

English 2130: Questions for Consideration

1. Throughout our discussion of *Huck Finn*, we looked at Twain's treatment of race through his character Jim. Jim's character is borne largely out of the minstrel tradition. At times, however, Jim seems to break away from the minstrel stereotypes; there are moments, consequently, where his character is more nuanced, more "humanized," and more "multi-dimensional" rather than static. Review Paul Laurence Dunbar's poem as well as the article "Finding Jim Behind the Mask" and select two or three salient places in the text (focusing on the last third of the novel), whereby to analyze Jim's characterization and his complicated relationship to the dominant white society.
2. As we look, in particular, at Twain's creation of Huck as a character, we see how Twain creates Huck to represent the American fantasy of the image of a virgin land in new-world and American ideology. Specifically, Twain creates Huck in such a way that he "latches on" to one of the most prominent of American dreams—"the dream of domination in the guise of creating a new world." However, we also see how Twain sets up the dichotomy of complete anonymity versus reliance on civilization by demonstrating the conflict that arises out of "Huck's quest to 'light out' into the new" by attaching himself to "the old." Review the novel (focusing on the last third of the text), as well as the Bennett article, and detail two or three salient passages which demonstrates this contradiction.
3. According to the Bennett article, "Huck has yet to solve the conundrum of self-fashioning in a new world." In his attempt to re-create himself and become the "boss" of his existence, he also realizes the difficulty of creating an "authorial voice"—becoming the "author of his book" and "reinventing" himself in his own world. As Bennett demonstrates, "everything we have learned about Huck has come from his efforts at being the 'author' of his own identity. Pay special attention to how Bennett discusses this "authorial voice" of Huck's and detail two or three salient passages whereby we see Twain's character battling with this ideology, particularly as it relates to the notion of the American dream.