

AI-Generated Graded Readers

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About This Edition

This book is a simplified English adaptation created for extensive reading practice.

The text was generated using ChatGPT and prepared for intermediate English learners as part of an educational project.

Target reading level: CEFR A2-B1

This edition aims to support fluency development through accessible vocabulary, expanded narration, and improved readability while preserving the original story structure.

Source Text

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Mark Twain, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (Simplified Edition, Adapted and Simplified by ChatGPT)

Part 1

You don't know about me unless you have read a book called *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, but that does not matter. That book was written by Mr. Mark Twain, and most of what he wrote in it was true. Some things were stretched a little, but most of it happened just the way he said. I never saw anyone who did not sometimes stretch the truth, except maybe Aunt Polly or the widow, or perhaps Mary. Aunt Polly was Tom's aunt, and Mary was Tom's cousin. The widow, Mrs. Douglas, was the woman who took me into her house at the end of the last story.

She took me in because she felt sorry for me. She said she was going to civilize me. That sounded terrible to me. I had never wanted to be civilized. But the widow meant well, so I stayed with her.

Living in the widow's house was difficult. Everything had rules. I had to wash every day, and I had to wear clean clothes all the time. The clothes felt stiff and uncomfortable. I could not lie around in the old easy way I was used to. I had to sit straight at the table and eat with a knife and fork, even when my hands would have done the job better.

The widow was kind, but her sister Miss Watson lived with her, and Miss Watson was always watching me. She was a thin old lady with sharp eyes. She told me what I should do and what I should not do from morning until night. She said I must not put my elbows on the table, I must not stretch, and I must not scratch unless I had a very good reason. There seemed to be a thousand rules.

Miss Watson also tried to teach me reading and spelling. I did not enjoy that at first, but after some time I began to like reading a little. Still, I could never understand why she wanted to keep teaching me more and more.

The widow also told me about heaven. She said that if I behaved well, I might go there someday. She said heaven was a place where people played the harp and sang forever. That sounded very dull to me. I asked her if Tom Sawyer would go

there. She said she did not know. I said that if Tom was not going, I did not want to go either.

Miss Watson told me about the other place, the bad place where wicked people go. She said it was full of fire. I said that sounded more lively, and maybe I would go there instead. She was very shocked when I said that.

After supper every evening the widow made me sit quietly while Miss Watson read from the Bible. I did not understand most of what she read, but I had to sit there anyway.

Sometimes I would look out the window and wish I could escape back to the woods and the river. I missed my old life. I missed sleeping wherever I liked and eating whenever I found something to eat.

But there was one good thing about living at the widow's house. I had my friend Tom Sawyer.

Tom came to see me often, especially at night. We liked to meet secretly and talk about adventures.

One night, not long after the widow had taken me in, Tom came to my window and meowed softly like a cat. That was our signal.

I climbed out the window quietly and dropped down into the yard. Then I slipped along the garden fence and met Tom in the dark.

We crept away through the trees until we reached the edge of the village. There, several other boys were waiting for us.

Tom had an idea for a secret gang of robbers. We would call it Tom Sawyer's Gang.

Tom said that real robbers always took an oath in blood. So we pricked our fingers and wrote our names with our blood on a piece of paper.

Tom explained the rules of the gang. We would stop travelers on lonely roads and rob them. If anyone told our secrets, we would kill that person and the person's whole family.

The other boys thought this sounded wonderful.

Of course, we did not really rob anyone. Most of the time we just pretended.

Still, the gang made life much more exciting.

Without Tom Sawyer, I do not think I could have stood the widow's house for very long.

Part 2

After Tom Sawyer's Gang had been started, we met several times in a secret cave. Tom read to us from books about robbers and pirates. Those books said that real robbers wore masks and stopped coaches on lonely roads. They killed people who resisted and carried away bags of gold. We wanted to do the same things.

But we were only boys, and there were no coaches full of gold passing through our small town. Most of the time we just imagined adventures. Sometimes we ran through the woods shouting and pretending we were attacking enemies. After a while the gang began to lose interest. The boys slowly stopped coming to the meetings. In the end the gang broke up without ever robbing anyone.

Meanwhile I still lived with the widow and Miss Watson. The rules continued every day. I had to go to school and learn my lessons. I had to behave properly at the table. I had to listen to long talks about good behavior and religion.

At night I sometimes lay awake thinking about my old life. I wished I could sleep outside again and wear my old ragged clothes. The clean clothes and the quiet rooms made me feel trapped.

But there was one thing that helped me stay. I had money.

Some time earlier Tom and I had discovered a large treasure of gold hidden by robbers. Each of us received six thousand dollars. Judge Thatcher kept the money for us and invested it. Every day the money earned a small amount of interest.

The judge said I would receive one dollar every day.

I did not understand much about banks or interest, but I knew that one dollar every day was a great deal of money for a boy like me.

Sometimes I thought about running away, but I knew the widow would be disappointed. She had taken care of me kindly, and I did not want to hurt her feelings.

Then something happened that changed everything.

One morning Miss Watson's slave Jim found some footprints in the snow outside the house. The footprints led toward the garden and then away again.

Jim examined them carefully. Suddenly he noticed something strange.

In the heel of the left footprint there was a mark shaped like a cross.

Jim knew that mark.

My father had once nailed a small cross into the heel of his boot to keep the Devil away. No one else had such a mark.

Jim told me about the footprint.

When I heard it, my heart sank.

I knew what it meant.

My father had come back to town.

Pap had been gone for more than a year. No one had seen him during that time. People thought he might be dead. But now he had returned.

Pap was not a good man. He drank too much and often beat me when he was angry. When I lived with him before, my life had been miserable.

Now I felt afraid that he had come to take my money.

I ran to Judge Thatcher's house as fast as I could.

When the judge opened the door, I asked him to take all my money.

The judge looked surprised.

"What do you mean, Huck?" he said.

I told him I did not want the money anymore. I wanted to give it all to him.

The judge studied my face for a moment. Then he wrote a short paper and asked me to sign it.

I signed my name.

The judge gave me one dollar in exchange.

In that way all my money now belonged to him.

I felt relieved.

If Pap had come back for the money, he would not get it.

But I still knew that trouble was coming.

Part 3

That night I went up to my room carrying a candle. Everything seemed quiet in the house, but I still felt uneasy after hearing about the footprints in the snow. I opened the door and stepped inside.

Then I froze.

Someone was sitting in the chair beside the window.

It was Pap.

He looked almost the same as before, only worse. His hair was long and tangled, hanging down around his face. His beard was thick and messy. His clothes were nothing but rags. One of his boots was broken at the toe, and two of his toes stuck out.

