

Name: _____

Period: _____

American Literature Research Paper

You will write an **original** two to three page paper that explores one of the topics generated from our reading of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain, and you will present your research in a five-minute oral presentation during finals week. (More on the presentation later.) Emphasis will be placed on format, structure, and content; special emphasis will be placed on citing sources correctly.

Objective: You will be able to formulate a specific **research question** or **problem** and answer it by breaking it down into smaller parts, locating sources for information, and synthesizing the information into an original product. You will also be able to present your findings both in a properly formatted research paper and in an oral report.

Possible Topics (*these are very general; yours will be more specific*):

- The history of censorship of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (at the time of 1st publication and/or in recent times)
- The treatment of slaves in American homes (family life, literacy, punishment, slave codes, work conditions)
- The history of minstrel shows and other traveling entertainment (stereotyping, racism, popular culture)
- Runaways: What were Jim's chances for freedom? (slave laws in IL & MO, Dred Scott, abolitionism)
- Life on the Mississippi River (ecology, geography, travel, trade, towns, boats)
- Alcohol and temperance movements (alcoholism, poverty, education, religion, blue laws)
- The representation of dialects in literature and film (literacy, literary realism & regionalism, vernaculars, class)

Timeline (subject to change):

Tuesday, 1/4: Research question and notes on one online source due at the end of class

Friday, 1/7: Notes on all five sources due at the beginning of class

Monday, 1/10: Outline due at the end of class

Wednesday 1/12 or Thursday, 1/13: Rough draft and Works Cited page due

Friday, 1/14: Final draft due, to be turned in with rough draft, this handout, and all supporting materials, including notes

Tuesday, 1/18 & 1st semester final: Presentations and evaluations

Sources: Your paper must cite **at least five sources**, including at least one book, one reference book (from the reference area of the library), one periodical (magazine, journal, or newspaper article), and one website.

Requirements and Rubric:

1. Format (____/25 points)

- Paper is properly formatted according to MLA standards (one-inch margins, header, centered title, double-spaced, 12-point font, etc.)
- Works Cited page is complete and properly formatted

2. Structure (____/25 points)

- An introductory paragraph that introduces the topic, captures the reader's attention, and contains a strong thesis statement that answers your research question
- Three body paragraphs; topic sentence for each body paragraph relates back to your thesis statement (no random paragraphs!)
- The paper is at least two pages in length.
- A concluding paragraph that uses fresh language to reiterate thesis AND make connections to broader topics.

3. Content (____/25 points)

- Each body paragraph has 3-4 specific examples that directly relate to the topic sentence.
- Each body paragraph has at least 1 quote from *or* paraphrase of an outside source *with correct parenthetical citations*.

4. Citations (____/15 points)

- At least five sources are cited, and sources are varied. (See "sources", above.)
- There is a properly formatted and punctuated parenthetical citation (first words from Works Cited page; no comma inside the parentheses; period is after the parentheses) for each fact (**N.B.: Whether you paraphrase or quote, failure to cite sources will result in a 0 with no possibility of rewriting.**)

5. Mechanics (____/10 points)

- Correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation
- Proper sentence structure with sentences of varied lengths and types; at least three complex sentences
- Academic language – no slang, clichés, contractions, or use of "I", "me", "you", or other 1st and 2nd person pronouns

Total points: ____/100