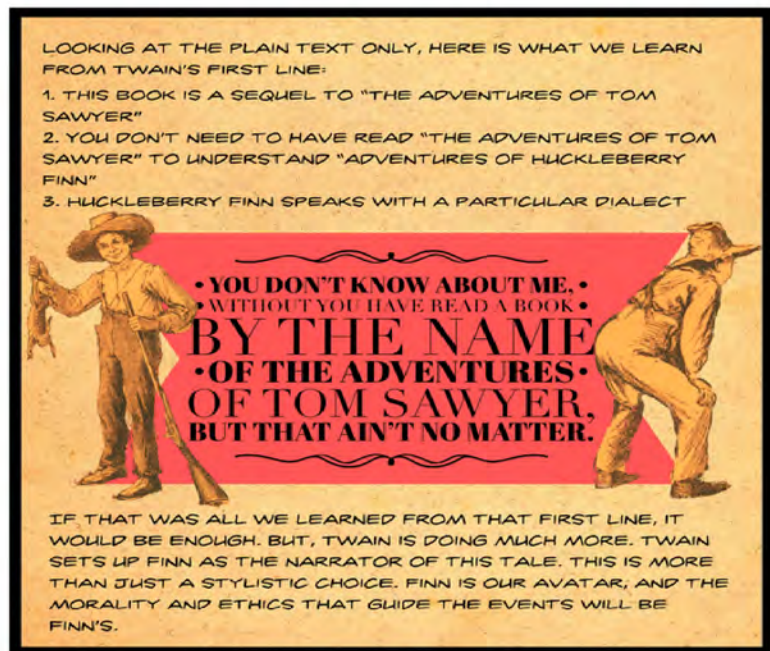
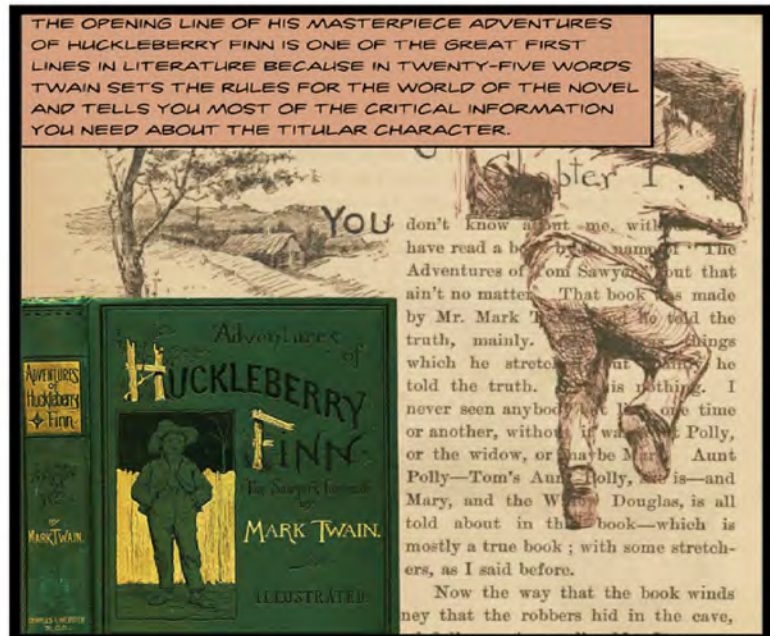
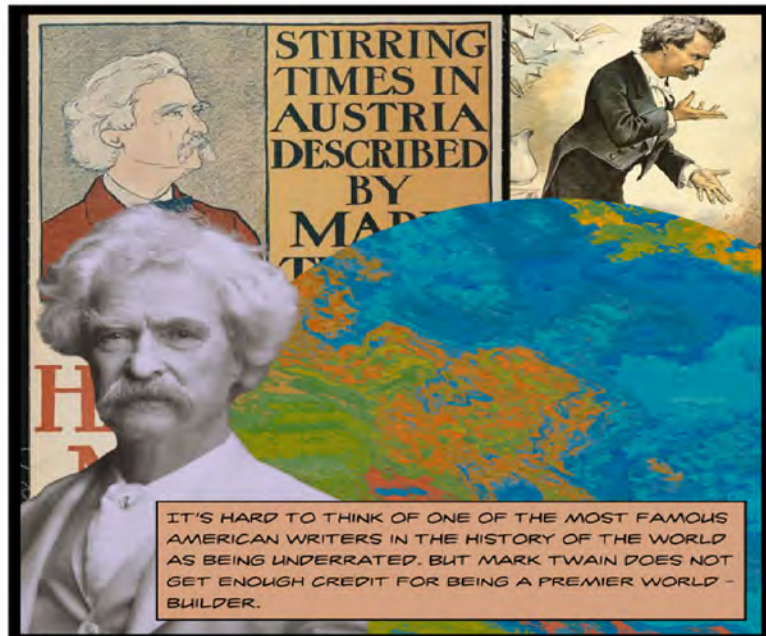


