


NAXOS
AudioBooks

Mark Twain

THE
COMPLETE
CLASSICS

UNABRIDGED

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn

Read by **Garrick Hagon**



9
Compact
Discs



NAX36012D

1	Introduction	0:32
2	Chapter 1: I Discover Moses and the Bulrushers	4:28
3	Then she told me all about the bad place...	4:16
4	Chapter 2: Our Gang's Dark Oath	5:43
5	Well, when Tom and I got to the edge...	8:29
6	Chapter 3: We Ambuscade the A-rabs	5:41
7	I didn't believe we could...	4:22
8	Chapter 4: The Hair-ball Oracle	4:36
9	Miss Watson's nigger Jim...	3:47
10	Chapter 5: Pap starts in on a new life	4:24
11	He set there a-mumblin'...	6:00
12	Chapter 6: Pap Struggles with the Death Angel	4:50
13	Pap warn't in a good humor...	5:43
14	And that ain't the wust...	7:01
15	Chapter 7: I fool Pap and get away	4:22
16	About 12 o'clock...	4:02
17	Well, at last I pulled out...	7:27
18	Chapter 8: I spare Miss Watson's Jim	4:41
19	I didn't hope so...	4:01
20	When I got to camp...	6:24
21	When breakfast was ready...	5:45
22	I went into de woods...	6:48

23	Chapter 9: The House of Death Floats By	4:14
24	Day-times we paddled...	5:20
25	Chapter 10: What Comes of Handlin' Snakeskin	4:50
26	Well, the days went along...	3:17
27	Chapter 11: They're After Us!	6:02
28	I had got so uneasy I couldn't set still...	4:48
29	So I said it wouldn't be no use...	5:59
30	Chapter 12: 'Better Let Blame Well Alone'	4:50
31	The fifth night...	2:27
32	The fifth night below St. Louis...	4:25
33	I dropped on my hands and knees...	5:32
34	Chapter 13: Honest Loot from the 'Walter Scott'	5:16
35	I skimmed around for the watchman...	7:10
36	Chapter 14: Was Solomon Wise?	5:14
37	But hang it, Jim...	4:24
38	Chapter 15: Fooling Poor Old Jim	6:59
39	I looked away downstream...	7:34
40	Chapter 16: The Rattlesnake-skin Does Its Work	4:56
41	It most froze me...	7:56
42	Well then, says I...	4:00
43	We didn't say a word for a good while...	4:24
44	Chapter 17: The Grangerfords Take Me In	4:46

45	Buck looked about as old as me...	4:50
46	It was a mighty nice family...	5:11
47	These was all nice pictures...	6:13
48	Chapter 18: Why Harney Rode Away for His Hat	4:46
49	There was another clan of aristocracy...	5:07
50	I reckon that old man was a coward...	4:59
51	I followed a half a mile...	6:18
52	I took up the river road...	7:37
53	Chapter 19: The Duke and the Dauphin Come Aboard	5:03
54	Sometimes we have that whole river all to ourselves...	5:09
55	Well, I've been a running a little temperance revival...	6:31
56	All through dinner Jim stood around...	5:47
57	Chapter 20: What Royalty Did to Parkville	5:04
58	And then rip comes another flash...	4:31
60	He got out two or three...	3:41
61	The first shed we come to...	5:10
62	When we got back...	4:27
63	Chapter 21: An Arkansas Difficulty	6:18
64	One morning when we was pretty well down...	5:54
65	All the streets and lanes...	5:15
66	Then he turns and goes in...	6:02

67	Chapter 22: Why the Lynching Bee Failed	5:58
68	I ain't opposed to spending money on circuses...	7:11
69	Chapter 23: The Orneriness of King	5:48
70	Them rapsCALLIONS took in four hundred and sixty-five	4:40
71	I went to sleep...	3:46
72	Chapter 24: The King Turns Parson	5:55
73	Well, he don't miss any property by it...	4:00
74	Was Peter Wilks well off?	4:35
75	Chapter 25: All Full of Tears and Flapdoodle	3:03
76	Well by and by the king he gets up...	4:51
77	Most everybody would have been satisfied...	4:19
78	Mary Jane she went for him...	6:35
79	Chapter 26: I Steal the King's Plunder	4:29
80	When she said that...	6:02
81	When I got by myself...	7:27
82	Chapter 27: Dead Peter Has His Gold	4:19
83	When the place was packed full...	5:46
84	So the next day after the funeral...	6:17
85	Chapter 28: Overreaching Don't Pay	5:24
86	Well I says...	5:09
87	Gone to see a friend is alright...	4:52
88	I couldn't think of anything reasonable right off...	4:57

