

1990

Towards a better Huck Finn :

Jill Marie Cospers
Lehigh University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://preserve.lehigh.edu/etd>



Part of the [English Language and Literature Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Cospers, Jill Marie, "Towards a better Huck Finn :." (1990). *Theses and Dissertations*. 5408.
<https://preserve.lehigh.edu/etd/5408>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Lehigh Preserve. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Lehigh Preserve. For more information, please contact preserve@lehigh.edu.

Towards a Better Huck Finn:
One Censor's Failed Attempt at Expurgation

by

Jill Marie Cosper

A Thesis

Presented to the Graduate Committee
of Lehigh University
in Candidacy for the Degree of
Master of Arts

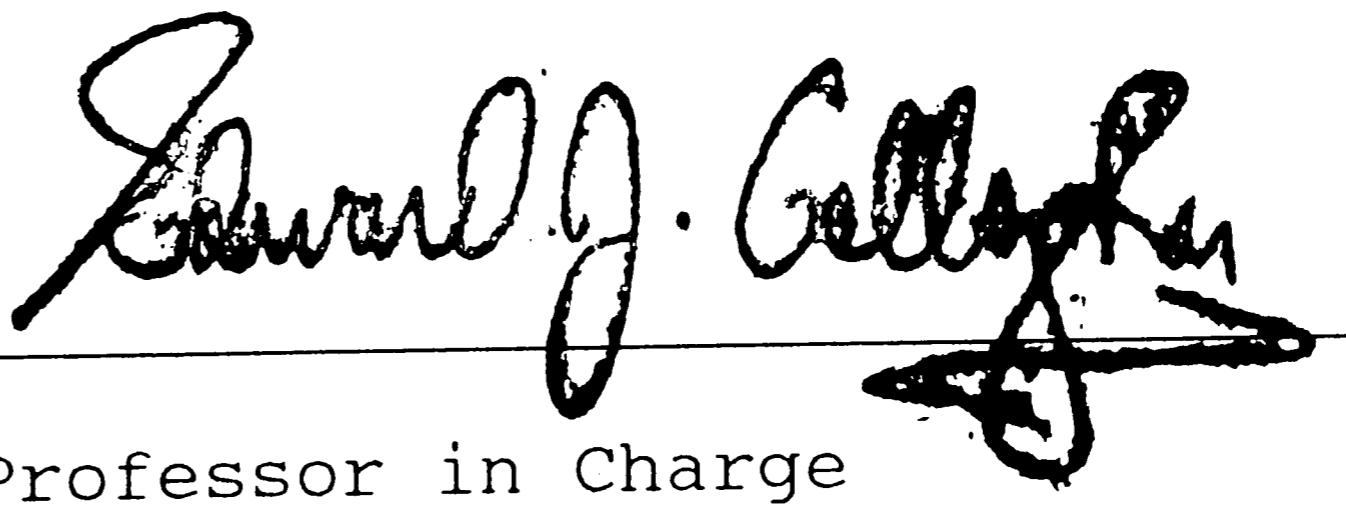
in

English

Lehigh University
December 1990

This thesis is accepted and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

12 / 6 / 90
(date)


Professor in Charge

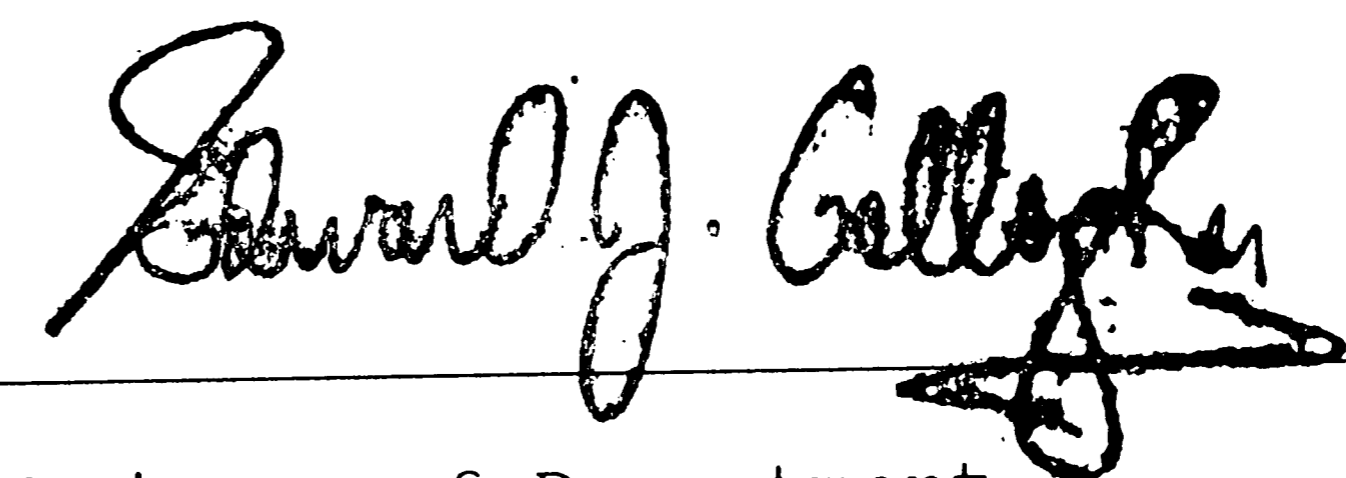

Chairman of Department

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT1
Chapter 1: An Explorattion of Huck's Offenses.....3

Chapter 2: The Spectrum of Black Response.....17

Chapter 3: Wallace's Huck Finn.....39

Chapter 4: Where Do We Go From Here?.....63

Works Cited.....67

Vita..... 70 _r

Abstract

What would happen to the Adventures of Huckleberry Finn if a censor removed what he thought was racially offensive? Since the mid-1950s, parents who object to the racial references of Huck Finn have tried, without much success, to have the book removed from ninth-grade classrooms. In frustration, John H. Wallace, an educator and administrator, published his own expurgated edition of Huck Finn. This Huck Finn satisfies Wallace's objections to the novel, but how will it be read by its intended audience and by other Black scholars? When reading Mark Twain's Huck Finn, Black students are frustrated by the word "nigger," the lack of understanding from their teachers and classmates, and the portrayal of Jim. Black scholars' responses to Twain's Huck Finn range from outrage to support of Twain as a social critic. By using the students' and scholars' responses to Twain's Huck Finn, we can evaluate the success of Wallace's Huck Finn. Wallace accommodated the frustrations with "nigger," and substituted words such as "slave," "Black," and "dude." Wallace also used antiseptic pronouns to replace "nigger." But, unfortunately, replacing "nigger" does little to change the portrayal of Jim or alleviate the frustrations

caused by insensitive teachers and classmates. Although Wallace's changes may placate some Black scholars, others, such as David L. Smith and Kenny J. Williams, see "nigger" as a necessary evil. Wallace does nothing to appease the students' or scholars' other objections to Huck Finn. He does, however, make some other minor changes to grammar, word order, and chapter headings which show no racial relevance. Although Wallace's intentions are good, his version of Huck Finn does not serve his intended audience. On a larger scale, Wallace's expurgation will not alleviate objections to Huck Finn. To satisfy complaints about the novel, editions would have to be produced to answer each complaint--an undesirable task.

Chapter 1: An Exploration of Huck's Offenses

In 1983, John H. Wallace, an educator and administrator in Fairfax County Virginia, published an expurgated edition of the Adventures of Huckleberry Finn. Although his purpose, to eliminate racism, is commendable, the results of his expurgation are not all positive. By censoring Huck Finn, Wallace created a book that was acceptable to himself. But how does Wallace's edition suit other readers? By reviewing criticisms of Huck Finn and then applying some of those criticisms to Wallace's edition, we find that Wallace has made the book acceptable to only a narrow audience. If every critic of Huck Finn published his own version, we would have at least seven different editions. Huck Finn's manner of publication originally caused problems, but the novel has also been criticized for its lack of morality, display of role models, wavering political viewpoints, poor familial relations, and ungrammatical use of language. No wonder, then, as Leslie Fiedler says, "it was reviewed favorably in only one 'serious' literary periodical" (1) when it first appeared in 1885.

Objections may have come easier to Huck Finn because of the way it was published. Unlike the "proper"

literature of the time, Huck Finn was published in excerpts and distributed by subscription, and even the excerpted version was censored. According to Justin Kaplan, "Century Magazine, which published excerpts in advance of book publication, insisted on deleting references to nakedness, dead cats, and the like" (10). So, the book was censored before it was even completed. "Part of the trouble," says Fielder, "seems to have been that it was not packaged and distributed like a 'serious' book at all--but published by 'subscription,' which is to say, peddled like the sleaziest 'commodity literature' of the time" (1). To a society which was concerned with correct language and proper manners, a book which was published like Huck Finn belonged only to the uncouth.

Even though Huck Finn was published after the slavery issue had been settled, the first objections to the novel did not deal with the derogatory attitude towards Blacks. "At first," Nat Hentoff says, "it was not that word [nigger] but rather the uncivilized, unsocialized nature of the wandering boy himself that kept getting him into trouble with decent citizens" (8). Indeed, historically the negative public reaction Huck Finn received was not directed at the book's portrayal of Blacks. Instead, the criticisms were directed at the novel's lack of morality

and refinement. For instance, an editorial in the Springfield Republican in 1907 stated, Mr. Clemens indulges in "a gross trifling with every fine feeling...he has no reliable sense of propriety," and his "moral level is low" (Hentoff 8). In the Missouri Historical Review of 1920, Professor John T. Rice wrote:

he is often coarse, irreverent if not blasphemous...Mark Twain lacks the education absolutely necessary to be a great writer; he lacks the refinement which would render it impossible for him to create such coarse characters as Huck Finn; furthermore, he is absolutely unconscious of all the canons of literary art. (Fiedler 2)

Newspaper editorials accused Twain "not only of a contempt for propriety and a willingness to pander to the gross tastes of the mass audience, but of fouling his own American nest, discrediting his country and culture in the eyes of the 'civilized' world" (Fiedler 4). The criticisms Huck Finn first received, then, were directed at its morality and lack of refinement. Racial criticism was not directed at Huck Finn until the 1950s.