THAT AIN'T NO MATTER

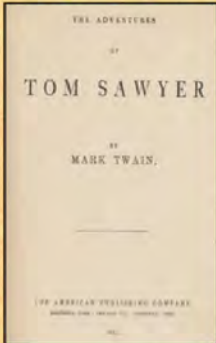
THE OPENING LINE OF
"ADVENTURES OF HUCKLEBERRY
FINN" IS A WORLD-BUILDING
MASTERPIECE

JASON MCBRIDE

WEIRDPOETRY



TWAIN TELLS US THAT THIS STORY IS IN THE SAME WORLD AS THAT OF TOM SAWYER, BUT HINTS THAT THIS BOOK TELLS A VERY DIFFERENT STORY, "BUT THAT AIN'T NO MATTER" MEANS THAT THE EVENTS OF THIS BOOK HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH THE EXPLOITS OF TOM SAWYER, AUNT POLLY, OR MOST OF THE REST OF THE CAST OF THAT BOOK. THAT BOOK HAS NO CONSEQUENCE ON THIS ONE. THE EARLIER CHARACTERS ARE IMMATERIAL. (THIS INCLUDES FINN HIMSELF, WHO IS NOT THE SAME CHARACTER IN HIS BOOK THAT HE IS IN SAWYER'S BOOK.)



KEY ELEMENTS OF FINN'S CHARACTER ARE ALSO LAID OUT IN THIS FIRST LINE. FINN IS NOT BOASTFUL IN THE WAY TOM SAWYER IS. SAWYER WOULD NEVER INTRODUCE HIMSELF IN REFERENCE TO SOMEONE ELSE. FINN HAS A HUMILITY. HIS DIALECT ALSO HINTS AT A LACK OF FORMAL EDUCATION. IN THE FRONT OF THE 1885 EDITION OF THE NOVEL, TWAIN EXPLAINS IN AN AUTHOR'S NOTE THAT THE BOOK CONTAINS MULTIPLE DIFFERENT DIALECTS.

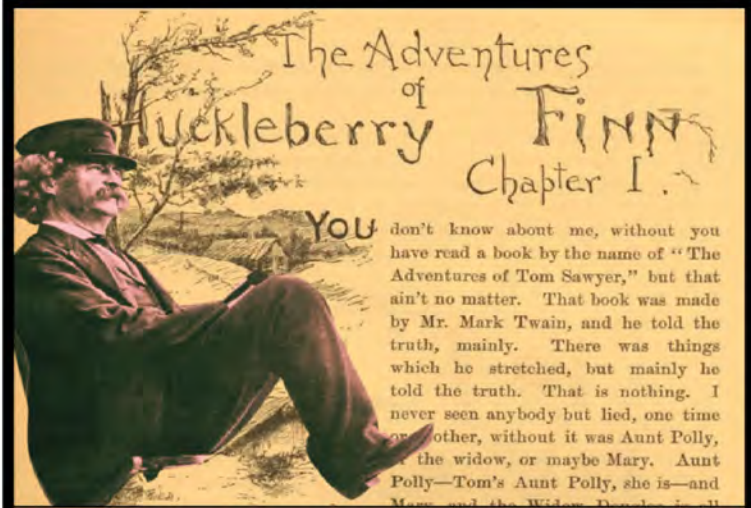
...shadings have not been done in a haphazard fashion, or by guesswork; but painstakingly, and with the trustworthy guidance and support of personal familiarity with these several forms of speech.



