

AP Language and Composition
Essay Topics: *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

For the in-class novel exam, you will be given TWO short answer questions along with ONE long essay to complete. There will also be a multiple choice section. Please be prepared to respond to ALL of the following prompts. Note that each essay requires you to use textual evidence to support your argument!

Short Answer (1-2 paragraph response)

1. What is Mark Twain's message about morality and religion? How does Twain use both the geography and characters in the novel to support that message?
2. What is the difference between good lies and bad lies? Are both kinds of lying wrong? What are the purposes of lying? Use examples from *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* to argue your opinion.
3. Examine the significance of Jim and Huck's relationship. Is Jim a father figure to Huck? Consider: Huck's relationship with Pap, the power structure between Huck and Jim, Huck's treatment of Jim (tricks), the evolution of Huck's perception of Jim, Huck and Jim's relationship on the shore/on the raft
4. Examine the novel's portrayal of racism. Is the novel racist or is it merely holding a mirror to a racist society? Essay could examine: Huck's relationship with Jim, Pap's views of African Americans, Twain's portrayal of Jim, use of the "n" word.
5. What techniques does Mark Twain use to create sympathy for his characters? Are these techniques effective?
6. The Mississippi River is a symbol of freedom as well as for the growing up of Huck. How do you see the river symbolizing one of these things? How does the river contrast with the society that surrounds it?

Full Essay (Requires a fully developed response)

1. Mark Twain said of *Huck Finn* : “it is a novel where a sound heart and a deformed conscience come into collision and conscience suffers defeat. The conscience – that unerring monitor—can be trained to any wild thing you want it to approve.” In light of these comments, trace Huck’s moral development throughout the novel. Your essay could examine Huck’s lies, Huck’s decisions regarding Jim, Huck’s refusal to be “sivilized,” Huck’s relationship with Jim, or the differences between individual and society.

2. Consider the quotation “it is on shore that Huck encounters the worst excesses of which ‘the damned human race’ is capable, but with each return to the raft comes a renewal of spiritual home and idealism” (Magill 13). Examine the difference between society’s dictates as embodied by Huck and Jim’s encounters on the shore and the relative freedom they experience on the river. Your essay could examine the irony that what is thought to be civilized is in fact not or compare and contrast encounters on the shore with descriptions of life on the river.

3. Mark Twain makes masterful use of satire and irony in his novel. Discuss examples of satire and irony in the novel, and explain what Twain is satirizing in the particular episodes. How do these satirical episodes contribute to the overall theme (message) of the novel. What is the most important message of the novel?

4. Discuss Huck’s reasons for rejecting civilization. Make specific references to incidents that influenced his decision. What exactly is Huck choosing instead of civilization? Is his choice a good one? Why or why not?

5. In the novel, Huck is monetarily rich, although he cannot use his money because of Pap. How does he come to view wealth? How does Jim define wealth? How have money and the pursuit of wealth driven Huck’s story along the Mississippi? List the characters and events that are shaped by economics. What does their journey teach them about valuing themselves and others? What is a man worth, finally, to Huck, to Jim, and to the 19th century world?

6. Twain uses a motherless child of an abusive father, a teenager who lacks sophistication and is barely literate, as his narrator and hero. In what ways is Huck an effective narrator and admirable hero? How would the story have been different if Jim had told the story, rather than Huck? Would Jim be a reliable narrator? What kinds of things can Huck do and know that Jim would not have been privy to because of his slave status? If the point of a novel is that the characters will encounter hardships that will change them for the better, what about Huck’s makes for obvious opportunities to change? What in Jim? What in Tom?