Choose one of the following prompts and write a well-structured and insightful five-paragraph essay. In addition to the novel itself, you must use at least one outside source to support your argument.

1. In The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, Huck is torn between the “sivilized” world and the freedom he finds on the Mississippi River. Explain how the river and the land are symbols for these opposing worlds, and what Huck gains from his experiences in both worlds by the end of the novel.

2. The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn is a satire which ridicules religion, hypocrisy, and ignorance. Superstition, imagination, and belief in magic also influence the novel. Explain how the concepts listed assist with the definition of the following characters: Jim, Huck, and Tom Sawyer.

3. Mark Twain uses The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn to make a personal statement on the issue of slavery. Explain how and why Huck’s attitude toward slaves and slavery changes throughout the novel, based on his personal relationship with Jim.

4. The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn is a “coming of age” story. Explain how Huck matures and changes during the course of the novel.

5. At the end of the novel, Huck says, “But I reckon I got to light out for the Territory ahead of the rest, because Aunt Sally she’s going to adopt me and sivilize me and I can’t stand it. I been there before.” Why, at the end of the book, does Huck once again reject “civilization”? You should show instances of hypocrisy, cruelty, and social satire in the novel.

6. Ernest Hemingway once said that all American literature came from one book: The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn. According to Hemingway, it’s “the best book we’ve got.” Examine the novel Huck Finn as a masterpiece of American literature. Does it deserve a place in the canon of Great Books? Support or refute Ernest Hemingway’s claim. Take a stand for or against the inclusion of this novel as required high school reading. Provide specific and intelligent reasons, and support those reasons with specific examples from the novel, as well as relevant quotations. You will also need to examine American society (and its students) today, as contrasted with society in the past.

7. The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn gives us a glimpse of one summer in the life of Huck. During that time, Huck develops an extraordinary friendship with Jim, a runaway slave. Although Huck never comes to a final awareness that his society is wrong to enslave another human being, he ultimately chooses loyalty to a friend over the legal and moral code of his land. Discuss Huck’s “journey” in this changing relationship with Jim. You might want to address some of the following: The way Jim is depicted in the earliest chapters and how both Huck and Tom treat him; Huck’s decision to turn Jim in, then his decision to trick the slave-hunters as they approach the raft; Huck’s apology after the fog incident; Huck’s surprise over Jim’s misery regarding his daughter; Huck’s argument with Jim over King Solomon and the French; Huck’s
decision to tear up the letter to Miss Watson; Huck’s tolerance of Tom’s escape plan; Huck’s rationalization after Jim sacrifices his freedom for Tom.

8. Mark Twain said of *Huck Finn*: “It is a novel where a sound heart and a deformed conscience come into collision and conscience suffers defeat. The conscience – that unerring monitor—can be trained to any wild thing you want it to approve.” In light of these comments, trace Huck’s moral development throughout the novel. Your essay could examine Huck’s decisions regarding Jim, Huck’s refusal to be “sivilized,” Huck’s relationship with Jim, and/or the differences between individual and society.

9. Consider the quotation “it is on shore that Huck encounters the worst excesses of which ‘the damned human race’ is capable, but with each return to the raft comes a renewal of spiritual home and idealism” (Magill 13). Examine the difference between society’s dictates as embodied by Huck and Jim’s encounters on the shore and the relative freedom they experience on the river. Your essay could examine the irony that what is thought to be civilized is in fact not or compare and contrast encounters on the shore with descriptions of life on the river.

10. Mark Twain makes masterful use of satire and irony in his novel. Discuss examples of satire and irony in the novel, and explain what Twain is satirizing in the particular episodes. How do these satirical episodes contribute to the overall theme (message) of the novel? What is the most important message of the novel?

11. Discuss Huck’s reasons for rejecting civilization. Make specific references to incidents that influenced his decision. What exactly is Huck choosing instead of civilization? Is his choice a good one? Why or why not?

12. In the novel, Huck is monetarily rich, although he cannot use his money because of Pap. How does he come to view wealth? How does Jim define wealth? How have money and the pursuit of wealth driven Huck’s story along the Mississippi? List the characters and events that are shaped by economics. What does their journey teach them about valuing themselves and others? What is a man worth, finally, to Huck, to Jim, and to the 19th Century world?

13. Twain uses a motherless child of an abusive father, a teenager who lacks sophistication and is barely literate, as his narrator and hero. In what ways is Huck an effective narrator and admirable hero? How would the story have been different if Jim had told the story, rather than Huck? Would Jim be a reliable narrator? What kinds of things can Huck do and know that Jim would not have been privy to because of his slave status? If the point of a novel is that the characters will encounter hardships that will change them for the better, what about Huck’s makes for obvious opportunities to change? What in Jim? What in Tom?

14. Lying occurs frequently in this novel. Curiously, some lies, like those Huck tells to save Jim, seem to be “good” lies, while others, like the cons of the duke and the dauphin, seem to be “bad.” What is the difference? Are both “wrong”? Why does so much lying go on in *Huckleberry Finn*?
15. Describe some of the models for families that appear in the novel. What is the importance of family structures? What is their place in society? Do Huck and Jim constitute a family? What about Huck and Tom? When does society intervene in the family? What overall comment or comments does Twain make about family and society?

16. Discuss the place of morality in Huckleberry Finn. In the world of the novel, where do moral values come from? The community? The family? The church? One’s experiences? Which of these potential sources does Twain privilege over the others? Which does he mock, or describe disapprovingly?

17. Many readers of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* consider the ending flawed—while others have praised it. Write an essay on the appropriateness of the novel’s ending, focusing on Huck’s treatment of Jim and Huck’s moral complicity with Tom.

18. Some critics have attacked Mark Twain's portrayal of the runaway slave Jim as a racist caricature who does whatever is asked of him and exhibits little intelligence. They argue that Jim's portrayal dehumanizes African Americans. Other critics argue that Twain’s portrayal realistically reflects the social context in which the novel is written and criticizes society’s racist treatment of Jim—not Jim himself. Upon close reading, some critics argue that Jim himself is, in fact, the most moral and caring individual in the text which suggests that Twain was sympathetic towards African Americans. What do you think?