

October 24 2014 Literature Circle 7th grade, session # 3

Rebecca_poulson@hotmail.com 747-3448

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Adventures of Huckleberry Finn by Mark Twain Part 3

Here are some interesting articles about the Civil War: [the numbers](#)

and, someone said that African-Americans actually fought for the Confederacy: [Article here](#).

This week, read the rest of the book, and decide what you'll write a one-page essay on, you can write the essay if you want.

Next Friday we'll spend most of our time writing (or revising) that, and sharing.

Some of the things in the book I and you have noted:

Civil War deaths as a percentage (about 2.5%) of the population of the U.S. at the time, would be about 7 million dead of today's population – the Civil War (1861-1865) was a cataclysmic event that must have colored Mark Twain's depiction of pre-War life. For one thing, could people have imagined that slavery would be outlawed?

Tom's fantasies of life-and-death adventures relative to Huck's real ones, how Tom's dangerous

How Huck thinks he's less intelligent than Tom

being free on the river – paradise

How easy it seems to live off the land and "borrowing"

How strangers take Huck in, not like now

Christianity vs. superstition

Huck's knowledge, abilities and intelligence

How many times Huck's life is in danger

How do you think it would feel to read this book if your ancestors had been enslaved?

How Huck is treated in the book compare to Jim's treatment (as a character). Huck grows and changes – could Jim?

The world he's creating – utopian and dystopian elements: easy to live, but also true evil, separating families, stealing, killing

Huck's innocent morality, compared to the morals of others in the book

Are some parts just for humor, and not part of the overall thrust of the book? Emmeline Grangerford

- or maybe this is to show that wealthy "aristocratic" people can be foolish – her obsession with the morbid, her family's feud

Death – tally up the people Huck sees die, and the deaths that occur he doesn't witness

Lies – Huck's, and the Duke's and King's

Foolishness

Evil, cowardice, and cruelty: the townspeople who let Colonel Sherburn get away with murder

Conscience/morality – how Huck is developing, or is he.

Goodness (being kind to others) vs. Goodness (according to convention)

The places, societies, worlds? of each adventure

Food!

Women

The last part really gets complicated for Huck, and for us. There are two systems of morality that he wrestles with: the being good that means supporting human bondage, and condemning Jim to a life of slavery, separated for the rest of his life from his family – Vs. Huck doing what he feels he has to do: treating Jim as well as he truly should. He makes his decision, then, runs into Tom Sawyer again.

The Phelps family, and the doctor, are as “good” as they can be, and yet Mrs. Phelps when she hears Huck’s story does not consider a slave’s life lost as a life lost, and even though they treat Jim kindly, they are going to send him back to slavery. The doctor recognizes he is good and loyal – and therefore worth a lot of money as a slave.

So it looks like the author is angry about slavery, BUT – the problem for us, is Mark Twain’s use of the n-word but more than that, his depiction of African-Americans as comical, foolish caricatures. Even Jim, whose portrayal had become almost dignified, regresses.

Another problem is Huck’s and Jim’s acceptance of Tom’s insane ideas, which are obviously dangerous. Is this a weakness for you? Previously, danger has come from “bad” people. This time the threat is Tom. Do you think Tom Sawyer is supposed to stand for a group of people or beliefs? Or just a way to create dramatic tension? Or, is it just Huck falling back to what he was at the start of the book.