We encounter for the first time Huck's characteristic way of talking. His idiom is 'folksy' and ungrammatical. It is free of all the rules of so-called 'standard' English. This is of special significance in a novel which is largely concerned to show the ways in which the abuse of language underlies corruption within society. Huck's plain, unaffected way of speaking is in keeping with his constant attempt to tell the truth as he sees it. Finally, in this chapter the central theme of the novel is established. This is the theme of freedom and integrity. Above everything else *Huckleberry Finn* explores the possibility of the individual maintaining his integrity within the confines of society. Subsequent events suggest that this is impossible and that the only way

for man to be true to himself is to escape from the town into the freedom of the wilds. In the context of the whole novel Huck's desire to flee from Miss Watson's house has a much wider significance than a young boy's natural desire to avoid washing his hands before meals and saying prayers in the evening. His 'lighting out for the territory' is seen as a necessary step in his attempt to be true to his own ideals and sense of values. (See the final paragraph of the novel.)

without:	unless
stretched:	exaggerated
winds up:	ends up
awful sight:	a lot
civilize:	civilise, domesticate
rough:	uncomfortable
sugar hogshead:	large barrel (used by Huck as a place to sleep)
victuals:	food
Moses and the Bulrushers: in the Bible story, Moses, the future leader of the Israelites, was found as a baby among the bulrushes by the daughter of the Egyptian king (See Exodus, XII)	
no stock in:	no regard for
a-bothering:	concerned with
tolerable:	very
goggles:	spectacles
middling:	quite
reckoned:	thought
not by a considerable sight:	not likely
pecking:	nagging

Chapter 2: Huck joins Tom Sawyer's gang

Huck and Tom play a trick on Miss Watson's Negro slave, Jim. They then join their companions and sail down the river in a small boat. In a secret cave they listen to Tom Sawyer's plan to form a robber gang and sign an oath of loyalty with their blood. They discuss the problem of ransoming their captives and agree that the gang should meet the next week to 'rob somebody and kill some people'. Huck manages to get back into his room just before daybreak.

NOTES AND GLOSSARY

We see the difference between Huck and Tom Sawyer. Huck is straightforward in his approach to things. Tom, on the other hand, is full of ideas taken from romantic fiction. He always behaves in the way

he imagines the hero of an adventure novel would act. Although Huck always admires his friend's inventiveness we realise that Huck's ordinary approach to life is preferable. This becomes particularly apparent in the episodes following Jim's recapture in Chapter 31. (See notes on Chapters 34 to 43)

dah:	that
dasn't:	daren't
sumf'n:	something
I's gwyne:	I'm going to
in a sweat:	very worried
New Orleans:	big city in the south-eastern United States
saddle boils:	sores on a horse's back caused by saddle friction
monstrous:	very
five-center piece:	small coin
most ruined:	almost spoiled
stuck up:	aloof
tanyard:	place for making leather from the hides of cattle
high-toned:	superior
learn:	teach
polite as pie:	extremely polite

Chapter 3: An ambush and Huck's disillusionment

Miss Watson tries without success to explain the value of prayer to Huck. Huck hears that his father has been drowned but doesn't believe the story saying that 'the old man would turn up again by-and-by, though I wished he wouldn't'. Huck is disappointed in the gang who only pretend to rob and kill. Tom Sawyer's promised attack upon rich Spaniards and Arabs turns out to be a mere skirmish against a Sunday School picnic party. Tom tries to convince him that their efforts had been frustrated by magical genies, but Huck decides that it is just another of Tom's lies.

NOTES AND GLOSSARY

In this chapter we get an interesting insight into Huck's character. He possesses a hard core of common sense which leads him to reject both the childish romanticism of Tom as well as Miss Watson's simple religious beliefs. In these episodes we see Huck becoming increasingly alienated from the society in which he is forced to live.

too many for me:	too much for me to understand
judged:	reckoned, calculated
show:	chance

ornery:	ordinary, common
whale:	beat
hog:	pig
hived:	robbed
powwow:	discuss in secret
scoured:	scrubbed
primer:	primary, for the youngest pupils
tract:	religious pamphlet
<i>Don Quixote:</i>	a novel by the Spanish writer Miguel de Cervantes (1547–1616), published in 1605. There is irony in the fact that Tom completely fails to see that its author was satirising the kind of romantic view of life by which Tom himself lives
numskull:	fool, idiot
belting:	beating
tear:	run wildly
waltz:	(here) transport
'stead:	instead
shucks:	an exclamation of disgust
Injun:	red Indian (native of North America)

Chapter 4: Huck prepares for the return of his father

Huck attends St Petersburg village school and makes some progress with reading and arithmetic. He is just getting used to 'civilised' life when he notices some tracks in the snow. He realises that they belong to his worthless father. In order to stop his father getting his money he gets Judge Thatcher to take the money for himself. He asks Jim to consult his magic hair-ball. Jim tells him that his father is undecided about what to do. However, on his return to Miss Watson's he finds his father waiting for him in his room.

NOTES AND GLOSSARY

We are prepared for the return of Huck's father and his subsequent departure from St Petersburg. Huck's consultation with Jim brings the slave to our attention. Jim lives in a world governed by magic and superstition. Huck is instinctively attracted to this view of life in which man's fate is controlled by forces outside the visible world of ordinary experience.

stand it:	tolerate it
played hooky:	stayed away from school without permission
raspy:	irritating