



The River as a Symbol of Liberty

An Analysis regarding the Significance of the Mississippi
River in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

Floden som en symbol för frihet: en analys av Mississippiflodens betydelse i
Huckleberry Finns äventyr

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Abstract

Despite the extensive research on slavery during the antebellum, few authors have investigated the connection between the Mississippi river and its importance and status as a symbol of freedom throughout *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, written by Mark Twain. Therefore, this essay attempts to analyze just how much the river actually meant for Huck and Jim during their journey towards freedom. The methodology of this analysis is based on a qualitative content analysis where categories are created and put in relation to the historical and political landscape the novel presents. By investigating how the river functioned as an optional escape route that would lead the slaves far away from the notoriously bad treatment on the cotton fields, as well as the dangerous riverside settings which involved several risks for both Huck and Jim, this essay concludes that the river does not only work as an escape route away from captivity and civilization, it also provided the characters with a comfortable and safe home which alone could symbolize liberty.

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1. Introduction

To begin with I find it very important to disambiguate the two terms *Symbolism* and *Freedom* since they are the key elements throughout this analysis. **Symbolism** is a term that can be used in different contexts, not least relating to religion. However throughout this analysis the word and the purpose of symbolism has no religious connection, instead the text focuses on symbolism in a sense where it stands for: “the practice of representing things by symbols, or of investing things with a symbolic meaning or character” (Dictionary.com). In other words this present analysis will primarily proceed focusing on investigating how the Mississippi river had a symbolic meaning of freedom.

Freedom, on the other hand, is a term which can be used widely and have many different meanings depending on the person using it. However, according to Dictionary.com the word Freedom means “the state of being free or at liberty rather than in confinement or under physical restraint”, “exemption from external control, interference, regulation, etc.” and “personal liberty, as opposed to bondage or slavery” and it is by these definitions this study approaches the term freedom.

Throughout *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Mark Twain is using the expression freedom broadly since it takes into account of various perspectives such as physical freedom, mental freedom and financial freedom (uppermost through Jim). Since Jim is a runaway slave, freedom is very personal to him. Therefore, he primarily wishes to not be a captive and hopefully one day become his own master. Furthermore, throughout the plot, Jim on repeated occasions states that he is determined to earn money as soon as he makes it to a slavery free state in order to be financially able to secure his wife’s freedom. “He was saying how the first thing he would do when he got to a free State he would go to saving up money and never spend a single cent, and when he got enough he would buy his wife” (Twain 149).

Freedom for Huck on the other hand is free space and peace, meaning that he strives to find a location where he is allowed to be himself without external control and interferences to his life. In addition, since Huck was incarcerated by his father, who was physically abusive and suppressive, the meaning of freedom for Huck is equally physical as it is mental. In other words, the purpose of freedom for Huck has nothing to do with the American dream and financial freedom, which at least partially is the case for Jim (Pinsker 648-649).

1.1 Background

For the purposes of the present analysis, the economic, geographical and political circumstances are of particular importance due to their impact on the abolition of slavery, but also to create a broader meaningfulness to this study.

From an economic perspective, the trade tariff concerned the planters not only as slave owners, but also as farming producers. The trade tariff also threatened slavery from a political point of view “if a majority could legislate against the interest of a minority, as did the Tariff of 1828, it might be possible for a national majority to abolish slavery” (Kaufman 104). At the debate in the Virginia legislature of 1831-1832, the abolitionists convinced the legislature that slavery was something evil, but even still those in favor of the slavery system emerged as victors of the debate and slavery was maintained as an institution despite the moral reservations, it was considered a necessary evil due to its economic benefits, and was thus not abolished (Kaufman 105).

