Chapters 19-31: Lessons in Assistance and Betrayal

QUESTIONS

1. What is a “confidence” man, a.k.a. con man? What scams have you heard about in your own neighborhood or state? Did these frauds prey on the confidence of the people they conned? How do the King and the Duke play on the confidences of people to get their money? What do they have to know about the towns, local people, and human nature in order to perfect their scams?

2. Though both men are criminal in their behavior, each is different in his understanding of and abuse of people. Make two columns and list the differences in the King and the Duke. How is one morally superior to the other? Which do you like least and why?

3. S Since Huck quickly understands the King and Duke are con men, why doesn’t he confront them or tell Jim?

4. How and by whom is Jim betrayed? Have other slaves been similarly treated by this character? How does Huck respond to Jim’s capture?

5. Twain is a master of satire and of irony. List ironic episodes in this section and explain how Twain uses them to affect readers.

QUOTATIONS

1. “Sometimes we’d have that whole river all to ourselves for the longest time…It’s lovely to live on a raft. We had the sky up there, all speckled with stars, and we used to lay on our backs and look up at them, and discuss whether they was made or only just happened” (120).

2. “It didn’t take me long to make up my mind that these liars warn’t no kings nor dukes at all, but just low-down humbugs and frauds. But I never said nothing, never let on.…If I never learnt nothing else out of pap, I learnt that the best way to get along with his kind of people is to let them have their own way” (125-6).

3. “’The pitifulest thing out is a mob; that’s what an army is—a mob; they don’t fight with courage that’s born in them, but with courage that’s borrowed from their mass, and from their officers. But a mob without any man at the head of it is beneath pitifulness….If any real lynching’s going to be done it will be done in the dark, Southern fashion’” (145-6).

4. “What was the use to tell Jim these warn’t real kings and dukes? It wouldn’t ‘a’ done no good; and besides, it was just as I said: you couldn’t tell them from the real kind” (153).

5. “I do believe he cared just as much for his people as white folks does for their’n. It don’t seem natural, but I reckon it’s so.…He was a mighty good nigger, Jim was” (153).

6. “Well, if ever I struck anything like it, I’m a nigger. It was enough to make a body ashamed of the human race” (160).

7. “And when it comes to beauty—and goodness, too—she lays over them all…but I reckon I’ve thought of her a many and a many a million times, and of her saying she would pray for me; and if ever I’d ‘a’ thought it would do any good for me to pray for her, blamed if I wouldn’t ‘a’ done it or bust” (186).

8. “…deep down in me I knowed it was a lie, and He knowed it. You can’t pray a lie—I found that out….I studied a minute, sort of holding my breath, and then says to myself: ‘All right, then, I’ll go to hell’—and tore it up” (206-7).