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Dramatic Publishing

Huck Finn's Story



By
Aurand Harris

Huck Finn's Story

Drama. Adapted by Aurand Harris. Based on selected scenes from Mark Twain's classic, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn. Cast: 4m., 4w., 2 boys, or 5 minimum (4m., 1w.) with doubling. This version is a dramatization of selected scenes from Mark Twain's classic of Huck Finn's story. It depicts his escape from his drunken father and how he befriends a runaway slave. Huck Finn's Story is an adventure tale of excitement and suspense, delightfully sprinkled with home-spun humor. In six action-filled scenes, alive with colorful characters and sparkling dialog in rural dialect, the play reveals Huck, a clever, lovable boy who is baffled by the greed, hypocrisy and absurdity of society. His conscience troubles him about what is wrong and what is right, during his long journey down the Mississippi, a journey in which he "grows up." Keeping faithfully to the book, Harris, with his celebrated mastery of playwriting, has written for young audiences a great American play about the great American novel. *No set necessary. Few props. Ideal for touring. Simple period costumes. Approximate running time: 50 minutes. Code: HB5.*

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Huck Finn's Story



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Huck Finn's Story

A dramatization of scenes from Mark Twain's novel
The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn

By

AURAND HARRIS



Dramatic Publishing Company

Woodstock, Illinois • Australia • New Zealand • South Africa

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**Dedicated to
The Akron Children's Theatre**

HUCK FINN'S STORY was first produced by Akron Children's Theatre Productions, Inc. a professional acting company, on October 8, 1986, with the following company:

Written and directed by Aurand Harris
Producer: Artistic Director Barbara Ballance
Scenic Design Jack Ballance
Stage Manager Rebecca J. Nero
Costumes Mary Jones
Set Construction Lori Pasnik
Properties Bob and Helen Riggle
Music Composition Lynn Frederick
Sound Taping J. Gregory Sager
Publicity Donna Curfman

CAST

HUCKLEBERRY FINN Jim Speegle
JIM Jim Hosey
WIDOW DOUGLAS, MISS WATSON,
RIVER WOMAN, AUNT SALLY Constance Enlow
PAP, First SLAVEHUNTER, DUKE Peter Ferry
SECOND SLAVEHUNTER, KING Dennis Murphy

A second tryout production was given by The University Theatre of Indiana University—Purdue University at Indianapolis, Indiana.

HUCK FINN'S STORY

a dramatization by Aurand Harris
of scenes from Mark Twain's novel

THE ADVENTURES OF HUCKLEBERRY FINN

Director: Aurand Harris

Scenic Designer: J. Edgar Webb

Costume Designer: Marjorie Duehmig

Lighting Designer: Jack Douglas Sutton

Sound Designer: Jack Douglas Sutton

CAST

(in order of appearance)

HUCKLEBERRY FINN.....	John Kennedy
THE WIDOW DOUGLAS.....	Beverly Brewer
MISS WATSON.....	Beverly Brewer
PAP.....	Anthony W. Shaw
JIM.....	Dwayne Massey
RIVER WOMAN.....	Beverly Brewer
SLAVE HUNTER.....	James B. Beaver
DUKE.....	Scott Black
KING.....	Anthony W. Shaw
AUNT SALLY.....	Beverly Brewer

THE SETTING

Along the Mississippi River—villages, islands, and on a raft.

THE TIME

1850

Director, Children's Theatre.....	Dorothy Webb
Director, University Theatre.....	J. Edgar Webb
Tour Manager.....	Edward Schwab
Marketing/Publicity Director.....	Della K. Pacheco

Cover Design by Diane Alfonso
Publications Department
Indiana University—Purdue University
at Indianapolis

HUCK FINN'S STORY

CAST:

Huckleberry Finn

Jim, a slave

Widow Douglas

Miss Watson

River Woman

Aunt Sally

Pap, Huck's father

Duke

Slave Hunter

King

Widow Douglas, Miss Watson, River Woman, and Aunt Sally may all be played by the same actress.

Pap, Huck's father and Duke may be played by the same actor.