His skin looked pale and sickly, almost like the belly of a fish. When he moved, the candlelight showed his sharp eyes staring at me through the tangled hair.

We looked at each other for a moment without speaking.

Finally Pap said, "Well, look at you. Wearing nice clothes and living in a fine house. You think you're a big gentleman now, do you?"

I said nothing.

Pap leaned forward and studied me carefully. Then he began asking questions.

He had heard that I could read and write. That made him very angry.

"Who told you that you could learn such things?" he said. "You think you're better than your father now?"

I tried to explain that the widow and Miss Watson wanted me to learn.

Pap slapped the book out of my hands when I showed him I could read.

"That's enough," he said. "You stop going to school. Nobody in our family ever learned to read before, and you're not going to start now."

He complained about my clean clothes and the comfortable room. Then he asked about the money.

"I hear you're rich," he said. "Judge Thatcher's got your money. You go get it tomorrow. I want it."

I told him I did not have the money anymore.

Pap did not believe me.

He demanded to know how much money I had with me.

I said I only had one dollar.

Pap grabbed it immediately.

He bit the coin to make sure it was real.

Then he said he was going to town to buy whiskey.

Before leaving, he warned me again not to go to school. If he ever saw me near that school again, he said he would beat me badly.

Then he climbed out the window and disappeared into the night.

The next day Pap went to see Judge Thatcher.

He demanded that the judge give him my money.

But the judge refused.

Pap shouted and cursed and threatened everyone in the office, but it did no good.

Meanwhile the widow and Judge Thatcher tried to help me. They went to court and asked the judge to take me away from Pap and make the widow my legal guardian.

Unfortunately a new judge had just arrived in town.

He did not know Pap's reputation.

The new judge believed strongly that families should stay together.

He said a boy should not be taken away from his father if it could be avoided.

So the court refused to give me to the widow.

Pap was very pleased when he heard this.

Soon afterward he began demanding money from me again. Sometimes he threatened to beat me unless I gave him some money. I borrowed small amounts from Judge Thatcher and gave it to Pap just to keep the peace.

Every time Pap received money, he went straight to town and spent it on whiskey.

Then he would get drunk and shout and curse all over the streets.

The townspeople usually threw him in jail for a few days.

When he came out again, the same thing started all over.

After a while the new judge decided he would try to reform Pap.

He took Pap into his own house, gave him clean clothes, and fed him a good

dinner.

Pap began crying and promising to become a new man. He said he would never drink again.

The judge and his wife felt very moved by his promises.

Pap even signed a paper promising to stop drinking.

But that very night Pap climbed out the window, traded his new coat for whiskey, and got drunk again.

Before morning he fell off the roof and broke his arm.

The judge looked very discouraged when he heard the news.

He said the only way to reform Pap might be with a shotgun.

Part 4

After Pap's arm healed, he went back to his old habits. He still wanted my money, and he still hated the fact that I was learning to read and write. Whenever he saw me near the school, he shouted and threatened to beat me. Sometimes he did catch me and whip me. But I kept going to school anyway, partly because I had begun to like reading, and partly because it annoyed him so much.

The court case about my money moved very slowly. Pap's lawyer believed they might eventually win the case, but Judge Thatcher knew many ways to delay things. Pap complained about it constantly. Every time he came to town he asked me for money. If I did not give him some, he would threaten to beat me.

Often I borrowed two or three dollars from Judge Thatcher and handed it over. Pap always spent the money on whiskey. After drinking, he wandered around the town shouting and cursing until the people finally put him in jail again.

The townspeople were tired of him. But Pap seemed satisfied with this life. He did not work and did not try to change.

One day in the spring Pap caught me alone. He grabbed me by the arm and dragged me down to the river. There he forced me into a small boat.

We rowed upstream for several miles and then crossed the Mississippi River to the Illinois side. The land there was wild and covered with thick woods.

Deep in the forest stood an old log cabin.

Pap took me inside and said we would live there together.

The cabin had only one room. There was a rough bed, a table, and a few broken chairs. The door had a heavy lock. Pap kept the key with him all the time.

He also had a gun.

Most days Pap hunted or fished for food. Sometimes he locked me inside the cabin and went several miles down the river to a small store near the ferry landing. There he traded fish or animal skins for whiskey.

When he returned drunk, he often beat me.

After a while the widow learned where I was. She sent a man to rescue me. But Pap chased him away with his gun. After that no one tried again.

At first I hated living in the cabin. I felt trapped and lonely.

But after some time I began to enjoy parts of the life there. We slept whenever we wanted. We fished in the river and hunted in the woods. No one made me wash every day or wear stiff clothes.

There were no books, no school, and no lectures from Miss Watson.

Two months passed in this way.

My clothes became dirty rags, and my hair grew long. When I thought about the widow's house, it seemed strange that I had ever tried to live there.

Still, Pap's drinking made life dangerous.

When he was drunk he sometimes beat me so badly that I had bruises all over my body.

He also began leaving me locked inside the cabin for longer and longer periods.

Once he stayed away for three whole days.

During that time I became frightened. I thought Pap might have drowned in the river, leaving me locked inside forever.

That was when I decided I must escape.

I had already tried many times to find a way out. The windows were too small to crawl through. The chimney was too narrow to climb. The door was made of thick oak boards.

Pap always made sure there were no knives or tools left in the cabin.

But one day, while searching carefully again, I finally found something.
Between the roof boards and a beam I discovered an old rusty wood saw.
It had no handle, but the blade was still sharp enough to cut.
I hid the saw under my blanket and waited for a good chance to use it.
Soon that chance came.

One evening Pap locked me inside the cabin and went down the river to the town.

As soon as he was gone, I lifted the blanket hanging on the wall and began sawing through one of the logs near the floor.

I worked slowly and carefully so no one would hear.

Little by little the hole grew larger.

At last it became big enough for me to crawl through.

I covered the hole with the blanket again so Pap would not notice it.

Now I had a way out.

But I knew that simply running away would not be enough.

Pap would search for me.

So I began thinking of a better plan.

Part 5

That evening Pap returned from town in a bad mood. He had been drinking, and when Pap drank he usually began complaining about everything in the world. He cursed the government, the judge, and the townspeople. He said the law was trying to steal his own son away from him and keep his money. The more he drank, the louder he shouted.

Soon he began talking about something else that had made him angry in town. He said he had seen a well-dressed Black man from Ohio. The man was almost white in color and wore fine clothes and a gold watch. Pap said the man was educated and could speak several languages. Someone told Pap that in his home state the man could even vote in elections.

