

Rising 12th Grade Summer Reading

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn

PART 1

Writing Assignment

During or after reading *Huck Finn*, please answer three of the following questions, choosing one from each category. Your answers should be typed and double-spaced in 12-point, Times New Roman font, with an MLA-style heading in the upper left corner. Answers should be 150-300 words each, thoughtfully presented in your best short-essay style, using complete sentences, proper spelling and grammar, and indenting new paragraphs when necessary.

Category 1

- A. *Huck Finn* was one of the first major works of literature to employ different regional and social dialects. What does your dialect say about who you are?
- B. How important is it that we speak our native tongue well? Why?

Category 2

- A. How is humor generally used in our culture? How does Mark Twain use humor to communicate deeper truths in *Huck Finn*?
- B. When is humor appropriate? When is it inappropriate? Are certain types of humor off-limits? Why?

Category 3

- A. Many characters in *Huck Finn* are overtly racist, as the story takes place in the antebellum American South. What is at the heart of racism? Is racism ever excusable? Discuss.
- B. Why are humans so inhumane? What are some of the most striking examples of “man’s inhumanity to man” in our culture? What can we do to reverse these trends of cruelty?

PART 2

Project: Classroom Debate

From the year after it was published, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* has been banned by one group or another. In 1885 a library in Massachusetts banned the book because of the rough language. The use of so much slang was too much for some. It was not the use of the “n-word” that caused the initial outrage, though. It wasn’t until more recent times that the book has been banned by some schools due to the racial issues and the fact that the hotly debated racial slur occurs some 215 times throughout the book.

After some class discussions and review, as well as a day or two spent organizing, we will be debating the question of whether or not *Huck Finn* should be banned. You will be assigned to a group after school begins, so you should familiarize yourself with both sides of the argument.

The class will be divided into two groups: “Ban *Huck Finn*” vs. “Don’t Ban *Huck Finn*.” The debate will be structured as follows, giving each side a maximum of five minutes to make opening and closing statements and allowing for up to ten minutes for each round of questioning:

- Opening Statement: “Ban” (5 minutes)
- “Don’t Ban” questions “Ban” (10 minutes)
- Opening Statement: “Don’t Ban” (5 minutes)
- “Ban” Questions “Don’t Ban” (10 minutes)
- Closing Statement: “Ban” (5 minutes)
- Closing Statement: “Don’t Ban” (5 minutes)

This totals 40 minutes, which leaves us ten minutes “flex time” for everyone to come in, get settled, rearrange chairs if necessary and put them back, etc.

You should do some reading on the *Huck Finn* bans, perhaps considering some other instances of book banning as well. This can be accomplished with a simple internet search, accompanied by taking some notes. Consider the following online articles to start your research off; I’m sure you can also find others:

- <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/banned-adventures-huckleberry-finn/>
- https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/school-district-weighs-ban-of-to-kill-a-mockingbird-huck-finn-after-complaint/2016/12/03/92701c80-b8b0-11e6-a677-b608fbb3aaf6_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.76173ab20029
- http://teachers.bergen catholic.org/faculty/hornerj/literature%202/Peaches_Henry.htm
- <http://www.claytonschools.net/cms/lib/MO01000419/Centricity/Domain/292/Huck%20Finn%20race%20controversy.pdf>
- <https://www.mercerislandschools.org/cms/lib3/WA01001855/Centricity/Domain/640/Carey-Webb%20Article.pdf>
- <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/huckleberry-finn-and-the-n-word-debate/>
- <http://www.bannedbookweek.org/censorship/bannedbooksthatshapedamerica>
- <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/07/books/07huck.html>
- <https://mtsu.edu/first-amendment/article/986/book-banning>