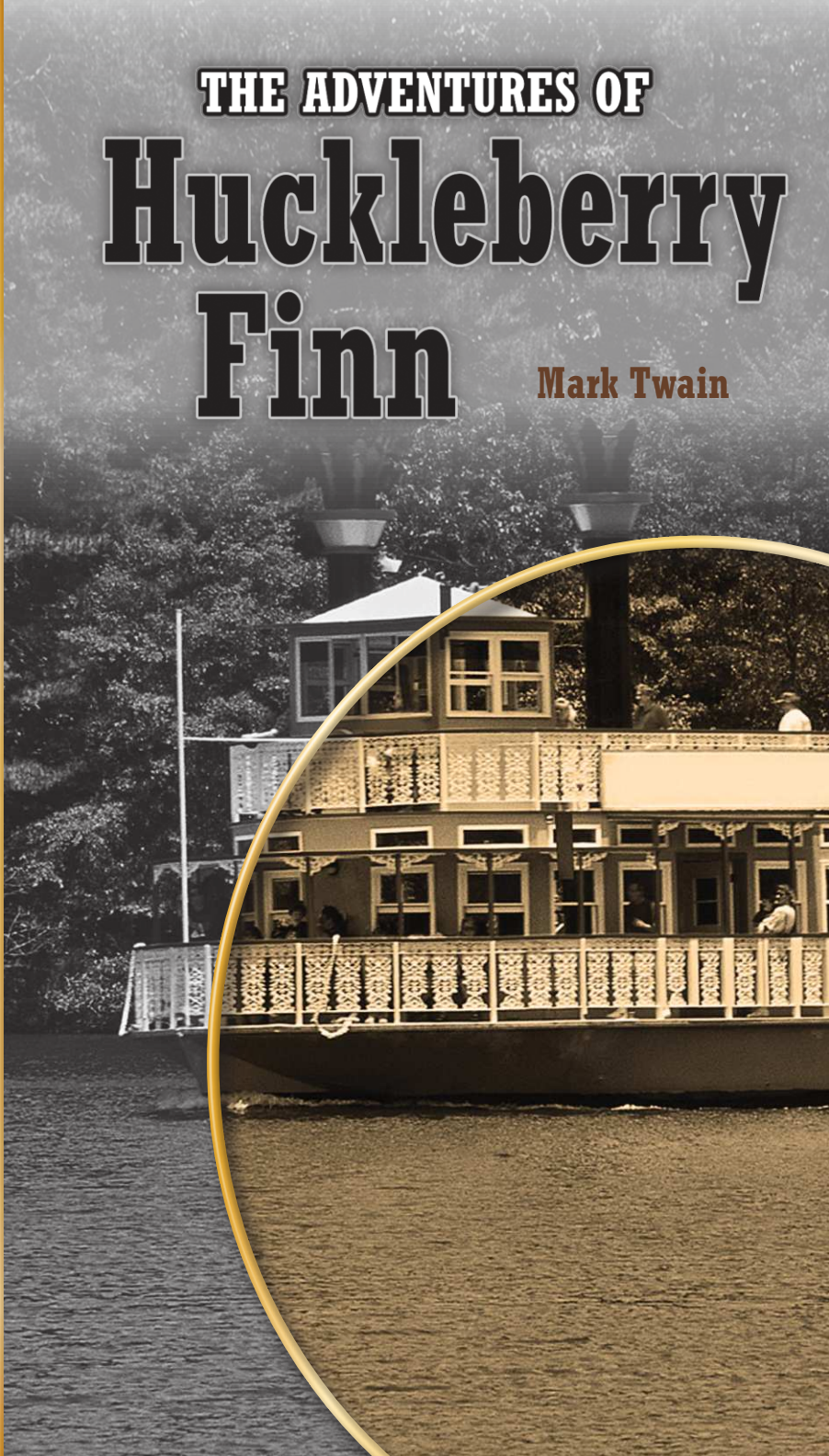
THE ADVENTURES OF Huckleberry Finn

Mark Twain



TIMELESS CLASSICS

Contents

1	I Join the Robber Gang	5
2	I Fool Pap and Get Away	11
3	Me and Jim Run Off	17
4	The Snakeskin Does Its Work	25
5	The Grangerfords Take Me In	33
6	The Duke and the King	41
7	I Trick the Rapscallions	47
8	I Have a New Name	55
9	Trying to Help Jim	63
10	Why They Don't Hang Jim	71
11	Nothing More to Write	79
	Activities	83

1

I Join the Robber Gang

I'm Huck Finn. You don't know about me unless you read *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. That book was made by Mr. Mark Twain. He told the truth, mainly. Well, there might have been a few things he stretched. But that's O.K. Seems like everybody stretches the truth sometime—except maybe Tom's Aunt Polly or the Widow Douglas. They're in the book, too.

