

Christ Presbyterian Academy
English III, English III Honors, and AP English: Language and Composition
Summer Reading Study Guide
The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn by Mark Twain

ABSTRACT:

This American classic is a novel set in St. Petersburg, Missouri about 1840. Hilariously picaresque, epic in scope, alive with the poetry and vigor of the American people, Mark Twain's story about a young boy and his journey down the Mississippi was the first great novel to speak in a truly American voice. This novel, published in 1885, is not a children's book although the story is a simple adventure. Huckleberry Finn can be read on multiple levels.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Samuel Langhorne Clemens, who later took the pen name Mark Twain, spent his childhood in the river town of Hannibal, Missouri (model for the fictional town of St. Petersburg), in the 1830s and 40s. Twain had to leave school at age twelve to seek work. He was successively a journeyman printer, a steamboat pilot, a halfhearted Confederate soldier, a prospector, miner, and reporter in the western territories. His experiences furnished him with a knowledge of humanity, as well as the perfect grasp of local customs and speech which manifests itself so well in his writing

GUIDING QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER WHILE READING:

1. Mark Twain satirizes conventions of the day, two of which are religion and slavery. Using a spiral notebook, journal each time you read the novel about Twain's satirical picture of America. Be sure to cite page numbers corresponding to the events and comments you include.
2. Consider the river and raft metaphor.
3. Examine Jim's heroism (his ordeals and triumphs) throughout the novel. What are his character strengths and his role in the "overall" rescuing of Huck? How does Twain utilize the character of Jim to further the subtext of the novel?
4. Analyze the role of Huck as the narrator. How does he characterize Tom? How does Huck's unreliable narration affect his ironic characterization?
5. How does Twain use the motif of false identity in order to complement the theme of Huck's search for self and his emerging sense of independence?