Pap became furious when he spoke about it. He shouted that the government

had gone crazy if it allowed such things. He said he would never vote again in a country where that could happen. He continued shouting and cursing until he was completely drunk.

After supper Pap sat by the fire with the whiskey jug beside him. Outside the wind blew through the trees, and the river sounded dark and lonely in the distance. Pap drank more and more until his eyes became wild.

Suddenly he jumped to his feet and grabbed his gun.

“Snakes!” he shouted. “They’re crawling all over me!”

He ran around the cabin pointing the gun at the floor and the walls, trying to shoot snakes that were not really there. Then he cried out that the Devil was chasing him. Pap stumbled across the room, shaking with fear and anger.

At last he fell onto the floor and passed out.

I waited quietly for a long time. The candle burned lower and lower while Pap snored loudly beside the fire.

When I was sure he would not wake up, I took the saw from its hiding place. I lifted the blanket and began cutting again at the log where I had started the hole.

It was slow work. The wood was thick and hard, and I had to stop often to listen for any sound from Pap. But he kept snoring and did not move.

At last the piece of wood broke free.

I pushed it outward and looked through the opening. The hole was now large enough for me to crawl through.

I felt a great sense of relief.

I could escape whenever I wished.

But I still had to think carefully about what to do next. If I simply disappeared, Pap would search the woods and the riverbanks until he found me.

So I decided to make it look like I had been murdered.

The next morning Pap left again for town. As soon as he was gone, I began preparing my plan.

First I carried some supplies from the cabin down to the river and hid them near the boat. Then I dragged a sack of cornmeal across the floor and through the hole in the wall so it would leave a trail.

After that I caught a wild pig in the woods.

I brought the pig into the cabin and killed it. The blood spread across the floor.

Then I smashed the door open with an axe so it looked like robbers had forced their way inside. I dragged the pig's body across the ground toward the river, leaving a trail of blood behind.

Anyone who saw the scene would think someone had killed me and thrown my body into the Mississippi.

When everything was ready, I loaded the boat with food, tools, blankets, and Pap's gun. Then I pushed the boat quietly into the river.

The current carried me away from the shore.

I felt free for the first time in many weeks.

I steered the boat toward a place called Jackson's Island. No one lived there, and I believed it would be the perfect hiding place.

By the time the sun began to rise, I had reached the island.

I pulled the boat into the trees and climbed onto the quiet shore, leaving behind the old life I had escaped.

Part 6

I reached Jackson's Island just before sunrise. The river was quiet, and a light mist floated over the water. I guided the boat carefully along the shore until I found a place hidden by thick trees and bushes. Then I tied the boat and carried my supplies into the woods so no one passing on the river would see them.

After that I lay down on the ground and slept.

When I woke later that morning, the sun was shining through the trees. The island looked bright and peaceful. Birds were singing, and the river moved quietly along the shore. I felt very comfortable.

No one knew I was alive. Everyone in town would believe I had been murdered.

I spent the day exploring the island. It was about three miles long and wide enough in places to hide almost anything. The woods were thick, and there were many quiet places where a person could live without being seen. I found berries

growing in the bushes and plenty of fish in the river.

It seemed like the perfect hiding place.

Later I climbed up a high place where I could see the river clearly. While I was watching, a ferryboat moved slowly along the water. Several men stood on the deck looking carefully at the river.

Suddenly I heard a loud boom.

They had fired a cannon.

The sound echoed across the water and through the trees.

I knew what they were doing. When people believe someone has drowned, they sometimes fire a cannon over the water. The explosion is supposed to make the body rise to the surface.

They fired the cannon again and again.

After a while I saw them throwing loaves of bread onto the river. People sometimes put quicksilver inside the bread and say a prayer before letting it float away. The bread is supposed to stop above a drowned body.

One of the loaves drifted close to the island.

I swam out and caught it.

Inside the bread I found a small piece of silver money. Someone had left it there with the prayer.

I carried the bread back to shore and ate it happily.

The search boat kept moving up and down the river for the rest of the day. At last it went away, and the river became quiet again.

That evening I built a small fire hidden among the trees and cooked some fish. I was careful that the smoke would not be seen from the river. When night came, the island became very still.

I lay down under the trees and slept peacefully.

The next day I walked along the shore again and explored the woods farther inland. Sometimes I fished. Sometimes I rested in the shade.

Everything felt calm.

But on the third day something happened that surprised me.

I saw a thin line of smoke rising through the trees.

At first I thought it might be the remains of my own fire.
But I had not made a fire that morning.
Someone else was on the island.
I felt nervous.
I moved quietly through the woods toward the smoke. Step by step I crept closer,
hiding behind trees and bushes.
Soon I saw a small fire burning beside a fallen log.
And sitting next to the fire was a man.
I watched him carefully for a moment.
Then I recognized him.
It was Jim.
Jim was Miss Watson's slave.
I stepped out from the trees.
"Hello, Jim!" I said.
Jim jumped to his feet and stared at me with wide eyes.
"Good Lord!" he cried. "It's a ghost!"
He dropped to his knees and began begging the ghost not to hurt him.
I laughed and told him I was not a ghost.
"It's me, Huck Finn," I said.
Jim stood up slowly and looked closely at my face.
Finally he said, "Huck... you ain't dead?"
I told him the whole story about my escape from Pap and how everyone
believed I had been murdered.
Jim listened with great interest.
Then he told me his story.
Miss Watson had been planning to sell him to a trader who would take him far
down the Mississippi River. Jim had overheard her talking about it.
If he were sold, he would never see his wife and children again.
So he ran away.
He had been hiding on the island for several days.
When Jim finished his story, we both felt glad to see each other.

Now neither of us had to live alone on the island.

That night we built a small shelter of branches and leaves.

Then we sat beside the fire and talked for a long time.

For the first time since escaping from Pap, I felt that I had a true companion again.

Part 7

Jim and I soon settled into a quiet life on Jackson's Island. During the day we explored the woods, gathered berries, and fished in the river. At night we built a small fire hidden deep among the trees and cooked our food carefully so that no one passing along the river would see the smoke.

The island felt safe. No one ever came there, and the thick trees hid us from view.

Sometimes we climbed to a high place and watched the river. Boats passed from time to time, but none stopped at the island. Jim liked to sit and listen to the sounds of the water. He said the river always had something to say if a person listened closely.

One morning we were walking along the sandy shore when we saw a small boat drifting down the river.

Inside the boat were several men with guns.

Jim and I quickly hid among the bushes.

The boat came close to the island, and the men stepped onto the shore. They walked around the edge of the woods for a while, talking loudly and laughing. It seemed they were searching for someone.