Huck Finn provided a poor role model for law-abiding citizens, whether the book was intended for children or

adults. The "sole hero-narrator of [the] book ridiculed the work ethic, polite manners, the Bible, prayer, and pious sentiments in general" (Kaplan 16). Huck "borrows" from strangers as he makes his way down the river, plays tricks on the authority figures in his life, and, most famously, rejects being "civilized." As for Huck's religious beliefs, he has no tolerance for the widow's strong belief in prayer and religious justice. Fiedler proposes that the bad role model objection has caused Huck Finn the most trouble: "It was therefore predictable from the start that scarcely a year would pass during the century since its publication that has not seen Twain's book forbidden somewhere in the United States" (Fiedler 5). Huck Finn may have provided a bad role model, but others argue that the novel is too good.

In support of the argument that the novel is too good, Kaplan says, "perhaps another of the affronts that Mark Twain's novel offered and continues to offer is that his two outcasts are a silent reproach to dry-land society. They are simply too good for us, too truthful, too loyal, too passionate, and, in a profounder sense than the one we feel easy with, too moral" (17-18). And, indeed, on a moral scale Huck's treatment of Jim ranked way above contemporary society's treatment of Blacks.

Huck feels no need to conform to society's mores, and he is condemned not for being a bad person but for being a bad follower. He "persuades us...of the essential ridiculousness not only of our society's restrictive taboos against lying and stealing, 'copping out' and 'dropping out,' but of its highest positive values as well: duty and hard work, heroism and honor" (Fiedler 7). If we look at Huck's reasoning, we find that his behavior is not motivated by a criminal conscience but by a need to reconcile society and reality.

As Kaplan indicates, Twain explains Huck's conflict as a clash between the heart and the conscience: "Twenty years after he finished Huck Finn Mark Twain described its central and constitutive irony: 'A sound heart and a deformed conscience come into collision and conscience suffers defeat'" (16). Huck questions the morality of society's customs, and what he decides is that society is not always right. Certainly, such an attitude is a threat, but to whom? Huck Finn, Lionel Trilling says, "is 'a subversive book.' No one who responds to its hero's internal struggles over right and wrong, freedom and slavery, humanity and racism will ever again be certain that what appear to be 'clear dictates of moral reason are not merely the ingrained customary beliefs' of a

particular place and time" (Kaplan 16). Huck's aid to Jim, his family problems, and his questioning of civilization in general all make him guilty of being a bad role model. Twain objected to the regimentation of society. According to Kaplan, Twain said society "can be trained to approve any wild thing you want it to approve if you begin its education early and stick to it" (16-17). So, perhaps Huck may be accused of being a bad role model, but his actions are far from destructive. In fact, his actions actually stimulate class consciousness--a most worthy endeavor.

The people who accuse Huck of being a bad role model, of questioning society, belong to a stagnant society, a society where thoughts are dictated. A popular response might be to call them Communist. And yes, Huck Finn has even gotten into international and domestic political trouble. Senator Joseph McCarthy accused Huck Finn of having improper leanings when an Overseas Library Inspection Tour that he ordered in 1953 revealed that the Soviets liked Mark Twain. "The rule of thumb, then, [for the U.S. Overseas Libraries]," says David Oshinsky, "was to include 'controversial' books while excluding blatantly pro-Communist or anti-American propaganda" (277). The purpose of the overseas tour was to eliminate books which

our enemies found acceptable. According to Oshinsky, "In Vienna, [Roy] Cohn and [G. David] Schine visited the U.S. Information Library and the Soviet Union's House of Culture, searching for books that both sides found acceptable. They found several--the works of Mark Twain, for example--and dutifully wrote them down" (279). In all, 30,000 out of 2,000,000 books were eliminated. Huck also had domestic political problems: "A now forgotten congressman called Joseph Shannon...an unreconstructed apologist for the Confederacy, had described Twain as 'a foresaker of the interests of the South, a coward and a deserter'" (Fiedler 1). Huck just could not win--socially or politically.

Ironically, Twain was also accused of not being liberal enough. For example, Fiedler notes, "During the Sexual Revolution of the 'twenties, that is to say--in one more typically ironic turn of the critical screw--Twain was blamed for expurgating his own work in response to the pressures of his timid family and friends--for failing, in short, to be vulgar and unrefined enough" (2). And even though others complained about his liberal social policies, to Marxists Twain's consciousness had serious faults. "To a hardline Stalinist like Granville Hicks, for instance," Fiedler writes, "Twain seemed never to have

fulfilled his promise of becoming 'a great social novelist'" (2). Henry James dismissed Twain as "reading for the immature," and Newton Arvin argued "that Twain's appeal was 'chiefly to the very young...he is read not because he makes experience more intelligible, but because he cooperates with the desire to play hooky'" (2). So, was Twain a social critic? And for which side? And did Huck provide a poor role model? With all of these social discussions brought about by one book, no wonder it caused a stir.

Twain shook society's view of familial relations through his sense of humor in Huck Finn. As far as Twain's mastery of literary art, public opinion labeled him a humorist. Huck Finn's humor fell far short of its audience's expectations, though. A scathing review which appeared in Life's "Bookishness" column labeled Twain's humor "Blood-Curdling," and called Twain's opening comments on moral and motive "a nice little artifice to scare off the critics--a kind of 'trespassers on these grounds will be dealt with according to law'" (119). The rest of the column is devoted to sarcastic interpretation of the novel. For example, Huck's method of escaping the clutches of his abusive father is described as follows:

An elevating and laughable description of how

Huck killed a pig, smeared its blood on an axe and mixed in a little of his own hair, and then ran off, setting up a job on the old man and the community, and leading them to believe him murdered. This little joke can be repeated by any smart boy for the amusement of his fond parents. (119)

The anonymous author has obviously missed the danger of Huck's situation. Calling Huck's father a "fond parent" is ridiculous, and any sincere reader cannot help but applaud Huck's ingenious escape. That the reviewer felt so strongly about Huck's relation with his father shows the straight and narrow view of familial relationships allowed by most censors. Why should such a relationship not be censored?

Those who thought Twain's sense of humor unwitty also thought his use of language inappropriate. Books were supposed to be enlightening and educational, but Twain's language was not intended to teach; it was reality. Huck Finn was filled with "colloquial backcountry American, with the deliberate misspellings and grammatical lapses on which newspaper humorists depended for easy laughs" (Fiedler 1). Although readers wanted to be entertained, they also depended on books to teach them "proper"

English. With Huck Finn Twain "disappointed readers who thought that with The Prince and the Pauper he was shedding the bad habits he had acquired as a Western journalist, contemptuous of elegance and good taste" (Fiedler 1). Not only does the novel contain dialect reproductions, but the author is proud of his accomplishments. In an opening "Explanatory," Twain lists the dialects he has used--Missouri Negro, the "extremist form of the backwoods Southwestern," Pike County, and four modified varieties--and defends their use: "The shadings have not been done in a haphazard fashion, or by guesswork; but painstakingly, and with the trustworthy guidance and support of personal familiarity with these several forms of speech." Perhaps Twain's use of several dialects can be labeled social commentary, because his reason for giving an explanation touches on social conformity: "I make this explanation for the reason that without it many readers would suppose that all these characters were trying to talk alike and not succeeding." If we can label Twain's use of dialects social commentary, then we certainly cannot allow its prohibition by censors. So, before the issue of racism arose, Huck Finn was denounced because of its language.

None of the previous objections appears sound to me.

They all imply subtle disturbances which are very open to interpretation. Of all the complaints about Huck Finn, the only justifiable ones, it seems to me, come from Blacks. Although the novel had already been accused of anti-racism, in 1957 the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People declared the book "racially offensive" for the first time (Kaplan 18). One excerpt from Mari Evans' reaction to the novel reveals that Blacks are truly offended and belittled by the book:

When I first read Huck Finn as a child, I knew nothing of the Plantation School's stereotype of the loyal, slow-witted "negro," but Jim never rose above that level in my childish mind. I remember a deep sense of unease that the adult Black male was not only partially dependent on but at the mercy of both the goodwill and the whims of the unpredictable young white boy.

(qtd. in Woodard 11)

In recent years, the Black cause has been taken on by John H. Wallace, who has his own childhood memories of Huck Finn. "I read 'Huck Finn' when I was in high school--and I remember feeling betrayed by the teacher. I felt humiliated and embarrassed" (qtd. in Sager). If Huck Finn is causing tension for Black children and contributing to

their suppression, does that mean it should be banned?

