

May 2010

Dear Parents:

Your student has requested the English I Pre-AP course for the upcoming school year. The purpose of this course is to offer promising students challenging work that will prepare them for Advanced Placement courses.

In the Alvin Independent School District, Advanced Placement English courses are offered to eleventh and twelfth grade students. Upon successful completion of course work, students may take AP examinations administered each year in May, and if successful, they will be awarded college English credit accepted by most universities. The Pre-AP courses offered in grades 6-10 develop reading, writing, and thinking skills necessary for success in AP courses. Reading selections for these courses represent concepts and/ or reading selections frequently cited on Advanced Placement examinations. Because these courses include works that are numerous and challenging, students are required to complete a summer reading assignment.

For the summer of 2010, your child **must read the following:**

English I Pre-AP Summer Reading Assignment:

- **Huckleberry Finn by Mark Twain**
- A packet of **related nonfiction selections** will be given to students at the end of this school year as required reading. They will also be available on the district website.

Please encourage your child to complete this reading assignment in order to be prepared for an assessment at the beginning of the school year.

Thank you for your cooperation and continuing interest in your student's education.

Sincerely,



Carla Voelkel
Executive Director of Secondary Education



Kelley Smith
English Lead Teacher

Please sign and return to your student's current English teacher.

_____ My child and I have received notice of the summer assignment for **Ninth Grade Pre-AP** and will comply. We understand that the completion date for this assignment is **AUGUST 23, 2010**, the first day of school.

_____ My child and I have received notice of the summer assignment for **Ninth Grade Pre-AP**, and I do not wish my child to be enrolled.

In the fall of 2010, my child will attend:

_____ Alvin High School

_____ Manvel High School

Parent Printed Name _____

Parent Signature _____

Student Printed Name _____

Student Signature _____

Date _____

Current English Teacher's Name _____

Campus _____

English I Summer Reading Assignment
2010-2011
Cover Letter (Page 1 & 2) & Pages 2 - 6

Students will read *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and the four articles below, answering the focus questions for each.

Focus Questions: Articles

Answer all of the following questions for each of the four articles found below.

- 1. Support or oppose the issue discussed in the article.**
- 2. How did you arrive at your conclusion?**
- 3. Reference the text in support or opposition of the topic being addressed.**

Article A

NAACP seeks ban on Huck Finn classic

<http://palimpsest.stanford.edu/byform/mailling-lists/exlibris/1998/02/msg00028.html>

Mark Twain's classic "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn" is offensive to black students and should be banned from classrooms across the state, the Pennsylvania NAACP says.

Although the state Education Department said books discussed in classrooms are selected locally, NAACP officials said yesterday they would lobby lawmakers and education associations to have the book removed from mandatory reading lists.

"I can think of many fights that have occurred when persons of color have been called 'n----,' " NAACP member George Love said at a Harrisburg news conference. "It is insulting to African-American students to sit in a classroom while the term is used in required reading." The 1884 novel about a white boy's first-person account of his adventures along the Mississippi River with a runaway slave named Jim has been controversial for decades because of its use of racial slurs and its representations of blacks and women.

Article B

Excerpted From- "Racism and *Huckleberry Finn*: Censorship, Dialogue, and Change"
English Journal, Nov. 1993.

http://www.webbschool.com/rhood/english2/webb_racism_and_huck.htm

As his affection for the minstrel show indicates, and the contributors point out, Twain's personal attitudes toward blacks were contradictory. His father and uncle owned slaves, yet his wife was the daughter of a prominent abolitionist. He fought briefly with the confederate army, yet later in

life paid a black student's way through Yale Law School. Though he protested against lynching and discrimination, he loved minstrel shows. . . . In their essay Frederick Woodward and Donnarae MacCann, a professor and a graduate student at the University of Iowa, argue that Twain's affection for the minstrel show is fundamental to the portrayal of Jim, "The swaggering buffoonery of the minstrel clown is represented early in the novel when Jim awakes and finds his hat in a tree (one of Tom's tricks), and then concocts a tale about witches and the devil" (145). They argue that: The stage Negro's' typical banter about wife troubles, profit making, spooks, and formal education is echoed in episodes in *Huckleberry Finn*, and their inclusion can be traced to a period when Twain was in the midst of planning a new tour of stage readings. Jim gives his impression of King Sollermun' and his harem in a minstrel-like repartee (chap. 14) and his confusion about stock market profits is seen in a farcical account of how Jim's stock his cow-failed to increase his fourteen dollar fortune when he tuck to specalat'n'' (chap. 8). Throughout the novel Jim is stupefied by information that Huck shares with him, as when they discuss Louis XVI's little boy the dolphin.' (145) Several scholars in *Satire and Evasion* point out that in the sequels that Twain wrote to *Huckleberry Finn* (Tom Sawyer Abroad and the unfinished Tom Sawyer's Conspiracy) Jim also appears as "the patient simpleton" and "Huck and Tom amuse themselves while risking Jim's dignity and even his life" (152). In this view even the affection Huck and the reader feel for Jim fits with the minstrel tradition where the comic black characters are congenial and non-threatening.

