



Huckleberry Finn

Who wants to live in a house, wear clean clothes, be good, and go to school every day? Not young Huckleberry Finn, that's for sure.

So Huck runs away, and is soon floating down the great Mississippi River on a raft. With him is Jim, a black slave who is also running away. But life is not always easy for the two friends.

And there is 300 dollars waiting for anyone who catches poor Jim . . .



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Text adaptation by Diane Mowat

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Huckleberry Finn

MARK TWAIN



HUCKLEBERRY FINN

Mark Twain

OXFORD

HUCKLEBERRY FINN

'I never had a home,' writes Huck, 'or went to school like all the other boys. I slept in the streets or in the woods, and I could do what I wanted, when I wanted. It was a fine life.'

So when Huck goes to live with the Widow Douglas, he doesn't like it at all. He has to be clean and tidy, be good all the time, and go to school. Then his father comes and takes him away to live in the woods. At first Huck is pleased, but his father is always hitting him so Huck decides to run away.

When he meets Jim, a runaway slave, they decide to travel together down the great Mississippi River on a raft. They run into all kinds of trouble and danger, of course, but Huck is happy. Life on the river is so free and easy and comfortable . . .



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Huckleberry Finn

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1
Huck in trouble

You don't know about me if you haven't read a book called *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. Mr Mark Twain wrote the book and most of it is true. In that book robbers stole some money and hid it in a very secret place in the woods. But Tom Sawyer and I found it, and after that we were rich. We got six thousand dollars each – all gold.

In those days I never had a home or went to school like Tom and all the other boys in St Petersburg. Pop was always drunk, and he moved around a lot, so he wasn't a very good father. But it didn't matter to me. I slept in the streets or in the woods, and I could do what I wanted, when I wanted. It was a fine life.



I could do what I wanted, when I wanted. It was a fine life.

When we got all that money, Tom and I were famous for a while. Judge Thatcher, who was an important man in our town, kept my money in the bank for me. And the Widow Douglas took me to live in her house and said I could be her son. She was very nice and kind, but it was a hard life because I had to wear new clothes and be good all the time.

In the end, I put on my old clothes and ran away. But Tom came after me and said that I had to go back, but that I could be in his gang of robbers. So, I went back, and the widow cried and I had to put on those new clothes again. I didn't like it at all. Her sister, Miss Watson, lived there too. She was always saying, 'Don't put your feet there, Huckleberry,' and 'Don't do that, Huckleberry.' It was terrible.

When I went up to bed that night, I sat down in a chair by the window. I sat there a good long time, and I was really unhappy. But just after midnight I heard 'mee-yow! mee-yow!' outside. Very softly, I answered, 'mee-yow! mee-yow!' Quietly, I put out the light and got out through the window. In the trees, Tom Sawyer was waiting for me.

We went through the trees to the end of the widow's garden. Soon we were on top of a hill on the other side of the house. Below us we could see the river and the town. One or two lights were still on, but everything was quiet. We went down the hill and found Joe Harper, Ben Rogers and two or three more of the boys. Then Tom took us down the river by

boat to his secret place, which was a cave deep in the side of a hill. When we got there, Tom told us all his plan.

'Now, we'll have this gang of robbers,' he said, 'and we'll call it Tom Sawyer's Gang. If somebody hurts one of us, the others will kill him and his family. And if a boy from the



Tom's secret place was a cave, deep in the side of a hill.

gang tells other people our secrets, we'll kill him and his family, too.'

We all thought this was wonderful, and we wrote our names in blood from our fingers. Then Ben Rogers said, 'Now, what's the gang going to do?'

'Nothing,' replied Tom. 'Just rob and kill. We stop people on the road, and we kill them, and take their money and things. But we can keep a few of the people, and then their friends can pay money to get them back. That's what they do in the stories in books.'

But Ben wasn't happy. 'What about women?' he asked. 'Do we kill them, too?'

'Oh, no,' Tom answered. 'We're very nice to them, and they all love us, and they don't want to go home.'

'Then the cave will be full of women, and people waiting, and we'll have to watch them all night ...'

'We'll all go home now,' Tom said, 'and we'll meet next week, and we'll kill somebody and rob somebody.'

Ben wanted to begin on Sunday, but the others said no. It was bad to kill and rob on a Sunday.