Slave Hunter and King may be played by the same actor.

SCENE:

Along the Mississippi River—villages, islands, and on a raft.

TIME:

1850.

HUCK FINN'S STORY

(Music. Huck enters)

HUCK: Howdy. I'm Huckleberry Finn. You don't know about me, without you've read a book called *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, what was made by Mr. Mark Twain. The way the book ends is this: Tom Sawyer and me we found a pile of money that the robbers hid in the cave. And the Widow Douglas (*Widow enters. She is motherly and good-hearted*)—richest woman in town—she took me in—to live with her. The widow, she allowed she was going to—*sivilize*—me.

WIDOW: Oh, Huckleberry—you poor lost lamb. No, mother. And your father gone away. But never you mind, you have a home now—a home with me. First, you will go to school.

HUCK: Go to school?

WIDOW: Sleep in a bed.

HUCK: (*Happily*) Sleep in a bed.

WIDOW: Wash up—every day.

HUCK: (*Horrified*) Wash-up ever day! I could tell right off being *sivilized* warn't going to be easy.

(The same actress playing Widow Douglas becomes Miss Watson. She turns her back to the audience and puts on a pair of glasses)

The Widow she had a sister named Miss Watson, who come to live with her. (*Amused*) The two of them sorta looked alike, 'cept Miss Watson had spectaqacls perched on her nose.

(Miss Watson turns around, faces audience. Her nose and chin held high)

And ever day she had a set with me—with a lesson in the spelling book.

(Sits on stool, L)

WATSON: The first word today is—CAT.

HUCK: K—! C—a—t. (*Puts feet on second stool*)

WATSON: Don't put your feet up there, Huckleberry. The second word is—BOY.

HUCK: (*Spells it loudly, being the one word he knows, then smiles at her triumphantly*) B—o—y.

WATSON: Don't scrunch up like that, Huckleberry. Sit up straight.
(*Huckleberry, comically, sits up very straight*)
Oh, Huckleberry, why don't you try to behave?

HUCK: And if Miss Watson warn't pecking at' me, she was bossing Jim.
(*Jim enters, R. He is a slave, a friend of Huck's*)
Jim, he's the slave what she brought along with her.

WATSON: Now, Jim, mind what I say. First, I want you to hoe the garden and pole the beans.

JIM: Yes'm.

WATSON: Then mend the front fence.

JIM: Yes'm.

WATSON: Oh, and be sure you feed the chickens.

JIM: Yes'm.

WATSON: Not too much.

JIM: No, mam.

WATSON: And not too little.

JIM: Oh, no, mam!

WATSON: Now go along.

JIM: Yes'm.

WATSON: And don't dwaddle away the afternoon.

JIM: Yes'm. I mean, no'm. I mean, yes'm. (*Smiles broadly*) I'm headin' to work right soon. (*Exits R*)

HUCK: (*To audience*) But the day that the awful thing happened, which I'm waitin' to tell you about,

(*Actress takes off glasses and becomes Widow, arranges stools at L in a group, as if at a table, two stools at the sides, one at the back*)

the Widow, she rung the bell for supper, and you have to come right on time or she gets mad.

(*They sit, Widow facing C at L, Huck facing audience at back*)

But you warn't allowed to eat. First you had to sit and wait for the Widow to tuck down her head.

WIDOW: (*Starts a grace*) We are thankful for this wonderful day. We are thankful for the wonderful—(*Continues to mumble*)

HUCK: And then she mumbled some words over the chicken and gravy, though there warn't nothing wrong with any of the eats.

WIDOW: Amen.

HUCK: Amen! Then we could start eatin' and chewin' and swallowin'.

(*Actress rises, goes behind Huck, sits on stool at R. Puts on glasses*)

And the awful thing wouldn't of happened, iffen Miss Watson hadn't butted in. I was reachin', polite like, for my third biscuit when she belted out—

WATSON: Mind your manners, Huckleberry Finn!

HUCK: Then I did it! I KNOCKED OVER THE SALT SHAKER. Well, quick as lightning I reached for some of the salt to throw over my left shoulder so's to keep off the bad luck!