In response to the NAACP's objections, Fiedler says that the New York School Board "crossed the book about Huck from the books permitted for reading in the elementary and junior schools" (5). Once the precedent was set, the trend continued. As Fiedler notes, "In the 1/4 century since, most of the efforts to ban Huck Finn have been launched by enlightened liberals" (5). In 1982, in what most critics call an ironic twist that Twain would have appreciated, two name-sake institutions banned Huck Finn. The Human Relations Committee of the Mark Twain Elementary School of Arlington Virginia, according to Fiedler, "charged it with being 'anti-American,' a threat to the 14th Amendment and the very notion that 'all men are created equal' because of its 'flagrant use of the word "nigger"'" (5-6). During that same year the Human Relations Committee of the Mark Twain Intermediate School in Fairfax County "objected to 'the flagrant use of the word "nigger" and the demeaning way in which Black people are portrayed in the book'" (Sager). Fairfax's crusade was lead by John H. Wallace, who stressed the harm Huck Finn could bring to Black students. "I am convinced that the assignment and reading aloud of Huck Finn in our classrooms causes Black children to have a low esteem of

themselves and of their race. It also causes white students to have little or no respect for Blacks. The resulting attitudes can lead to tension, discontent and fights" (qtd. in Sager). Most of the racial objectors acknowledge the worth of Huck Finn, but they claim the bad outweighs the good. Certainly, the Blacks are ridiculed at some points in the novel, but if a piece of literature is demeaning, does that mean it should be altered?

There have been two attempts to expurgate Huck Finn. As Jonathan Yardley notes, Charles Neider, with the backing of Doubleday publishers, restored the raft chapter and "wack[ed] away mercilessly at six of the novel's chapters, eliminating one entirely" (Yardley F1). Neider based his revisions on the critical scholarship of Hemingway, Trilling, and Eliot; and the result was, of course, an entirely new novel. We can easily condemn Neider for his fiddlings because his decisions were extreme and based on the idea that he could produce a critically better novel. But what about subtle changes? Could we object to a rewrite of Huck Finn that simply removed the offensive words? Fairfax's John H. Wallace also produced an expurgated Huck Finn in 1983 by his own publishing company. Unlike Neider, Wallace changed only what he deemed offensive, and he did not censor according

to literary criticism. But were his changes less offensive and less damaging to the purpose and meaning of Huck Finn? And did they result in a better Huck Finn for Blacks?

In this first chapter, I have explored the many criticisms that have been levied at Huck Finn. The novel has been accused of broad range of offenses. Before we look at the subtle changes Wallace made in his edition of the novel, we should look more closely at the criticism levied by Wallace's peers. What do Blacks think about Huck Finn? How do they feel about that word "nigger." By exploring the Black response to Huck Finn, we can better understand Wallace's changes and also better evaluate the success of those changes.

Chapter 2: The Spectrum of Black Response

To my mind there have been two basic evaluations of the Adventures of Huckleberry Finn by Black people. The first is simply the emotional and angry response of those subjected to the book in a classroom. The second is the analytical response to the book when critiqued by Black scholars. Although the analytical response varies from positive to negative and the suggested solutions from banning and burning to teacher sensitivity training, the response of the typical Black child and parents remains constant. By detailing the spectrum of Black responses to the novel, I hope to gain an understanding of the Black reactions to Huck Finn and to then use that understanding to evaluate John H. Wallace's edition of the novel in Chapter 3.

The children and parents who have been angered enough to challenge the use of Huck Finn in the classroom clearly demonstrate the humiliation the novel can cause. Allen Ballard recalls, "Being Black, I remember vividly the experience of having read Huck Finn in a predominately white junior high school in Philadelphia some 30 years ago. I can still recall the anger and pain I felt as my white classmates read aloud the word 'nigger'" (qtd. in

Woodard 11). And their humiliation is often compounded by the lack of understanding from teachers. Sonia Sanchez writes about her son's frustrations with an ignorant teacher:

When my son Mungu was reading Huckleberry Finn in junior high school, he walked into my room one weekend with a very strange look on his face. I asked, "What's wrong, honey?" and he said, "I feel that Jim is not a human being," adding that Jim's only purpose in the book was to serve whites. He also said that he read the book in disgust, unable to enjoy it. He told me that he could not identify with Jim because he would never allow himself to be used in this way. I suggested he bring this up in the classroom with his teacher, and he did. He reported that the teacher responded by saying that a lot of Blacks were not intelligent at the time the book was written, and they were too ignorant to understand how they were being treated and used. My son answered that Blacks were powerless, not unintelligent. (qtd. in Woodard 11)

The responses of Black children subjected to reading

the book are very clear. They are angered by the repetitious use of the word "nigger" and often feel uncomfortable and even demeaned in front of their white classmates. When they attempt to express their feelings, they come face to face with the prejudice which still exists in our society. As a result, Black children learn to withdraw from the classroom. They do not fit in. Margot Allen writes, "I hid from the teacher and my classmates the tension, discomfort and hurt I would feel everytime I heard the word 'nigger' and felt some white person's stare being directed my way" (qtd. in Woodard 10). On the emotional level, the word causes a problem, and in many instances the teachers do not seem prepared to combat the inevitable feelings of inferiority, and often the teachers even contribute to the problem. The students are caught in a double negative. Reading "nigger" over and over reminds them that their ancestors were not considered human beings. They were considered sneaky, lazy, stupid work horses to be exploited for the owners' monetary gain. The students question, then, their own self-worth. Yet, if the students express any doubt about "nigger," they find that their white teachers and classmates feel that "nigger" is an accurate portrayal of the way things were--that Blacks were, in those days,

sneaky, lazy, etc. Their sense of self-worth plummets.

Teacher sensitivity training has been offered by the NAACP as a way to keep Huck Finn in the classroom, but the reflex action of most parents is to withdraw the book. The antebellum South lulled the Blacks into taking things slowly too, and who can blame them for not wanting to follow that path again? Education is supposed to be an enlightening and confidence-building experience, and yet the effect of Huck Finn on Black youngsters is just the opposite.

The frustrations Black students and parents face when trying to combat racism is exemplified by one parent's attempt to remove Huck Finn from the classroom. Margot Allen is a parent who both experienced the pain of reading Huck Finn in class and watched her own son fall victim to the same racist attitudes approximately twenty-three years later. After her son Antwi was asked to read the part of Jim because he had "the perfect voice for it," Mrs. Allen joined the crusade to have Huck Finn removed from the classroom. Allen's complaints were filed on her school's "Citizen's Request for Reconsideration of a Book" form. Her three main reasons were "racially potent language; negative stereotyped images of the character Jim in particular, but also of other non-European people; and

condescending/patronizing attitudes of Whites toward Jim" (Ondrusek 17). As for racially potent language, that word "nigger" causes problems for children in the classroom without a doubt. Lucille Clifton's father, in an effort to protect her, sent a note with her to school: "Do not teach her about Nigger Jim. She ain't no nigger" (qtd. in Woodard 10). And Allen's parents had taught her that that word "was used only by people who were ignorant or of low moral character" (9). While Clifton and Allen's parents were attempting to combat racist attitudes, the other authority figures, the schools and teachers, were supporting them. The negative stereotyped images are supported by Jim, who not only expounds upon but follows with dedicated interest superstitious practices. Here the sneaky and stupid images have crept in. And Huck, as well as older white characters, continuously put themselves in the position of knowing what's best for Jim, who, if left to his own devices, would have found himself a free man much sooner. Parents are upset by the support Huck Finn appears to lend to racist attitudes. At a time when youngsters are building their sense of identity and self-esteem, reading the novel in class, especially with insensitive teachers, can easily push them into acceptance of a low position on the socio-economic ladder.

A fact-finding committee, with Allen as a member, was formed and found that:

Despite the generally favorable results of the study, several of the responses, including some by students who read the book as part of an instructional unit, indicated a tendency to perceive Black characters in stereotypic terms: as less intelligent, as highly superstitious, and as more susceptible to caricature than whites. (Penn State study 20)

The committee recommended that the book be removed from the ninth-grade curriculum but that it be available for use in grades eleven and twelve and that the district study the treatment of minorities in the school district. According to the committee, the tendency to stereotype Blacks occurred at the same level before and after the students had read Huck Finn. Here we see the frustration. Students with prejudicial views are confirmed in their standing by reading the book. Those without, remain unaffected. In essence, the majority of the students at the ninth-grade level were not sophisticated enough to pick up the sarcasm, and the book was interpreted as an adventure story. But what about the Black students' reactions? Although the attitudes towards Blacks were

unacceptable, the study showed that reading the book had no significant effect on them. And though no attempt to expose racism is useless, the end results of this study proved worthless. Allen notes, "The School Board stated that it was not the Board's prerogative to decide the grade placement of the book, and that decision was referred to an English Advisory Committee made up of the English Coordinator and classroom teachers. At a School Board meeting in October, 1983, the final decision was to retain Huck Finn in the ninth grade" (12). Allen later filed formal complaints with the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission and the Pennsylvania NAACP. She writes, "It was clear that my original concerns about the impact of this book on youngsters (both Black and white) had been lost between the cracks of committee bureaucracy and School Board politics" (12).

Parents and students who deal with Huck Finn in the classroom agree that the book causes problems. Black scholars form a less unified group. Some Black critics support the complaints that Huck Finn causes problems with the self-confidence of Black children. Richard Barksdale writes, "Blacks, in particular, would have their children shielded from the ignominious shame of slavery, not only because the memory of slavery exacerbates today's racial

problems, but also because their children are racially traumatized by any reference to their former inferior status" (18). The main cause of the problem continues to be the word "nigger," and Barksdale counts 160 occurrences of the word in the book. Barksdale also moves beyond the realm of Black self-confidence in his criticism of Huck Finn and suggests that the novel should be offensive to both Blacks and whites. He writes:

Indeed, slavery times provoke bad memories for both racial groups - memories of the chaos wrought by incestuous concubinage and the birth of half-white half-brothers and half-black half-sisters, memories of a dehumanizing system that reduced grown black men and women to "boys" and "gals" and grown white men and women to groveling hypocrites. (18)

Within the context of Black criticism, then, Huck Finn could be labeled racially offensive to both Blacks and whites.