Jim whispered that they were probably looking for him.

My heart beat faster as we watched them.

But the men never came near the place where we were hiding. After some time they returned to their boat and drifted away down the river.

When they were gone, Jim and I came out from the bushes.

"We got to be careful, Huck," Jim said quietly. "People looking for runaway

slaves might come here again.”

I agreed.

A few days later a strong storm came over the river. Dark clouds filled the sky, and the wind blew hard through the trees. Rain poured down all night while thunder rolled across the island.

Jim and I stayed inside our little shelter and waited for the storm to pass.

During the night we heard a loud crashing sound somewhere out on the river.

When morning came, we walked down to the shore to see what had happened.

A large wooden house was floating slowly down the river.

The storm must have torn it loose from its foundation and carried it into the current.

The house drifted close to the island and caught against a group of trees.

Jim and I climbed onto it carefully.

Inside the house everything was scattered across the floor. Chairs were overturned, dishes were broken, and clothes lay everywhere. It looked as if the people who had lived there had left in a hurry.

We began searching through the rooms.

In one room we found blankets and clothes that were still dry. In another room we found knives, candles, and some useful tools.

We carried everything valuable down to our boat.

While we were searching the house, Jim suddenly stopped.

He stared toward the far corner of the room and then quickly stepped in front of me.

“Don’t come over here, Huck,” he said quietly.

I tried to see what he was looking at, but Jim blocked my way.

“There’s a dead man here,” he said. “You don’t need to see that.”

I asked who the man was.

Jim shook his head.

“It ain’t important,” he said. “Best thing is we leave.”

So we finished gathering what we needed and climbed back into our boat.

The floating house slowly drifted away from the island and disappeared down

the river.

Later that evening we sat by our fire eating fish and bread.

I asked Jim again about the dead man in the house.

Jim looked serious and said we should not talk about it now.

“You’ll know later,” he said quietly.

I did not understand what he meant, but I did not ask more questions.

That night Jim and I talked about our future.

Jim said we could not stay on the island forever. People searching for runaway slaves might eventually find him there.

Instead, he said we should build a raft and travel down the Mississippi River.

Jim hoped that somewhere along the river we could reach a place where slavery was not allowed.

There he could finally live as a free man.

The idea sounded exciting to me.

So the next day we began gathering logs and tying them together with rope and vines.

After several days of work, we finished building the raft.

We loaded it with food, blankets, tools, and everything we had taken from the floating house.

One evening as the sun set over the river, Jim and I pushed the raft gently into the water.

The wide Mississippi River opened before us.

Our long journey had begun.

Part 8

Jim and I soon learned how to live on the raft. During the day we usually tied the raft to the shore and hid among the trees. If anyone saw Jim, they might capture him and send him back to slavery. At night we traveled. The river was wide and calm in the darkness, and the current carried us slowly south.

We liked the nights best. The air was cool, and the stars shone brightly above

the water. Sometimes we could see lights far away from houses along the shore. Sometimes a large steamboat passed us, shining bright lamps across the river and making loud noises as it moved through the current.

When a steamboat came near, we guided the raft carefully toward the shore so the waves would not break it apart. The waves from those boats were strong enough to shake the raft badly.

On quiet nights Jim and I talked about many things. Jim spoke often about his family. He had a wife and children, and he missed them deeply. He hoped that when he became free he might someday earn enough money to buy their freedom too.

I had never thought much about such things before, but Jim's words made me think.

One night a thick fog began to rise from the river. At first it came in thin white clouds across the water, but soon it grew so thick that we could hardly see each other on the raft.

The fog surrounded us like a wall.

The river current began pushing the raft in strange directions.

Jim said we should try to tie the raft to something until the fog cleared. But before we could do that, the raft struck a floating branch.

The impact pushed us apart.

Jim stayed on the raft, but I was thrown into the water.

I managed to grab a floating log and pull myself onto it. The fog was so thick that I could not see the raft anymore.

I called out loudly.

"Jim! Jim!"

But the fog swallowed my voice.

The river carried me slowly through the darkness. Sometimes I thought I heard Jim calling for me, but when I shouted back there was no answer.

I floated along for a long time. The fog seemed endless. I began to feel lonely and frightened.

At last the fog began to lift. The moon appeared faintly through the clouds, and

the river became clearer.

Soon I saw something drifting quietly ahead of me.

It was the raft.

I swam over and climbed aboard.

Jim was lying there asleep.

I had an idea for a joke.

When Jim woke up, I pretended nothing had happened. I told him he must have dreamed the whole thing.

Jim looked confused. He said he remembered the fog and calling for me again and again.

But I kept insisting that he had only been dreaming.

After a while Jim began to believe me.

Then he noticed something strange.

Leaves and branches were scattered across the raft. They had fallen there while the raft drifted through trees during the fog.

Jim studied the branches for a moment.

Suddenly he understood.

He realized I had been tricking him.

Jim looked hurt.

He said he had been worried all night. He had called for me again and again because he thought I had drowned in the river. When I finally returned, he had felt so happy that he cried.

But then he discovered that I had been making fun of him.

Jim said it was mean to treat a friend that way.

His words made me feel ashamed.

I had never thought about Jim's feelings before. But now I saw that he had cared about me like a real friend.

For the first time in my life I felt sorry for something I had done to a Black man.

I walked over to Jim and apologized.

It took me a long time to gather the courage to do it, but I did.

Jim accepted my apology.

After that, things between us felt different.

We were no longer just two travelers floating down the river.

We were friends.

Part 9

Our plan was to travel down the river until we reached a town called Cairo. Cairo was important because it stood near the place where the Ohio River joined the Mississippi. If we turned up the Ohio River, we could travel north into states where slavery was not allowed. Jim believed that once he reached a free state he would finally be safe.

So every night we watched carefully for the lights of Cairo.

During the day we hid along the shore. We tied the raft among thick trees where it could not easily be seen from the river. Jim stayed hidden under a small shelter made from blankets and branches so that anyone passing by would not see him.

One night as we drifted quietly along the river, we saw another raft approaching. Two men stood on it holding lanterns.

They called out to us.

“Who’s there?”

Jim whispered quickly, “Don’t answer them, Huck. They might be slave hunters.”

But the men called again, and I thought it might seem suspicious if we stayed silent.

So I answered.

The men rowed closer to our raft. They asked what we were doing on the river so late at night.

I told them a story.

I said my father and mother were both sick with smallpox. We were trying to reach a town where a doctor could help them.

As soon as the men heard the word “smallpox,” they became frightened.

They moved their boat farther away from us.

