**University Mohamed Khider Biskra-Algeria**

**Faculty of Letters and Languages**

**Department of Letters and Foreign Languages**

**Section of English**

**Level : L3 Course : Literatry Texts**

**Semester : 2**

**Lectures : I- American Realism and Naturalism**

**II- Analysis of Mark Twain’s Huck Finn**

1. **A- American Realism :**
2. **Background :** American Realism emerged as a response to the new conditions of American people that characterized the late nineteenth century. After the Civil War America entered the Realistic period. This period attempts to resist the romanticizing of life and depicts it as it is instead through describing what is called “common place” and the ordinary.It tries also to cope up with the rapidly changing American society due to industrialization, urbanization and immigration.
3. **Definition:**Realism means the depiction of life as it is using a simple direct language. Regionalism and Local Color are considered as sub-genres of realism.American realists tend to get distanced from what is called journalistic style. They tend to write about the common reality of Americans.
4. **Characteristics of American Realism:**

-Depicts reality in details and its topics are driven from real life experiences.

-It focuses on characters more than the other elements like the plot; with the common topic of ethical choice that their main characters face.

-Characters are related to nature, past, class, and each other.

-It depicts class and focuses on middle class.

- Diction is simple, vernacular, natural.The depiction of Common Place.

-The tone can be sometimes satirical or comic.

1. **Notable authors:**

* Mark Twain is considered as the pioneer of American realism and the founder of Local color writing.
* William Dean Howells (The Rise of Silas Laphalm)

1. **American Naturalism:**
2. **Overview:**The period between 1900 and 1914 noticed the emergence of Naturalistic Period. Naturalism is said to depict life more accurately than Realism.Naturalist writers tended to build up their characters on the basis that human beings behave according to heredity and environment (high-order animals), a notion brought about by Darwinism. These writings use scientific subjectivity in the treatment of their topics. They depict life in a tragic, straightforward way. Stephen Crane (The Red Badge of Courage), Jack London (The Call of the Wild), and Theodore Dreiser (Sister Carrie) are well known American Naturalists. Naturalist writers are those writers who follow what is called the post-Darwinism ideasthat explore the relation between human beings and nature like natural law and the theory of evolution.Naturalism is referred to as an intensified form of Realism.

Naturalists proclaim that humans cannot control their fate;external and internal forces control them under the notion of determinism.

**2- Characteristics of Naturalism:**

-It depicts the subject matter objectively copying the steps of a scientific investigation.

- It finds logical explanation to anything far from supernatural explorations.

- It draws heavily on scientific theories especially Darwinism.

-Nature can be ambivalent or hostile to humans.

- Humans (like animals) yield to natural laws.

- Humans are products of their environment and of heredity; they are also driven by their instincts like animals.

-Nihilism (life has no objective, it is pointless; reality does not exist), determinism, fatalism and luck of free will.

- Nature dominates characters and themes.

**C- Naturalism VS Realism:**

Naturalism is often seen as the offspring of Realism, or Realism at its exaggerated form. Nevertheless, there are some differences between the two:

* Realistic writers depict events as they are in reality while Naturalists use determinism to describe characters’ lives and events.
* Naturalists use scientific techniques to state that humans are objective with pessimistic philosophy while Realists use merely literary techniques.
* Realists describe characters as reacting to specific situations which they respond to while Naturalists postulate that nature dictates the behaviors and decisions of characters.

1. **An Analysis of *Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain**

**A brief biography of Mark Twain:**

Mark Twain, or Samuel Langhorne Clemens, was born in 1835 in Florida , Hannibal, the supposed setting of his works*The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer.* Frontier life and Southern tradition are what characterizes his hometown.He is famous fordepictingthe narrator as child. Despite the fact that his books were banned at first, he was considered the greatest American humorist of his age and William Faulkner called him “the Father of American Literature”. He died on April 21, 1910.

