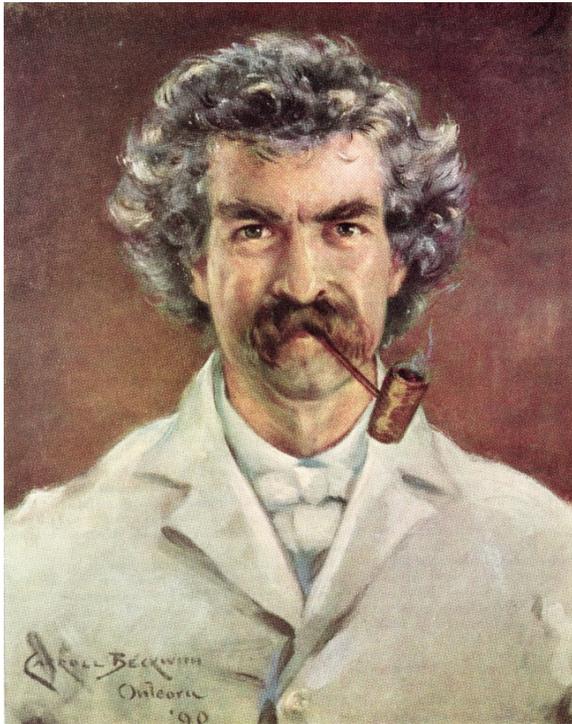


The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn

Mark Twain

Samuel Langhorne Clemens (Mark Twain)



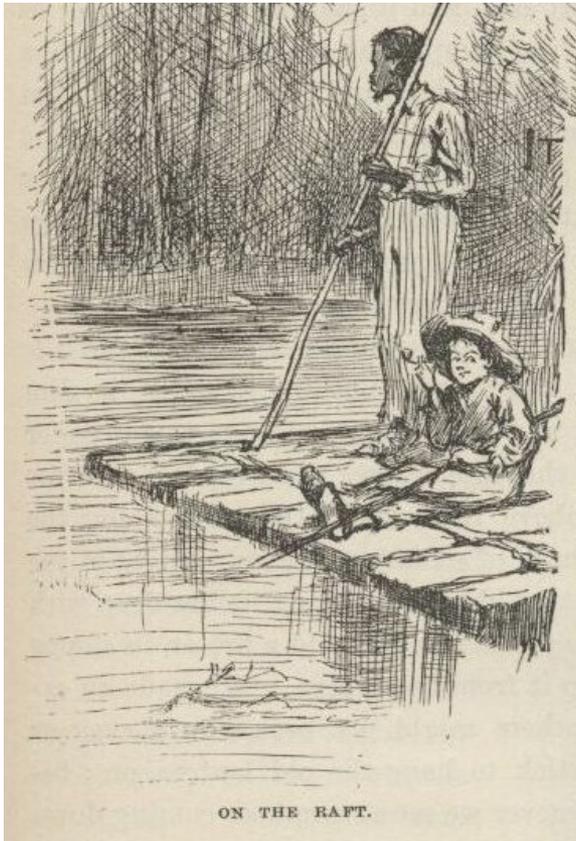
- Born and raised in Hannibal, Missouri, to a stern, lawyer father and a humorous, genteel mother
- Formal schooling ended at age 12; worked as an apprentice in a printer's shop and learned the newspaper trade
- Hometown of Hannibal was part-slave and part-free
- Later acknowledged the inhumanity of slavery, but said of his childhood: "I had no aversion to slavery. I was not aware that there was anything wrong about it."
- Worked as a printer and a riverboat pilot
- Joined the Confederate Army, but deserted the troops after three weeks: "incapacitated by fatigue through persistent retreating"

What kind of novel is *Huck Finn*?



- Episodic odyssey
 - (like Homer's *The Odyssey*)
- Spiritual pilgrimage
 - (like Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, which you will read excerpts from next year)
- Satire

What have scholars said about the novel?



- Social commentary on the pre-Reconstruction South
- Linguistic (related to language) interpretation of the various American voices
- Exploration of dark humor through the point of view of the mythical trickster
- The contradiction of racism and segregation in a “free and equal” society

What are some of the novels recurring themes?



- The wisdom of maturity
- The value of friendship
- The conflict between legality and morality
- The (color) blindness of true love
- The inhumanity of racism
- The value of freedom

What makes this novel great?

- Unique, boyish point of view of Huck – free from affectation, both puerile and mature, enlightened and ignorant
 - Like a child, Huck views his surroundings in a sensory manner, based mostly on what he sees and hears
 - Like an adult, Huck displays uncanny wisdom, shattering the illusion of a care-free world by discovering its injustices
- Bitter social satire
 - Huck constantly believes that he is evil because he has the urge to rebel against society's expectations
 - Is nonconformity always evil or wrong?
 - Isn't everything relative to a particular point of view?

Point to Ponder



- *Huck Finn* has been called a “racist” book and has been banned in many schools across our country. What are your thoughts on this issue?

More Points to Ponder



- Right vs. wrong
- Hypocrisy
- Romanticism vs. Realism (Yes, *Huck Finn* technically is a Realism novel; however, elements of Romanticism are evident.)
- Basic human decency
- River vs. land (We'll be discussing the contrast between life on the actual river and life amongst "civilization" on land.)