Chapters 12-18: Bonding over Inhumanity

QUESTIONS

1. How does the episode with the murderers and the attempt to save them develop Huck’s sense of morality? What is his current code? From whom or what has he developed this code thus far?

2. What role does Huck play in discussions with Jim? What has Huck learned in school, from reading, or from Tom Sawyer that he has retained and found useful? How and when does Huck compliment and denigrate Jim?

3. What lessons from Pap does Huck remember and evaluate during his moral dilemmas with Jim?

4. How do both Grangerfords and Shepherdsons exhibit religious hypocrisy? Explain Twain’s use of the families’ feuding as satire of Civil War mentality.

5. The families follow their own code of behavior, unable to remember the original court case and the reason for the feud. Discuss feuds and frontier justice as they impact Huck’s growing sense of right and wrong.

6. Discuss Jim’s interactions with the Grangerford slaves, including his assessment of their abilities. What do these slaves know about the underground railroad and ways for runaways to elude capture?

QUOTATIONS

1. “Pap always said it warn’t no harm to borrow things, if you was meaning to pay them back, sometime; but the widow said it warn’t anything but a soft name for stealing, and no decent body would do it” (70).

2. “Now was the first time that I begun to worry about the men—I reckon I hadn’t had time to before. I begun to think how dreadful it was, even for murderers, to be in such a fix. I says to myself, there ain’t no telling but I might come to be a murderer myself yet, and then how would I like it?” (76).

3. “Well, he was right; he was most always right; he had an uncommon level head for a nigger” (81).

“I see it warn’t no use wasting words—you can’t learn a nigger to argue. So I quit” (84).

4. “’En all you wuz thinkin’ ‘bout wuz how you could make a fool uv ole Jim wid a lie. Dat truck dah is trash; en trash is what people is dat puts dirt on de head er dey fren’s en makes ‘em ashamed” (89).

5. “It was fifteen minutes before I could work myself up to go and humble myself to a nigger; but I done it, and I warn’t ever sorry for it afterward, neither” (89).

6. “…I begun to get it through my head that he was most free—and who was to blame for it? Why, me…Conscience says to me, ‘What had poor Miss Watson done to you that you could see her nigger go off right under your eyes and never say one single word?” (91).

24 A Teacher’s Guide to the Signet Classics Edition of Mark Twain’s Adventures of Huckleberry Finn

7. “I got aboard the raft, feeling bad and low, because I knowed very well I had done wrong, and I see it warn’t no use for me to try to learn to do right; a body that don’t get started right when he’s little ain’t got no show” (94).

8. “Well then, says I, what’s the use you learning to do right when it’s troublesome to do right and ain’t no trouble to do wrong, and the wages is just the same?” (94).

9. “The men took their guns along, so did Buck, and kept them between their knees or stood them handy against the wall. The Shepherdsons done the same. It was pretty ornery preaching—all about brotherly love, and such-like tiresomeness; but everybody said it was a good sermon, and they all talked it over going home, and had such a powerful lot to say about faith and good works and free grace…” (111).

10. “I ain’t a-going to tell all that happened—it would make me sick again if I was to do that. I wished I hadn’t ever come ashore that night to see such things. I ain’t ever going to get shut of them—lots of times I dream about them” (116).