**About the Book**

*The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* was published in the United Kingdom in December 1884 and in the United States in February 1885as a sequel to *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. It was one of the first American novels written in vernacular English. It faced harsh criticism for its informal language and was banned because they thought it was inappropriately humorous and silly. Still, the book is seen as a classic.

**SUMMARY**

Huck, the novel’s narrator, has been living with the Widow Douglas and her sister, Miss Watson, in the town of St. Petersburg. They have been trying to “sivilize” him with proper dress, manners, and religious piety. He finds this life constraining and false and would rather live free and wild. When his father hears that Huck has come into a large amount of money, he kidnaps him and locks him in an old cabin across the river. To avoid his father’s cruel beatings, Huck elaborately stages his own death and then escapes to Jackson’s Island. He finds Jim, Miss Watson’s runaway slave, on the island, and the two decide to hide out together. To avoid danger of discovery, they decide to float down the river on a raft they had found earlier. Sleeping during the day and traveling at night, they plan to connect with the Ohio River at Cairo, Illinois, which would lead them north into the free states, where slavery is outlawed. They miss Cairo in the fog one night and find themselves floating deeper into slave territory. While they are searching for a canoe, a steamship hits the raft and damages it. Huck and Jim are separated.

Huck swims ashore where he meets the feuding Grangerfords and Shepherdsons. He claims to be George Jackson, a passenger who fell from a steamboat and swam to shore. After witnessing a violent eruption of the feud in which many people are killed, he finds Jim, and they return to the raft.

They continue down the river. Two conmen, calling themselves a king and a duke, find their way to the raft. In one of the towns the king and the duke impersonate the two brothers of Peter Wilks, who has just died and left a small fortune. Huck thwarts their plan to swindle Wilks’ family out of their inheritance. The king and the duke escape, but further down the river the two decide to sell Jim to Silas Phelps, who turns out to be Tom Sawyer’s uncle.

Visiting his aunt and uncle, Tom persuades Huck to join him in an elaborate, ridiculous plan to free Jim. Huck prefers a quicker escape for Jim but caves in to Tom’s wishes. Only after Tom’s plan has been played out, and Jim recaptured, does Tom reveal that Miss Watson had actually freed Jim two months earlier, just before she died. Huck decides to “light out for the Territory,” to head west toward the frontier before anyone can attempt to “sivilize” him again.

**ANALYSIS**

1. **THEMES**
2. **Slavery and Racism**

The novel was written after the abolition of slavery, but is set before the Civil War. Therefore, slavery and racism are highlighted together with the depth and deep effects of slavery on American society. Jim is treated like a commodity and is “sold” and “bought” now and then. Even though Huck is a child, he refers to him as “Miss Watson’s nigger”. Jim takes Huck as his superior, merely because he is White. Huck also uses racial stereotypes in the beginning, but as he befriends Jim, he starts to feel that he, too, is “white inside”. Despite the fact that Jim is wiser, he and his views are subdued because of his race in front of a child. Huck, who is a product of such a society, also puts him in danger every now and then. This is enrooted so deeply that he feels reluctant to apologize to or free him.

1. **Education**

In the beginning, the narrator tells us that widow Douglas tried to civilize Huck and made him read. He does not like it, but does get to learn.Huck is not able to get any significant formal education but he grows up into a wiser, more broad-minded human being who sees through the hypocrisy of the society and breaks away from them to create a better place for a slave like Jim. Huck is very different from his friend Tom Sawyer, who gets excited about absurd things, like getting shot, and who always follows what his books say. His decisions always reflective of what the widow taught him. He learns how to help others and how to forgive. Twain also tries to challenge the idea of education by depicting how a child as uneducated and rustic as Huck can manage to keep his senses alive even in horrible circumstances.