The economic situation partially explains why many of the slave owners supported the Republicans, as one of the major purposes of slavery was to help with the development of the plantations (Kaufman 104). This was surprising, considering that Abraham Lincoln was a Republican who strived to free all slaves, and yet the slave owners associated with him. However, since the slave owners would sell their goods in order to make a living off their plantations, the slave owners found the republicans’ policies appealing since they wanted to increase free trade and the abolition of all fees, taxes and duties (Kaufman 104). The issue for the slave owners was their plantations and their desire to recommend free trade rather than slave ownership. For this reason the slave owners voted for the Republicans although the party wanted to abolish slavery. Republicanism could be used as a synonym for justice according to Kaufman, because “A republican government corresponds to the political tenets of natural law, which are the preconditions for a moral economic order. Republicanism is, therefore, the political vehicle for redemption” (73).

One can also argue from a liberal perspective, where one strives for “personal freedom, equal worth, government by consent, and private ownership of property as core human values” (Ericson 14), or from an anti-liberal perspective where one does not agree with these issues. From a liberal perspective, it is obvious that the southern slavery institution was an unfair one, since it did not allow the African American slaves the same equal rights as European Americans that emigrated to the country

during the antebellum period (Ericson 14). In addition, non-liberals individuals who were opposed to slavery argued that the slavery system did not allow African American slaves an “opportunity to work, worship and learn at the feet of the superior white race”. However, non-liberals who were in favor of the slavery system considered the system an institution as this was what the African American slaves were made for by God or nature. It was a societal order granted from above, so to speak (Ericson 15).

The two rivers, The Ohio River as well as The Mississippi River also had a major impact on specifically runaway slaves. Particularly those who escaped captivity by boat, such as Jim, a slave character in Mark Twain’s famous novel *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, who together with Huckleberry Finn traveled through the Mississippi River by steamboat and raft in order to reach the town of Cairo, but the rivers also had a major impact on the slave owners. The two rivers instilled a fearful image in the slave holders as they were not able to control the blacks’ movements by the banks of the rivers: “There was no evil... more dangerous to the institutions of the south than the employment of free blacks on steamboats whereby the free negro and the slave are brought frequently together” (Buchanan 797). The river environment in addition led to many positive outcomes (including freedom), such as the abolitionists’ efforts that, according to Buchanan, “combined the pursuit of ready money with efforts to liberate runaway slaves” (Buchanan 798). These individuals were men and women who helped the slaves to reach freedom in different ways. Some of them were free blacks that had earned money in various ways, including stealing things from their masters and selling the items to someone else or robbers, while others were free slaves who worked on boats who had earned the money in a legitimate way. In short, the slave owners feared the rivers as they presented the slaves with a way of escaping slavery, which in its turn was detrimental to the plantations’ and their economies as they relied heavily on forced labor.

In contrast, the rivers had some disadvantages on runaway slaves’ journeys to freedom since the predictability of their destination made it easier for citizens to track the slaves’ escape routes along the river and eventually catch them. This particular problem is portrayed in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, which takes place by the Mississippi River in the state of Missouri. During the 1840’s, the state of Missouri introduced a payment system regarding runaway slaves where the given reward dependent on factors such as the slave’s age and the location of capture. For example,

this meant that anyone who captured a runaway slave over the age of twenty outside the state of Missouri would receive 100\$. If the capture took place outside the state, or if the slave was younger than twenty years old, the given reward was decreased to 50\$. However, if the capture took place within the state of Missouri, but outside the district of where the bondman escaped from, one received 25\$ despite his or her age but one only received 5-10\$ if the capture took place within the region. Also, people such as Huckleberry Finn who helped slaves to get free also risked a prison sentence, often as long as 5 to 10 years (“Missouri’s Early Slave Laws”, *MSA.org*). The citizens of pro-slavery states most likely shared an opinion that dark skinned characters were less valuable than themselves and therefore it was easier to ignore their morals and turn in a slave for financial gain. This is exemplified *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, when a group of white individuals search for runaway slaves in the woods. The scene creates an impression of slaves having the same value as animals and that the various bounties could be looked upon as a rating of how elusive the catch was.