WATSON: (*Slaps his hand*) Take your hands away, Huckleberry Finn! Oh, what a mess you are always making!

HUCK: I knowed, without throwin' salt over my left shoulder, bad luck was comin' straight at me.

WATSON: You are excused. You may leave the table.

HUCK: Yes, mam. And lit out faster than a cyclone.

(Huck runs to other side. Watson exits L)

Out in the backyard, I wondered what kind of bad luck I was going to have. I didn't have to wait long. Cause right away—it happened. It was dark and I walked right soft-like—expecting trouble behind ever tree. Ever shadow gave me a shiver.

(He circles)

When I turned the corner by the shed, I hered something—

(Pap silently enters, a disruptable drunk. He follows behind Huck, then puts his hand on Huck's shoulder)

footsteps—Footsteps—getting closer and closer. Then I felt—something—TOUCH my shoulder. I turned my head. *(Face to face with Pap)* PAP!

PAP: Yes, I'm your Pap, and don't you forget it. Think you're a big bug now, don't you? Going to school, puttin' on airs. Think you're better than your Pap. Who told you you could go to school?

HUCK: Widow Douglas, she took me in—after you left.

PAP: Don't give me none of your lip! *(Slaps at Huck, who dodges)* I'll give you something better then learnin'. I'll give you a good tanning with a cowhide! They say you're rich. That's why I come back—for the money. And I want it now.

HUCK: Judge Thatcher he keeps it for me.

PAP: I'm your Pap. And by rights, the money's mine!

HUCK: The Widow Douglas she's fixin' to adopt me.

PAP: Nobody's takin' you away from me. We're rowing across the river tonight, over to the Illinois side. And I'll keep you there—till I get the money.

HUCK: Judge Thatcher he won't let you.

PAP: *(Slaps Huck, who staggers to his knees)* Don't give me no sass. *(Pulls Huck up)* Get up! Now march. Them's my orders. Your Pap says—MARCH!

(Huck goes L, Pap follows and exits. Huck comes downstage)

HUCK: We crossed the river and Pap locked me in an old cabin what was hidden in the woods. Then he went off to the store for a jug of whiskey.

(Sits on stool, R)

I got mighty lonesome, sitting there, in the dark, all alone, for three days. Then I hered him coming, singing and a-swearin', and I knowed he was a-drinking.

PAP: *(Enters singing, mimes pounding on "door")* Open the door!

HUCK: I cain't. You're got the key.

PAP: *(Drunk)* The key—the key—*(Mimes unlocking "door" and enters "room")* I'm back.

HUCK: Where you been so long?

PAP: I've been talking to my lawyer. Dang fool! He says I ain't going to get the money. By crackey, I'll show him. I'm taking you away. I know a hiding place. They can hunt for you till they drop dead. I'll outsmart them! You. Get a move on. Get down to the river. Fetch the stuff off the skiff. Be off. While I have a little drink.

(Sits. Huck runs out of "cabin")

HUCK: I ran down to the river, glad to get away. And I seed—yes, sir—the river was risen. Trees and logs was floating by. And here comes a canoe. I dived right in, clothes and all. I catched her, and paddled back to shore. Then I struck a thought. WITH A CANOE, I HAD A CHANCE TO ESCAPE FROM PAP. I toted the food stuff back to the cabin. I could hear Pap shouting, and I knowed he was drunk as a skunk.

(Enters "cabin")

PAP: *(Rises)* I ask you, what kind of government is it that takes a son away from a lovin' father? I ask you—I ask you—*(He falls)*

HUCK: Pap. Pap, are you all right? Pap. *(Pap groans. Huck helps him up)* Pap—you drunk so much you got the shakes.

PAP: Hear 'em? Tramp—tramp—tramp.

HUCK: There ain't nothing tramping.

PAP: It's the dead. The dead are coming after me. See 'em?

HUCK: You're drunk. You're seeing things.

PAP: Don't touch me! (*Points to Huck*) You! I know you. You are the angel of Death.

HUCK: Me?

PAP: You've come to take me away.