Other Black scholars, however, defend the use of racially offensive material to make a point. David Smith, for example, defends Twain's work as a means to explain and eliminate racial discourse. Smith defines racial discourse as the language used in speaking about Blacks

and their supposed inferiority. "The notion of Negro inferiority was so deeply pervasive among those heirs of 'The Enlightenment,'" Smith notes, "that the categories and even the vocabulary of Negro inferiority were formalized into a tedious, unmodulated litany" (4). Racial discourse could be found in everyday conversation and also in literature, and it worked to continue the concept of Black inferiority after the Emancipation. Even though the Blacks were freed from slavery, portrayals of Blacks as inferior kept the movement of the status quo to a minimum. Smith concludes, "'The Negro,' a socially constituted fiction, is a generalized, one-dimensional surrogate for the historical reality of Afro-American people. It is this reified fiction which Twain attacks in Huck Finn" (4).

Smith contends that the use of the word "nigger" is necessary to discredit racial discourse: as a synonym for slave the use of that word "clearly designates the 'nigger' as a piece of property, a commodity, a slave" (5). If we evaluate where and when Huck and Jim use "nigger," we find that it is used in this sense. For example, when Huck tells Aunt Sally that "only" a "nigger" was killed, "he correctly assumes that the common notion of Negro subhumanity will be appropriate," says Smith (5).

Throughout the novel, Huck and Jim use "nigger" to trick other people into believing them. Those characters who use "nigger" and buy into the myths of racial discourse discredit themselves in other ways. For example, when Pap rants and raves about the free mulatto from Ohio who "refuses to behave like a 'nigger,'" Smith says, "he discredits himself and other believers in 'the Negro'" (5). The problem, Smith says, lies in the fact that the connection between Pap and his white Southern contemporaries has not been stressed.

Another Black scholar, Kenny Williams, agrees with the notion that Twain uses the "nigger"/white issue to discredit the characters who buy into the Negro myth. Williams sees a polarization of whites and Blacks in the description of Pap as "a fish-belly white." If one compares this description with that of the free Black man from Ohio who so angered Huck's father that he refused to vote again, or with the presentation of the noble qualities of Jim, "'white' does not appear to have any particular advantage," says Williams (41). Twain shows us respectable personages in his Black characters while all of his white characters, some more so than others, appear ridiculous. The white characters are further exposed as surface evaluators in the "Sick Arab" escapade. The white

characters "accept blackness when it can be given a foreign air" (Williams 41). Color can be used to trick the white characters into acceptance. Twain's manipulation of color discredits the white characters who accept the manipulation. In this sense, Williams says, Huck Finn may be seen as a positive contribution to the dispelling of the Negro myth.

Williams joins the parents and other Black critics in denouncing the use of the word "nigger": "What could have been a magnificent tale is so burdened by an excessive use of racial epithets that the story's message is lost to all but the most perceptive" (41). The concern with the word, according to Williams, is understandable and should not be dismissed. But perhaps the focus on that word has done some harm. Williams writes: "That there is much concern with the presence of an objectionable word is perhaps unfortunate because to focus on an epithet seriously limits one's perception of other aspects of the novel" (42). Not unlike Twain's white characters, Huck Finn's readers have been caught in the color = stereotype trap. And as we saw in the first chapter, readers can see just about any view they want in Huck Finn.

Black critics' opinions of the predominant Black character, Jim, represent a wide spectrum from white

fantasy to ambivalence to intelligence. Julius Lester contends that Huck Finn is not credible factually or emotionally: "Jim is childlike, not typical of a grown man with a wife and children" (44). Lester claims that Jim's character is inconsistent, and that Jim's intelligence is sacrificed for the sake of the adventure: "If Jim knew that Ohio met the Mississippi at Cairo, how could he not have known of the closer proximity of freedom to the east in Illinois or north in Iowa? Why continue South?" (44). Lester holds the readers responsible for knowing the geography: "A century of white readers have accepted this as credible, a grim reminder of the abysmal feelings of superiority with which whites are burdened" (44). Lester is unsatisfied with Jim's emotional display concerning his journey: "Jim continues south without anxiety about his fate" (44). Lester's arguments are severe and brutal, and he allows no room for diversity in white interpretations. To him Jim is "the only kind of Black that whites have ever truly liked--faithful, tending sick whites, not speaking, not causing trouble and totally passive" (44).

Kenny Williams contends that Jim "represents a variety of viewpoints and may indeed be most representative of Twain's own ambivalence" (40). And Charles Nilon agrees that Jim's character is inconsistent.

At times Jim is believable; at others he is not. Initially Jim is concerned with the well-being of his wife and children, but by the end of the novel he seems to have forgotten about them. The critics who feel that Jim is inconsistent most often point to the end of the book to prove their arguments. When Tom is shot, Nilon says, Jim accepts the myth of caste: "Jim's false assumptions about Tom's concern and attitudes are costly errors" (25). The relationships between Tom, Huck, and Jim sway Jim into accepting attitudes that are not initially his:

At the end of the novel Jim appears to have accepted the value Tom places on him...and he shows no resentment of the way Tom took advantage of Huck's and his powerlessness. It is of crucial importance that he appears also to have forgotten his interest in the condition of his wife and children. His delight in being "rich" with the forty dollars Tom gave him shows how he has been injured by accepting Tom's values. (27)

Most critics, whether Black or white, find the final chapters disturbing. Nichols sums up well the interpretation that perhaps the final chapters are representative of the South's reluctance to accept Black

equality: "By 1885 Mark Twain was well aware how little freedom had been achieved by the Emancipation Proclamation and the Reconstruction. The Old South's ex-Confederates did everything possible to keep the Blacks enslaved. The ending of the book is Twain's satire on the extremes to which the defeated Confederacy went to keep the Black population enslaved" (15). Although the critics see Jim as an inconsistent character, his inconsistency serves a purpose.

Nichols gives Twain credit, however, for Jim's humanity, and Smith is representative of the Black critics who see Huck Finn as a positive force in Black history. Smith writes, "Jim is cautious, he gives excellent advice, he suffers persistent anguish over separation from his wife and child, and he even sacrifices his own sleep in order that Huck may rest" (4). Jim's alleged belief in the supernatural has caused concern because of the lack of education which it implies, but Smith credits Jim with the intelligence to use foolish misconceptions of Black reality to his own advantage. Smith comments on Jim's tale of having been hexed and ridden by witches:

Whether Jim believes his own tale or not-and the "superstitious Negro" thesis requires us to assume that he does--the fact remains that Jim

clearly benefits from becoming more a celebrity and less a "servant." Has he cleverly exploited the conventions of "Negro superstition" in order to turn a silly boy's prank to his own advantage? (7)

Smith leaves his question unanswered but adds to his argument for Jim's intelligence in dealing with superstitions. "Even if Jim does believe in the supernatural powers of this hairball, the fact remains that most of the transaction depends upon Jim's quick wits. For example, the soothsaying aside, much of the exchange between Huck and Jim is an exercise in wily and understated economic bartering" (7). Jim maintains his intelligence in Smith's opinion. Later in the novel, when Huck and Jim argue over "Poly-voo-franzy," "While Jim's response--that man should talk like a man--betrays his ignorance of cultural diversity, his argument is perceptive and structurally sound" (8). Jim moves within the system and knows how to manipulate situations to suit his own needs. He is intelligent and a survivor, according to Smith.

The final chapters of Huck Finn have long come under critical scrutiny. The fact that Twain left the novel for a time and then returned to it has been cited as a reason

for the ending's inconsistency with the rest of the novel. Black critical response agrees that the ending is inconsistent, but whether the ending has a worthwhile purpose varies with individual critics. Lester continues his bitterness towards Huck Finn and finds no redeeming qualities in the closing chapters: "Jim is a plaything, an excuse for 'the adventure of it,' to be used as it suits the fancies of the white folk, whether that fancy be a journey on a raft down the river or a torch-light parade" (45). Lester questions the validity of Miss Watson freeing Jim in the strongest point of his argument. The townspeople believe that Jim killed Huck--"Yet we are now to believe that an old white lady would free a Black slave suspected of murdering a white child" (45). Lester also sees Miss Watson as inhuman because she fails to mention Jim's wife and children. But as we have seen from Huck Finn and its critics before, being white does not mean automatic intelligence.

The closing chapters show perhaps more clearly than the rest of the novel that white does not equal good and Black does not equal bad: "Twain contrasts Jim's self-sacrificing compassion with the cruel and mean-spirited behavior of his captors, emphasizing that white skin does not justify claims of superior virtue"

(Smith 9). What causes the problem, though, is that Tom is not punished for his actions nor is Jim rewarded for his. Nilon notes, "The doctor recognizes in Jim what in white people are considered admirable human qualities" (26). All of the characters in the novel agree that Jim has acted nobly, yet they do not treat him any better. Smith and Nilon see the structure of the final chapters as a necessary evil: "Tom's antics subvert the tone of the novel, but they also provide the necessary backdrop for Jim's noble act" (Smith 9). Jim's response to Tom's actions, according to Smith, sets him apart from everyone except Huck. The closing chapters work to dispel the conventional Black and white stereotypes.