One of them shouted that they would send help later.

Then they drifted away quickly into the darkness.

Jim looked very relieved.

“Huck,” he said quietly, “that lie saved me.”

A little while later the men returned, but they still stayed far away from us. One of them threw a bag onto our raft. Inside the bag were some bread and a small amount of money.

They said the supplies were for the sick people and then hurried away again.

Jim and I laughed softly after they disappeared.

My story about smallpox had frightened them so badly that they wanted to help us without coming close.

After that we continued drifting down the river.

Night after night the raft carried us south. Sometimes we talked quietly. Sometimes we lay on our backs and watched the stars shining above the wide Mississippi.

The river seemed endless.

Some nights were bright with moonlight. Other nights were dark and cloudy.

We kept watching for the lights of Cairo, but the nights passed and we did not see the town.

One evening the current grew stronger, and the raft began moving faster than before. The river seemed wider and darker than usual.

We looked carefully toward the shore, hoping to see signs of the town.

But everything remained silent.

When morning came, we realized something terrible.

We had passed Cairo during the night without seeing it.

That meant we had missed the place where the Ohio River turned north.

Now the Mississippi would carry us deeper into the southern states.

Jim looked very worried.

“Huck,” he said slowly, “if we keep going south, somebody going to catch me.”

I tried to think of a plan.

Perhaps we could find another town farther down the river and sell the raft.

Then we might travel north on foot.

It did not seem like a good plan, but it was the only idea I had.

Later that same day we saw a large steamboat coming toward us.

The boat moved quickly through the water.

The waves it created began to shake our raft violently.

We tried to steer away, but the current was strong.

Suddenly the steamboat struck our raft with great force.

The raft broke apart.

I was thrown into the river.

The current pulled me under the water.

I struggled to reach the surface and breathe again.

When I finally came up for air, the raft had disappeared.

Jim was gone.

I swam desperately toward the shore.

After a long struggle I reached the muddy bank and climbed out of the river.

I collapsed on the ground, exhausted.

I was alone again.

I did not know where the river had carried Jim.

Part 10

After climbing out of the river, I rested for a long time on the muddy bank. My clothes were wet, and my arms felt weak from swimming. The night was quiet except for the sound of the river moving past the shore.

I stood up and began walking along the bank, hoping to find Jim or some piece of the broken raft.

But the river was empty.

After a while I noticed lights shining in the distance. They came from a large house standing on a hill above the river.

As I climbed the hill, several dogs began barking loudly.

Soon men came running out of the house carrying guns.

“Who’s there?” one of them shouted.

I quickly told them my name was George Jackson.

I did not want them to know who I really was.

The men lowered their guns and led me into the house.

The house belonged to a wealthy family called the Grangerfords.

They gave me dry clothes and food. The family treated me kindly, and they asked many questions about where I had come from.

The head of the family was Colonel Grangerford. He was a tall and serious man with gray hair. His wife was gentle and polite. Their children were all well dressed and behaved.

One of the boys, Buck Grangerford, was about my age.

Buck liked me right away and showed me around the house.

The house was large and comfortable. The walls were covered with pictures and poems written by a girl named Emmeline Grangerford who had died a few years earlier. Buck said Emmeline had loved writing poems about sad things like death and funerals.

Everyone in the family admired her work.

That evening we sat together in the large front room after supper. Everyone spoke politely and quietly.

But I noticed something strange.

Every man in the room kept a rifle nearby.

The next morning Buck asked if I wanted to go walking with him in the woods. We took our guns and went together through the trees.

As we walked, Buck began explaining something important.

The Grangerfords were involved in a feud with another family called the Shepherdsons.

A feud is a long fight between two families. Each side tries to kill members of the other family whenever they have the chance.

Buck said the feud had been going on for many years.

I asked how it had started.

Buck said he did not know.

No one seemed to remember the original reason.
I asked why they kept fighting if they did not know why.
Buck looked surprised at the question.
“Because it’s a feud,” he said, as if that explained everything.
Later that day the entire Grangerford family went to church.
The Shepherdson family was there too.
The two families sat quietly listening to the sermon.
The preacher spoke about love and kindness.
But every man in the church held a rifle across his knees while he listened.
When the sermon ended, both families walked outside politely.
They greeted each other calmly, but everyone kept a careful distance.
The next day something terrible happened.
Buck’s sister Sophia ran away with Harney Shepherdson, a young man from the rival family.
When the Grangerfords discovered this, they became furious.
The feud exploded into violence.
Gunshots rang through the woods and fields.
Men from both families began chasing each other with rifles.
I hid behind a tree while the shooting continued around me.
Buck and another boy ran through the woods trying to escape.
I followed them, hoping we could reach safety.
Suddenly more gunshots rang out.
The two boys fell to the ground.
They did not move again.
I stood there trembling with fear and sadness.
I had known Buck only a short time, but he had been my friend.
I ran away through the woods as fast as I could.
When I reached the riverbank, I saw something that made me shout with relief.
The raft was floating quietly near the shore.
And sitting on the raft was Jim.
Jim was alive.

I jumped onto the raft, and we pushed away from the shore.

Soon the terrible feud of the Grangerfords was far behind us as the Mississippi carried us south again.

Part 11

Jim was very glad to see me again. When I climbed onto the raft, he grabbed my hands and laughed with relief. He said he had been worried that I had drowned after the steamboat smashed our raft apart.

Jim told me how he had survived. After the collision, he had managed to gather several pieces of the broken raft. Slowly he tied them together again and built another raft. Then he hid along the riverbank and waited for me.

When I did not return for many days, Jim began to think he had lost me forever.

I told Jim everything that had happened with the Grangerford family and the terrible feud with the Shepherdsons.

Jim listened quietly and shook his head.

“All that killing,” he said softly, “and nobody even know what it started for. Dat’s mighty foolishness.”

I agreed with him.

For a while we did not speak much. The memory of Buck lying dead in the woods stayed in my mind.

But the river kept moving, and life on the raft soon returned to its quiet rhythm.

During the day we hid along the shore. At night we floated down the Mississippi again.

The nights on the river were peaceful. The water moved slowly beneath the raft, and the stars shone brightly above us. Sometimes we talked for hours. Sometimes we simply lay on our backs and watched the sky.

One evening we tied the raft beside a small island and made a fire to cook supper.

After we ate, Jim began telling me about signs and superstitions. He believed certain things always meant good luck or bad luck.

For example, Jim said touching a snake skin would bring terrible misfortune. I laughed at that idea.

The next morning, while walking through the woods, I found the shed skin of a large rattlesnake. I picked it up and carried it back to the raft.

