

# DEPICTION OF TRUE FRIENDSHIP FROM THE ADVENTURES OF HUCKLEBERRY FINN BY MARK TWAIN.

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## Abstract

This study attempts to depict the true friendship between the young Huck and Jim in the novel *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain. Friendship between people of same class, colour, creed and region is natural. But friendship which cuts across man-made barriers and lasts long is rare. Literature has shown to the world that such true friendship exists. However, the friendship between a white boy and an older man, a 'nigger' during the time when racism was at its peak is unimaginable. Defying a society that is ruthless towards the black slaves and saving such a friend from captivity needs grit and guts. This paper traces few examples of great friendship from literature to highlight the unprecedented friendship between Huck and Jim. It touches upon the sacrificial friendship of Damon and Pythias, the significant friendship between David and Jonathan in Biblical literature, the selfless friendship of the famous Shakespearean characters Antonio and Bassanio and, Tom Sawyer and Huck.

**Keywords:** Friendship, racism, nigger, captivity.

## Introduction

Friendship for most people is an attachment with the other person that draws them closer and closer. They detect similar qualities, interests, likes and dislikes. In some cases, people of diametrically opposite nature become good friends proving the adage 'unlike poles attract'. Whatever be the degree of positive or negative qualities there is a bond that strengthens the friendship. "Friendship", says Emerson "like the immortality of the soul, is too good to be believed". The book of Proverbs says that some friends stick closer than a brother. In moments of adversity the nature of a friend is manifested. When one falls, the other lifts him up, encourages and never gives up and that is the mark of true friendship.

Literature is full of epic friendships. These have made a great impact on the readers and are indelible in their minds for ages. Friendship can cross the boundaries of race, religion, age, language, status and custom. It accepts the friend irrespective of certain drawbacks. True friendship is undeterred by crisis but looks forward to plunge into action and wrest the friend from danger. It never realizes the cost, but is ready to sacrifice even one's own life. This bond becomes strengthened by the passing of time allowing none to put it asunder.

## Damon and Pythias

In the *Greek Historic* writings one can find a classic example of friendship between Damon and Pythias. According to Bateman's *Damon and Pythias- a Test of Friendship*, there lived two young men known as Damon and Pythias. They were great friends who admired each other and were inseparable. In their days they lived under a tyrant King of Syracuse. One day Pythias was found speaking ill of the King and therefore got arrested and sentenced to death. His friend Damon tried in earnest to save his friend but all

his efforts proved futile. When Damon came to meet him Pythias expressed his final desire to meet his family. Damon convinced the King to allow him to bid farewell to his family. In the meantime, he would stay in prison as his substitute. Pythias left to meet his family. Still, he kept his word and returned but was captured by pirates. After his escape, braving all odds he rushed on time to save his friend. If he never returned his friend would have been executed in his place. But he kept his word. On seeing such a good friendship the tyrant King's heart melted and he pardoned both and appointed them as his advisors.

### David and Jonathan

In the Biblical literature, one of the greatest friendship stories is about David and Jonathan. David was a shepherd boy who became a hero after slaying the Philistine giant, Goliath and rescuing the whole nation. This success put Saul the reigning King to envy. As the days went by, David became the archenemy of Saul. He plotted to kill David. It was clear that David was the God-ordained successor to the throne and Saul was furious about that. On the contrary, the heir to the throne Jonathan who was older to David had a great love and affection towards David. He acknowledged that David was the true successor and without any iota of envy or resentment continued to protect and support David. When his father was determined to kill David he alerted him with a signal to escape. He made David vow that they would keep their friendship intact. *The Holy Bible* records how Jonathan made David swear again by his love for him. He loved him when he loved his soul. Loyalty is a part of friendship and both these were loyal to each other even when difficulties came their way. Though Jonathan could not witness David ascending his father's throne he paved way for his ascendancy whole-heartedly. He was enthroned in the heart of David so the royal throne seemed nothing to him. Such was their friendship.

### Antonio and Bassanio

Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* has shown to the world yet another example of true friendship. Antonio was a rich merchant of Venice. He had a bosom friend, the young and handsome Bassanio. At one point, Bassanio requested money from his rich merchant friend so that he could present himself as a suitor to the rich lady of Belmont, Portia. To quote:

BASSANIO: "To you, Antonio,  
I owe the most, in money and love  
And from your love I have warranty  
To unburden all my plots and purpose  
How to get clear of all the debts I owe".

ANTONIO: "I pray you, good Bassanio, let me know it;  
And if it stand, as you yourself's still do,  
Within the eye of honour, be assured,  
My purse, my person, my extremest means,

Lie all unlock'd to your occasions". (Shakespeare, *Merchant of Venice Act I, Sci 130-135*)

Unfortunately, Antonio had no money to lend him at that time so he borrowed money from a Jewish moneylender, Shylock. Both of them detested each other and Shylock waited for a chance to trap Antonio. Using that opportunity, he lent 3000 ducats to Antonio but demanded him to sign a bond that if Antonio failed to return the money on the due date he would cut a pound of flesh from near his heart. The bond was signed, Bassanio went happily and fortune favoured him to win the hand of rich Portia. As the happy wedding could take place Bassanio was informed that Antonio's ships were wrecked and he could not pay

the money due to Shylock. Bassanio rushed to save his friend ready to pay six times more to Shylock. But the stone-hearted Jew was bent on cutting the pound of flesh. Fortunately, Portia appeared in disguise and saved Antonio through her wit and wisdom. She allowed the Jew to cut a pound of flesh without spilling a drop of Christian blood. Shylock was shocked and he went home empty-handed. In the story the exchanges between Antonio and Bassanio manifest their selfless love.