HUCK: No.

PAP: But you ain't going to get me. Where's my gun? (*Feels on "wall"*)

HUCK: It's me, Pap. Me! Don't shoot!

PAP: The door. I'll give you the slip. I'll get away. (*Goes out "door"*)
I outsmarted you. I outsmarted the devil! (*Laughs. Stagger off*)

HUCK: Pap—Pap—? (*To audience*) I knowed it would be best for him to sleep it off. And I knowed—I warn't locked in. And I—I HAD A CANOE. I sure warn't going to stay around Pap no longer. And then a thought struck me—a plan—how I could go away—and nobody never would come and look for me.

(*Mimes as he talks*)

First I took the food, blankets, pans, fishing line, matches—I cleaned out the cabin—and put 'em all in the canoe down by the river. (L.) Then I took Pap's gun from the wall (R.), and in the woods, I shot a pig. Back in the cabin, I whacked his neck with the axe and laid him down so he would bleed—blood was all over the floor. I pulled some hairs out of my head, and stuck the hairs in the blood on the axe. Then I dragged the pig—down to the river, leaving a path of oozing blood. (L.) Then I dropped it in the water, like a dead body. I figured folks would think some robbers come and killed me and dumped me in the river. They could drag the river but they warn't going to find me. Cause I knowed a place to hide—Jackson's Island. I hurried to the canoe, and as I was gettin' in, I hered Pap a-coming back. I paddled off down the river fast as I could go—till I was out of sight. (*Exits*)

PAP: (*Enters, goes in "cabin"*) Huck! Where are you Huck? Answer your Pap! (*Slips*) What's this? Blood. Blood! An axe! Blood and his hair. Murder! Robbers! Thieves! Huck! Huck! They've killed my Huck! Help! Huck's been murdered! MURDERED! (*Exits*)

HUCK: (*Peeks, then enters*) I got to Jackson's Island without no trouble. And like I figured they searched the river for my dead body—(*laughs*)—but they didn't find me. And I knowed then I was free. Just me and the trees and the sky. (*Sings happily and kicks up his heels*)

“A bee is a buzzin’,
Dandelion is a fuzzin’,
Sing Polly Wally Doodle all the day.
Ants are a-crawlin’
Haulin’ and a pilin’,
And I’m the King of Jackson’s Island!
Sing Polly Wally Doodle all the day.”

Yes, sir, I was feeling mighty fine! I picked and et me some berries. (*Mimes*) Then I seed a little bird on the ground, quivering and a-shaking. (*Mimes picking it up, petting it, putting it in nest*) You had a tumble. Fell from your nest. I'll put you back. Hold still. (*Whistles like bird*) There. Home, sweet, home. (*Whistles*) Goodbye. (*Waves and whistles*) And I was ready to give myself a good swing on a hanging vine, when I seed—still a-smoking—a camp fire! Somebody else was on the island! My heart jumped right up in my lungs! I backed off—clumb a tree—(*Steps on stool*)—and as I was hiding in the branches, I seed a man coming near the fire.

(*A man with blanket around his head and shoulders enters, warms his hands, and curls up to sleep*)

What was I to do? As the saying goes—I sure was—up a tree! I pumped up my courage—and clumb down. (*Grins*) I thought I'd take a peek.

(*He cautiously gets off stool, starts toward man. Man yawns loudly and throws blanket from off his head. Huck freezes with fear, then looks at the quiet figure and is surprised*)

Jehesaphat! He looks like—(*Closer*)—he is—(*Closer*)—he's Jim, Miss Watson's slave. (*Shakes Jim*) Hello, Jim. Am I glad it's you.

JIM: Who's there?

HUCK: Me. Huckleberry.

JIM: (*Horrified at seeing a ghost, voice shakes*) Hu-u-kle-ber-r-r-y? You go away. I ain't talking to no—no—ghost! (*Covers head*)

HUCK: Ghost?

JIM: You's dead! You's done been MURDERED! (*Covers head*)

HUCK: No, I ain't dead.

