
Huckleberry Finn Essay

It is a common thought that the concept of freedom was pioneered in the United States of America. The book, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain, is based on the American concept of individual freedom. The concept of freedom changes throughout the course of the book and is different from the perspective of the different characters inside the book. In order to find the freedom they seek, they turn to the natural world. Although the natural world they are exposed to poses new dangers and challenges to overcome such as the lonesomeness that Huck describes, it actually provides shelter from society and sometimes even itself.

For instance, the cave on the island Huck and Jim shelter them from the flooding and the storm and it these havens throughout the book which allow the characters to be free to be themselves. On the other hand, it can be inferred from the book that too much freedom can actually imprison a person. In the book, the meaning of freedom is different for each character. For Jim, a runaway slave, it is escaping from his owner in order to reunite with his family. For Huck, freedom is to escape from societal values and manners which he thinks to be petty. Thus, the driving force of these characters trying to obtain their freedom helps us to understand the author's overall message in the book that one can ironically have enough freedom to imprison themselves.

A good example of being free enough to imprison one's self is the Duke and the King. They have so much freedom that they can become almost anyone they can imagine through impersonation and acting. However, this is only due to them having no "moral compasses" and being imprisoned in their own selfishness. "It ain't my fault I wasn't born a duke, it ain't your fault you warn't born a king—so what's the use to worry? Make the best o' things the way you find 'em, says I—that's my motto. This ain't no bad thing that we've struck here—plenty grub and an easy life—come, give us your hand, duke, and let's all be friends." In this quote, it can be learned that the reason for the Duke and King teaming up is for money and an easy life which shows just how selfish the King and the Duke are. At first, Huck is having a grand old time. No rules, no sitting up straight, and definitely no Sunday School. Soon enough, he starts to wonder if maybe life on the run is not so great after all, especially when the king and Duke start trying to cheat the pretty Mary Jane out of her inheritance.

From the beginning of the novel, Jim lives his life as a slave. He is fairly content until one day, when he overhears his owner, Mrs. Watson, talking about selling him to New Orleans. Jim becomes terrified and runs from Mrs. Watson. From that point on in the novel, Jim turns into a runaway slave. His journey with Huck down the Mississippi River begins with only the fear of being caught as a runaway slave. Later in the journey, Jim starts to yearn for freedom from

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slavery. This is manifested in this quote when Huck describes Jim's reactions about being free in Cairo, "Jim said it made him all over trembly and feverish to be so close to freedom" (97). Jim's excitement is also demonstrated in more actions about Cairo as Huck describes more, "Jim was fidgeting up and down past me. We neither of us could keep still. Every time he danced around and says, "Dah's Cairo!" (97) Jim's excitement for freedom is obvious. Slavery sets social chains on Jim's life and hinders his happiness and his goals in life. The only way Jim can achieve his happiness is through freedom. Freedom for Jim means to escape from slavery and a release from the social chains. Similarities appear in each of Huck's and Jim's portrayal of freedom. One important similarity is both of their visions of freedom are intertwined with their escaping from society. Miss Watson's attempts at civilizing Huck are shown when she orders Huck, "Don't put your feet up there, Huckleberry; and don't scrunch up like that, Huckleberry, set up straight" (2).

This civilization and becoming one with society becomes bad experiences for Huck, causing his desire for an unrestricted life. Jim's unhappy experiences from society also result in Jim's portrayal of freedom. As a slave, he is not treated as equals by society as white people are. His unequal treatment from society causes his wish for escaping from slavery, as Huck's bad experiences from society cause his hope for an unrestricted life. Another similarity is that both wish to obtain freedom for their happiness and comfort. As shown in Cairo and raft quotes earlier, freedom is something that can make their life happy and more comfortable. Freedom is an important concept. It serves as a common goal, something to obtain. For Jim and Huck, freedom meant happiness, a happiness away from the binds of society and into a world of freedom. In the end, this is what freedom meant to them and is what they strived for.

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