1.2 Purpose

Firstly as mentioned earlier, the rivers were the slaves’ escape routes to independence and by reaching the states where slavery was not practiced they acquired their freedom. In addition while reading *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* one gets an impression as if the Mississippi river it self has an symbolic implication for freedom through various ways during the entire plot. Therefore the purpose of this study is to analyze the importance of the Mississippi river, but also to find out in what way the river could be perceived as a symbol of liberty for the two main characters Huckleberry (Huck) and Jim, throughout *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.

1.3 Method

The purpose of this study is to examine the importance and perception of freedom regarding the Mississippi river through a symbolic perspective. In order to answer the thesis statement, a qualitative content analysis is used as a method (Bryman 505). The reasoning behind this choice is mainly that I would like to receive a better understanding of this particular topic, but also to take advantage of different interpretations, perspectives and experiences (Bryman 283). Through a thorough reading of Twain’s novel, I will try to find some form of pattern in order to create different categories from where I can proceed analyzing the thesis. In comparison to a

quantitative content analysis where one decides the categories beforehand, I believe that this particular approach will suit my topic well for the reason that one is able to get as much evidence as possible from the material and not miss out of significant data, even though the usage of a qualitative analysis will not lead to generalizable results, which a quantitative study characterizes (Bryman 168).

In addition, I will use *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as well as historical and political research about the society of antebellum in order to receive a broader perspective and understanding for the setting and the events that took place during this particular time period. The reason I specifically use *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is because the two novels are set approximately during the same period of time (1840s), share a similar setting and events, but also to strengthen the essay's trustworthiness. Although one is written from a humoristic perspective (*The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*) while the other one from a religious point of view, they portray a similar image of the rivers' importance to the slaves during the time before the Civil War.

2. The river as an escape route from civilization and as a route to freedom

The Mississippi River is presented as having a different purpose for Huck and Jim. Throughout the plot, Huck is being abused by his drunk father who keeps him locked up and regularly threatens to hurt him "He chased me round and round the place with a clasp-knife, calling me the Angel of Death, and saying he would kill me" (Twain 48) which creates an impression of Huck being almost a "white slave", since he in many ways is experiencing the same treatment (physical and psychological abuse) as some of the slaves during this era were experiencing. In addition, throughout the story Huck is presented as a child who does not agree to society's standards of how a youth should behave, meaning that he does not follow some of the norms and valuations civilization embraces since he for a majority of the time does things in his own way without taking others' opinions into consideration, and would like to continue living his life this way. Therefore instead of becoming like the rest of the community he prefers abandoning it in order to be himself, or; gain the liberty of self (Entzminger 110). "I reckon I got to light out for the Territory ahead of the rest, because Aunt Sally she's going to adopt me and sivilize me and I can't stand it. I been there before" (Twain 489).

In order to breakout and release himself from the limitations, his father's captivity and abuses Huck decides to fake his own death and escape with the help of a raft and

the river to secure freedom, freedom in a form that he is allowed to be himself and live life in his own way without having anyone interfering in his life “I guessed I wouldn’t stay in one place, but just tramp right across the country, mostly night times, and hunt and fish to keep alive, and get so far away that the old man nor the widow couldn’t ever find me any more” (Twain 43). Even though Huck enjoys being his own boss, being away from civilization and friends creates a feeling of loneliness “[...] by and by it got sort of lonesome” (Twain 65). Eventually Huck meets Jim, a slave who has escaped captivity and originally belongs to Miss Watson, a woman who is also Huck’s caregiver “[...] and it was Miss Watson’s Jim! I bet I was glad to see him” (Twain 69).

Jim on the other hand sees the river as a route to liberty, meaning that the Mississippi river for him is the route he has to travel in order to get to Cairo and accomplish the ultimate thing a slave can wish for, freedom. “We judged that three nights more would fetch us to Cairo, at the bottom of Illinois, where the Ohio river comes in, and that was what we was after. We would sell the raft and get on a steamboat and go way up the Ohio amongst the free states, and then be out of trouble” (Twain 135). In contrast, Huck is already free from his confinements while staying on the river. As soon as he has to interact with society he has to adapt to its limitations and therefore he will never be truly free on land. For that reason is it possible to argue that the river symbolizes freedom to an even greater extent to Huck than for Jim, primarily since the river to him (Jim) is portrayed as the journey to freedom, in which Huck is the means to achieve this goal, whilst the actual river to Jim is not viewed upon as liberty by itself. “Huck knows that the journey will have been a failure unless it takes Jim to freedom” (Marx 51).