My clothes were very dirty and I was very tired when I got back. Of course, the next morning Miss Watson was angry with me because of my dirty clothes, but the widow just looked unhappy. Soon after that we stopped playing robbers because we never robbed people and we never killed them.

* * *



Miss Watson was angry, but the widow just looked unhappy.

Time went on and winter came. I went to school most of the time and I was learning to read and write a little. It wasn't too bad, and the widow was pleased with me. Miss Watson had a slave, an old man called Jim, and he and I were good friends. I often sat talking to Jim, but I still didn't like living in a house and sleeping in a bed.

Then, one morning, there was some new snow on the ground and outside the back garden I could see footprints in the snow. I went out to look at them more carefully. They were Pop's footprints!



They were Pop's footprints!

A minute later, I was running down the hill to Judge Thatcher's house. When he opened the door, I cried, 'Sir, I want you to take all my money. I want to give it to you.'

He looked surprised. 'Why, what's the matter?'

'Please, sir, take it! Don't ask me why!'

In the end he said, 'Well, you can sell it to me, then.' And he gave me a dollar and I wrote my name on a piece of paper for him.

That night when I went up to my room, Pop was sitting there, waiting for me! I saw that the window was open, so that was how he got in.

He was almost fifty and he looked old. His hair was long and dirty and his face was a terrible white colour. His clothes were old and dirty, too, and two of his toes were coming through his shoe. He looked at me all over for a long time, and then he said, 'Well, just look at those clean, tidy clothes! And they say you can read and write now. Who said you could go to school?'

'The widow . . .' I began.

'Oh, she did, did she? Well, you can forget about school. I can't read and your mother couldn't read; no one in our family could read before they died, so who do you think you are? Go on, take that book and read to me!'

I began to read, but he hit the book and it flew out of my hand, across the room. Then he shouted, 'They say you're rich – how's that?'

'It isn't true!'

'You give me that money! I want it. Get it for me tomorrow!'

'I haven't got any money. Ask Judge Thatcher. He'll tell you. I haven't got any money.'

'Well, give me what you've got in your pocket now. Come on, give it to me!'

'I've only got a dollar, and I want that to ...'

'Give it to me, do you hear?'

He took it, and then he said he was going out to get a drink. When he was outside the window, he put his head back in and shouted, 'And stop going to that school, or you know what you'll get!'

The next day he was drunk, and he went to Judge Thatcher to get my money. The judge wouldn't give it to him. But Pop didn't stop trying and every few days I got two or three dollars from the judge to stop Pop from hitting me. But when Pop had money, he got drunk again and made trouble in town. He was always coming to the widow's house, and she got angry and told him to stay away. Then Pop got really angry and one day he caught me and took me a long way up the river in a boat. I had to stay with him in a hut in the woods and I couldn't go out by myself. He watched me all the time. The widow sent a man to find me and bring me home, but Pop went after him with a gun, and the man ran away.



I had to stay with him in a hut in the woods.

Huck escapes and finds a friend

Mostly it was a lazy, comfortable kind of life, but after about two months Pop began to hit me too much with his stick. He often went away into town too, and then he always locked me in the hut. Once he was away for three days and I thought I was never going to get out again.

When he came back that time, he was drunk and angry. He wanted my money, but Judge Thatcher wouldn't give it to him. The judge wanted to send me to live with the widow again, Pop told me. I wasn't very pleased about that. I didn't want to go back there.

So I decided to escape and go down the river and live in the woods somewhere. When Pop was out, I began to cut a hole in the wooden wall of the hut. In a few days, when the hole was bigger, I could take the wood out, escape through the hole, and put the wood back.

One morning Pop sent me down to the river to catch some fish for breakfast. To my surprise, there was a canoe in the water and there was no one in it. Immediately, I jumped into the river and brought the canoe to the side. It was lucky that Pop didn't see me, and I decided to hide the canoe under some trees and use it when I escaped.

That afternoon, Pop locked me in and went off to town.



I jumped into the river and brought the canoe to the side.

'He won't be back tonight,' I thought, so I began to work hard at my hole. Soon I could get out through it, and I carried food and drink and Pop's gun down to the canoe. Then I put back the wood to hide the hole, took the gun and