When Jim saw it, he became very upset.

“Huck,” he said, “dat’s bad luck. You don’t ever touch a snake skin.”

I still did not believe him.

Later that evening I found a dead rattlesnake near the river. I thought of playing a joke on Jim. I placed the dead snake on his blanket so he would jump when he saw it.

But something worse happened.

The dead snake’s mate had crawled onto the blanket beside it.

When Jim lay down to sleep, the living snake bit him on the ankle.

Jim jumped up with a shout.

His leg began swelling quickly.

I felt terrible when I realized what had happened. It was my fault.

I killed the snake with a stick and threw it into the river. Then I ran into the woods and brought back some whiskey from our supplies.

Jim drank some of it, and I poured some on the bite.

For several days Jim’s leg remained swollen and painful. During that time I did most of the work while he rested.

Jim finally recovered, but I never forgot the lesson. After that I was more careful about joking with Jim’s superstitions.

Soon we were drifting down the river again.

One night we saw the bright lights of a large steamboat approaching from behind us. The boat moved quickly through the dark water.

When it passed, the waves rocked our raft violently.

But the raft held together.

After the steamboat disappeared, the river became quiet again.

Jim and I stretched out on the raft and watched the stars above us.

The Mississippi River flowed endlessly through the night, carrying us farther

and farther from the places we had known.

Part 12

A few nights later we tied the raft near the shore and rested for a while. The river was quiet, and the moon shone across the wide water. After some time Jim went to sleep, but I stayed awake watching the river.

Far away in the darkness I noticed the shape of a large steamboat.

The boat was not moving normally. It leaned to one side and seemed to be stuck.

I watched it carefully and soon realized the boat had probably run onto a sandbar.

I felt curious.

I wanted to explore it.

When I told Jim my idea, he said it was dangerous. A broken steamboat might sink at any moment. But I liked adventures too much to stay away.

So we guided the raft closer to the stranded boat.

When we reached it, I climbed quietly onto the deck.

The boat was dark and silent. Rain began falling lightly while I walked along the wet boards.

Inside the cabin I heard voices.

I moved closer and listened.

Three men were arguing loudly.

One man was lying on the floor with his hands tied behind his back. The other two men stood over him.

The tied man begged them not to kill him. He promised he would never betray them.

But the other men did not trust him.

One of them said they would leave him tied up on the sinking boat so he would drown.

As I listened, I noticed water slowly rising on the floor.

The boat really was sinking.

I slipped back outside and hurried down to the raft. I told Jim everything I had heard.

We decided to try to take the criminals' small boat so they would not be able to escape.

If they could not escape, perhaps someone could rescue the tied man later.

We climbed back onto the steamboat and moved quietly toward the small boat tied behind it.

The rain was falling harder now, and the river rushed around the stranded vessel.

Just as we reached the small boat, the criminals came running out of the cabin.

They jumped into the boat and pushed away quickly from the steamboat.

Jim and I ran back to our raft as fast as we could.

The steamboat was sinking lower and lower in the water.

Soon it would disappear completely.

We pushed our raft away from the wreck and drifted down the river again.

As we floated along, we saw the criminals' small boat drifting nearby. It looked as if they had abandoned it.

We pulled it close and climbed inside.

The boat contained many useful things—blankets, clothes, tools, and other supplies.

We carried everything we could back to the raft.

After that we let the empty boat drift away.

The rain soon stopped, and the river grew calm again.

Jim and I sat quietly on the raft.

I kept thinking about the tied man on the sinking steamboat. I hoped someone would rescue him before the boat disappeared under the water.

The next morning we heard news from people along the river.

A group of men had gone out during the night to investigate the wreck.

They said the steamboat had sunk completely.

No one knew what had happened to the criminals.

The river had swallowed the whole story.

Jim and I climbed back onto the raft and continued our journey.

The Mississippi stretched wide and silent before us, carrying us farther south into unknown places.

Part 13

One morning we tied the raft along the shore and went into the woods to rest during the day. Jim built a small fire to cook breakfast, and after we ate we stretched out under the trees. The quiet of the forest felt peaceful after so many nights on the river.

Later that afternoon we heard voices coming from the river.

Two men were calling loudly for help.

Jim and I walked down to the shore. A small boat drifted toward us. Inside the boat were two men who looked tired and frightened.

They begged us to help them.

We brought them onto the raft.

One man was older, with gray hair and a worried face. The other was younger and thin. Both men spoke quickly and nervously. They said angry people in a nearby town had chased them away, even though they had done nothing wrong.

Jim and I listened carefully.

After a while the younger man made a surprising announcement.

He said he was actually the Duke of Bridgewater, a nobleman from England. According to his story, enemies had taken his lands and money, and now he was traveling through America in disguise.

The older man listened to this story and then suddenly stood up.

“If you are a duke,” he said, “then I must tell the truth too.”

He claimed he was the rightful King of France.

He said he was the lost son of King Louis XVI and had escaped from France many years earlier. Since then he had been wandering the world in secret.

Jim and I looked at each other.

These stories sounded very strange.

But the two men seemed very serious about them. We decided it was safer not

to argue.

So we agreed to call the younger man “Your Grace” and the older man “Your Majesty.”

That seemed to satisfy them.

Soon they began making plans for earning money while traveling with us down the river.

The Duke said he could perform scenes from Shakespeare’s plays. The King said he could give powerful religious sermons that would move people’s hearts.

A few nights later we stopped near a small town.

The Duke printed posters announcing a grand theatrical performance. The posters promised that the audience would see famous scenes from Shakespeare.

That night the townspeople gathered in a small hall.

The Duke stepped onto the stage and began performing dramatic speeches. But he did not perform very well. The King joined him in one scene dressed as Juliet, which made the performance look even more ridiculous.

Soon the audience realized the show was foolish.

People began shouting angrily.

Jim, the Duke, the King, and I hurried out of the building before trouble could begin. We ran back to the raft and pushed away from the shore.

The next day the King tried a different plan.

He dressed like a preacher and attended a religious meeting in another town. Standing before the crowd, he began telling a sad story about his sinful life. He claimed that he had once been a terrible pirate who robbed ships and hurt many people.

Now, he said, he wanted to become a good man and live honestly.

Many people in the crowd felt sorry for him.

They collected money to help him start a new life.

When we returned to the raft that evening, the King laughed loudly.

He said the crowd had believed every word of his story.

The Duke laughed with him.

It became clear to Jim and me that both men were professional swindlers.

They planned to keep cheating people in every town along the river.
Jim and I did not like their behavior, but we could not easily get rid of them.
They had joined our journey.
And the Mississippi River kept carrying all four of us farther south.