In a sense, whites and Blacks are made equal by Tom's pranks. Whites and Blacks are hurt by Tom: "Aunt Sally and Uncle Silas are affected as much as Nat their slave is" (Nilon 23-24). Aunt Sally fears that she is losing her mind, the neighbors are frightened, and Tom is shot. The entire community is disturbed. Tom uses the same caliber of pranks to distract Nat and Aunt Sally. By denying that he has greeted Jim, Tom forces Nat "to reject the truth of what he has seen, to give up confidence in his knowledge and the accuracy of his vision" (Nilon 23). By stealing and replacing the spoons, Tom forces Aunt

Sally to come to the same conclusion.

The final chapters have also been evaluated as a parody of the contemporary issue of freeing Blacks. "While Twain was completing Huck Finn," Nilon writes, "Black people were being freed much as Huck and Tom were freeing Jim and in a style that would have pleased Tom" (21). For example, Tom's use of foxfire, Nilon says, calls attention to the fact that freeing the Blacks could only be done in the dark. "Huck's reference to Tom's plan getting them killed," Nilon continues, "may be a reference to the fact that violence was frequently a part of the process of coercing Black behavior in the South during the post-Reconstruction period" (Nilon 24). Blacks were injured emotionally, and Tom's plan causes Jim to mistrust his judgment. Tom denies Jim's humanity. Smith concludes, "Given Twain's view of freedom, to allow Jim to escape to the North or to have Tom announce Jim's manumission earlier would have been an evasion of the novel's ethical insights. While one may escape from legal bondage, there is no escape from the cruelties of this 'civilization'" (10).

The preceding arguments outline the critical response to the novel as a whole put forth by Black critics. The response ranges from socially responsible to socially

irresponsible. Smith sees the novel as "a critique of those socially constituted fictions--most notably, romanticism, religion, and the concept of 'the Negro'--which serve to justify and to disguise selfish, cruel, and exploitative behavior" (4). Nichols agrees that the novel should be read as an attack on the values of genteel America. Reading the novel in this manner is rare as we see from the responses of the children in the beginning of this chapter. The problem lies in Twain's ironic style. Barksdale writes, "If the ironic statement made by an author in a work of fiction is too subtly wrought, it will not be effectively communicated to the average reader" (20). Barksdale suggests, then, that the problem is not in the book but in its readers.

Lester sees Huck Finn as socially irresponsible. He assumes an author's responsibility to educate, and he writes, "In its very essence, the book offends that morality which would give 'a noble image...to be inspired and guided by.' If it is the hero's task 'to reveal what the gods require and love,' what do we learn from the Adventures of Huck Finn?" (45) What we learn depends on how we read the novel. Perhaps Twain wrote the novel in an instructive manner to his intended audience. Herein lies another problem. Twain claims the novel was never

intended for children. If we assume an author should be socially responsible, then perhaps we need to follow the author's intentions more faithfully.

None of the Black critics whose opinions have been expressed in this chapter recommend expurgating the novel as Wallace has done. Lester feels that the book should be eliminated from the classroom: "While I am opposed to book banning, I know that my children's education will be enhanced by not reading Huck Finn...That may sound harsh and moralistic, but I cannot separate literature, no matter how well-written, from morality" (43). The NAACP recommends teacher sensitivity training, but Barksdale thinks the efforts would not be worth the rewards and the book should be made an optional reading assignment. Barksdale admits that there may be validity in the observation that any race that would ignore its history will be condemned to repeat it: "This admonition, if heeded, would prod Black Americans to remember slavery, however painful the memory, and urge Jews to recall the Holocaust, however painful the memory" (18). Perhaps there is a lesson to be learned from the Jewish handling of the Holocaust. While they do not celebrate it, their dignified remembrances keep them from ignoring their heritage.

Although Rhett Jones sees problems with Huck Finn, he feels that the book should be read "so that folk can continue to read the novel, get angry, feel betrayed and eventually find an answer to why Twain was willing to betray Jim, Huck, his readers and his own insight rather than let Huck go on in his exposure of racism" (37). Irritation and discussion keep us from becoming complacent. Nichols fully supports the presence of Huck Finn in the classroom:

1. it unmasks the violence, hypocrisy and pretense of nineteenth century America;
2. it re-affirms the values of our democratic faith, our celebration of the worthiness of the individual, however poor, ignorant or despised;
3. it gives us a vision of the possibility of love and harmony in our multi-ethnic society;
4. it dramatizes the truth that justice and freedom are always in jeopardy. (14)

To Nichols, the lessons to be learned from Huck Finn are necessary. The novel exposes racism for what it was then and still is now.

The range of response to Huck Finn is wide, but one strong underlying sentiment ties the range together. Children, parents, and critics agree that "nigger" causes

anger and resentment. Unlike the children and parents, however, some critics support Twain's use of the word for a purpose. Character portrayals and situations in the novel frustrate the children and parents' attempts to combat racism in schools. But some Black critics defend Twain's work as an attempt to fight that racism. Although removing the book from schools is the answer for Lester and the children and parents, Wallace offers another alternative in his expurgated edition. By using the range of response outlined in this chapter, we can evaluate Wallace's edition and its suitability for the classroom.

Chapter 3: Wallace's Huck Finn

In this chapter, I will explore and evaluate the changes Wallace made to the Adventures of Huckleberry Finn in his attempt to make the book more suitable for the classroom. The arguments of Williams and Smith which we explored in the previous chapter become very useful here. Most of the changes Wallace makes affect the color issue, racial discourse, and Negro myth elements of the novel. We also need to keep in mind that the children were angered not only by the use of "nigger" but also by the lack of understanding from their teachers and classmates. To help the reader who would like to see Wallace's changes versus Twain's original text, I will list page numbers for both versions after each quotation, (Wallace's page number, Twain's page number).

As an administrator at the Mark Twain Intermediate School in Fairfax County, John H. Wallace was a member of the racially mixed Human Relations Committee which recommended Huck Finn be banned from the ninth-grade classes in 1982. In his opinion, Wallace said, "It is anti-American; it works against the melting pot theory of our country; it works against the 14th Amendment to the Constitution and against the preamble that guarantees all

men life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" (qtd. in Sager A10). Calling the book "racist trash," Wallace added that anyone who taught the book was racist too (New York Times editorial). Although the committee's recommendation was supported by the school's principal, John Martin, the area school superintendent, Doris Torrice, disagreed, and the novel was returned to the classroom. In response Wallace then published his own expurgated edition in 1983 and dedicated it to "the elimination of racism from the curriculums of schools in the United States of America and throughout the world" (iv). Most of Wallace's changes work to soften the racial implications of the book, but he also takes the liberty of cleaning up grammar, eliminating sentences, and even adding his own words.

The first noticeable difference is the elimination of Twain's "Explanatory" and "Notice." The "Explanatory" warns readers that they should pay close attention to the language. Wallace adds a glossary to the end of his edition, which may help young readers with the individual words but steers them away from the true dialogue, the racial discourse. The "Notice," as well, tells readers that the novel has a purpose larger than the expected motive, moral, and plot. Without the "Notice" why should

young readers see more than an adventure story in Huck Finn? Why should they see the dispelling of the Negro myth? Wallace has only made the sensitive teacher's job harder. Wallace's own "Foreward" confirms the adventure story reading: "Huck and his friend, Tom Sawyer, have lots of fun playing tricks on Jim and several other characters in the novel" (v). We have to wonder, too, about Wallace's interpretation of the novel, for he says Huck is "running away from the rigid control of his father" (v). Pap's abuse of Huck can hardly be called rigid control. As we move through Wallace's edition, we find other instances of his conservative attitudes. Wallace appears to have wandered from his purpose before he gets beyond the first page.

The first change which supports Wallace's aim to eliminate racism is the removal of the word "nigger." Wallace replaces the word "nigger" throughout his edition of the book, and at times he eliminates the status reference entirely. His favorite replacement is the word "slave" which he uses 120 times. Other replacement words include "he/him" seven times, "people" two times, and "anybody" one time. If Wallace's aim was to remove the implications of "nigger," the antiseptic pronouns do just that. However, other replacement words cannot be so

easily passed over, and we need to look at the situations where Wallace uses "dude" three times, "her companion" one time, "the devil" one time, and "servant" two times. At times he used Jim's (eleven times) and Nat's (six times) names as replacements, and "Black," which he used nine times, may have negative implications as well.

After reading, frontwards and backwards, I found that the offending word "nigger" occurred 215 times. Many thoughts have been recorded about Twain's use of the word, but for such a short book its usage does seem excessive. What became most interesting to me was who was using the word and how. Smith and Williams both say the use of "nigger" is a means to an end. Smith's racial discourse argument and Williams' discrediting of the Negro myth rely on Twain using the word deliberately, and at times Twain upholds that responsibility. At other times Twain's satire requires too narrow an audience to be effective. For example, Smith contends that Huck uses "nigger" to gain the confidence of his foes; and indeed he does, 29 times. The most prolific use of the word, however, comes during Huck's narration, 94 times. If, while he is narrating, Huck is educating the reader, then a Black reader negates the necessity of the lesson. Huck's internal struggles remain relevant but trying to engage

the reader and lead him to the same realization becomes superfluous if not insulting.

Evaluating the variance in definition between "nigger" and "slave" becomes a difficult task. Both words imply a lack of self-determination. A "nigger" and a "slave" are both people who can be owned. Although "nigger" implies a person of a certain color, both words imply a subservient will. Today, of course, the words mean greatly different things, and perhaps the problem is one of timing. Slave brings an historical image to mind, while "nigger" is still used today to imply all of the negative Black myths. "Nigger" becomes acceptable, however, when Blacks use the word among themselves. Perhaps Black youngsters should know that slave involved more negative implications than it does today. We need to decide, I think, how important it is for Black youngsters to know their past. Their ancestors were called "niggers" as well as "slaves." The problem lies in the amount of time teachers spend discussing these perception problems, and perhaps the book, for that reason, does not belong in the ninth-grade classroom. Changing the novel does not solve the problem. And I think we need to hold more tightly to the sacredness of an author's work.

