

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn

Timothy Mason (adapted from Mark Twain)

Set along the Mississippi River valley in the 1840s, here is the great American tale of Tom Sawyer's faithful, impish friend Huckleberry Finn. Young Huck escapes his Pap and the widow Douglas and sets off on classic adventures that mix suspense, mischievousness, and, most of all, a love for life that speak to young and old alike.

Two Males

In the first scene below, Huck is reunited with his friend Jim, an escaped slave. In the second scene, which immediately follows, Huck and Jim discover a dead body.



Lights rise on bare setting, with river and riverbanks in the background. Huck enters, out of breath.

HUCK: (*Voice-over.*) In the moonlight, the river looked miles and miles across. It was late, I could tell — it *smell't* late, and everythin' was so quiet on the island, I could hear people talkin' way over to the ferry landin'. (*Huck climbs to uppermost platform and surveys the scene. He sits and stretches himself out for sleep.*) Anyways, I was pretty tired. It was goin' to be a grand mornin', with them all searchin' the river for my body, so I went right on out to sleep. (*Huck sleeps. Lights rise and the sound of birds provide transition into morning. Sound of distant cannon up the river. Huck stirs and sits up. Jim enters, but Huck doesn't*

recognize him. Huck attempts to find a vantage point to see the stranger, approaching nearer. Jim turns around and sees Huck. Jim is terrified; Huck is relieved.)

HUCK: Jim! Jim — it's *you!* You sho'ly did give me a fright . . .

JIM: Don't hurt me! I never done you no harm when you was alive, Huck Finn, and I hain't never done no harm to no ghost . . .

HUCK: I ain't no *ghost*, dad blame it! Looky here, see for yourself . . . (*Huck extends his arm out for Jim to touch; he does so, tentatively.*) Go on, touch me — ain't no ghost *about* me.

(Jim takes Huck's hand, then the other. He breaks into a big smile and hugs Huck to his chest.)

JIM: I was powerful sorry to hear you was killed, Huck, but I ain't no mo'. Honey, you is alive as I!

HUCK: Shore is good to see a friendly face, Jim, after all them days stuck in Pap's shanty.

(Cannon boom.)

JIM: But look here, Huck — who *was* murdered in that shanty if it warn't you?

HUCK: Shucks — *nobody*, Jim! I just fixed things up to look like I was dead, so's I could get away from 'em all.

(Huck moves upstage to look upstream at the town. Jim follows.)

JIM: Well, yestiday night the whole town was talkin' bout you bein' dead, and now they're all out on the river, soundin' a cannon to make your body rise up from the bottom.

HUCK: (*With a modest grin.*) Yup. Kinder grand, ain't it.

(Cannon boom.)

HUCK: But how do *you* come to be here, Jim?

(Jim takes off his hat and turns away from Huck, looking out over the river.)

JIM: Maybe I better not tell. (*Small pause.*) You wouldn't tell on me if I was to tell you, would you, Huck?

HUCK: Blamed if I would, Jim.

JIM: *(Sitting.)* Well, it was this way. Some time after yer Pap hauled you off, there came this nigger trader from New Orleans an' he started to git mighty thick with Miz Watson. Now that Miz Watson, she treats me pretty rough, but she always said she wouldn't sell me down to New Orleans. Well, it were a lie, Huck . . .

(Cannon boom, louder.)

HUCK: *(Pulling Jim down behind the slope.)* Git down, Jim. They're gettin' closer.

(They crouch side by side, glancing out over the river as they speak in more hushed tones.)

JIM: One night I creeps to the parlor do', and the do' warn't quite shet, an' I hear Miz Watson tell the Widow she was a-goin' to sell me, 'cause she could get eight hundred dollars fo' me. The Widow, she try to git her not to do it, but I never waited to hear the res'. I hain't Miz Watson's Jim no more, Huck, I done run off.

(Cannon boom, still louder.)

HUCK: But now you're a runaway nigger, Jim! You know what that means . . .

JIM: She was a-goin' to *sell* me — away from my wife, Huck . . . away from my child'en.

HUCK: *(After a brief pause.)* You got *child'en*, Jim? You got a *fam'ly*?

JIM: Mind . . . you said you wouldn't tell.

HUCK: And I won't, Jim. People can call me a low-down Abolitionist and a slave-lover, but I said I wouldn't tell, an' I won't.

(Large cannon boom, Jim pulls Huck further down.)

JIM: There they is!



Sound of river rushing, animal calls of the night. Lights of late evening reveal the two sitting by a campfire: Jim smokes a pipe as Huck finishes his dinner.

HUCK: *(Voice-over.)* Jim an' me spent considerable time on Jackson's Island.

JIM: We cain't stay here forever, chile . . .

HUCK: *(Voice-over.)* We slept days and woke nights, topsy-turvy like.

JIM: *(Standing and stretching.)* We got to find a way down to Cairo, Illinois, Huck.

HUCK: *(Voice-over.)* Then one night . . .

JIM: Huck, there's somethin' out there . . .

HUCK: *(He wasn't listening.)* How's that, Jim?

JIM: I say there's somethin' on the river . . . comin' this way.

HUCK: Well, what is it?

JIM: Cain't make it out, but it's mighty big.

(Huck rises and joins Jim at top of the slope.)

HUCK: *(With a small laugh, not believing his eyes.)* It almost looks like a . . . house.

JIM: Well, the river's been risin' right along . . .

HUCK: Mighta swept things off the shore . . .

JIM: That's jist what it is, Huck! It's a whole, en-tire house a-floatin' down the river!

HUCK: Wonder if they's anybody still in it . . .

JIM: Not likely, but they's bound to be some truck that there house we could use in Cairo. I's goin' aboard . . .

