

Huckleberry Finn Study Guide – Dr. Armetta

Chapters 4 – 6

Vocabulary: important words to note and define:

- Why does Huck use the word *raspy* to describe the widow's ways? What might that refer to? (p. 24)
- starchy (p. 28) – what does it mean, and why does Pap use this word?
- hifalut'n (p. 29) -
- bullyragged (p. 30) –
- “handy with his hick'ry” (p. 34) -

Questions:

1. What is the effect of the simile that Twain uses to describe Pap's face: “There warn't no color in his face, where his face showed [from behind his hair]; it was white; not like another man's white, but a white to make a body sick, a white to make a body's flesh crawl - a tree-toad white, a fish-belly white”? (p. 28)
2. Pap has a speech on pp. 36-37 (“Call this a govment.....”) – what does it tell you about his character?
3. In the first few chapters of the novel, Huck and Jim both show that they are superstitious (for example, Huck is terrified when he sees a spider shrivel up in a candle flame, on p. 11, and Jim on p. 55 tells Huck not to count the things you're going to cook for dinner, or shake a table-cloth after sundown). But some events that the two characters think of as “signs” are really just part of observing the natural world – Jim says that seeing “young birds come along, flying a yard or two at a time and lighting” (55) is a sign that it's going to rain, and he is probably right, given that the animals can feel changes in the weather ... What do these different approaches to understanding and dealing with the world tell us about Huck and Jim's characters? What is the difference between what we might call natural “folk wisdom” and real superstition? What does Twain's attitude seem to be toward superstition in general?