I want to look closely at a couple of passages where

Wallace replaces "nigger" with "slave." The change in the tonal quality of the passages is great, but hard to appreciate unless you are reading it for the first time as Wallace's readers would be. One passage that stands out is the doctor's evaluation of Jim. For the short time the doctor appears in the book, he uses "nigger" ten times in referring to Jim's helpfulness and loyalty. Wallace uses "slave" five times in this passage, and the rest of the doctor's offenses are covered with vague words such as "fellow," "man," and "him." Wallace replaces "nigger" with "slave" when the doctor is referring to his own sacrifices and Jim's worth. "I'd of liked to run up town and see them, but I dasn't, because the slave might get away" (216, 276). "I tell you gentlemen, a slave like that is worth a thousand dollars" (216, 276). When speaking about Jim's value, Wallace's use of "slave" puts Jim in a subservient position. Yet when the doctor gives his candid opinion--"I like him for that" (216, 276) and "He ain't no bad fellow" (217, 276)--the antiseptic words creep in, and it leaves me wondering whether it was possible to like a "nigger" or "slave." The dehumanization remains even though the words have been changed.

Another passage where "nigger" appears repeatedly occurs when Huck tells the reader about Jim's experience

with witches. Here Wallace uses "slave" to replace four offenses and "people" to replace one. This passage perpetuates the Negro myth, and to make our young readers comfortable perhaps it should have been eliminated entirely. Wallace's "slave" here does not drastically change the meaning of the passage, but his "people" puts Jim in a lofty position: "People would come miles to hear Jim tell about it, and he was more looked up to than any slave in that country" (5, 16). The use of "people" here implies that everyone, no matter what race, came to hear Jim spin his tale and held him in high esteem. To my mind, this situation gives Black youngsters a distorted view of the slave condition. These arguments seem small, and the effects the words will have on children occur subtly; yet, if taught with sensitivity, does "nigger" effect the children so harshly?

Even though Black people today use "nigger" among themselves, Wallace does not allow Jim to use the word in what would most likely be a mixed race classroom. Granted, the use of "nigger" may imply a deeply rooted sense of unworth, even when a Black person uses the word. When Jim tells Huck the story of the slave bank, Wallace replaces Jim's use of "nigger" with "slave" and "dude." If we consider the popularity and the attitudes associated

with "dude," we again have to find Wallace guilty, albeit most likely unknowingly, of elevating Jim in the eyes of the reader. A "dude" (35, 53) is a cool person, and the person who uses the word is up to date on the current teenage lingo. Jim becomes a hero before Twain intended. Why Jim continues to use "slave" (36, 54) remains a mystery to me. If Wallace felt that Jim should not refer to himself or others in his position as "niggers," what is the point of using "slave"? By putting "slave" in Jim's mouth, Wallace allows Jim to continue to put himself and Blacks in a subservient position. Why not use the antiseptic pronouns here?

On occasion Wallace breaks from his use of "slave" as a replacement and becomes a little more creative in his editing. In Chapter 13 when Huck makes up a story to convince the ferryman to go out to the wreck of the Walter Scott, Huck inserts a "nigger woman" (56, 79) into his yarn in hopes that the ferryman will identify with him. By supporting the Negro myth and using the word "nigger," Huck aligns himself with proper society in hopes that the ferryman will quickly fulfill his request. As it turns out the mention of Hornback convinces the ferryman to venture out and the identification through "nigger" fails. Since money was what actually convinced the ferryman,

perhaps Wallace felt the "nigger" usage was useless here. Wallace eliminates entirely the first reference to the "nigger woman" and replaces the second with "her companion" (56, 79). The insertion of "her companion" caused me to stumble over the passage. Since there is no earlier mention of another person, the reference is very vague. If the ferryman does not identify with Huck because of his use of "nigger," it seems to me that it would be even more important to leave this passage intact. This passage shows that not everyone was willing to identify for the mere mention of a racial reference.

Another creative insertion bothers me more because Wallace takes even more creative license. At the end of Chapter 24, Huck relates how the King and Duke convince the townspeople that they were the brothers of Peter Wilks. To show his disgust for their antics, Huck says, "both of them took on about that dead tanner like they's lost the twelve disciples. Well, if ever I struck anything like it, I'm a nigger" (124, 162). Wallace takes the liberty of replacing "I'm a nigger" with "I'm the devil" (124, 162). Clearly, if read in the wrong manner, the "nigger" reference would support the Negro myth that Blacks use overemotional outbursts to trick people. But the point is that the King and Duke are not Black. By

using "the devil" Wallace continues the religious reference started by Twain with "the twelve disciples." As we noted with Kaplan in Chapter 1, Huck has no respect for religion. By continuing the religious references here, Wallace risks further objections based on religion. Thus, Wallace substitutes the needs of one reading group for another. In such a mind-set we would never have anything suitable for reading by more than one reading group. Any writer's work would be suited only for a very narrow audience.

Twain very carefully draws a line between English and American slaves in Chapter 26, and Wallace misses the context entirely. While Huck is being grilled by Joanna, Twain draws a line between "servants" and "niggers." Joanna says, "How is servants treated in England? Do they treat `em better `n we treat niggers?" (132, 172). Through Joanna, Twain notes the difference in cultures. By doing so, Twain forces his readers to face the ridiculous nature of the Negro myth. With his changes, Wallace puts the English and American versions of slaves on the same level. "How is servants treated in England? Do they treat `em better `n we treat ours?" (132, 172). The exchange equates the English and American version of subservients, thus eliminating Twain's attempt at social

education. The remainder of the conversation stays unchanged as Huck tries to convince Joanna that "servants" are treated worse than "niggers." The irony, unfortunately, is lost, and again the end result is an elevation of the Blacks' position. Reality is distorted.

Wallace replaces "nigger" with "Jim" several times throughout his edition. These replacements cause holes in Twain's development of Huck's realization that Jim is a human being and not a "nigger." In terms of educating the reader, Wallace's use of "slave" at least continues the assumption that subservients do not warrant name recognition. When Huck first meets Jim on Jackson's Island, Huck still holds firmly to all that society has taught him. As he unloads his supplies, Huck comments, "the nigger was set back considerable, because he reckoned it was all done with witchcraft" (32, 49). Wallace replaces "nigger" with "Jim" and throws off balance the whole scene Twain was setting. Granted, Twain uses Jim's name in this passage, but he is very careful about when he uses the familiar and generalized references. When Huck is asking Jim how long he has been on the island and what he has had to eat, and when Jim is cleaning the catfish, Twain chooses to use "Jim." When Huck slips away from the personal and makes a generalized comment, Twain chooses

"nigger." Even this early in the novel, Huck subconsciously separates "Jim" from "nigger," so that throughout the rest of the novel he can question why if "Jim" does not equal "nigger" another "nigger" must equal "nigger." By replacing the "nigger" reference with "Jim" here, Wallace slows Huck's, and thus the reader's, education.

As Huck wrestles with the reality of slavery, he refers to Jim as "Jim" when noting his human qualities and as "nigger" when he is struggling with the myths society has taught him to believe. Only a "nigger" would need to worry about stealing his children, and Huck's reference to Jim as a "nigger" in that passage confirms that needing to steal children is a societal problem and not a personal one. Wallace substitutes "Jim" here (67, 93) and brings the problem to a personal level. What suffers is the Negro myth commentary. Huck had trouble apologizing to Jim because he was a "nigger," not because he was "Jim" (66,90). Huck needs to steal a "nigger" out of slavery (177, 228), dig a "nigger" out of the Phelps's cabin (185, 237), and set a "nigger" free (218, 278). In all of these instances Wallace substitutes "Jim," and the social commentary is lost. By making it personal, we lose sight of the larger problem and focus on the man. Of all the

changes Wallace makes in the book, substituting "Jim" for "nigger" is the most destructive. At least "slave" allows the nuance of subservience to remain in Twain's commentary. Wallace even denies Jim the right to separate himself from the Negro myth. When Huck and Jim come to the realization that they must have passed Cairo in the fog, Jim says, "Po' niggers can't have no luck" (71, 97). Wallace substitutes "Jim" and denies Jim's fighting of the Negro myth. Again it becomes a personal problem.

When Huck and other characters deny Jim's humanity, "nigger" allows them to safely. Late in the novel, Huck tries one last time to overcome his support of Jim and attempts to write to Miss Watson. Huck would not have used "Jim" in this letter. The struggle is hard enough, and "nigger" allows him an escape. Wallace's insertion of "Jim" (162, 209) ruins the struggle. Huck is fighting Jim, then, not convention. The Duke is a supporter of convention, and by allowing him to use "Jim" instead of "nigger," Wallace weakens his standing as a bastion of society. After the King sells Jim, the Duke asks, "Do you reckon the nigger would blow on us?" (165, 212). Huck knows that he must answer in kind to keep the charade running. Wallace permits the Duke and Huck to use "Jim" throughout their exchange, and the whole issue of slavery

and Huck's need to keep up appearances disappears. Society no longer needs to be fooled.

