English 11 Honors

*The Adventures of Huckleberry* Finn Essay

People have tried to say it better, more flowery — and some have succeeded. But nobody has ever said it more accurately than Ernest Hemingway did in 1935.  
  
*All modern American literature comes from one book by Mark Twain called 'Huckleberry Finn.' American writing comes from that. There was nothing before. There has been nothing as good since.*  
Twain himself put his writing in what he thought was the proper perspective when he was about 50 years old, just a couple of years after *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* was published: "My books are water, those of the great geniuses are wine. Everybody drinks water."

Indeed, there is something in the novel that everyone can drink in, to extend the metaphor. For even some 135 years after its publication, the work remains, as Heminway, as Hemingway noted, seminal in American literature. .

And certainly to Americans. So what is that we see in the seemingly simple adventure of a boy and an escaped slave that speaks to our American story?

And that is the question for this essay:

***In what way is Huck’s story ultimately America’s story?***

Assignment. With a partner, you will write a literary analysis that will answer this question.

Basics:

* 4-5 pages (not included Works Cited)
* Works Cited (probably just the novel here, no outside sources and definitely no quote sites)
* MLA format
* Underlined claim
* Evidence
* Citations
* Commentary
* Rhetorical elements

My goal in having you work with a partner is mainly to discuss, really talk about literature as a reflection of the human experience. In this respect you and your partner will consider such questions as how the novel serves as a sort of extended metaphor (also called a conceit) for the American experience at the time it was written in and written about? How does Huck’s adventures mirror those of America as it transitioned from period of Romanticism to the period of Realism? How is Huck’s moral development, his knowledge, his sound heart likewise transitioned as he opens himself to the human condition, to institutions, to the American landscape? Consider what the end of the novel signals for not only Huck, but for the country/

Additionally, my hope is that a partnership will force a discussion of organization as you work together on the Top Priorities of the essay: Answer, Argue and Support (with evidence and commentary that connects the proof with the claim). How will your team best focus on and evolve your argument?

And finally, this work is concerned with effective use of composition. Below is an exhaustive list of what should be where, and what should not be there at all. It’s extensive, but if you want to improve your writing you’ll take the time to review your work against these guidelines.

**Composition.**

* Intro (lean in in anticipation)
  + Hook form
  + Elaboration: explain your hook, give examples
  + Bridge: genre, author, title
  + Claim
    - Not a fact but an opinion you will defend with evidence.
    - Of reasonable focus that it can be argued
    - Should echo (either directly or through synonyms) the language of the prompt. Show you are responsive.
    - Speak to the main idea
    - Answer the prompt in full.
    - An opinion, not a fact
    - No run-ons

**Body Paragraph 1**

* Topic Sentence (TS)
  + NEVER universal – now into the work. Instead of “people”, the characters. If you want to move from universal to specific in the topic sentence, that is fine.
  + Identifies, either directly or indirectly, the main idea of the prompt
  + Offers ONE clear topic
  + Is not a repeat of your thesis but a POINT that supports your thesis
  + Never a fact – an argument. Here try some superlatives to make this an opinion. (The most compelling…the best example…the symbol that most clearly)
  + A topic sentence NEVER begins with “for example”. You have not actually made a point yet.
* Transition
  + Connect TS to the coming evidence with an appropriate transitional word or phrase
  + Transitions are an easy and powerful way to create coherency between ideas
* Lead In
  + Lead ins should SMOOTHLY move from context into the quote, almost as if they worked as one.
  + Ending punctuation for a lead in is NEVER a period. A comma, a semi colon, a colon work.
  + After the quote is confusing, non-instinctual
* Quote(s)
  + NEVER EVER EVER neglect quotes in body paragraphs. You will have made an argument without proof.
  + The quotes are in support of your topic in your topic sentence. Choose accordingly.
  + Avoid brief and literal evidence, rather choose something with a rhetorical element that further confirms your claim.
  + No long quotes
  + All quotes must be cited according to MLA for the genre
  + Use evidence where your claim demands support. Do not leave the reader saying, yeah but where’s your proof?.
  + Feel free to gang quotes together to show a motif or mounting evidence of your point.
* Commentary
  + This is where you get to explain your quote. Why did you use this? How does it prove your point?
  + Commentary is NOT summary. It’s analysis. Show your insight
  + Note a literary element (art of persuasion) THAT IS ACTUALLY IN THE QUOTE YOU CHOOSE. Not somewhere further on.
  + Do not write “this proves” as it does not. Quotes do not prove, you have to do the work of explaining HOW it proves.
  + Explain your rhetorical device in terms of HOW it supports your claim. Don’t just say it is there without making the CONNECTION.
  + If you’re going to invoke the demonic term diction, tell me what specific work you are referencing. If you do not, you are making the claim that the author uses words…and that’s like, literal. We want analysis and specifics.
* Concluding Sentence
  + Concluding sentence are basically reimagined topic sentences.
  + Signal the reader that you are closing out this argument and moving to a new one.
  + NEVER introduce a new topic at the end of a paragraph (middle school stuff)

**Following Body Paragraphs**

* Transitions.
  + ALWAYS use a transitional word or phrase between body paragraphs.
  + Transitions create a lovely flow between ideas
  + Will signal the reader what you aim to do with the paragraph (extend the idea: moreover, additionally; confirm the idea: indeed; compare the idea: by contrast, however, still…)
  + Try repeating the last idea of the previous paragraph as a seamless way in. But while Holden may appear (previous idea), his internal monologue reveals an individual of profound turmoil…
* Follow all other protocols for **Body Paragraph 1**

**Conclusion (lean back in satisfaction)**

* Specific
  + Stay in the work. Speak to your ideas with elements in the novel
  + Don’t just stop, rather conclude
* Universal
  + Connect your specific statements to a universal claim (not the characters but people, not Elsinore, but the ordered world)
* Reimagine thesis claim
  + Do not simple repeat your claim, but show the learning you attempted to impart in your body paragraphs. This can be a couple sentences for depth and clarity.
* Revisit Hook Format
  + However you started is how you will end. If you used a quote, speak to it now that quote is now illuminated by your argument. An analogy can be redone in light of your claims. A question can now be answered.
  + Do not just throw this section away or underserve it. It is your chance to make a claim and show how you proved it. It is your lasting impression.
  + A weak and choppy intro will make it difficult for you to come full circle here.
  + Try writing intro and conclusion together.

**Basics (Gerber sensitivities)**

* Your audience is me, assume I know plot and avoid summary
* Awareness of audience, a teenager named Holden
* Gerunds (form of the verb to
* Passive voice
* Use antecedents over pronouns
* Taboo words (some popular ones from this assignment: the reader, this quote, proves, one, in order to, utilize, the fact that, you)
* Avoid clichés
* Do not use “one” as your antecedent. Be more specific (e.g. the individual, the curious mind, the authentic being)
* Do not reference the reader or “the quote”