

# The Wickedness of Huck Finn

Huckleberry Finn, an eighteenth-century thirteen-year-old American boy, is a fictional character created by Mark Twain. Although he has a father, a vagrant drunkard who beats him, he is without a real home and lives off the good will of others. They think he is "wicked" and since he is easily influenced by others, he shares their opinion.

After running away, he meets Jim, a fugitive slave, and joins him on the run rafting down the Mississippi River. Believing in hell and its everlasting torments, he fears not turning Jim in to authorities. He eventually writes a letter betraying him so he can be "reformed."

From chapter 13 of  
*The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884)

*I felt good and all washed clean of sin for the first time I had ever felt so in my life, and I knowed I could pray now. But I didn't do it straight off, but laid the paper down and set there thinking—thinking how good it was all this happened so, and how near I come to being lost and going to hell. And went on thinking. And got to thinking over our trip down the river; and I see Jim before me, all the time; in the day, and in the night-time, sometimes moonlight, sometimes storms, and we a floating along, talking, and singing, and laughing. But somehow I couldn't seem to strike no places to harden me against him, but only the other kind. I'd see him standing my watch on top of his'n, stead of calling me,*

*so I could go on sleeping; and see him how glad he was when I come back out of the fog; and when I come to him again in the swamp, up there where the feud was; and such-like times; and would always call me honey; and pet me, and do everything he could think of for me, and how good he always was; and at last I struck the time I saved him by telling the men we had small pox aboard, and he was so grateful, and said I was the best friend old Jim ever had in the world, and the only one he's got now; and then I happened to look around, and see that paper.*

*It was a close place. I took it up, and held it in my hand. I was a trembling, because I got to decide, forever, betwixt two things, and I knowed it. I studied a minute, sort of holding my breath, and then says to myself: "All right, then, I'll go to hell"—and tore it up.*

*It was awful thoughts, and awful words, but they was said. And I let them stay said; and never thought no more about reforming. I shoved the whole thing out of my head; and said I would take up wickedness again, which was in my line, being brung up to it, and the other warn't. And for a starter, I would go to work and steal Jim out of slavery again; and if I could think up anything worse, I would do that, too; because as long as I was in, and in for good, I might as well go the whole hog.*

Readers generally consider "Huck" as one of the most remarkable characters in American fiction.