

Name: _____ Date: _____

Satire in *Huckleberry Finn*

As we've discussed, satire is the ridicule of the shortcomings of an individual or society, usually for the purpose of bringing about change. A writer satirizes his target by using exaggeration, irony, sarcasm, understatement, or some other stylistic device. I've listed nine of Twain's satirical targets below. I want you to match the satirical targets to the passages that follow.

Twain's Targets of Satire

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| A. Feuding | F. Fascination/obsession with ceremony and somber things |
| B. Greed | G. Religious hypocrisy |
| C. Gullibility | H. Uncultured tastes |
| D. Trite, melodramatic literature | I. Pseudo-intellectualism |
| E. Inappropriate curiosity | |

Passage Leads: Skim the chapter for the following passage lead. Read until you find Twain's target of satire and place the correct letter of the above item in the blank to the left.

- ___ Chapter 17: "If Emmeline Grangerford could make..."
- ___ Chapter 18: "Soon as I could get Buck..."
- ___ Chapter 18: "Next Sunday we all went to..."
- ___ Chapter 22: The handbill, especially the final words
- ___ Chapter 23: "We never showed a light..."
- ___ Chapter 25: "They bein' partickler friends of the diseased..."
- ___ Chapter 26: "What! And not sell out the rest...?"
- ___ Chapter 27: "When the place was packed full, the undertaker..."
- ___ Chapter 27: "They had borrowed a melodeum..."

Questions for Discussion

1. Satire can be light-hearted and whimsical, but it can also be dark, bitter, or cynical in tone. Rank the above examples on the scale below by writing them on the line where you think they best fit.

Light	Dark

2. Choose one of your examples from above and justify your placement. In other words, what makes your example the lightest or darkest in tone? Give specific examples from the text to support your answer.

3. Which of the above targets of satire do you think Twain would most tolerate? Justify your answer.

4. Which of the above targets do you think Twain would least tolerate? Justify your answer.

5. How does Twain understate the severity of feuding? Provide an example of his use of understatement.

6. If you were to examine Twain's use of satire as a whole so far, does he provide any clues regarding his own general moral philosophy or personal beliefs about human nature? How might his use of an unreliable child narrator such as Huck allow Twain to convey his own beliefs? Explain.

7. Name two other targets of satire found in *Huck Finn* so far? How does Twain satirize the targets you've selected?

8. What current trends in American culture do you believe would make good satirical targets? How would you ridicule society's shortcomings through this cultural trend?