89	Everything was all right now	1:49
90	Chapter 29: I Light Out in the Storm	5:36
91	We all got into a big room...	4:31
92	So they got some paper...	5:01
93	Well I never see anything like that old blister...	4:34
94	At last they got out of the coffin...	4:11
95	Chapter 30: The Gold Saves the Thieves	7:41
96	Chapter 31: You Can't Pray a Lie	4:49
97	Pretty soon I went out on the road...	5:00
98	So I kneeled down...	5:45
99	Well the very first man I see...	6:52
100	Chapter 32: I Have a New Name	6:37
101	Now I struck an idea...	7:28
102	Chapter 33: The Pitiful Ending of Royalty	7:22
103	So Tom he thanked them...	5:01
104	We had dinner...	4:12
105	Chapter 34: We Cheer Up Jim	5:33
106	When we got to the cabin...	7:59
107	Chapter 35: Dark, Deep-laid Plans	5:25
108	Why Tom Sawyer how you talk...	5:20
109	So we allowed we would steal...	5:51
110	Chapter 36: Trying to Help Jim	5:45

111	That night we went down...	7:03
112	Chapter 37: Jim Gets His Witch-pie	5:08
113	I reckon the world is coming to an end...	5:11
114	So I smouched one...	4:59
115	Chapter 38: 'Here a Captive Heart Busted'	7:06
116	Our hole was pretty big...	3:37
117	You got any rats around here?	4:53
118	Chapter 39: Tom Writes Nonamous Letters	5:53
119	But as I was saying...	6:59
120	Chapter 40: A Mixed-up and Splendid Rescue	5:53
121	I was upstairs in a second...	4:01
122	Then we struck out...	3:47
123	Chapter 41: 'Must 'a' Been Sperits'	4:28
124	When we got home...	5:27
125	Well it does beat...	6:03
126	Chapter 42: Why They Didn't Hang Jim	5:42
127	But there I was...	4:40
128	He'd got a start...	4:15
129	Goodness alive, Aunt Polly!	4:40
130	Chapter the Last. Nothing More to Write...	4:06

Total time: 11:24:04

Mark Twain

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn

‘You don’t know about me, without you have read a book by the name of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, but that ain’t no matter.’

It was while writing *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* that Mark Twain became more interested in another character. Huckleberry Finn walks into that novel carrying a dead cat and very soon, even before Tom Sawyer came before the public, his creator found himself embarking on a different book altogether. However, after a brisk start, Twain lost impetus. When his own publishing house finally brought the completed novel out, Twain told his brother Orion that he ‘had been fooling over [it] for 7 years’. *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* has since come to be regarded as one of the most important American novels of the nineteenth century.

It is hardly surprising that Huck engaged his creator’s imagination, for though from the same sort of background as Tom, he is in some ways a richer and for many readers a somewhat more endearing character. (Nevertheless, it was Tom who was

‘recycled’, reappearing in *Tom Sawyer Abroad* and *Tom Sawyer, Detective*.) Tom is a prankster who enjoys playing tricks on people because he likes to laugh at their discomfort. Huckleberry himself is no angel and finds himself caught up in various hair-raising scrapes but only because he is misled or forced into them by others or in reaction to the hypocrisies of the world he lives in. He may be far from perfect but his imperfections are those of the rascal rather than the villain.

Twain based his unsentimental portrayal of Huck on a real boy from his hometown. Tom Blankenship was the son of the town drunkard. Twain writes in his autobiography that Tom was ‘ignorant, unwashed, insufficiently fed; but he had as good a heart as ever any boy had ... he was the only really independent person – boy or man – in the community.’

The figure of the innocent (or at least naïve) child has often been used by writers to sharpen the perspective from which to view society. Dickens frequently uses children partly for this purpose. Such a figure

is comparable to the holy fool whose innate and incorruptible goodness wins out against all odds. Huck is neither quite innocent nor exactly naïve, neither holy nor a fool, but he finally remains uncorrupted by attempts to turn him into 'a good boy' if that means accepting vicious compromises with a society that degrades everyone while desperately striving to keep up appearances.

From the outset he finds himself in the worst state for a child: that of an orphan – he does have a father, Pap, but he is no more a father to his son than a wolf is a shepherd to a lamb. Huck can only distrust the moral precepts of a society which has failed its primary duty of taking care of its young and guarding them from cruelty and abuse. Life teaches him that he must decide for himself and if that means coming into conflict with the generality of folk, so be it.

Thus it is that he sides, against his better judgement but because of his ultimately unspoiled good nature, with Jim, the runaway slave. He is as uncertain, however, about whether it is right to help him as Pip is about helping Magwitch in Dickens's *Great Expectations*, but whereas Pip is terrified into offering that help, Huck has formed a kind of friendship with the slave and trusts his instincts rather than what his socially-

directed conscience would instruct him to do. Any anti-Negro prejudices instilled in him fall away when he encounters the reality of an individual.

At the end of the book, tired of the way people treat one another, he takes off westwards into the unknown, away from the 'civilised world'.

This all sounds very earnest but earnestness was the last thing on Twain's mind when he was writing these adventures. Indeed, he declares at the beginning that anyone looking for motive, plot or moral will be prosecuted, banished or shot. And so the reader looks forward to entertainment, with which he is duly rewarded. At the same time an undercurrent of social criticism principally concerned with slavery, racism, and the double standards of the so-called civilised world should not escape his perception.

