

Standards: 6, 7, 8, 10

Task: *Huckleberry Finn* Racism and Stereotypes Discussion

As we read *Huckleberry Finn*, we are going to be confronted by a number of issues related to racism, prejudice and stereotypes. We also are going to be confronted by the use of some disturbing and controversial language, in particular, the use of the word “nigger.” The debate of Twain’s language continues to reign: is he a racist or is he satirizing racism?

To adequately prepare ourselves for reading the novel, and as an important part of determining our own views on the subject, it is important that we each consider some of these weighty issues. Please complete the following questions in great detail in your journals, and be prepared to share your answers with the class. Remember, these are not black and white questions with only one right answer. I want to hear your individual perspective. Answering these questions will take time – plan on devoting at least one hour to this task.

- ❖ What is racism? Is it a belief? An action? Develop a definition on your own (do not look it up.)
- ❖ What causes racism? What beliefs do people invoke to try to justify racism? In what kinds of situations do we see or find racism?
- ❖ What are stereotypes? Why and how are they formed? Develop a definition of what you believe stereotypes to be.
- ❖ What stereotypes can you think of regarding your own racial, ethnic or religious background? How do you think they formed?
- ❖ What are some portrayals of African Americans in movies, television, and advertising today? What are the common stereotypes? Why do you think these continue to exist?
- ❖ When did you first recognize your own racial, ethnic, religious (or other) identity? What does it mean to you to identify yourself in this way? What do you like most and least about being a member of your group?
- ❖ How has racism affected you or people you know?
- ❖ Do you think most minorities have a positive or negative image of American Caucasians? Do you think most American Caucasians have a positive or negative image of other races?
- ❖ What is the biggest misconception African Americans have about American Caucasians? American Caucasians about African Americans?

Rubric:

To earn an "A," your response must

- be well-thought out and organized,
- thoroughly answer all questions,
- be free of grammatical and mechanical errors.

To earn a "B," your response must

- be logical and organized,
- answer all questions well,
- be free of major grammatical and mechanical errors.

To earn a "C," your response must

- be fairly organized and coherent,
- adequately answer questions,
- contain a few grammatical and mechanical errors.

To earn a "D," your response must

- be unorganized and somewhat coherent,
- fail to adequately answer questions,
- contain many grammatical and mechanical errors.

To earn an "F," your response must

- be poorly organized, sloppy, and show little to no effort,
- fail to adequately answer questions,
- contain an unacceptable number of grammatical and mechanical errors.