Nat, the Phelps's slave, has the worst image of any character in the book. Twain uses him to portray all of the Negro myth to the hilt at a time when the reader is feeling most sympathetic for Jim. Wallace compounds the already crude portrayal of Nat by substituting his name for "nigger." Tom and Huck's first visit to Jim via Nat has long been a sore point. The over-emotional myth is evident when "Tom turns to the nigger, which was looking wild and distressed" (180, 231). Twain keeps Nat dehumanized by using "nigger" and "which." The reader can see the human Black man in Jim and the stereotyped myth in Nat side by side. Wallace decided to humanize Nat, and thus used his name and "who" (180,231). Again, the reader's lesson is lost, and by humanizing Nat he supports the myth. The "nigger" dispels it. Wallace's changes again support the Negro myth. Tom goes "to work on the nigger, coaxing him and petting him, and asking him if he'd been imagining he saw something again" (190, 243). Wallace changes "nigger" to "Nat" (190, 243). By personalizing the episode it is no longer the "nigger" and the Negro myth who are being scrutinized but Nat the human being. Wallace only makes the impression of this Black

man worse.

Wallace emphasizes the Black/white issue by substituting "Black" for "nigger." As we have seen through Smith and Williams' criticisms, Twain poses decent Black characters against foolish white characters to prove that white does not equal better. Color references do not appear to concern Wallace, for he leaves "yaller wench" stand (193, 246; 203, 260; 204, 260). And the passages in which he uses "Black" remain equally insulting. For example, in Wallace's edition Pap uses "Black" when he is ranting about the vote: "But when they told me there was a state in this country where they'd let [B]lacks vote" (21, 35). Pap looks just as foolish whether he says "Black" or "nigger." In fact, the division between Black and white is heightened. Without the use of "nigger," however, the insulting nature of the passage becomes more personal. Students today take pride in their heritage and identify themselves as being "Black." Thus, Pap's comment, "They call that govment that can't sell a free [B]lack till he's been in the state six months" (21, 35) surely must hit close to home. At least "nigger" allows them to pass off the insult in an historical context. Whereas "Black" can be seen as one of Wallace's least offensive changes because it leaves the integrity of the book in tact, the

ideas remain insulting. I fail to see where this change makes anything any better.

If Wallace's intent is to eliminate racism, his attack of the word "nigger" is appropriate if any censorship is to be allowed at all. But it seems that Wallace, with all his good intentions, was not able to limit himself to changing "nigger." I want to take a look now at the other types of changes Wallace made. Throughout the novel Wallace has also taken small liberties in changing word order, eliminating sentences, and even adding his own words.

Even though his own "Foreward" notes that "Much of the story is written in the dialect of the Southern plantation slave represented by Jim, and the poor country white represented by Huck and his father" (v), Wallace could not leave the dialect alone. Twain's "We got home all safe" (39, 58) turns up "We all got home safe" (39, 58); "No how nor no way" (67, 92) becomes "No how no way" (67, 92); "There's a nigger here that I'm a-trying to steal" (171, 220) becomes "there's a slave that I'm a-trying to steal" (171, 220); and "I know all what I'm talking about" (218, 278) becomes "I know what I'm talking about" (218, 278). All of these changes are simply grammatical. None of them make a bit of difference as to

how the race of any of the characters is perceived. We have no choice but to find Wallace guilty of succumbing to the power censoring has put in his hands. As we saw his religious preference sneak in earlier, we can also see it now in a word change. "Hell" (163, 210) Wallace changes to "ever lasting fire" (163, 210). Perhaps Wallace is just trying to keep children from cursing in class, and this small change does not affect the meaning of the passage. But what does Wallace see as racially offensive about these words? Wallace may have started out simply trying to tone down the racial references in the book, but he has clearly overstepped even that shaky line. Some of the changes are so minor they could be typographical errors. "I wish we could have some bad luck like this every day" (40, 59) becomes "I wish we would have some bad luck like this every day" (40, 59). And Twain's one sentence paragraph, "I started up the Illinois shore in the canoe just after dark" (42, 61), gets tacked on to the beginning of the next paragraph in Wallace's edition. If they are typographical, Wallace truly had no regard for Twain's work. If he is cleaning up the grammar, shame on him for overstepping his stated purpose.

We have already seen in Chapter 1 how Huck Finn has been attacked by numerous groups for as many different

reasons. Wallace shows us that he cannot be a censor for one group. We have already seen two changes which are religious in nature, and the grammatical changes put him in with the proper society group who complained that Huck taught children bad English and bad manners. Throughout Twain's edition, Jim uses "honey" as a term of endearment for Huck. Wallace has removed every instance of "honey." If Wallace sees "honey" as a bad word for Jim to be using in terms of Black English dialect, why do other guilty words remain? For example, "It's too good for true, honey, it's too good for true. Lemme look at you chile, lemme feel o' you" (64, 88) becomes "It's too good for true, it's too good for true. Lemme look at you chile, lemme feel o' you" (64, 88). The "chile" which Wallace retains is just as much a Black English term as "honey." And Wallace allows "pet," to remain. So, although Wallace begins to eliminate Black English dialect, he does not eliminate it entirely. For example, "Would always call me honey, and pet me" (163, 209) becomes "Would always call on me, and pet me" (163, 209). The offensive "honey" has been removed, but the presence of "chile" and "pet" should still offend. Wallace's broad purpose, "to eliminate racism," has left him too much room for interpretation.

Although Wallace seems to have lost control in some

instances, it is interesting to note that all of the larger Negro myth-supporting passages remain. Wallace retains, for example, Jim's experience with witches and cuts only a small portion of the narration. "With their mouths open" and "Niggers is always talking about witches in the dark by the kitchen fire; but whenever one was talking and letting on to know all about such things, Jim would happen in and say, 'Hm! What you know 'bout witches?' and that nigger was corked up and had to take a back seat" (5, 16) have been removed. Perhaps the position of the mouths is not all that important, but if we are to read this passage in a positive light at all, the way Jim dominates the witches' conversations is very important. The cut sentence clearly shows Jim taking advantage of his elevated situation. It is the only direct quote we have from Jim in the entire narration. By cutting it Wallace lowers Jim's active participation in shaping his own life. Wallace only made a minor cut to Pap's raving about Blacks being able to vote. In fact, the cut occurs as Pap is calming down. "The rest of his speech was all the hottest kind of language--mostly hove at the nigger and the govment, though he give the tub some, too, all along, here and there" (21, 36) gets cut off after "language" in Wallace's edition (21, 36). All

Wallace accomplishes racially is the disappearance of one "nigger." Could he be trying to soften Pap, so the authority figure does not look so bad? Another cut Wallace makes weakens Twain's Black/white positioning. Huck and Jim's discussion of French has been pointed to as a sign of Jim's intelligence. Both of them are wrong, but at least Jim's logic is clear. "I'd take en bust him over de head -- dat is, if he weren't white. I wouldn't 'low no nigger to call me dat" (60, 84) shows that Jim recognizes his position. He knows he needs to play the game even if he does not like it. Wallace's version, "I'd take en bust him over de head. I wouldn't 'low no body to call me dat" (60, 84), casts Jim in a different light. In Wallace's edition, Jim lashes out at everyone. He shows no restraint or control. The violence, then, only upholds the Negro myth.

Wallace makes other cuts which are clearly racially motivated, but they do nothing but harm the novel. "Balum's Ass dey call him for short" (36, 54) has been cut from Jim's description of his money troubles (36, 54). "It was according to the old saying, 'Give a nigger an inch and he'll take an ell'" (67, 93) has been cut from Huck's reaction to Jim's desire to steal his children (67, 93). Both comments are derogatory, but their elimination

only weakens the societal arguments. The Blacks knew Balum as Balum's Ass. Otherwise they are duped without knowing it. The "old saying" gives a teacher the perfect opportunity to discuss stereotypes. Huck is clearly fighting all that he has been taught. Wallace cuts "nor nigger shows" (132, 172) from the list of things slaves are not allowed to do in the United States. This cut weakens Huck's argument that slaves are worse off in England--they cannot attend shows intended specifically for them. With Huck's argument weakened, Twain's England versus America argument suffers. Wallace's largest cut comes late in the novel when Huck and Tom are "freeing" Jim. "Jim he couldn't see no sense in the most of it, but he allowed we was white folks and knowed better than him; so he was satisfied, and said he would do it all just as Tom said" (189, 242) becomes "Jim was satisfied, and said he would do it all just as Tom said" (189, 242). We lose Jim's logic, and we are left with the impression that Jim holds no doubts about the boys' plans. Even though Jim is older and wiser, he knows he needs to play along. Wallace's censoring here only weakens Jim's character, and any sensitive teacher loses the opportunity to discuss Twain's Black/white imagery.

Wallace's cuts also eliminate some of the racial

discourse which Smith cites as a positive aspect of the novel. We have already seen how Huck uses "nigger" to trick white society, but Wallace apparently did not feel the good was worth the damage. In trying to find Jim, Huck plays up to the Duke's sensibilities: "they've took my nigger, which is the only nigger I've got in the world" (164, 211). Wallace's edition stops at "they've took my slave" (164, 211). The remaining conversation in both editions confirms that Huck is presenting Jim as his property. All Wallace has done is weaken Huck's pleading. During the same discussion, Wallace eliminates "and won't let the nigger blow" (165, 212). The Duke recognizes that Jim could do some harm, but Wallace takes that recognition of Jim's power away. Racial discourse's strongest confirmation has also lost its place in Wallace's edition. When Huck first meets Aunt Sally and tells her about the explosion, his answer to her concerning casualties, "No'm killed a nigger" (168, 216) marks Huck's strongest use of racial discourse. In Wallace's edition his answer is simply "No'm" (168, 216). The remark is offensive, but it marks the extreme danger Huck is in, and he needs to play the socially acceptable boy as strongly as possible. Without it, Twain's criticism of white society is softened.