1. **Freedom**

Huck is “forcefully civilized” by the widow and has to go out to get away from the decent and clean house. He takes more joy in joining Tom Sawyer’s gang of robbers. Hucknever quite finds the freedom he seeks. There is always the world of adults which comes around in his way; he is always surrounded by violence – murder, conmen…He also faces obstacles in paving way for his friend Jim’s freedom, laid down by adults. While Huck finds himself trapped in the web of evil and crimes, Alice is not even able to escape into a real world free of adults.

1. **Adventure**

Ironically given the book’s title, the theme of “adventure” in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* tends to conjure a sense of immaturity and childish make-believe. The book begins by pointing backward to its prequel, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, and the boyish exploits that resulted in Tom and Huck striking it rich. Chapter 2 continues this type of adventure, with Tom and his “Gang” of highwaymen. This spirit of adventure as play follows Huck beyond St. Petersburg. But the real-life situations Huck and Jim find themselves in frequently demonstrate that adventure is not what Tom and his games have made it out to be. By the end of the book, when Tom returns and tries to enforce an overly complicated and “romantical” plan for Jim’s escape, the very foundations of adventure have come to strike Huck as childish and unrealistic. Even so, Huck retains some lust for adventure, which he demonstrates when he declares his intent to leave Pikesville and “light out for the Territory.”

1. **Money/wealth**

Money does nothing but cause problems in this book. Huck complains that ever since he came into a significant sum of money at the end of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, he has had to suffer attempts to “sivilize” and educate him. Further money-related problems arise following the initial appearance of the duke and the dauphin, who swindle common townsfolk out of their money. Their scams cause anxiety for Huck and wreak havoc in all of the small towns they visit. The only time money seems like it might have a redemptive power is at the end of the novel, when Tom gives Jim forty dollars to pay his way back north. For Jim, money holds the promise of liberation. But given the many problems money has brought throughout the book, it seems unlikely that money alone will guarantee Jim his freedom.

1. **Character List**

**Huckleberry “Huck” Finn** -  The protagonist and narrator of the novel. Huck is the thirteen-year-old son of the local drunk of St. Petersburg, Missouri, a town on the Mississippi River. Frequently forced to survive on his own wits and always a bit of an outcast, Huck is thoughtful, intelligent (though formally uneducated), and willing to come to his own conclusions about important matters, even if these conclusions contradict society’s norms. Nevertheless, Huck is still a boy, and is influenced by others, particularly by his imaginative friend, Tom.

**Tom Sawyer** -  Huck’s friend, and the protagonist of *Tom Sawyer,* the novel to which *Huckleberry Finn* is the sequel. In *Huckleberry Finn,*Tom serves as a foil to Huck: imaginative, dominating, and given to wild plans taken from the plots of adventure novels, Tom is everything that Huck is not. Tom’s stubborn reliance on the “authorities” of romance novels leads him to acts of incredible stupidity and startling cruelty. His rigid adherence to society’s conventions aligns Tom with the “sivilizing” forces that Huck learns to see through and gradually abandons.

**Widow Douglas And Miss Watson** -  Two wealthy sisters who live together in a large house in St. Petersburg and who adopt Huck. The severe Miss Watson is the most prominent representative of the hypocritical religious and ethical values Twain criticizes in the novel. The Widow Douglas is somewhat gentler in her beliefs and has more patience with the mischievous Huck. When Huck acts in a manner contrary to societal expectations, it is the Widow Douglas whom he fears disappointing.

**Jim** -  One of Miss Watson’s household slaves. Jim is superstitious and occasionally sentimental, but he is also intelligent, practical, and ultimately more of an adult than anyone else in the novel. Jim’s frequent acts of selflessness, his longing for his family, and his friendship with both Huck and Tom demonstrate to Huck that humanity has nothing to do with race. Because Jim is a black man and a runaway slave, he is at the mercy of almost all the other characters in the novel and is often forced into ridiculous and degrading situations.

