The Moral Evolution Of Huckleberry Finn

Throughout Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, Huckleberry (Huck) grows as a human being and develops his own personal identity. As his life changes through his relationship with Jim, a runaway slave, his understanding of right and wrong evolves. Huck strides towards one goal, the path of freedom, and will do whatever it takes to accomplish that task. Along the way, Huck learns what he values, who he cares for, and how he deals with new situations. In Adventures of Huckleberry Finn by Mark Twain, Huck's moral development is impacted throughout the novel in situations which incorporate the use of lies, relationships, and the value of freedom.

Huck's moral development is greatly impacted by his relationships. As Huck grows older, he becomes more and more distant from what family he has left, so the few relationships that remain change his view of morality, and the way Huck lives his life. In the beggining, Miss Watson and the Widow Douglas take Huck in and mature him. Huck doesn't realize it, but they care for him more than Huck knows. One night, after withstanding a couple of hours of Miss Watson and Widow Douglas trying to teach him and control him, Huck thinks to himself, "Miss Watson kept pecking at me, and it got tiresome and lonesome (Twain 2). Huck later realizes, however, that Miss Watson and Widow Douglas are just caring for him. They spend their time trying to shape Huck into a better man, but Huck is unable to think past the strict rules. At the beginning of this novel, Huck is immature and can't comprehend how people around him are actually trying to make an impact on his morality. As Huck's relationship with Jim changes, they both begin to look out for each other. "As a caring father figure for Huck, Jim makes an effort to keep Huck from having to witness anything so "gashly" (Twain 50) and disturbing as a dead body" (Shrum). Huck not only learns about the value of trust but also the importance of relationships. Lastly, Jim, a runaway slave, comes to resemble a father-like figure to Huck. Huck only has Pap, an abusive father who comes back only to keep Huck locked in a cabin until Huck escapes and helps the runaway slave flee. Right before Huck's father returns, Jim reassures Huck and says, "Sometimes you gwyne to git hurt, en sometimes you gwyne to git sick; but every time you's gwyne to git well agin" (Twain 13). Although Jim is stereotyped by his race, Huck gets to know him and the two of them come together almost like family. Huck demonstrates the importance of a relationship, and how it can guide a person into the future.

Over time, Huck learns that the value of freedom is one of the most important things to him, and it boosts his moral development. Huck grew up wild and free, so when he has to go to school, eat on a plate, and live a civilized life, he can't help but think about his old ways. In the beginning of the novel, Huck says, "The Widow Douglas she took me for her son and allowed she would sivilize me, but it was rough living in the house all the time… and so when I couldn't handle it out no longer, I lit out" (Twain 1). Huck was not raised to sit in a house all day. He does not enjoy anyone telling him what to do, and this independent nature will benefit Huck greatly in life. Another instance of Huck's lack of freedom occurs when Huck is forced to live in a cabin with Pap. When Pap is away, he locks Huck in. Since Huck's freedom is so important to him, he stages his own death and runs off. While he is planning to stage his death, Huck says, "I can fix it now nobody won't think of following me (Twain 24). Huck comes up with a brilliant plan that ends up working, proving how Huck develops through his core values. As Jim and Huck are running away, Huck proclaims, "Other places do seem so cramped up and smothery, but a raft don't. You feel mighty free and easy and comfortable on a raft." (Page 116). Huck is

comfortable, and as long as he is free, he will make decisions that benefit both his freedom and the freedom of others.

Huck's lies and decisions greatly benefit those he cares for. In one instance, although society might think differently, Huck chooses to protect Jim with a lie. When Huck and Jim encounter two white men looking for runaway slaves, they question who else is on Huck's raft, and he replies, 'He's White' (Twain 68). In this situation, Huck lies to the men to protect Jim. and ultimately helps Jim get closer to freedom. Huck also lies for his own protection. He decides to go into town to gather information, and dresses up as a girl for disguise. Huck meets Judith Loftus, and she catches on to his lies, replying, "I thought you was maybe trying to hocus me again" (Twain 46). Although Judith catches on to his lying, Huck continues to lie about his actual identity. He makes the right decision and gathers information about the people who are after him. Huck uses lying in this situation to resourcefully obtain knowledge, which will benefit him in the long term. Lastly, Huck makes the decision of whether to send the letter he wrote to the Widow. If Huck sends the letter, Jim won't be able to follow his plans, although it is technically the right decision according to Huck and society. But he decides against it, saying, "All right then, I'll go to hell- and tore it up" (Twain 162). In Huck's mind, he is always making the wrong decision, although in today's society it would be correct. To think independently is the significant sign for one's growth and maturity (Sang 4). Huck is independently making his own decisions, which contributes to his growing morality.

Hucks' relationships, his use of lies, and the value of freedom shapes his morality and who he becomes. Huck teaches the reader that they must find their core values and institute them in their own decisions. In Huck's life, he institutes his core values to help develop his morality, which will lead him on the path to making the right decisions. One must establish their goals and how they plan to accomplish them. Huck always believes in and sets out for freedom, whilst staying true to his core values and beliefs. He keeps relationships and stays true to them. Huck establishes who he wants to look out for, and that person in turn ends up looking out for him. Throughout the novel, Huck learns how he should not cross the line with his lying, and only uses lies for the protection of others. He matures, no longer playing pointless pranks that may only have a negative effect on his relationships. One can look up to Huck's maturity and conclude that Huck learns to make decisions through the use of his real values, and for the protection of himself and others.

Works Cited

1. Sang, Yanxia. An Analysis of the Factors Affecting Huck's Growth. Journal of Language
2. Teaching and Research, Sept. 2010,
3. pdfs.semanticscholar.org/b06d/de5e804b1bb130efb0013bc85c1162008d15.pdf.
4. Shrum, and Heather M Shrum. "The Father-Son Relationship of Jim and Huck in Mark Twain's 'Adventures of Huckleberry Finn.'" Inquiries Journal, Inquiries Journal, 1 Nov. 2014, www.inquiriesjournal.com/articles/1668/the-father-son-relationship-of-jim-and-huck-in-mark-twains-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn.
5. Twain, Mark. Adventures of Huckleberry Finn. Dover Thrift Editions. Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, 1994.