



The Mark Twain
House & Museum



LESSON:
Teaching Adventures of Huckleberry Finn





Goal: Students will recognize satire as a literary form.

Material:

“A Modest Proposal” by Jonathan Swift
Adventures of Huckleberry Finn
Paper and pen/pencil for students

Procedure:

1. Ask students to read selected paragraphs of “A Modest Proposal” and answer the following questions:
 - Is Swift really in favor of eating babies?
 - Can you tell he is upset? If so, how?
 - What solution to famine would you prefer?
2. How is satire different from a regular suggestion that should get you working to change something?
3. Look at Tom’s treatment of Jim at the end of “Huck Finn”. Could this be satire?
4. Hold a group discussion on the use of satire to project an author’s values.

Follow Up: Read and discuss Mark Twain’s “Disgraceful Persecution of a Boy” and/or “To the Person in Darkness.”

Editor’s Notes:

This is a pre-reading exercise on how satire works. Jonathan Swift’s “A Modest Proposal” to solve the Irish famine is a harsh satire proposing to eat babies and sell their skin commercially. Students sometimes ask if this guy “was for real?” No, he was not; he was extraordinarily angry at the situation. In fact, Swift went insane because he could not stand man’s inhumanity to man.



Goals:

1. Students learn how authors use satire to contrast immoral and moral actions and ideas.
2. Jim's dignity is established for students.

Materials:

Adventures of Huckleberry Finn
Paper pen/pencils for students

Procedure:

1. Working in small groups, have students compare the actions and attitudes of the duke and dauphin at the beginning of chapter 23 with the actions of Jim at the end of the chapter.
 - Who is degraded and who climbs higher in our regard by their actions?
 - Who has an ugly, corrupt, and cynical view of humanity?
 - Who can feel remorse over bad actions and report them – the duke and dauphin, the townspeople, or Jim?
2. As a class, discuss the student's conclusions.

Follow up:

To take this activity further asks students to work in small groups and present to the class (dramatize) two or three scenes from the book.

- Royal Nonesuch
- Townspeople's response, and/or
- Jim's story to his daughter