Article C

**Excerpted From- Teaching Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*
by Shelley Fisher Fishkin**

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/cultureshock/teachers/huck/essay.html>

It is impossible to read *Huck Finn* intelligently without understanding that Mark Twain's consciousness and awareness is larger than that of any of the characters in the novel, including Huck. Indeed, part of what makes the book so effective is the fact that Huck is too innocent and ignorant to understand what's wrong with his society and what's right about his own transgressive behavior. Twain, on the other hand, knows the score. One must be skeptical about most of what Huck says in order to hear what Twain is saying. In a 1991 interview, Ralph Ellison suggested that critics who condemn Twain for the portrait of Jim that we get in the book forget that "one also has to look at the teller of the tale, and realize that you are getting a black man, an adult, seen through the condescending eyes -- partially -- of a young white boy." Are you saying, I asked Ellison, "that those critics are making the same old mistake of confusing the narrator with the author? That they're saying that Twain saw him that way rather than that Huck did?" "Yes," was Ellison's answer.

Clemens as a child accepted without question, as Huck did, the idea that slaves were property; neither wanted to be called a "low-down Abolitionist" if he could possibly help it. Between the time of that Hannibal childhood and adolescence, however, and the years in which Twain wrote *Huckleberry Finn*, Twain's consciousness changed. By 1885, when the book was published, Samuel Clemens held views that were very different from those he ascribed to Huck. . . .

By the time he wrote *Huckleberry Finn*, Samuel Clemens had come to believe not only that slavery was a horrendous wrong, but that white Americans owed black Americans some form of "reparations" for it.

Article D

Excerpted From- **Pioneers: January/February 2006**

by **Judith Ann Schiff**, chief research archivist at the **Yale University Library**

http://www.yalealumnimagazine.com/issues/2006_01/old_yale.html

Because of an association with Mark Twain, Warner Thornton McGuinn, Class of 1887, became the Law School's best-known early African American graduate. After McGuinn finished his undergraduate work at Lincoln University, he attended Howard University Law School for one year before entering Yale. His major extracurricular activity (besides trying to support himself) was serving as president of the Kent Club. This student organization hosted debates about prominent social and political questions, and during the fall term, one of its speakers was Mark Twain. In the course of shepherding the writer around campus and introducing him to the audience, McGuinn made a positive impression.

On Christmas Eve 1885, Twain wrote to Law School dean Francis Wayland to inquire about McGuinn's financial circumstances and whether it would be prudent to offer to help out the young man. "We have ground the manhood out of them, and the shame is ours, not theirs, & we should pay for it," wrote Twain. (The letter, comments Twain scholar Shelley Fisher Fishkin '71, '77PhD, in her book *Lighting Out for the Territory: Reflections on Mark Twain and American Culture*, contains the "most direct, non-ironic condemnation of racism that we had from Twain himself.")

With Twain's support McGuinn became free to concentrate on his studies. He won the Townsend Prize for distinguished oration and went on to a prominent law career in Baltimore, where he held many public service positions and argued successfully in landmark cases against segregation. "He was one of the greatest lawyers who ever lived," said Thurgood Marshall, associate justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, when McGuinn died in 1937. Justice Marshall, who as a young lawyer in Baltimore shared adjoining offices with McGuinn, also said: "If he had been white, he'd have been a judge."

English I Summer Reading Assignment
The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn by Mark Twain

This novel is about the experiences of a young boy who lives in a small town in Missouri during the time of slavery. After being frustrated with rules and conditions placed on him by his caretakers and society, he determines to run away with a slave to seek freedom along the Mississippi. While on the journey, Huck learns about society and the culture in which he lives.

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn is written from the perspective of the various dialects a part of the society at the time. As you read the book and answer the focus questions below, consider the effect of the dialect on the novel.

As you read, pay attention to the characters as they are introduced and developed. Making some notes about characters you suspect will be important will be helpful to you.

As you read this book, focus on the following questions:

- 1. Which minor character (not Huck or Jim) do YOU think has the most influence on the outcome of the book?**
- 2. How did you arrive at your conclusion?**
- 3. Provide text evidence supporting your ideas.**

Length:

Minimum – 1 page

Maximum – 2 pages

Be prepared to share your ideas at the beginning of the school year.