

HUCKLEBERRY FINN

Original by Mark Twain
Retold by Pauline Francis

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First published in this edition in 2013

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Printed in Malta by Melita Press

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data (CIP) is available for this title.

ISBN 978 1 78322 077 9

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Introduction

Mark Twain was born in 1835, in the American state of Missouri, which borders the great Mississippi River. His real name was Samuel Langhorne Clemens. When Samuel was only twelve years old, his father died and he left school to earn his living. After travelling around America as a printer and digging for gold, Samuel became a pilot on the steamboats which travelled up and down the Mississippi.

Then Samuel worked as a journalist and he became a famous travel writer. He decided to use the name Mark Twain. This was the call of the steamboat pilots when the depth of the water was two (twain) fathoms!

In 1876, Mark Twain wrote *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. Eight years later, *Huckleberry Finn* was published. This book tells the adventures of Tom's friend, Huck. Huck runs away and travels down the Mississippi River on a raft with a runaway slave called Jim.

Mark Twain became famous all over the world. He died in 1910, at the age of seventy-five.

The story of *Huckleberry Finn* was set at a time (the 1850s) when slaves, were bought and sold in some

American states. Many tried to escape to states where slavery was not allowed. It was a crime to help a runaway slave.

Twain uses some Missouri African-American words in the story, and other words you may not know. These are the ones I have used:

<i>bin</i>	been
<i>'cos</i>	because
<i>dah</i>	there
<i>dat</i>	that
<i>de</i>	the
<i>dey</i>	they
<i>doan</i>	don't
<i>en</i>	and
<i>git</i>	get
<i>(h)ain't</i>	hasn't/ haven't
<i>injun</i>	Indian
<i>kin</i>	can
<i>mars</i>	master
<i>ole</i>	old
<i>pap</i>	father
<i>run</i>	travel, sail
<i>skiff</i>	a small, light boat
<i>warn't</i>	wasn't
<i>wuz</i>	was

Some of the characters in the book also use double negatives! So ‘*I hain’t done nuffin*’ means ‘I haven’t done anything’ and ‘*I hain’t got no money*’ means ‘I haven’t got any money’.

“Huckleberry Finn, son of the town drunkard, was hated and dreaded by all the mothers because he was idle, lawless, vulgar and bad – and because all the children wished they dared be like him.”

The Adventures of Tom Sawyer