Huck Finn- Argumentative Essay

Topics Breakdown

# Topic #1: A Changing Huck

Mark Twain said of *Huck Finn*:  “it is a novel where a sound heart and a deformed conscience come into collision and conscience suffers defeat.  The conscience – that unmistaken monitor—can be trained to any wild thing you want it to approve.”

In light of these comments, trace Huck’s moral development throughout the novel, and develop an argumentative essay examining if Huck matures / does not mature during his journey down the Mississippi.

Things to consider as you develop your argument:

* Huck’s lies
* Huck’s decisions regarding Jim
* Huck’s refusal to be “sivilized”
* Huck’s relationship with Jim
* The differences between individual expectations and society’s expectations.
* How do adolescents mature?
* What does “civilization” mean to Huck
* Specific instances of hypocrisy, cruelty, and disregard for authority
* The contrast of the raft life of Huck and Jim with the world they live on shore.

# Topic #2: Jim’s Leadership/Influence

It has been thought the character of Jim is the only righteous and honest character in a sea of white characters who are all greatly flawed. Whether or not this is true, inspect the significance of Jim and Huck’s relationship as they journey down the Mississippi River.  Develop an argumentative essay that discusses the development of Jim as a character AND examines if Jim is / is not a true father figure to Huck.

 Things to consider as you develop your argument:

* Huck’s relationship with Pap vs. Jim
* The power structure of Huck and Jim’s relationship on the shore vs. on the raft.
* Huck’s treatment of Jim (tricks)
* The evolution of Huck’s perception of Jim
* How is Jim portrayed in the opening chapters of the novel?
* How does his character evolve as the novel continues?
* What do we learn about Jim’s character and reputation?
* How Jim is ultimately a contrast to Pap?
* What makes a parent good?

# Topic #3: Twain’s Controversial Novel

*You don’t ban Mark Twain—you explain Mark Twain! To study an idea is not necessarily to endorse the idea. Mark Twain’s satirical novel, Huckleberry Finn, accurately portrays a time in history—the nineteenth century—and one of its evils, slavery.* --NAACP, current position on Huck Finn.

In a carefully reasoned argumentative essay, take a position that defends or challenges the NAACP’s position on the teaching of *Huck Finn* in the high school classroom. Your argumentative essay should be developed around the following topic: The novel *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* should/ should not be studied in schools.

Things to consider as you develop your argument:

* The novel’s portrayal of racism
* The 60 minutes Video we watch at the beginning of the unit
* Alternative novels - censored vs. original publication
* The lessons learned from Huck’s relationship with Jim
* The lessons learned from Pap’s views of African Americans
* Twain’s portrayal of Jim, the runaway slave
* Use of the “N” word
* The dark themes of slavery, abuse, and dishonesty.
* When should a book be banned?
* Is the novel racist or is it merely holding a mirror to a racist society?
* What was Twain trying to relate in the novel?