JIM: (*Huck pulls cover. Jim yells and crawls away. Peeks out*) Now you get yourself back in the river where you belong. (*Covers head*)

HUCK: I ain't no ghost! I'm alive. Touch me. (*Holds out hand*)

JIM: (*Crawls farther away*) Stay away from me! Mr. Ghost! (*Covers head*)

HUCK: It was pig's blood. So it looked like I was dead. So nobody would come after me. See. (*Inhales, then exhales, sputtering*) I'm breathing.

JIM: (*Cautiously*) Is you. . .? Is you. . .? Why. . .why. . .You is. (*Feels Huck*) Yes, I reckon you is. And you's alive. Lawsy-me! (*They hug each other and laugh*) How long you been here?

HUCK: Since the day I was murdered. How long YOU been here?

JIM: I come the night after you's killed.

HUCK: Why?

JIM: If I tell, you won't blab? Will you, Huck? I—I RUN AWAY.

HUCK: Run away! Jim! Why did you do it?

JIM: It was like this. Miss Watson, she been seeing a slave dealer. And that night I hear her tell Widow Douglas she gwyne to sell me.

HUCK: Sell you?

JIM: Sell me for eight hundred dollars. I lit out mighty quick.

HUCK: What are you going to do?

JIM: I don't know. I's so shook up—and with nothing to eat.

HUCK: I got a string of fish.

JIM: Shus! Tain't good to count things afore you cook 'em. It'll fetch bad luck.

HUCK: (*Admiringly*) Jim, you know all the signs for bad luck.

JIM: I knows 'em all.

HUCK: Ain't there nothing that brings GOOD luck?

JIM: Rabbit foot. (*Shows it*) Protects me day and night. And—if you grow hair on your arms, you's gwyne to be rich.

HUCK: You got hair on both arms.

JIM: I is rich. Today I owns myself, and I's worth EIGHT HUNDRED DOLLARS!

HUCK: Get your blanket and let's eat.

JIM: Eat! I's so hungry I could eat a horse!

(Jim takes blanket. They walk R. Jim continues and exits. Huck circles back to C)

HUCK: It was mighty fine having Jim on the Island. We watched the river and it kept on a-risin'. One night we caught a big lumber raft which was floating by. We fixed it up with a box of dirt so you could build a fire on it, and Jim made a tent-like cover with some planks, like a little room.

(Jim enters)

The next night part of an old house come floating by.

(Jim and Huck mime paddling in a canoe)

We climbed in the canoe and paddled out to it and clumb in a window.

(They mime climbing in a window)

JIM: Nothing much here for us to take. Some empty whiskey bottles—

HUCK: (*Looks off R*) Look. Here in the closet is a bundle of clothes.

JIM: Take it. (*Huck gets bundle. Jim looks off L*) There's something in the other room, on the floor. It's a man. Hello, you.

HUCK: Reckon he's asleep?

JIM: He's dead.

HUCK: Dead? Let me see.

JIM: (*Stops him*) No, Huck, no. Don't look at him. (*Takes bundle*) Come away, boy. He's a frightenin' sight. We best get back to the island.

HUCK: Yes, we're drifting.

JIM: Go ahead. Climb out the window.

(*They mime climbing out a window, then mime paddling a canoe to R*)

HUCK: Jim, who you reckon shot that man? And why they done it for?

JIM: Hush. Don't talk about no dead man. It'll fetch bad luck.

HUCK: I didn't say no more. (*They stop paddling. Jim goes to R with bundle. Huck speaks to audience*) We got back to the island afore daylight. Next morning Jim was rummaging through the clothes we got, liken it was Christmas time.

JIM: Look at this. (*Holds up dress*) It's a woman's dress.

HUCK: Jim, I was thinking I'd sure like to know what's happening over in town.

JIM: And a frilly cap. (*Puts it on*)

HUCK: Jim.

JIM: Yes, Huck.

HUCK: I figure I could paddle across the river tonight and slip around and listen to what folks is saying.

JIM: (*Takes frilly cap off*) They'd catch you.

HUCK: I reckon so. But—but not, if I—DISGUISED—myself.