The Ohio River is the only body of water in the area that runs north and the town of Cairo is where the Ohio River flows into the Mississippi River. During the antebellum period, Cairo functioned as a link between north and south in many ways, mainly for the benefit of the slaves, but also for the plantation owners, since the waterway facilitated the transportation of sugar, cotton, tobacco, grain, flour and other commodities to the customers in other states mainly to the northern part of America. The town Cairo is located between Missouri and Kentucky, two states that during this period accepted slavery. Cairo is connected to fourteen states by water and the Ohio River flows past thirteen states. Therefore it was one of the cities that runaway slaves headed for, concluding that this route hopefully placed the slaves further away from

the slavery states since it connects so many different states and made certain locations easier accessible for the runaway slaves to reach. Slavery became prohibited in the northwest 1787. (Robinson, *Religioustolerance.org*).

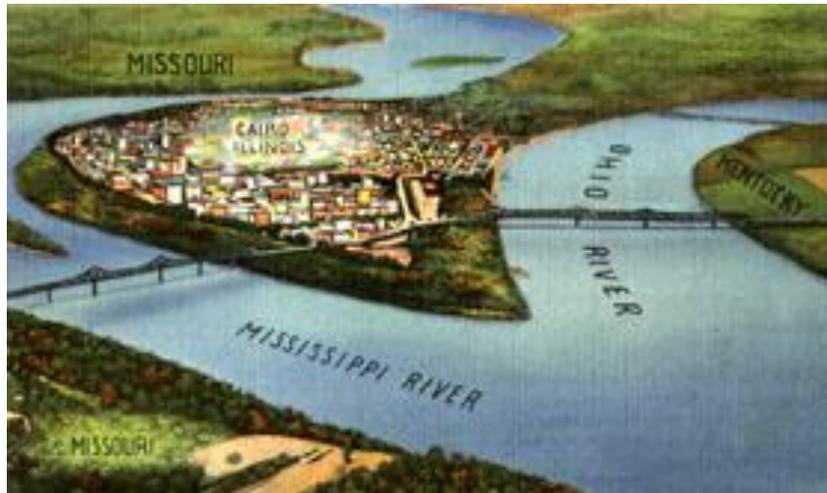


Photo: Bird eye view Cairo n.d.

This image portrays the city of Cairo and demonstrates how the Mississippi River is connected to the Ohio River. Here it is also shown that the town, which represented freedom for so many slaves, is located between two slavery states which is fascinating due to the fact that locations situated this close to each other can still be so different to one another.

As we know, the river was also associated with danger and to demonstrate this further, using the rivers as a route to independence can be perceived as gambling since one does not always succeed despite taking a risk, which is symbolized by what Huck and Jim experienced on their journey. However, the image Harriet Beecher Stowe represents when one does succeed to find liberty through the rivers is that one lives happily ever after, which was exactly what Eliza, Harry and George experienced in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Throughout *Uncle Tom's Cabin* the river is also used as a metaphor for something that separates heaven from hell. Hell for the reason that slaves such as George and Eliza were treated extremely bad by their masters and for those slaves who were situated down the river, the Ohio River therefore functioned as their route to heaven or freedom, just as the Mississippi River did for Jim in *The*

Adventures of Huckleberry Finn.