Now, that book about Tom Sawyer ended just when Tom and me got rich. We found some robbers' gold hidden in a cave. We got $6,000 each! Judge Thatcher, he kept the money for us. He gives it out to us a dollar a day, all year round. Why, that's more money than a fellow knows what to do with!

After that, the Widow Douglas took me in to live with her. Her sister, Miss Watson, lives there, too. They're both bent on civilizing me—giving me manners and religion and such. I ran away once. But Tom Sawyer hunted me up. He said I could be in his robber band—but only if I went back to the widow's.

The widow read to me from the Bible. She meant well, but those stories are about dead people. Truth is, I don't much care about dead people. Miss Watson was even worse. "Don't put your feet up there, Huckleberry Finn!" she'd say. She'd frown at me over her goggles, and sometimes she'd call me wicked. It all made me tired.

One night after Miss Watson had been pecking at me, I went up to my room. I sat there so lonesome I almost wished I was dead. Then a spider crawled up my arm, so I flipped it off. It landed in a candle and burned up! I don't need to tell you, that was an awful sign. It was bound to bring me bad luck.

I sat there shivering, thinking about the bad luck that was coming. Then I heard a sound from out in the trees.

"Me-yow! Me-yow!"

I recognized Tom's call right away. So I scrambled out the window and slid to the ground. Sure enough, there was Tom Sawyer waiting for me.

Tom and me headed out of the garden. As we passed the kitchen, I tripped over a tree root. We dropped and laid still. Miss Watson's enslaved person Jim was sitting in the kitchen doorway. He got up and stretched his big bones. Then he calls out, "Who there? I hears something! Huh! I'm just gonna sit right down 'til I hears it again." We stayed quiet until Jim began to snore.

Then Tom went into the kitchen to get us some candles. He left five cents on the table for pay. I wanted to sneak off right away, but not Tom! He had to play a trick on Jim first. He slipped Jim's hat off and hung it up in a tree.

When Jim woke up in the morning, he told everyone that some witches had come in the night. "They set me under the trees and hung my hat on a limb. Look! They left me this five-cent piece!" The other enslaved people laughed some at Jim's story. But they wouldn't touch that five-cent piece. They thought the devil had put

his hands on it.

Well, anyway, me and Tom went on our way that night. We met up with some of the boys and took an old boat down the river a mile or two. First Tom made everybody swear to keep a secret. Then he showed us a cave in the hill. We lit candles and crawled in.

"Now, we'll start this band of robbers," Tom says proudly. "We'll call it Tom Sawyer's Gang."

Everybody had to swear an oath. Tom had gotten the idea out of some pirate book. We swore to kill the families of anyone who told the gang's secrets.

Then someone says, "What about Huck Finn? He ain't got no family. His ol' drunk father ain't been seen around here in years."

I wanted to join the gang real bad, so I offered them Miss Watson. When I said they could kill *her* if I talked, they agreed!

We all stuck a pin in our fingers to get some blood. Then we made a mark on a paper. We wrote our names on the cave wall in blood, too.

We elected Tom the first captain of our robber band. Then we started home.

I climbed into my window at daybreak.

The new clothes the widow had got me was all dirty with clay. I was dog-tired.

Next morning when Miss Watson saw my clothes, I was in big trouble! The widow, she just looked sorry and sad. Then Miss Watson took me in the closet and prayed.

Once I tried praying for what I wanted, but it didn't work. I got a fishline, but no hooks. That line weren't no good to me without hooks!

I hadn't seen my pap for more than a year now. That was fine with me. He used to always be after me. Any time he could get his hands on me, he'd let me have it. Well, about this time they found a drowned body floating on its back in the river. They said it looked like my pap, all ragged and long-haired. But I knowed that a drowned man don't float on his back, but on his face. It was probably a woman dressed up in a man's clothes. So I still worried that old Pap would turn up by and by. I wished he wouldn't.

Me and the gang, we played robber for about a month. Then the gang broke up. We hadn't robbed nobody. We hadn't killed no people, either. We just pretended.

