Name:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

American Studies English

***Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*: Topics Essay**

As we have been reading *Huck Finn*, we have discussed many elements of the text. For example, we have analyzed irony and satire as a means of conveying social criticism, Huck’s characterization, and the individual’s relationship with larger society.

Your task:

1. Evaluate the attached topics tracking sheet.
2. Highlight the topics that we have covered so far in class.
3. Choose a topic that interests you and you will feel confident writing about.
4. Use the topic to develop an MI or argument about the text that you will prove through this essay.
5. Create an idea tree (MI, DIs, DDs) that outlines how you will support your argument.

Because you have so much freedom with the essay, here are some templates you may use to craft your MI:

In Mark Twain’s novel *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn,* Twain presents the character of Huck as a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ through Huck’s \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

In Mark Twain’s novel *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn,* Twain uses \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to criticize \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

In Mark Twain’s novel *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn,* Twain creates a dynamic character through \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ who acts as both a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to Huck.

Use the space on the back of this sheet to map out your idea tree.

**Idea Tree**

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| --- |
|  |

**Topics to Track**

**While Reading *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* – Pay Attention To/Make Notation Of…**

• The novel as a bildungsroman (“novel of education” or coming of age)

• The novel’s “picaresque “quality (the journey – a series of adventures)

• The symbolism of the raft and the river motif. Pay attention to Huck & Jim’s experiences on the river and those when they leave the raft and go ashore. What might the river symbolize? What does the river mean to Huck & Jim?

• “sivilize” — The idea of being civilized: What does it mean? Who is/isn’t civilized in Huck’s view?

• A comparison and a contrast of Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer, esp. Tom’s treatment of Jim vs. Huck’s treatment of Jim throughout the book.

• The evolution of Huck & Jim’s relationship — What is the nature of it at first? In the middle? At the end?

• Jim’s nobility of character; Jim as a father figure

• Huck Finn as a “noble savage” – Huck’s appreciation of nature – Huck’s compassion and humanity – Huck’s changes of identity – Huck’s practical morality – Huck’s gullibility, literal-mindedness, and innocence – Huck’s sense of right and wrong, what is a sin, how he solves moral dilemmas. Pay attention to Huck’s conscience talking to him.

• All the people Huck & Jim meet — What is the quality of their character?

• Superstition — Why are people superstitious?

• Lies and the truth

• Loneliness and isolation

• The individual’s relationship with larger society (conforming to or rejecting society)

• Appearance vs. reality — Notice when Huck finds people acting in ways that seem different than how their appearances might suggest they would act.

**Twain’s social criticism and satire in the novel:**

• Mob mentality

• Religion — Who is a “true Christian”? How is religion applied? Misapplied?

• Family feuds

• The gullibility of society

• The value of human life

• Romanticism and sentimental poetry

• Hypocrisy

• The cruelty of society

• Violence — Who commits acts of violence? What is the reason for it? Why might it confuse Huck?

**To develop your understanding of these topics and to begin developing your DIs and textual evidence, copy down these key notes:**

**Topics to Track**

**While Reading *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* – Pay Attention To/Make Notation Of…**

• The novel as a bildungsroman (“novel of education” or coming of age)

* Huck has been exposed to people from varying walks of life and learns “lessons” from each of them: Pap, Grangerfords, Jim, Duke, and the King.

• The novel’s “picaresque “quality (the journey – a series of adventures)

• The symbolism of the raft and the river motif. Pay attention to Huck & Jim’s experiences on the river and those when they leave the raft and go ashore. What might the river symbolize? What does the river mean to Huck & Jim?

* The river is a safe haven for Huck and Jim: Huck flees Pap, Jim flees enslavement.
* However, it is also a vehicle for Huck’s maturation process (it takes him to the Grangerfords, setting for fog episode). If he didn’t travel down the river, he wouldn’t learn these valuable life lessons!

• “sivilize” — The idea of being civilized: What does it mean? Who is/isn’t civilized in Huck’s view?

• A comparison and a contrast of Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer, esp. Tom’s treatment of Jim vs. Huck’s treatment of Jim throughout the book.

• The evolution of Huck & Jim’s relationship — What is the nature of it at first? In the middle? At the end?

• Jim’s nobility of character; Jim as a father figure/teacher

* Jim acts as a father to Huck by caring for him (dinner, rowing) and protecting him (from dead body in floating house)
* He acts as a teacher to him by teaching him to value the emotions of people regardless of their race (fog episode, when he talks about his daughter).

• Huck Finn as a “noble savage” – Huck’s appreciation of nature – Huck’s compassion and humanity – Huck’s changes of identity – Huck’s practical morality – Huck’s gullibility, literal-mindedness, and innocence – Huck’s sense of right and wrong, what is a sin, how he solves moral dilemmas. Pay attention to Huck’s conscience talking to him.

* Huck is rough around the edges, but he is really very sensitive.
* Huck appreciates nature and values the freedom it allows (after sneaking out of the widow’s and escaping the Grangerfords)
* Huck’s compassion and humanity is developing. He is upset when Buck dies and he experiences guilt in the fog episode.

• All the people Huck & Jim meet — What is the quality of their character?

• Superstition — Why are people superstitious?

• Lies and the truth

• Loneliness and isolation

• The individual’s relationship with larger society (conforming to or rejecting society)

• Appearance vs. reality — Notice when Huck finds people acting in ways that seem different than how their appearances might suggest they would act.

**Twain’s social criticism and satire in the novel:**

• Mob mentality

* Sherburn/Boggs episode: the “borrowed” courage of the townspeople when they try to lynch Sherburn
* The Royal Nonesuch/retributive justice

• Religion — Who is a “true Christian”? How is religion applied? Misapplied?

* “Religious Revival”: superficial and showy representation of religion
* Grangerfords: “brotherly love”

• Family feuds

* Grangerfords/Shepardsons

• The gullibility of society

* The judge who wanted to reform pap
* The people at the religious revival who believed the king was a reformed pirate
* Mary Jane / The Wilks Family

• The value of human life

* Buck
* Jim (objectification by duke and king)

• Romanticism and sentimental poetry

* Emmeline, *The Walter Scott*

• Hypocrisy

* Grangerfords
* Ms. Watson and her snuff
* Religious/slaveholding society

• The cruelty of society

* Feud
* Pap
* Robbers on steamboat
* Duke and king

• Violence — Who commits acts of violence? What is the reason for it? Why might it confuse Huck?

Ideas for Intro:

* Context of novel-when was it published, what is the basic premise?