



Huck Finn's America: Mark Twain and the Era That Shaped His Masterpiece

Andrew Levy

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A provocative, exuberant, and deeply researched investigation into Mark Twain's writing of America's favorite icon of childhood, *Huckleberry Finn*: "A boldly revisionist reading of Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*...Twain's masterpiece emerges as a compelling depiction of nineteenth-century troubles still all too familiar in the twenty-first century" (*Booklist*, starred review).

In the "groundbreaking" (*Dallas Morning News*) *Huck Finn's America*, award-winning biographer Andrew Levy shows how modern readers have misunderstood *Huckleberry Finn* for decades. Mark Twain's masterpiece is often discussed either as a carefree adventure story for children or a serious novel about race relations, yet Levy argues, it is neither. Instead, *Huck Finn* was written at a time when Americans were nervous about "uncivilized" bad boys, and a debate was raging about education, popular culture, and responsible parenting—casting Huck's now-celebrated "freedom" in a very different and very modern light. On issues of race, on the other hand, Twain's lifelong fascination with minstrel shows and black culture inspired him to write a book not about civil rights, but about race's role in entertainment and commerce, the same features on which much of our own modern consumer culture is also grounded. In Levy's vision, *Huck Finn* has more to say about contemporary children and race that we have ever imagined—if we are willing to hear it.

An eye-opening, groundbreaking exploration of the character and psyche of Mark Twain as he was writing his most famous novel, Levy's book "explores the soul of Mark Twain's enduring achievement with the utmost self-awareness...An eloquent argument, wrapped up in rich biographical detail and historical fact." (*USA TODAY*). *Huck Finn's America* brings the past to vivid, surprising life, and offers a persuasive argument for why this American classic deserves to be understood anew.

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Lou Whisenhunt:

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