### **Tom Sawyer and Huck**

The duo Tom Sawyer and Huck are well known to the literary world as friends on adventure. Both of them come from different backgrounds but they are close to each other. Huckleberry Finn was an abandoned young boy whereas Tom Sawyer came from a well-respected family. One was the darling of the community but the other was sneered at as a waif. Huck adored Tom for his sound education, his intelligence and decision –making. To him Tom Sawyer was his role model. However, Tom treasured the friendship he had with Huckleberry Finn. Apart from the differences the similar traits the two companions share together were their bravery, courage, their strong belief in superstition, and their love of adventures. Despite their many differences, the both boys knew to make the right decision and became both valued friendship above all.

### **Huck and Jim**

The last pair of friends is one of the most controversial friendships to be found in the literary world. This study is set to zero in on this exemplary friendship between Huckleberry Finn, or Huck and Jim. Jim was an adult black slave who had fled and Huck Finn was a dirty little homeless fellow without any decent ways of the white society. Still, those character differences don't stop them from having a great friendship. Huck was from a lower stratum of the white society. His father was a drunkard and disappeared from home. The poor boy Huck was not brought up properly. He was dirty and homeless. Widow Douglas tried to "reform" Huck back, he resisted her and maintained his independent ways. A famous philosopher Euripides once said, "Friends show their love in times of trouble, not in happiness". The presence of friends makes the life worthwhile but it is a rare thing to find a friend who would stick on amidst all odds.

Huck was brought up by a wicked boorish drunkard father in a white society. He treated him very brutally. Huck was like an orphan. The boy grew up in a crude way dressed in tatters, smoked and was unkempt. Widow Douglas tried her best to refine him and make him 'civilized' in vain. She could never groom him into a decent boy. Though he understood her goodness he could not come into terms with the refined ways of life. He loved a life of freedom from any sort of binding. He wanted to be free. Miss Watson tried to nurture him spiritually and morally. But the imposing rules of a refined society were smothering. So Huck went back to his earlier life of freedom. With the arrival of his father and his merciless confinement in the log cabin Huck lost his last chance of getting refined. Though he was happy with life, one day his father in an inebriated condition attempted to murder him. Huck decided to escape for his life. He misled his father to understand that he was dead and escaped.

While he was heading towards Jackson Island, he found to his surprise that the slave of Miss Watson, old Jim had also runaway. He was about to be sold to the slave traders which would sever him from his family. There started the most unique friendship of the white boy and the old black man Jim. Huck ran away from his family, whereas Jim ran away unable to be ripped away from his family. After hearing Jim's tale of woe, Huck decided to protect him. He assured to maintain confidence and both explored the island. Their friendship matured gradually. To the fatherless Huck, Jim was a father figure. He made a wigwam to keep the boy from heat or rain. He taught him many supernatural things. Huck's biological father made his life a wreck but Jim resurrected the boy and gave him the warmth of love and friendship.

Once a broken frame-house was floating in the water, Jim pried into it and found a dead body inside. The sight of it could make the boy shudder so he kept Huck at bay and disallowed him to see that. To quote, "He's been shot in da back. I reck'n he's ben dead two er three days. Come in Huck, but doan' lok at his face- it's too gashley" (*Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* 63). Later on it was understood that it was the body of Pap, Huck's father. So much was the concern of Jim that he kept Huck in the dark about his father's

death as long as he could. Once during a heavy fog Jim and Huck were lost. This separation broke his heart and Jim later confessed, “my heart wuz mos broke because you wuz los, en I didn’t k’yer no mo’ what become er me en de raf” (AHF102). Jim never let down the boy even though Huck was callous to him sometime. His racist feeling and supremacy of being a white boy showed its fangs at times. Huck once put the rattle snake on Jim that made the mate bite him. Later, he was remorseful and vowed not to repeat it. After getting united with Jim from the fog which separated them Huck was reluctant to accept his weakness but implied that everything was a nightmare. Jim reproached him thus: “En when I wake up en fine you back agin, all safe en soun, de tears come, en I could a got down on my knees en kiss yo’ foot, I’s so thankful. . . how you could make a fool uv ole Jim wid a lie” (AHF102). Huck understood his mistake and apologized. During another occasion, when Huck went to the Grangerfords’ mansion, it was Jim who was waiting for him anxiously.

Huck also had a share of his goodness towards Jim. He saved Jim from slave hunters lying to them that he (Jim) was his father a Whiteman who was suffering from small pox. And finally he tore the letter he had written to Miss. Watson about Jim and his whereabouts. In the case of Huck, he was torn between the two opinions: to violate the social order by harbouring a runaway slave or betray him to the white people after enjoying the selfless love of a father figure like Jim. In the “antebellum society in the South of America if a white person helps a runaway slave towards freedom, ‘and in doing so he violates the laws of man, and he believes the laws of God’, the fact of helping slave that according to the Southerner rules is a deadly sin that sends a sinner into flames of hell. (Hutchinson 130). Finally, true love and friendship triumphed and Huck took courage and tore the letter written to Miss. Watson and saved Jim.

## Conclusion

In Huck’s case he had racial prejudice. He thought it was his moral duty to send Jim back. At times he wondered how a slave nigger could have emotions and sentiments. He had annoyed him also. But at last he understood that the black man was white inside. Therefore he freed himself from the social norms and demonstrated his friendship and helped in securing freedom for Jim. Huck understood the hollowness of the teachings against the blacks. Even if it meant damnation, according to his society, Huck was ready to obey the dictates of his conscience and remain a true friend of Jim. This is what makes their friendship an excellent and touching one.

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