

Name _____



Clever Lies

In *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Mark Twain uses deception and trickery to show how people lie for different reasons. Some characters use lies to survive, while others lie to take advantage of others. Throughout the novel, Huck, Jim, and several other characters use deception in clever ways.

Huck lies often, but not always for bad reasons. He is constantly running away—first from his abusive father and later from society’s rules. To protect himself and Jim, Huck creates fake stories. When men come looking for Jim, Huck tells them that his family is sick with smallpox. This lie keeps Jim safe from being caught. Huck also pretends to be other people when he needs to escape danger. His lies often help him and Jim survive on their journey down the river.

However, some characters use trickery for selfish reasons. The King and the Duke are two con men who pretend to be royalty to fool people out of their money. They act like they are preachers, actors, or long-lost family members, all to steal from innocent people. In one of their worst schemes, they trick a family into thinking they are the brothers of a man who has died, just so they can take his fortune. Unlike Huck, who lies to protect others, the King and the Duke lie to get rich.

Jim, on the other hand, is not a trickster like the King and the Duke, but he does use deception at times. When Tom Sawyer is hurt near the end of the book, Jim could escape, but he stays and pretends he is still a prisoner so Tom can get medical help. Jim’s deception is based on kindness and care for others.

Twain uses these different kinds of trickery to make readers think. Some lies are told to help people, while others are used to hurt and steal. Huck learns that not all rules are fair, and sometimes doing the right thing means bending the truth. The novel makes us question whether lying is always bad, or if sometimes, it can be the right thing to do.