Not to be confused, even though Jim is treated pretty well by Miss Watson throughout the novel, nonetheless she one day involuntarily is forced to sell Jim down the river which is the reason for his escape “I hear ole missus tell the wider she gwine to sell me down to Orleans, but she didn’ want to” (Twain 72). Harriet Beecher Stowe in *Uncle Tom’s cabin* states that: “the threat that terrifies more than whipping or torture of any kind is the threat of being sold down the river” (89). Country slaves such as George (but also Jim) in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* prefer to die rather than being sold down the river “I won’t be taken, Eliza – I’ll die first! I’ll be free, or I’ll die! [...] they never will get me down the river alive!” (Stowe 19). Undoubtedly, the slaves were aware of the notoriously bad treatment of slaves down the river which in turn made it easier for the slaves to risk the consequences of the aforementioned reward system and slave thieves in order to hopefully avoid the dangers of being sold down the river to plantations where the master treats them with violence and disrespect on a regular basis. Therefore one can understand Jim’s perspective on why he ran off with the river as the best possible route.

However being a slave on the run had several obstacles, one of these were that as a fleeing slave, Jim was valuable, a prized possession who could be compared to the modern day criminal who had committed a crime and has not yet been caught for it, because if Jim was to be seen in public it would only lead to captivity, which was exactly what he was trying to escape from. The difference would be that Jim’s only crime would have been the color of his skin, since he in fact was innocent and Huck was alive. When Huckleberry Finn walks around in the cities, disguised and with a fake identity, people cannot stop talking to him about Jim: “It’s like pickin’ up money out’n the road” (Twain 355). People along the cities down the Mississippi River were out searching for Jim in order to hopefully receive the aforementioned two hundred dollar bounty, which was a lot of money in the nineteenth century. Even though both Huck and Jim were feeling free and comfortable by the river, they were usually concerned and never at complete peace on the run. “[...] for whenever anybody was after anybody I judged it was me- or maybe Jim” (Twain 201). Thus this, the next paragraph states otherwise.

3. The river as a safe haven

Previously I have stated that both Huck and Jim were feeling free yet not at ease by

the river since there was a reward to collect for anyone capturing Jim. However the plot does not focus on this matter as much as it portrays that the raft symbolizes a home and a comfortable/relaxing setting, which is exactly what they both are wishing for.

It was kind of solemn, drifting down the big still river,
laying on our backs looking up at the stars, and we didn't
ever feel like talking loud, and it warn't often that we
laughed, only a little kind of a low chuckle. We had
mighty good weather, as a general thing, and nothing ever
happened to us at all, that night, nor the next, nor the next.
(Twain 109)

This quote indicates that they both were concerned that anyone would notice and catch them, however they were not as worried as one would believe since they obviously experienced the river as a peaceful setting where they could enjoy the weather and other things such as singing birds. "[...] and next you've got the full day, and everything smiling in the sun, and the song birds just doing it!" (Twain 197). Matter of fact both of them did not wish to be anywhere else at numerous occasions since they enjoyed it so much (Twain 82). In addition, the size of the river offers them a setting where they are allowed to have some form of "freedom of speech" since they are here able to talk about topics that are looked upon as taboo, such as how they are going to set Jim free without having to fear that anyone will hear them, precisely as if they are at home.

Soon as it was night, out we shoved; when we got her out
to about the middle, we let her alone, and let her float
wherever the current wanted her to; then we lit the pipes,
and dangled our legs in the water and talked about all kind
of things- we was always naked, day and night, whenever
the mosquitoes would let us [...] Sometimes we'd have
the whole river all to ourselves for the longest time. [...]
It's lovely to live on a raft. We had the sky, up there, all
speckled with stars, and we used to lay on our backs and
look at them. (Twain 199)

The quote designates and expresses that they both were living/traveling freely through several factors, first and foremost since they are naked while traveling on the raft, meaning that they are physically as free as one can get. Being naked in my opinion symbolizes freedom since oneself chooses what to do and when to do it. They are traveling in the same costume they were born in; free from the influence of societal norms that here is symbolized by the refusal to wear clothes. However, the quote also indicates that they are free in their mental state of mind. During this moment, they are able to stop worrying about the direction of the raft while they are talking, letting their feet dangle in the water and enjoying the stars. Therefore I believe it is legitimate to argue that the reward outweighs the risks regarding whether Huck and Jim felt at ease striving for freedom, even though the journey itself represents freedom in several ways such as stated throughout this text.