One time Tom Sawyer says we should attack

this Sunday school picnic. He tells us those little kids we see running around are *really* soldiers on elephants and camels. He says that magicians are making them look like Sunday school kids. Then he tells me that those magicians got magic lamps. They just rub a lamp and a bunch of genies comes out and does stuff for them!

Well, I found me an old lamp after dinner one night. I rubbed and rubbed—but no genies came out! So I judged that the whole story was just one of Tom Sawyer's lies. I reckon maybe *Tom* could see magicians and genies. But me, I just saw a Sunday school picnic.

It weren't long after that I lit the candle in my bedroom. There was Pap sitting on the bed. He was waiting for me.

2

I Fool Pap and Get Away

I reckon I was pretty scared to see Pap. His hair was long, hanging down like dirty old vines. His clothes were rags. His boots were so busted that his toes stuck through. I stood there looking at him. He sat there looking at me.

By and by, he says, "Fine clothes you got. Ain't you a high and mighty fellow?"

"Maybe I am, maybe I ain't," I says.

"Don't you give me no lip. They say you can read and write. You think you're better than your father now, don't you? Who put you up to that foolishness?"

"The widow. She taught me."

"Well, I'll learn her not to meddle. You drop that school, you hear? Your poor dead mother, she couldn't read or write neither.



Let me hear ya read something."

I took up a book and began reading. It was a story about George Washington. Pap whacked the book across the room.

"It's so!" he says. "You *can* do it! If I catch you at that school again, I'll tan you good. I heard about you being rich, too. That's why I come. You get me that money."

"It's a lie," I says. "You can ask Judge Thatcher. He'll tell you I ain't got no money." That was the truth. I had nothing. It was all put away in the bank.

"Oh, I'll ask him, all right," says Pap. "I'll make him tell me, too. Hey, you got anything in your pocket?"

"Just a dollar," I says, "and that's for—"

Pap took it to buy some whiskey. Then he said he'd lick me good if I didn't drop out of school right quick.

Next day Pap went to Judge Thatcher. He tried to bully him into giving him my money. He sweared he'd get the law on his side.

Judge Thatcher and Widow Douglas went to the court. They tried to take me away from Pap. But a new judge was there who didn't know the old man. He said Pap should get another chance at me.

That judge found out about Pap soon enough. Old Pap got drunk and fell off a porch. He broke his arm in two places.

As soon as Pap's arm got better, he was after me again. When he saw me going to school, he chased me. I really didn't care about school that much before. But now I reckoned I'd go just to spite Pap.

But Pap waited for me one spring day. He catched me and took me upriver to an old log

hut in the woods. He kept me locked up, and I never got a chance to run off.

After a while I got used to the lazy life. I sort of liked it—except when Pap got drunk and went after me.

By and by Pap got too handy with the stick. One time he almost killed me. And he got to locking me in too much. Once he was gone three days. I was dreadful lonesome. It was then I made up my mind to get away.

I found an old saw and hid it in the hut. Next time Pap locked me in, I went to work. I sawed a hole in the wall. Then I filled up a canoe with stuff I'd need—some food and fishlines and matches. I fetched a gun.

Then I went back to the cabin. I smashed the door with an axe, just like robbers might do it. I killed a pig and laid him on the ground to bleed. Then I dragged a sack of rocks down to the river. I left plenty of marks so people would think those robbers had drug my body there and throwed it in.

After that, I pulled out some of my hair and stuck it on the axe. I carried the pig off so no one could find him. All the while I'm wishing Tom

Sawyer was with me. I knowed he would take an interest in this business. He'd probably throw in some fancy touches.

I climbed in the canoe and paddled out to Jackson's Island. Then I hid the canoe and laid down in the woods for a nap.

The sound of a cannon boom woke me up. I sneaked to the shore and hid behind a log. A ferryboat came drifting along. Most everybody was on that boat. There was Pap and Judge Thatcher and Tom Sawyer. They was so close, I could hear them talking about my murder. The cannon boomed again. Everybody knows that cannon booms is supposed to bring up bodies. I watched the ferry drift by, booming now and then. Once it passed out of sight, I knowed I was all right. Nobody else would be hunting for me.

I felt about ready for another nap. But back in the woods, what should I run right into but a campfire. There lay a man rolled up in a blanket! I watched him close, and pretty soon he moved. My heart jumped.

TIMELESS CLASSICS

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Freedom is everything to Huckleberry Finn. How can he avoid being "civilized" by the good-hearted Widow Douglas? But just now Huck has more important things on his mind—like helping his friend Jim escape!

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