**Pap** -  Huck’s father, the town drunk and ne’er-do-well. Pap is a wreck when he appears at the beginning of the novel, with disgusting, ghostlike white skin and tattered clothes. The illiterate Pap disapproves of Huck’s education and beats him frequently. Pap represents both the general debasement of white society and the failure of family structures in the novel.

**The Duke And The Dauphin** - A pair of con men whom Huck and Jim rescue as they are being run out of a river town. The older man, who appears to be about seventy, claims to be the “dauphin,” the son of King Louis XVI and heir to the French throne. The younger man, who is about thirty, claims to be the usurped Duke of Bridgewater. Although Huck quickly realizes the men are frauds, he and Jim remain at their mercy, as Huck is only a child and Jim is a runaway slave. The duke and the dauphin carry out a number of increasingly disturbing scams as they travel down the river on the raft.

**Judge Thatcher** - The local judge who shares responsibility for Huck with the Widow Douglas and is in charge of safeguarding the money that Huck and Tom found at the end of *Tom Sawyer.* He has a daughter, Becky, who was Tom’s girlfriend in *Tom Sawyer*and whom Huck calls “Bessie” in this novel.

1. **Setting**

*The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* takes place before the [Civil War](https://www.sparknotes.com/history/american/civilwar/) in the American South. The book starts in the fictional small town of St. Petersburg, Missouri, which Twain based on his hometown, Hannibal, Missouri. After meeting up on Jackson’s Island, Huck and Jim set off along the Mississippi River and pass through Illinois, Kentucky, and Arkansas. The book ends in the fictional town of Pikesville, which is probably located in southeastern Arkansas, near where that state borders Mississippi and Louisiana.

1. **Motifs**

**Childhood**

Huck’s youth is an important factor in his moral education over the course of the novel, for we sense that only a child is open-minded enough to undergo the kind of development that Huck does. Since Huck and Tom are young, their age lends a sense of play to their actions, which excuses them in certain ways and also deepens the novel’s commentary on slavery and society. Ironically, Huck often knows better than the adults around him, even though he has lacked the guidance that a proper family and community should have offered him. Twain also frequently draws links between Huck’s youth and Jim’s status as a black man: both are vulnerable, yet Huck, because he is white, has power over Jim. The novel itself feels light in tone.

**Superstitions and Folk Beliefs**

From the time Huck meets him on Jackson’s Island until the end of the novel, Jim spouts a wide range of superstitions and folktales. Whereas Jim initially appears foolish to believe in these kinds of signs and omens, it turns out, curiously, that many of his beliefs do indeed have some basis in reality or presage events to come. Much as we do, Huck at first dismisses most of Jim’s superstitions as silly, but ultimately he comes to appreciate Jim’s deep knowledge of the world. In this sense, Jim’s superstition serves as an alternative to accepted social teachings and assumptions and provides a reminder that mainstream conventions are not always right.

1. **Symbols**

**The Mississippi River**

For Huck and Jim, the Mississippi River is the ultimate symbol of freedom. Alone on their raft, they do not have to answer to anyone. The river carries them toward freedom: for Jim, toward the free states; for Huck, away from his abusive father and the restrictive “sivilizing” of St. Petersburg. Much like the river itself, Huck and Jim are in flux, willing to change their attitudes about each other with little prompting. Despite their freedom, however, they soon find that they are not completely free from the evils and influences of the towns on the river’s banks. Even early on, the real world intrudes on the paradise of the raft: the river floods, bringing Huck and Jim into contact with criminals, wrecks, and stolen goods. Then, a thick fog causes them to miss the mouth of the Ohio River, which was to be their route to freedom.

As the novel progresses, then, the river becomes something other than the inherently benevolent place Huck originally thought it was. As Huck and Jim move further south, the duke and the dauphin invade the raft, and Huck and Jim must spend more time ashore. As Huck and Jim’s journey progresses, the river, which once seemed a paradise and a source of freedom, becomes merely a short-term means of escape that nonetheless pushes Huck and Jim ever further toward danger and destruction.

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