

# Huckleberry Finn and Child Abuse

3-4 Weeks

English: High School

## DESIRED RESULTS

What are the “big ideas” that drive this lesson?

- ❖ Mark Twain’s *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (AHF)*, although written over 100 years ago, has transcendent meaning for the 21<sup>st</sup> century because of its very realistic portrayal of child abuse and neglect.

What are the “essential questions” that students must answer in order to understand the “big ideas?”

- ❖ What is child abuse?
- ❖ How does Mark Twain portray child abuse in *AHF*?
- ❖ How has child abuse, as described by Mark Twain, changed from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to today?
- ❖ How can you, as a student, help in changing today’s issues?

## CORE UNDERSTANDINGS

Identify what students will know and/or be able to do.

- ❖ Student will analyze how the tensions among characters in *AHF* reflect the issue of child abuse during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.
- ❖ Students will be able connect issues presented in Twain and others’ work to issues presented in today’s society.

## LIST SUGGESTED ASSESSMENT(S)

- ❖ Participation in classroom discussion
- ❖ Participation in classroom activities and the reading worksheet
- ❖ Students' final essay

## LEARNING EXPERIENCES

What are the specific activities and sequence of instruction that will be used to engage students in this lesson?

1. Teacher will initially ask the class some probing questions about child abuse:
  - What is child abuse or neglect?
  - What are some causes or contributing factors to child abuse?
  - When is child punishment an act of abuse?
  - What do you believe is the prevalence of abuse in the country and in our community?
2. Teacher will then present the Healthline article depicting the prevalence of child abuse treatment in the U.S. on projection unit with data.
3. Students will respond to the data in class discussion.
4. Students will read the story of Mary Ellen in class, followed by the teacher asking these probing questions:
  - Does child abuse still occur today?
  - How child abuse changed over time?
  - Who is responsible for the welfare of children?
  - What resources to remediate child abuse are currently available?
5. Teacher should next explain to students where the events from the story and the information from the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children fit on the timeline for Mark Twain's writing of *AHF*.

6. Students will then read *AHF* while using the attached guide to record instances of abuse and the reactions of the characters as they are encountered in the book.
7. Daily class discussions on readings from *AHF* will focus on what students found as indications of abuse in the text.
8. On the final day of discussion on *AHF*, students will also read and discuss Toni Morrison's response followed by a reading and discussion of the United Way survey.
9. Follow this (possibly as homework) with a reading of "Letter from the Recording Angel," discussing the subtleties of the article and the issue of personal responsibility.
10. Students will then write an essay on whether or not they believe child abuse and neglect has changed since the writing of Twain's novel supported by current data. Rubric attached.

#### "COMMON CORE" CONNECTIONS:

- ❖ [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.6](#) Analyze a case in which grasping a point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement).
- ❖ [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.1](#) Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.
- ❖ [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.2](#) Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.
- ❖ [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.3](#) Analyze a complex set of ideas or sequence of events and explain how specific individuals, ideas, or events interact and develop over the course of the text.

