

Student Essay on Mistaken Identity in "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn"

Mistaken Identity in "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn" by Mark Twain

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Essay

Authors frequently use mistaken identity in their works to convey a message. William Shakespeare is a master at this in *Twelfth Night*. Mark Twain also employs mistaken identity to draw the reader's attention in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.

The first incident where mistaken identity is illustrated is when Huck goes to Judith Loftus's house to catch up on the town's gossip. He dresses like a girl to deceive Mrs. Loftus. He is not successful and she suspects Huck of being a boy. She says, "Why, I spotted you for a boy when you was threading the needle; and I contrived the other things just to make certain." (Twain 60-61)

After Jim and Huck are separated, Huck reaches land and goes in search for a place to stay. He arrives at a house and someone yells to find out who goes there. Huck replies, "George Jackson, sir. I'm only a boy." (93) The Grangefords let him in and Huck stays with them for a while. He is very cautious not to forget his name like he did at Mrs. Loftus's house. Huck pretends to be someone else just in case they would recognize his real name.

The king takes on the role of Harvey Wilks and the duke assumes the role of William Wilks. They fool the whole town, but Doctor Robinson is suspicious of them. Doctor Robinson thinks the king, "...is the thinnest kind of impostor-has come here with a lot of empty names and facts which he picked up somewheres...." (164) The king and duke are eventually caught and run out of town. They use mistaken identity in order to gain the money passed on to the real Wilks brothers as stated in Peter Wilks's will.

Twain demonstrates mistaken identity throughout the novel to keep the reader's interest. Huck, the king, and the duke try to successfully deceive those around them. It is entertaining to read their approaches to mislead others, and it is humorous if they get caught. By capturing the reader's awareness, Twain is able to get his point across.