Part 14

After that, the King and the Duke stayed with us on the raft. Jim and I did not trust them, but there was no easy way to leave them behind. The river was wide, and we were all drifting in the same direction.

During the day we still hid the raft along the shore. Jim stayed hidden inside a small tent made from blankets and branches so that people passing along the river would not see him. The Duke and the King spent most of their time thinking of new ways to make money.

One evening we stopped near a small town. The Duke had a new idea for a show.

He printed posters announcing a performance called "*The Royal Nonesuch*."

The posters promised that the show would be wonderful and mysterious, and that it would only happen for a few nights. The Duke and the King told Jim and me to help spread the posters around the town.

Soon people everywhere were talking about the strange performance.

That night a large crowd gathered in a small hall to see the show.

When the curtain opened, the King ran onto the stage wearing almost no clothes. His body was painted with bright colors. He shouted wildly, jumped around the stage, and waved his arms in strange ways.

The entire performance lasted only a few minutes.

Then the Duke quickly closed the curtain and announced that the show was finished.

At first the audience sat in silence.

Then they realized they had been fooled.

People began shouting angrily.

But after a moment the Duke had a clever idea. He told the crowd that it would be embarrassing to admit they had been tricked. Instead, he suggested that they leave quietly and say nothing about the bad show.

If they did that, the next group of people would come and pay money too.

The crowd liked this idea.

No one wanted to admit they had been cheated.

So they left quietly.

The next night another large crowd came to see the mysterious performance. Once again the King danced wildly on the stage for a few minutes before the Duke closed the curtain.

The crowd left without saying much.

But on the third night something different happened.

A huge crowd gathered in the hall, and many people carried rotten vegetables and eggs.

They had discovered the trick.

Jim, the Duke, the King, and I ran away before the angry crowd could reach us. We hurried back to the raft and pushed it quickly into the river.

As the raft drifted away, the King and the Duke laughed loudly.

They had made a large amount of money.

Jim and I felt ashamed of the whole business.

It did not seem right to cheat people that way.

But the Duke and the King did not care at all.

Soon they were already planning their next scheme.

A few days later we stopped near another town. There the King heard about a man named Peter Wilks who had recently died. The man had left a large amount of money for his brothers in England, but the brothers had not yet arrived.

When the King heard this story, his eyes became bright.

He said he had a wonderful idea.

He and the Duke would pretend to be the two brothers from England. If they convinced the town they were the real relatives, they could take the dead man's money.

The Duke liked this plan very much.

Soon the two swindlers began practicing English accents and preparing their story.

Jim and I watched them quietly.

We knew that trouble was coming again.

Part 15

Soon the King and the Duke put their new plan into action. They asked many questions about the dead man, Peter Wilks. From the townspeople they learned that Peter Wilks had left his property to three nieces named Mary Jane, Susan, and Joanna. The girls were waiting for their two uncles to arrive from England.

The King decided he would pretend to be the older uncle, Harvey Wilks. The Duke would pretend to be the younger uncle, William Wilks. They practiced their parts carefully. The King learned how to act sad and cry loudly. The Duke practiced pretending to be deaf and unable to speak.

When everything was ready, we went into town.

When we arrived at the Wilks house, the three girls welcomed us kindly. They believed the King and the Duke were really their uncles.

The King began crying loudly as soon as he entered the house. He hugged the girls and wiped tears from his eyes. The girls began crying too, and soon everyone in the house was weeping together.

The funeral for Peter Wilks took place the next day. The King behaved like a grieving brother and cried even louder than the girls. Many people in the town felt sorry for him and praised his love for his dead brother.

After the funeral the girls showed the King and the Duke the money Peter Wilks had left behind. It was a large bag filled with gold coins.

When the King saw the gold, his eyes shone with excitement.

But he quickly pretended to be generous.

He said the money should be given to the girls. He told the townspeople that he and his brother did not need the money.

Everyone in the room admired his kindness.

But later that evening the King secretly changed his mind. He told the Duke that they should take the gold after all.

Meanwhile I began to feel uncomfortable. The girls were honest and trusting, especially Mary Jane. She treated everyone with kindness and respect.

It seemed wrong to help the King and the Duke cheat them.

One evening I found Mary Jane alone in her room. She was crying about her uncle's death.

Suddenly I decided I could not keep the secret any longer.

I told her the truth.

I explained that the King and the Duke were not really her uncles. They were criminals trying to steal the money.

Mary Jane was shocked at first, but she believed me.

Together we made a plan.

I secretly took the bag of gold coins from the King's room and carried it away. Then I hid the money inside the coffin of Peter Wilks.

The coffin would soon be buried in the graveyard.

That way the King and the Duke would not find the gold.

But the next day something unexpected happened.

The real Wilks brothers arrived in town.

Now there were two sets of uncles.

The town became confused.

People gathered at the house to decide which pair of men was telling the truth. The King and the Duke insisted they were the real brothers, but the newcomers said the same thing.

Soon the whole room was filled with shouting and arguments.

While everyone was distracted, I slipped quietly out of the house and ran down to the river.

When I reached the raft, Jim was waiting for me.

I told him everything that had happened.

Then we pushed the raft away from the shore and drifted back into the river.

Once again we had escaped trouble.

But the Mississippi kept carrying us farther south into the unknown.

Part 16

Jim and I felt relieved to leave the town behind us. We believed the King and the Duke would soon be caught when the real Wilks brothers proved who they were. For a while we drifted quietly down the river, thinking we were finally free of them.

But late that night we heard voices along the riverbank.

Two figures came running through the darkness.

It was the King and the Duke.

They had escaped from the angry crowd.

They climbed onto the raft, breathing heavily and shouting at each other. The King accused the Duke of ruining their plan. The Duke blamed the King for making mistakes.

Then they turned to me.

The King demanded to know what had happened to the gold.

I told them I did not know.

They searched the raft for a long time but found nothing.

At last they stopped arguing and sat down to rest. Soon they began blaming each other again.

Jim and I stayed quiet.

We knew it was safer not to speak.

The next morning the raft drifted slowly along the river. The King and the Duke soon forgot their anger and began thinking about new ways to cheat people in the towns ahead.

But their tricks were becoming less successful. People along the river had begun hearing stories about traveling swindlers. Sometimes the Duke and the King were chased out of town before they could begin their schemes.

This made them more desperate.