(Jim runs down to stage level; Huck follows.)

HUCK: So'm I!

JIM: No, you ain't, chile. Din't you see how sprightly that thing is movin'? I'm goin' aboard; you stan' by.

HUCK: Stand by for what?

JIM: Blamed if I know — jist stan' by. Look now . . . here she come . . . *(Jim runs off stage left.)*

HUCK: *(Calling.)* Jim! Don't you be too long on that house.
(Music. Vague shapes and shadows appear off stage right; sound of rushing water has increased. Huck observes for a bit, then calls again.)

HUCK: Jim?
(No answer.)

HUCK: It's movin' too fast, Jim. Come on back!
(Pause. Suddenly a call.)

JIM: Huck! Here it come — now you catch it!
(A bundle is hurled onto the shore upstage right. Huck picks it up.)

HUCK: That's good, Jim — now come on off that thing!
(The house has approached upstage center.)

JIM: They's a white man a-sleepin' in here!

HUCK: A white man? He'll make trouble for you, Jim . . .

JIM: Well, we cain't leave him lie!

HUCK: I know we cain't but . . . Jim? Jim!
(The house is moving off stage right.)

HUCK: You slippin' away, Jim! *(Pause.)* Jim? *(Another pause. Quieter.)* Jim . . . *(Huck sinks to his knees, nearly in tears. Long pause and music fades out. Finally Jim appears, wet and dripping, from stage right; he carries a bundle.)*

JIM: Hucky?

HUCK: *(Whirling around.)* Jim!
(Jim drops the bundle and Huck runs to him, then stops himself from embracing Jim.)

JIM: *(Tousling Huck's hair and laughing.)* You warn't worried 'bout ol' Jim, was you, Honey?

HUCK: Nope. *(He wipes his eyes.)* What about the man?

JIM: *(Slight pause.)* He warn't sleepin'. He were dead. Shot in the back.

HUCK: Jiminy! Who was it, you reckon?
(A sound of creaking boards and rushing water. Jim and Huck turn their heads upstage right at the sound.)

JIM: Look, Hucky! She's goin' down! She's sinkin'!

HUCK: Bless my soul . . .
(A huge rush of water, and then nothing but the quiet passage of the river. Jim shakes his head and turns back to center stage and the bundles.)

HUCK: I wonder who that man was . . .

JIM: Bad luck, talkin' 'bout the dead.

HUCK: . . . wonder who shot him . . . an' what for . . .

JIM: *(Angry.)* Talk like that'll fetch nothin' but bad luck, you min' my words! *(Pause.)* Looky here. Huck — a lantern for us. An' a bran'-new Barlow knife . . .

HUCK: *(Immediately interested, joining Jim in the rummaging.)* A Barlow knife?! Why, that's wuth two bits in any store . . . you call that bad luck?

JIM: An' a couple o' ol', dirty calico dresses . . .

HUCK: An' a bonnet . . . *(Huck puts the bonnet on his head.)* How d' I look, Jim?

JIM: *(Laughs.)* An ol' book . . . an' here's a fine blanket . . . Huck, there's somethin' sewn into the linin' . . . right here . . . *(Jim uses the knife on the blanket and silver dollars fall out.)* Huck!

HUCK: Eight dollars silver! Bad luck?! Now what did you say, day before yestiday, when I fetched in that snakeskin I found on top o' the ridge?

JIM: I said it was the wust luck in the world to touch a snakeskin — worse'n lookin' at the moon over your left shoulder — and it *is*.

HUCK: Well, here's your bad luck: We've raked in all this truck an' eight dollars besides!

JIM: *(Walking away from him.)* Don't you get too pert, Honey . . . it's a-comin'. Mind you, the bad luck's a-comin'!
(Pause.)

HUCK: Hey, Jim — don't you wish you knew what was goin' on over to town?

JIM: I'd like to know if Miz Watson's done put a reward out on me . . .

HUCK: How's if I take the canoe an' slip over tomorrow?

(Slight pause as Jim considers.)

JIM: Well, you'll have to go in the dark and look sharp . . . Say, Hucky — that bonnet don't look half-bad on you. You git yo'self into one o' them calico dresses, an' won't nobody know you's Huck Finn.

HUCK: Hey, Jim, that is good. *(Huck holds one of the dresses to himself.)* Huck Finn? My name's . . . Sarah.

(Jim laughs.)

HUCK: Sarah Williams to you, Jim.

(Jim's laugh grows as lights fade to blackout.)

Afternoon of the Elves

Y York (adapted from Janet Taylor Lisle)

Based on Janet Taylor Lisle's award-winning book, fourth-grader Hillary Lenox is befriended by two neighbor girls, who teach her how to "fit in." But Sara Kate, the outcast little girl next door, draws Hillary to her with the discovery of a secret elf village in the backyard.

Two Females

In the first scene, Hillary enters Sara Kate's backyard, drawn by her curiosity of the elf village. In the second scene, Hillary, growing more skeptical, questions Sara Kate further about the "elf" people in the backyard.



Sara Kate's backyard. This yard is the antithesis of the Lenox yard. There are old appliances, car engines, tires, brambles. There, in the midst of the mess, is an orderly elf village. Little houses built with sticks, string, rocks, and leaves; separated by rows of rocks into an elf development. A well in the center of "town." Sara Kate is working on the elf village. Hillary enters with her book bag through the hedge; without looking at Hillary, Sara Kate speaks.

SARA KATE: I first saw it a couple of days ago, it just sort of appeared. They must work all through the night, but it isn't done. You can see where a couple of houses aren't finished, and there's places made ready for houses with no houses on them yet.

HILLARY: How did you know I was here?