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#### Huck Finn's Use of the Tall Tale

In Mark Twain's timeless American classic, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, the narrator often finds himself in undesirable situations. These situations, which are far-fetched even for the nineteenth-century, provide much humor to the novel and demonstrate Huck's cunning. Huck's adept use of the tall tale becomes a survival tool on this adventure.

In the novel, Huck sees lies as more of a practical solution to problems than as a moral dilemma. He rationalizes that he has "never seen anybody but lied, one time or another" (1). Unlike the lawless adventurer of the frontier, Huck does not use his knack for selfish purposes. He, instead, uses his lies strictly as a means of escaping misfortune and never for his own profit. At one point in the story, Huck uses his skill to fabricate a story that keeps a skiff of slave-hunters away from Jim: " 'Well, there's five niggers run off to-night, up yonder above the head of the bend. Is your man white or black?'...'He's white' " (110). Huck's tall tales are used for the survival of both Huck and Jim, and Jim knows this.

Huck's stories are usually believed, but even when doubted, he manages to change his fib just enough to make it believable. An example of this is when he is caught as a stow-away on a raft and his original story is not believed by the crew: "Now, looky-here, you're scared, and so you talk wild. Honest, now, do you live in a scowl, or is it a lie?" (106). Huck then changes his story just enough to make it believable, displaying his unique ability to adjust his tale to within the parameters of believability. Throughout the novel Huck fools many intelligent people. His youth gives him a mask of innocence, that people don't want to disbelieve.

Stretching the truth comes naturally to Huck Finn. Although his lies may seem to show a lack of good ethics, it is the lies themselves that truly show his virtue.