FINN'S DIALECT IS A KEY PART OF HIS CHARACTER AND WE GET A PICTURE OF THAT FROM THE FIRST LINE OF THE BOOK.



MOST IMPORTANTLY FINN IS MISCHIEVOUS. WHAT OTHER KIND OF CHARACTER WOULD TALK DIRECTLY TO THE READER, BREAKING THE FOURTH WALL? IN OUR SNARKY CULTURE, WE ARE ACCUSTOMED TO CHARACTERS LIKE DEADPOOL BEING META AND SELF-AWARE. BUT THIS WAS NOT AS COMMON OF A LITERARY DEVICE IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.



IN THIS FIRST LINE, WE GET THE SENSE THAT THIS BOOK IS GOING TO BE FUN. FINN IS TEASING US BY TELLING US HE KNOWS HE'S A CHARACTER IN A BOOK, BUT THAT DOES NOT MAKE HIM ANY LESS REAL. IN THIS OPENING SENTENCE, TWAIN STANDS ASTRIDE MODERNISM AND POST-MODERNISM, WITHOUT MAKING THE READER FEEL AWKWARD OR LOST.

NOTICE.

• PERSONS ATTEMPTING TO FIND A MOTIVE IN THIS NARRATIVE WILL BE PROSECUTED; PERSONS ATTEMPTING TO FIND A MORAL IN IT WILL BE BANISHED; PERSONS ATTEMPTING TO FIND A PLOT IN IT WILL BE SHOT. BY ORDER OF THE AUTHOR
PER G. G., CHIEF OF ORDNANCE.

NOTICE FROM THE FRONT MATTER OF THE 1885 EDITION OF "ADVENTURES OF HUCKLEBERRY FINN"

THE WORLD OF HUCKLEBERRY FINN IS BOTH FICTIONAL AND TETHERED TO THE REALITY OF OUR OWN WORLD. TWAIN TELLS US THAT THIS BOOK IS ABOUT REAL ADVENTURES WHILE WINKING AT US TO NOT TAKE IT TOO SERIOUSLY. IF YOU'VE READ THE WHOLE NOVEL YOU KNOW THAT IT'S A MIXTURE OF SATIRE OF THE ROMANTICISM OF THE SOUTH AND A DEEPLY DETAILED BIT OF REALISM. THAT DICHOTOMY HAS ITS FOUNDATION IN THIS OPENING LINE.

WHAT REALLY MAKES THIS OPENING A CLASSIC THOUGH IS THAT IT PERFECTLY EXECUTES THE PRIMARY FUNCTION OF ANY FIRST LINE OF ANYTHING. IT GETS YOU TO READ THE NEXT LINE.

YOU DON'T KNOW ABOUT ME, WITHOUT YOU HAVE READ A BOOK BY THE NAME OF THE ADVENTURES OF TOM SAWYER, BUT THAT AIN'T NO MATTER

I like a good story well told. That is the reason I am sometimes forced to tell them myself.

TWAIN WROTE LIKE A CON-ARTIST. HE KNEW HE HAD TO HOOK YOU WITH THE FIRST LINE TO GET YOU TO BUY INTO THE OUTRAGEOUS TALE HE WAS SELLING. I DON'T KNOW HOW YOU CAN READ THIS LINE AND NOT WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THIS HUCKLEBERRY FINN CHARACTER.