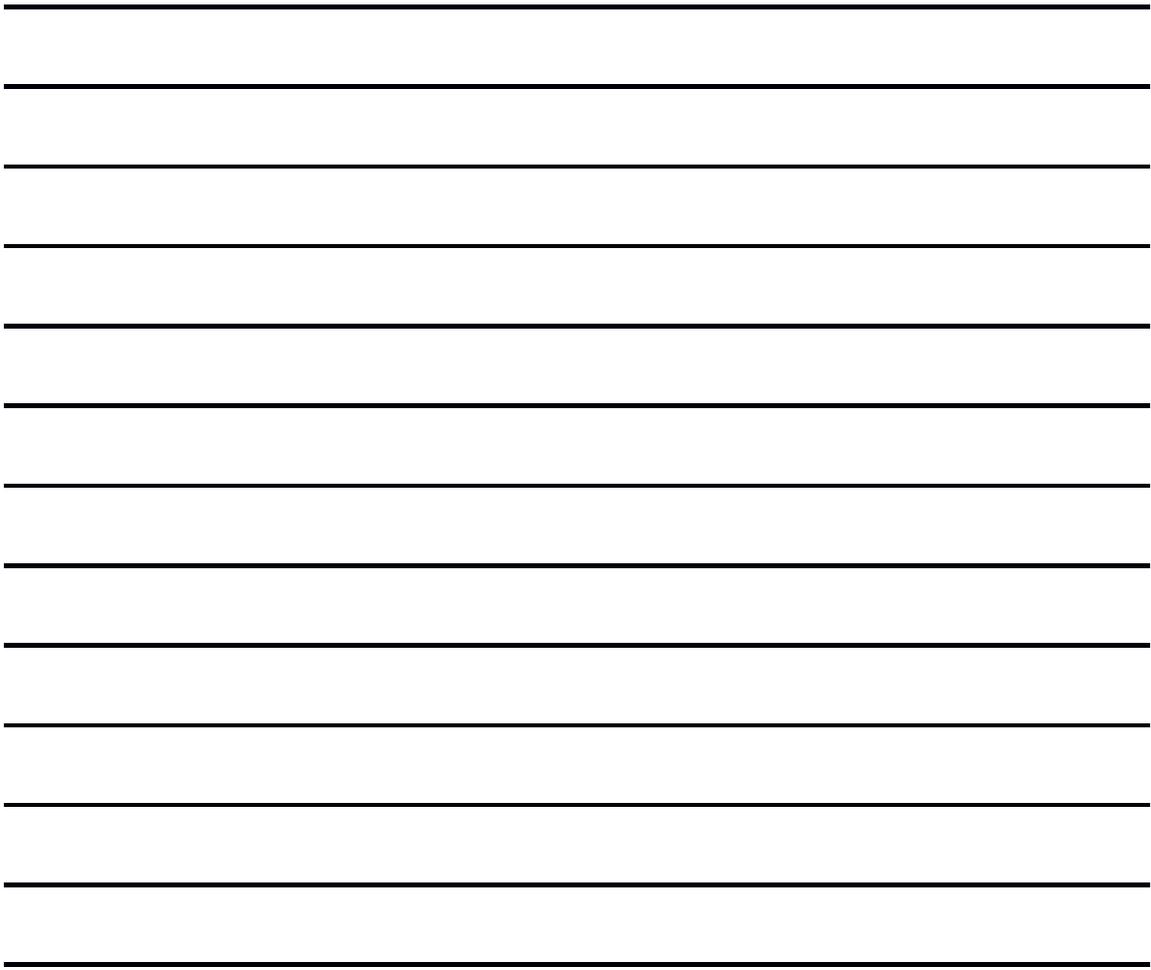
## MATERIALS AND ATTACHMENTS

- ❖ Healthline: Child Abuse. 2002. Obtained from the Worldwide Web on 7/10/07 at: [http://www.healthline.com/galeimage?\\_contentId=gech\\_0001\\_0001\\_0\\_00124&id=gech\\_0001\\_0001\\_0\\_img0058](http://www.healthline.com/galeimage?_contentId=gech_0001_0001_0_00124&id=gech_0001_0001_0_img0058)
- ❖ Hirst, Robert H. (24 July 2007). Mark Twain and Racisim: Evidence from the MS of *Huckleberry Finn*, and other documents.
- ❖ Michigan: Child Welfare & Protective Services (2007) obtained from the World Wide Web on 7/10/07 at: <http://www.childwelfare.com/michigan.htm>
- ❖ Morrison, Toni. "Introduction" to *Adventures of Huckelberry Finn* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).
- ❖ Timeline of Samuel Clemens' life, publications and current events intertwined.
- ❖ Twain, Mark. "Letter from the Recording Angel." January 1887
- ❖ Twain, Mark. *Great Novels of Mark Twain: Tom Sawyer & Huckleberry Finn* (UK: Paragon, 1899).
- ❖ "United Way of the Mark Twain Area Needs Assessment Survey" (2005)
- ❖ Wheeler, E. (1874)"The Story of Mary Ellen: The Beginnings of a Worldwide Child-Saving Crusade." American Humane Association. Albany, New York.
- ❖ Corresponding reading handout
- ❖ Essay Rubric

## SUGGESTED LESSON EXTENSIONS TO ENHANCE STUDENT LEARNING

- ❖ Students can continue their ideas with action through a student led initiative to raise funds or materials for local child abuse prevention agencies or other related causes in the area. In doing this, the students will be able to put their own ideas into action while helping others, giving them real world experience in relation to their learning.





**Essay Rubric**  
**Mark Twain, Child Abuse & Neglect, Today**

Criteria	Value Range
Writing must be at least 750 words APA format.	0-25
Writing must reference at least two quotations from the novel and explain their significance in supporting your ideas.	0-30
Writing must contain one original quotation by Twain not in the novel.	0-15
Writing must reference two data driven or personal stories of current child abuse/neglect.	0-30
Writing must contain effective transitions and support with appropriate essay structure and usage.	0-25