“Two or three days and nights went by; I reckon I might say they swum by, they slid along so quiet and smooth and lovely. Here is the way we put in the time. It was a monstrous big river down there” (Twain 196). One can argue, judging by this quote, that the river gives Huck and Jim an impression of being at home rather than on the run towards liberty, since they are not being bothered by society and are allowed to be themselves. The raft and the Mississippi river have already given them the one thing they are both seeking, freedom of mind and self. Huck and Jim feel neither safe nor free on land, probably since they always have to be extra vigilant in situations where they have to interact with society, as it is written in the previous section Jim had a bounty on his head and therefore the raft and the Mississippi river is the only environment where they are provided with the various features representing freedom. "I never felt easy till the raft was two mile below there and out in the middle of the Mississippi. [...] and judged that we was free and safe once more" (Twain 195). To further strengthen the point: "We said there warn't no home like a raft, after all. 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" (Twain 195). These quotes strengthen the argument that Huck and Jim feel as if they are at home on the raft. In addition, the sheer size of the river indicates that it could be seen as a shelter that protects them from the risk and dangers on land. Also, it is on the river Huck and Jim develops a stronger relationship as if they are siblings staying in the same home for a long period of time, home, which in this case is represented through the Mississippi river.

4. Using the Mississippi river to escape trouble

Throughout the novel both Huck and Jim get into trouble on several occasions however, the river has worked as a way out or savior at all events. “Git up and hump yourself, Jim! There ain’t a minute to lose. They’re after us! [...] I took the canoe out from shore” (Twain 104-105). This quote is related to a scene where Huck goes back to town disguised as a girl in order to get information regarding whether people were looking for Jim or not. As it turns out the inhabitants have found out where they stay and therefore they are rushing towards the river in order to be safe again. This was something that happened Huck and Jim on a frequent basis because of the reward one would get for capturing Jim. “If you see any runaway niggers, you get help and nab them, and you can make some money by it” (Twain 153). For slaves to be near the rivers, they had to risk more than possible recapture and drowning while attempting to make a dash for liberty. According to Stephanie LeMenager, being white was being human while being black equaled being used as currency during the period before the Civil War (422), meaning that the dark skinned slaves were valuable to the regular citizen as well, since they could be exchanged for money. Therefore, the river environment included many slave thieves who stole the slaves in order to sell them for their own benefit, which further increased the risks for slaves to be near the river. However even though it was dangerous for Jim to reside by the river, the scenes including slave thieves were usually set on land, probably for the reason that buying and selling slaves had no marketplace on the river. Matter of fact, characters such as the Duke and the King were even more helpful on the river than they were on land where they during one occasion sell Jim. In contrast to when they are staying on the raft and they hide and protect Jim in order to not risking him getting caught, which indicates that Jim as a human during this event is more valuable than the money they could receive of him (Twain 224).

Obviously the color of a persons skin had a value for different reasons such as stated above. During several occasions people came and stopped the raft in order to look for runaway slaves whom they could apprehend to their own benefit. “Well, there’s five niggers run off tonight, up yonder above the head of the bend. Is your man white or black?” Every time the question comes up Huck has to lie and make up a story in order to avoid trouble or being questioned for his reliability. “[...] He’s white” (Twain 151). In addition, since being a runaway slave whose face people were familiar with

Jim could not openly walk around in town without getting caught, therefore he for majority of time had to stay or hid by the raft while Huck explored the various towns and sometimes experienced complications on his own. "I lit out, and shook the reefs out of my hind legs and spun down the river road like a deer- for I see our chance; and I made up my mind that it would be a long day before they ever see me and Jim again. I got down there all out of breath but loaded up with joy, and sung out: Set her loose, Jim, we're all right, now!" (Twain 354). There are several scenes that strengthen the claim that: river including the raft was a safer place for Huck and Jim than the different towns and villages were.