We may not agree, but at least there is some logic to some of the changes Wallace made. Eliminating "nigger" damages the social context of the novel, but we can all agree that the word is offensive. The changes Wallace made to the title headings, however, defy explanation. Only one, "A Nigger Stealer" (Chapter 33), is clearly offensive, and Wallace dutifully changes "nigger" to "slave." The headings Wallace deleted point to the religious and conservative societal attitudes we have seen before. The following headings were deleted and not replaced: "The Testament" (Chapter 18), "The Fond Parent" (Chapter 5), and "A White Lie" (Chapter 16) have been removed. Some of the headings Wallace removed hold no controversial value at all, such as "Resting" (Chapter 7), "The Search" (Chapter 11), and "A Question of Handwriting" (Chapter 29). By removing them Wallace simply disregards Twain's rights as an author and shows his own irresponsibility as an editor. Although most of the changes Wallace made to the headings were deletions, he also took the liberty of changing some. "The King Went for Him" becomes "The Mad King" (Chapter 30), "Jim in Royal Robes" becomes "Sick A-rab" (Chapter 24), and "Out of Bondage" becomes "Free At Last" (Chapter 43). Perhaps "Free At Last" appeals to Wallace as a 60's slogan, but

Twain chose "Out of Bondage." Besides, Jim's freedom came long before Chapter 43. Why, other than creative meddling, was the change necessary? Not content manipulating and deleting Twain's headings, Wallace even adds one of his own. "A Hiding Place" appears at the front of the heading list of Chapter 27.

The changes Wallace made to the headings and grammar of Huck Finn have no real impact on the way we read the novel. They do point out, however, that any writing will reflect the entire personality of the writer. Wallace was unable to confine his changes to racially oriented materials, and we see his other preferences sneak in. The racially motivated changes have a great impact on the way we read the novel in light of Black criticism. But if ninth-grade students are unaware of Black criticism, perhaps Wallace's edition offers an alternative to eliminating the book from the classroom entirely. I think we need to decide whether it is more important to protect our children or to teach them to evaluate critically. Although the children react negatively to "nigger," their comments also show that they are reacting to the larger image of Jim as well. Wallace's changes do not positively affect our reading of Jim.

Chapter 4: Where Do We Go From Here?

So, has Wallace succeeded in producing a less offensive Adventures of Huckleberry Finn? I think we can measure his success in two ways. First, has he produced a novel which is responsive to the evaluations of Black scholars? And secondly, has he produced a novel which would solve the problems Huck causes in the classrooms? Although Wallace has the best of intentions, his Huck Finn falls short of his purpose to eliminate "racism from the curriculums of schools in the United States of America and throughout the world" (iv).

By removing "nigger" Wallace interrupts the racial discourse noted by Smith as a virtue of Huck Finn. In order to discredit racial discourse, the words which support it must be used. Like it or not, most students know the word "nigger." At least with "nigger" in the book, the word can be brought out in the open. Only an unusual child would not think of the word "nigger" while reading Wallace's edition. If a teacher takes the time to discuss the word in its historical context, Twain's edition can discredit not only the word but the people who use it.

Wallace is also guilty of weakening Huck Finn's

argument against the Negro myth as seen by Williams. Many of Wallace's changes put the book on a more personal level. Instead of focusing on "niggers" and their problems, we focus more on Jim and his problems. Using Jim's and Nat's names as replacements for "nigger" especially causes the reader to concentrate on the individuals and not even realize the larger social commentary that is being made. Instead of learning about social misconceptions, Huck learns that he has misunderstood Jim. Granted, some of the Negro myth dispelling remains, but we can hardly hail Wallace as a great changer of society for the reduction of Huck Finn to a mere adventure story.

The problems inherent to Huck Finn cannot be easily eradicated. By removing "nigger" Wallace may make the reading a little easier for some Black children, but the overall context of the novel remains the same. Jim's character receives a small boost from Wallace, but he still caters to "white folks." Jim remains a non-entity, a toy for Tom's cruel jokes. And Jim plays along, insisting that Huck knows best. Except for the bland pronouns, Wallace's substitutions for "nigger" can easily be called into question. His substitutions either continue to demean, as we saw with "Black," or

artificially elevate, as we saw with "dude." Each substitution can be interpreted, just as Twain's original "nigger" should be. The discomfort caused by "nigger" needs to be just as carefully interpreted and discussed rather than removed and ignored.

If Wallace wants to eliminate racism from America, he will have to try again. Wallace's Huck Finn may still be interpreted as being racist. The book is still very much open to interpretation. His intentions may have been good, but the result is a Huck Finn, if taught with sensitivity, which does not attack racism as strongly. It seems to me that Twain's edition, if taught properly, could go much further toward eradicating racism than Wallace's edition. The key lies in how the book is interpreted. The problem of racism lies not in the hands of Twain, but in the hands of his readers.

Wallace himself has proved that audience is the main ingredient of any writing. Wallace states his intention to soften the book's racial tones, but in the process his other preferences slip in, proving that writing for one reading group is impossible. We cannot read or write in a vacuum. All of our societal and personal values affect how we read and write. Wallace attempts to remove the racism from Huck Finn, but he also makes small adjustments

to anti-religion and anti-family elements. Values, not words, determine the racial implications of Huck Finn.

In the larger picture, Wallace has solved his problem with the novel. His frustration with the lack of positive action on the part of his school district is certainly understandable. By removing "nigger," he makes the novel more palatable on first taste, but the after-taste remains the same. Students who are frustrated by "nigger" will still be frustrated by the way Jim is treated. The Penn State study showed us that most students read Huck Finn as an adventure story, but how many of those adventure story readers were offended by the treatment Jim receives? How many of them should have been? They should be offended by "nigger" as well. Although Wallace's Huck Finn may offer a gut reaction, interim solution, I would think Wallace would reach his goal more fully by working on teacher sensitivity training. As Barksdale notes, whites should be ashamed too. In a time when cross-cultural awareness between countries is becoming so important, it seems to me that Twain's Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, if taught with sensitivity, could go a long way toward promoting awareness at home.

Works Cited

- Allen, Margot. "Huck Finn: Two Generations of Pain."
Interracial Books for Children Bulletin 15.1-2
(1984): 9-12.
- Barksdale, Richard K. "History, Slavery and Thematic Irony in
Huckleberry Finn." Mark Twain Journal 22.2 (1984):
4-12.
- The Effects of Reading Huckleberry Finn on the Racial
Attitudes of Ninth Grade Students. State College: A
Cooperative Study of the State College Area School
District and the Forum on Black Affairs of the
Pennsylvania State University, Fall 1983.
- Fiedler, Leslie A. "Huckleberry Finn: The Book We Love to
Hate." Proteus: A Journal of Ideas 1.2 (1984): 1-8.
- Hentoff, Nat. "Huck Finn Better Get Out of Town by Sundown."
Village Voice 4 May 1982: 8.
- Johnson, Hayes. "For Those Banning Huck, There's Another
Problem Out There." The Washington Post 11 April 1982:
A3.
- Jones, Rhett S. "Nigger and Knowledge: White
Double-Consciousness in Adventures of Huckleberry Finn."
Mark Twain Journal 22.2 (1984): 28-37.
- Kaplan, Justin. Born To Trouble: One Hundred Years of

- Huckleberry Finn. Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1985.
- Lester, Julius. "Morality and Adventures of Huckleberry Finn." Mark Twain Journal 22.2 (1984): 43-46.
- Life Magazine. "Mark Twain's Blood-Curdling Humor." 16 February 1985: 119.
- New York Times. Editorial. "'A Little Kind of Low Chuckle.'" 16 April 1982: Editorial Page.
- Nichols, Charles H. "A True Book--With Some Stretchers: Huck Finn Today." Mark Twain Journal 22.2 (1984): 13-16.
- Nilon, Charles H. "The Ending of Huckleberry Finn: Freeing the Free Negro." Mark Twain Journal 22.2 (1984): 21-27.
- Ondrusak, Anita. "Huckleberry Finn Challenge Resolved." Learning and Media (Summer 1984): 17-18.
- Oshinsky, David M. A Conspiracy So Immense: the World of Joe McCarthy. New York: Free Press, 1983.
- Sager, Mike. "Mark Twain School Trying to Censor Huck." Washington Post 8 April 1982: A1.
- Smith, David L. "Huck, Jim, And American Racial Discourse." Mark Twain Journal 22.2 (1984): 4-12.
- Twain, Mark. Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (Tom Sawyer's Comrade). New York: New American Library, 1959.
- Wallace, John H. The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (Tom

- Sawyer's Comrade) Adapted. Virginia: John H. Wallace and Sons Company, 1983.
- Williams, Kenny J. "Adventures of Huckleberry Finn; Or, Mark Twain's Racial Ambiguity." Mark Twain Journal 22.2 (1984): 38-42.
- Woodard, Fredrick and Donnarae MacCann. "Huckleberry Finn and the Traditions of Blackface Minstrelsy." Interracial Books for Children Bulletin 15.1.2 (1984): 4-13.
- Yardley, Jonathan. "Newly edited Huck Finn cannibalized Twain's classic." Globe-Times 8 Dec. 1985: F1

VITA

A native of Easton, Pennsylvania, Jill Marie Cospers was born on January 3, 1964. Jill received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Journalism and Political Science from Moravian College in 1985. In January of 1986, she received a teaching fellowship from Lehigh University and taught freshman English while pursuing a Master's degree in English. She currently holds the position of Assistant Director of Admissions/Coordinator for International Admissions at Cedar Crest College. She is the daughter of Harriet and Ronald Borger.