

Standards Focus: Subgenres of Literature—Satire

Chapters 1-3

Many students are familiar with the different **genres**, or categories, of literature—fiction, nonfiction, poetry, autobiography, biography, plays, newspaper, folk tales—to name a few. However, there are often many **subgenres** of literature within these genres. For example, under the broad genre of plays, there are the subgenres of comedy, tragedy and history. Under the genre of mystery, there are the subgenres of thriller, detective, historical, romantic, and suspense.

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn falls under the genre of fiction, and the subgenre of **satire**. Satire is a piece of work that tries to expose, attack and/or ridicule the foolishness, wrongdoings, or strange behavior of society. Satires are often humorous, using exaggeration, irony, sarcasm and parody to catch the attention of the reader and promote changes in behavior. Modern satire can be seen on television shows such as *Saturday Night Live*, *The Simpsons*, or in political cartoons in newspapers and magazines.

Huck Finn is a satire of the American South in the 19th Century. While slavery had been abolished by the time Twain wrote *Huck Finn*, racism and prejudice were still a major issue. While Twain’s main target is slavery, he also explores and criticizes civility, conformity, religion, hypocrisy, and the idea of superstition.

Directions: For numbers 1 and 2, find a quotation from Chapters 1-3 that best illustrates the issue that is indicated. For numbers 3 and 4, decide what issue Twain is commenting on or ridiculing.

1. Find a quote from the text in which Twain satirizes religion.

Quote, page #:

2. Find a quote from the text in which Twain satirizes the idea of being “civilized.”

Quote, page #:

3. “Pretty soon I wanted to smoke, and asked the widow to let me. But she wouldn’t. She said it was a mean practice and it wasn’t clean and I must try not to do it anymore. That is just the way with some people. They get down on a thing when they don’t know nothing about it... And she took snuff, too; of course that was all right because she done it herself.”

Twain is satirizing: _____

4. “Pretty soon a spider went crawling up my shoulder, and I flipped it off and it lit in the candle; and before I could budge it was all shriveled up. I didn’t need anybody to tell me that that was an awful bad sign and would fetch me some bad luck, so I was scared and most shook the clothes off of me. I got up and turned around in my tracks three times and crossed my breast every time; and then I tied up a little lock of hair with a thread to keep the witches away. But I hadn’t no confidence. You do that when you’ve lost a horseshoe that you’ve found, instead of nailing it up over the door, but I hadn’t ever heard anybody say it was any way to keep off bad luck when you’d killed a spider.”

Twain is satirizing: _____