But the history of this book shows that many readers are incapable of seeing what Twain places before them. Or rather, before they *can* see it, they are side-tracked. Nineteenth-century readers regarded it as the duty of an author to offer his community something morally 'improving'. Misguided if well-meaning readers of our own time regard it as their duty to censor the book or ban it from classrooms and libraries because

of its use of the word 'nigger'.

Huckleberry Finn's adventures are 'improving' in that they expand the limits of the open-minded reader's imagination. Alerting us to the hypocrisies of society of the Southern states, Twain focuses on the lowest orders of Mississippi society – i.e. to those normally as ignored in literature as in life. This was the shock for his contemporaries. As for today's zealots of political correctness, if it is not evident that Twain is attacking the twin evils of slavery and racism, then one wonders from what limited perspectives such high-minded authorities examine the text.

T. S. Eliot suggested that Huckleberry Finn could stand alongside such literary creations as Ulysses, Faust, Don Quixote and Hamlet – but Huck is not the only source of pleasure in the novel. There is a gallery of fascinating and fully realised characters, to each of whom Twain painstakingly gives a distinctive spoken voice. These carefully observed accents and idiosyncrasies were also a source of criticism at the time the book was published. Many readers were outraged, so offensively vivid was the language. The Library Committee of Concord, Massachusetts, dismissed the book as 'rough, coarse and inelegant ... more

suited to the slums than to intelligent, respectable people'. It was, in short, the 'veriest trash'.

For *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Twain drew on memories of his boyhood in the small riverside town of Hannibal, a 'picture' of which he said remained in his mind 'as clear and vivid as a photograph'. He wrote nostalgically in *Old Times on the Mississippi* of his days as a pilot on that huge river where he knew a freedom from constraint that eluded him in later life. Huck, too, delights in that same freedom on the raft with Jim but, of course, it is continually under threat – both from evildoers and well-wishers alike.

Some have said that through the character of Huck, Mark Twain is directing his barbed criticisms at a society in which he personally felt stifled and cramped. The agencies of his confinement included his wife and the genteel New England literary circle which held him back from the broader horizons of the frontier. He also expressed regret at having turned himself into the comic mouthpiece of a form of civilisation which by and large he held in contempt.

Before he married Olivia Langdon, he wrote to her: 'but you will break up all my irregularities when we are married and

civilize me, and make of me a model husband and an adornment to society – won't you?' In this we can hear Huck: 'The Widow Douglas she took me for her son, and allowed she would sivilize me.' And again at the end: 'But I reckon I got to light out for the Territory ahead of the rest, because Aunt Sally she's going to adopt me and sivilize me and I can't stand it. I been there before.' But if Twain spoke at times with bitterness, these adventures are in the end unsoured by it.

For Twain the worst aspect of the society he lived in was its suppression of 'natural and healthy instincts'. Its morality was based on negation and denial. In the episode of the Grangerfords and Shepherdsons, two families caught up in a vicious blood feud, the affirmation expressed in the Sunday morning sermon on 'brotherly love, and such-like tiresomeness ... faith, and good works' (Huck's words) is followed that very afternoon by a blood bath. This isn't a mere matter of hypocrisy. So-called 'civilised' people are prey to the very savagery they condemn in Native Americans and 'niggers'. As often as not they project it on to others, failing to observe the commandments which their superior civilisation is supposedly founded on.

Critics have generally agreed that the way the book ends shows a falling off of inspiration or at least an extraordinary change in tone that is at odds with the moral heart of the novel. Others have declared that it seems right that the end should echo the beginning as it does. Whether the majority of readers detect any disappointment is debatable.

Whatever one's view of this issue, the general verdict on the book as a whole is summed up by H. L. Mencken, who in 1931 proclaimed that it was 'one of the greatest masterpieces of the world' and that Mark Twain was 'the true father of our national heritage'. Ernest Hemingway went even further: 'It's the best book we've had. All American writing comes from that. There was nothing before. There has been nothing as good since.'

Notes by Maurice West



Garrick Hagon has appeared in many films including *Batman*, *Star Wars*, *Cry Freedom*, *Anthony and Cleopatra*, and *Fatherland*. His television credits include *A Perfect Spy*, *The Nightmare Years*, *Henry V*, *The Chief* and *Love Hurts*. On London's West End he played Chris Keller in *All My Sons*, and he is a frequent story reader for the BBC. He also reads *The Sea-Wolf*, *The Call of the Wild* and *Classic American Poetry* for Naxos AudioBooks.

Cover picture: *Paddle steamer at Silver Springs, Florida* by unnamed artist
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Mark Twain
**The Adventures
of Huckleberry Finn**

Read by **Garrick Hagon**

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn is the comic masterpiece of Samuel Langhorne Clemens who trained as a river-boat pilot (from which experience he took his pen-name, Mark Twain). His most famous book describes a boy's journey down the Mississippi aboard a raft with the runaway black slave Jim. Their escapades in the Deep South before the American Civil War are a joy in themselves but they also direct a searching light on a society where slavery and prejudice are taken for granted and civilisation is hypocritical and corrupt.



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