

Chapter 20

In Chapter 20 of "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn," the narrative unfolds just before dawn as Huck, Jim, the Duke, and the King approach a quiet little town. The Duke proposes to dock their raft just south of the hamlet, suggesting they should go into town to conduct some business. The King and Duke laugh off Huck and Jim's concerns about safety, insisting they will stay with them. Huck contemplates a plan to escape but realizes the risks.

Once they secure the raft, the duo moves into town through a path before reaching a deserted wagon road, where Huck feels uneasy at the sight of a sycamore tree bearing signs of previous hangings, reminding him of Young George. As they approach the town, they encounter a man who reveals that everyone is at a revival led by a preacher, leaving the town eerily quiet.

The Duke seizes the opportunity to exploit the revival, aiming to gather a crowd for their schemes. Despite Huck's protests about the idea of selling Jim, the Duke insists on putting on a show. They reach the revival site, a field full of townsfolk, where a hefty preacher leads the congregation. The Duke spots the crowd's gullibility and begins his con, presenting himself as a reformed pirate, drawing applause and attention.

After a while, the King joins, executing Shakespearean lines that confuse the preacher and further engage the audience. The Duke introduces Huck as "Caesar," showcasing him as a "heathen" he converted to Christianity. Huck manages to collect money from the crowd under the guise of a missionary, while the preacher's authority is undermined by their antics. The atmosphere shifts as doubts rise among the crowd, leading to murmurs of deception.

The chapter captures the tension between Huck's moral compass and the Duke and King's manipulative schemes, ultimately highlighting the themes of hypocrisy and exploitation central to the narrative. A false revival provides an ample stage for the Duke and King's deceitful acts while Huck grapples with his loyalty to Jim and the ethical dilemmas posed by his companions' unscrupulous behavior.