

Questions for classroom discussion: Day 1 of *Huckleberry Finn* – Dr. Flora Armetta

- 1) Given that Huck is speaking in the first person, how would you characterize his tone?
What kinds of writing tend to feature the first person? Does Huck's story seem to be more like one or another of these? How does the first-person narrative affect your attitude toward Huck as a reader so far?

- 2) In terms of the dialect, what does Huck's way of speaking tell us about who he is? What are some of the other details in the first chapter that give us clues about his history, his education, his interests? For example: he prefers his meals "in a barrel of odds and ends [where] things get mixed up, and the juice kind of swaps around" ...; he loses interest in "Moses and the Bulrushers" because "I don't take no stock in dead people"; one page later, however, he believes he hears "an owl ... who-whooping about somebody that was dead, and a whippowill and a dog crying about somebody that was going to die" and what he imagines is the sound of a ghost. What kind of environment does he seem to have grown up in? What does he mean by "not putting stock in dead people"? What DOES he think about dead people?

- 3) About Tom Sawyer: what are the differences so far between Huck's story and Tom's? Why do you think *Tom Sawyer* is usually recommended for slightly younger children, whereas *Huck Finn* is usually considered more appropriate for older students (teens, as opposed to grammar-schoolers)? Why might Twain begin and end the first chapter of this novel by specifically mentioning the book Tom Sawyer and the character Tom Sawyer, who arrives outside Huck's window as the chapter closes?