One afternoon the King had a terrible idea.
He said we could earn forty dollars if we sold Jim.
My heart jumped when I heard this.
I shouted that Jim was my friend.
But the King only laughed.
He said people would easily believe Jim was a runaway slave.
That evening we stopped near a small town.
The King went ashore alone.
When he returned later that night, Jim was gone.
The King told me he had sold Jim to a farmer named Silas Phelps.
The farm was about forty miles farther down the river.
When I heard this, I felt sick.
Jim had trusted me.
Now he was a prisoner again.
I sat on the raft for a long time thinking about what I should do.
I told myself that helping a runaway slave was against the law. People said it was like stealing someone's property.
Perhaps I should forget Jim and continue traveling alone.
But whenever I tried to think that way, I remembered Jim's kindness. Jim had protected me and cared about me like a true friend.
Finally I made my decision.
"All right," I said to myself. "I'll go to hell."
That meant I would help Jim even if everyone said it was wrong.
The next morning I went into town to learn more about the place where Jim had been taken.
People told me Jim had been sold to a farmer named Silas Phelps.
I began walking toward the Phelps farm.
When I reached the house, a woman ran out to greet me. She looked happy and excited.
She hugged me and called me by another name.
"Tom!" she said. "You've finally arrived!"

I quickly realized she believed I was someone else.

The woman was Aunt Sally.

She thought I was her nephew Tom Sawyer, who had been coming to visit.

I decided to continue pretending to be Tom.

That way I could stay at the farm and find a chance to rescue Jim.

Soon afterward another boy arrived at the farm.

It was the real Tom Sawyer.

When Tom learned about Jim being imprisoned there, his eyes shone with excitement.

Tom loved adventures.

He said rescuing Jim would be the greatest adventure of all.

Part 17

Tom Sawyer was very excited when he heard about Jim. When I told him that Jim was locked inside a small shed on the Phelps farm, Tom said it was the perfect chance for a great adventure.

I explained that the shed was guarded at night and that the door was locked. I thought the best plan would be simple. We could steal the key, open the door quietly, and help Jim run away.

But Tom did not like that idea.

“That would be too easy,” he said. “A real escape must be done in the proper way.”

Tom loved stories about prisoners escaping from castles and towers. He wanted our rescue to look like those stories.

So he began making a complicated plan.

Every night we crept quietly across the farm to the shed where Jim was being held. There was a small window in the wall, and we could speak to him through it.

Jim was surprised when he first saw us.

When he learned that we were planning to rescue him, he was very happy. But

Jim also thought Tom's ideas were strange.

Tom said Jim must dig a tunnel under the wall to escape. Instead of using proper tools, Jim should dig the tunnel with small knives because that was how prisoners escaped in adventure stories.

I said we could dig the tunnel quickly with shovels.

But Tom insisted on doing it his way.

So every night Jim slowly scratched at the dirt with small tools while Tom and I helped him carry the dirt away.

Tom also said Jim needed to keep a secret diary while he was a prisoner. Since Jim had no paper, Tom said he should write his messages on pieces of cloth.

Jim did not understand why any of this was necessary, but he did what Tom asked.

Tom also decided that Jim must have a rope ladder to climb down from the window during the escape. We built the rope ladder and baked it inside a pie so it could be secretly delivered to Jim.

All these preparations took many days.

Meanwhile Aunt Sally and Uncle Silas treated me kindly. They still believed I was Tom Sawyer, and they had no idea that we were planning to help Jim escape.

Finally Tom decided everything was ready.

One dark night we crept quietly to the shed.

Jim crawled through the tunnel we had dug.

Then the three of us ran across the yard toward the fence.

We climbed over the fence and began running toward the river.

Suddenly the dogs began barking loudly.

Lights appeared in the farmhouse.

People started shouting and running toward us.

Tom shouted for Jim to run faster.

We ran across the field toward the riverbank where the raft waited.

Then a gunshot rang out in the darkness.

Tom cried out and fell to the ground.

He had been shot in the leg.

Jim and I lifted Tom up and carried him to the river.

When we reached the raft, we laid him down on the blankets.

Jim pushed the raft away from the shore, and the current carried us quietly into the dark water.

At last Jim had escaped.

But Tom was badly wounded, and we needed help quickly.

Part 18

The raft drifted quietly down the river while Tom lay on the blankets holding his leg. The bullet had gone deep into the flesh, and Tom was in great pain. Jim and I tried to make him comfortable, but it was clear that he needed a doctor.

I said we must find help as soon as possible.

Tom agreed, but he made an unusual request.

He told us not to tell anyone that Jim was a runaway slave.

“Keep the secret,” Tom said weakly. “That’s part of the adventure.”

Jim looked at Tom for a moment and shook his head.

“Tom needs a doctor,” Jim said. “Adventure or no adventure.”

Early the next morning I went ashore and walked until I found a small house. I told the people there that my brother had been shot by accident while hunting. Soon a doctor agreed to come with me to the raft.

When the doctor saw Tom’s leg, he said the wound was serious. The bullet had gone deep, and Tom needed proper care.

We carried Tom to the house and laid him in a bed.

Jim stayed hidden near the raft.

Later that night Jim quietly came to the house. He wanted to see if Tom was safe.

The doctor saw him there.

At first the doctor looked surprised. But after hearing the whole story, he seemed thoughtful.

Jim explained that he had stayed nearby because he wanted to help the wounded

boy. Even though Jim had a chance to escape, he had come back to make sure Tom would live.

The doctor respected this.

“That man is no criminal,” the doctor said. “He stayed to help his friend.”

The next day several men from the town captured Jim. They tied his hands and took him back to the Phelps farm.

Jim did not resist.

He only asked if Tom was going to recover.

When Tom finally woke up, he looked cheerful even though his leg hurt badly.

He said the whole adventure had been wonderful.

Aunt Sally and Uncle Silas were confused by everything that had happened.

At last Tom decided to explain the truth.

He revealed an important secret.

Miss Watson had died two months earlier.

Before she died, she had written in her will that Jim should be set free.

Jim had already been a free man the entire time.

Tom had known this all along.

He had kept the secret because he wanted the rescue to be a great adventure.

When Aunt Sally heard this news, she immediately untied Jim.

Jim was finally free.

Then Jim told me something else.

The dead man we had once seen in the floating house on the river had been Pap.

My father had died there.

Jim had hidden that truth from me earlier because he did not want to frighten me.

Now I understood everything.

Pap was gone forever, and I was free from him.

Aunt Sally said she wanted to adopt me and teach me to live properly.

But I had already tried that kind of life before.

I did not want to be civilized again.

So I decided I would travel west where there were still wide open places and

freedom.

Jim was free at last.

Tom would soon recover from his wound.

And the Mississippi River still flowed endlessly into the distance.

My adventures, I felt sure, were not over yet.