Walk fast, now, till you get away from the houses, and then shin for the raft like the dickens was after you! I done it, and he done the same. We struck the raft at the same time, and in less than two seconds we was gliding down stream, all dark and still, and edging towards the middle oft the river, nobody saying a word. (Twain 256)

For Huck and Jim to interact with society usually meant getting into difficulties which one by now probably can figure. The river and the raft provides them with a setting where they are no longer bothered by society's standards and captivity in the same matter, even though the river has its own risks and responsibilities, such as the slave thieves, the duke and the king etc. One gets the impression that the river creates a peace of mind and a feeling of freedom as well as being an actual way to escape perils. "Cut loose and let her slide! So, in two seconds, away we went, a-sliding down the river, and it did seem so good to be free again and all by ourselves on the big river and nobody to bother us" (Twain 344).

5. Conclusion

To summarize, the purpose of this analysis was to study the importance and the symbolism regarding the Mississippi river throughout Mark Twain's famous novel *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. This essay has concluded that the river for Jim functioned as optional escape route that would lead him far away from the notoriously bad treatment on the cotton fields, and other types of plantations located down the southern states. By reaching the town Cairo, Jim would secure freedom, which was

the one thing he strived for throughout the entire plot. Unfortunately, things did not work as planned and Huck and Jim passed by Cairo due to the bad weather and the journey leads them even deeper into the notoriously feared southern states. For Huck on the other hand the Mississippi river surprisingly shares a similar function, since he is also kept captive by his abusive father. In addition, in contrast to Jim, Huck is escaping, not only physical imprisonment but also mental captivity since he does not want to be civilized by society's standards and norms and therefore decides to abandon the society instead of changing himself into something he does not agree upon, and the way to accomplish this is through the river. Therefore is it possible to conclude that the Mississippi river functions as both an escape route away from civilization as well as a route to freedom for Huck and Jim, even though one can argue that Huck is free while staying on the river and for Jim it mainly serves as an journey towards freedom (Marx 51).

Secondly, the river supplies Huck and Jim with a comfortable, relaxing and secure setting on several occasions throughout the novel. It is on the raft they are allowed to enjoy the beautiful things life has to offer such as the sounds of singing birds, the stars that show during the nights and other positive vibes that could be interpreted as relaxing. Also, while staying on the raft Huck and Jim are able to do whatever they want and even say what they feel which they are not allowed on land. The size of the river works to their advantage and allows them to look upon the river as a shelter or home that protects them from the danger available on land. It is also because of the size of the river that they are able to have some form of freedom of speech concluded by the fact that they are freely able to discuss how to set Jim (a slave) free. In other words while staying on the river/raft they are not bothered by society or the danger available on land and are therefore able to feel safe and comfortable as if they are staying at home. It is hence possible to claim that the Mississippi river symbolized a home throughout the plot.

Finally, Huck and Jim on several occasions throughout the plot experience trouble in various forms; chiefly because of the value Jim has as a runaway slave. For Huck and Jim to interact with society usually meant getting into trouble, since it is here they encounter slave thieves, the dark side of the Duke and the King and "regular" people trying to receive the two hundred dollar bounty. However the majority of times when Huck and Jim needs to feel safe or escape trouble they head for the raft that in turn serves them with facilitation and aforementioned comfort and safety, which they are

not experiencing on land. I therefore through this essay argue that the Mississippi river symbolizes freedom in various ways, not least since it serves them with an escape route away from civilization and trouble, and is instead leading them towards freedom as well as provides them with a home that represents “personal liberty” (Dictionary.com). Which, in my opinion, secures them from the “external control, interference, regulation”, that makes up the textbook definition of freedom. In other words, the Mississippi river provides Huck and Jim with both physical freedom as well as peace of mind. The raft may be their safe haven, but is the river that sets them free.

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