

Student Essay on Freedom and Society in Huckleberry Finn

Freedom and Society in Huckleberry Finn by Mark Twain

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Essay

Mark Twain examines society through the eyes of the young and pragmatic character Huckleberry Finn. Society puts pressure on Huck to act in a civilized manner, but throughout the novel, we constantly find him at odds with what society expects him to do and with what Huck logically feels he must do. Three people in particular, pose significant moral dilemma's for Huck. In the end, we see that the tension between who he is and what society tells him he must be, forces Huck to leave society behind and find his own path.

The Widow Douglas and Miss Watson are the first people we see who are trying to change Huck. "She put me in them new clothes again, and i couldn't do nothing but sweat and sweat, and feel all cramped up."(p. 1). We see here that Huck's irritation with their influence is mild compared with what happens later. However, this is the first glimpse we get of Huck's free spirit.

The return of Huck's father forces him to act to save his life. The new judge who comes into town (p. 22) pushes society's values over what is best for Huck. The judge believed that it is best for Huck to be with his father no matter how brutish he is. This judge, quite arrogantly, thinks he can reform Pap by dressing him in civilized clothes, inviting him to his house, and preaching to him. Even though Pap climbs out the judge's window, pawns his new clothes and gets drunk that same night, that judge makes no effort to remove Huck from his father. This makes Huck go against society by committing a seemingly terrible lie, faking his own death and seeking freedom down the Mississippi River.