

HKFN:
THE ABBREVIATED ADVENTURES OF
HUCKLEBERRY FINN

A ten-minute comedy by
Jeff Goode

Inspired by Mark Twain's novel

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

THE GIRL WHO PLAYS AUNT POLLY and later TOM SAWYER

THE BOY WHO PLAYS HUCK

THE BOY WHO PLAYS JIM

THE GIRL WHO PLAYS WIDOW DOUGLAS and DUKE and others

THE GIRL WHO PLAYS MISS WATSON and KING and others

NOTES

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn by Mark Twain is a novel about race in America. Written after the Civil War, but set 40 years earlier, the story explores the hypocrisy of slavery and the moral confusion it creates.

Ironically, the book—which is generally considered an American classic—has frequently been banned because of objectionable language and racist situations in its depiction of the pre-Civil War South, presenting educators with the challenge of engaging students in discussions about race when it is sometimes difficult to even discuss a book on the subject.

HKFN is a play about our discomfort with discussions of race and specifically our difficulty in discussing *Huckleberry Finn*.

In a sense, it is a play about "the elephant in the room," where characters often avoid the same topics we all do when faced with situations of bias or inequity. (Even when it should be pretty obvious to everyone what we're really talking about.)

This play is presented, not so much as a direct adaptation of the original, but as a means of jumpstarting a conversation about social taboos, which can lead to a fuller discussion of the original novel and other challenging works on race, gender and stereotyping.

CASTING NOTES

The author generally encourages color-blind and gender-blind casting whenever possible. It should be noted, however, that certain aspects of the gender and ethnicity of the characters are important to the story, and should be taken into consideration when casting.

HUCK AND JIM

In the original novel and in these plays, the characters of Huck and Jim are Caucasian and African American, respectively. While there can be some flexibility in the exact ethnicity of the actors playing the roles, it is important that Huck be lighter-complected than Jim and vice versa. When Polly expresses rigid opinions about who can play Jim and who can play Huck, it should be obvious that the two were cast mainly because of their skin color.

AUNT POLLY, WIDOW DOUGLAS AND MISS WATSON

In the novel, the characters of Aunt Polly, Widow Douglas and Miss Watson are white, but their ethnicity is not relevant to the play. Their gender, however, is. It is important that we know that Polly would not have cast any of them, including herself, as Huck or Jim because of their gender.

As the play goes on, all of the "actors" evolve in their ideas about casting, so that by the end of it, they all feel free to play characters of any race or gender, and the show ends with Jim playing Huck, Huck playing Polly and Polly playing Tom.

ADDED ROLES

The play was written for a cast of five: three females and two males. If a larger cast is desired – adding actors to play King, Duke, or Militia, for example – the gender and ethnicity of the additional characters is at the discretion of the director.

SCENE - A REHEARSAL FOR THE SCHOOL PLAY

(Lights up on AUNT POLLY.)

POLLY: *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, also known as Huck Finn, by Mark Twain, also known as Samuel Clemens, American humorist 1835 to 1910. The end.

(She starts to leave, but comes back.)

Of the title, I mean. The play is just starting. *(Awkward silence.)*
I play Aunt Polly –

(Enter HUCKLEBERRY FINN, with his script.)

HUCK: Hey, I can't say this.

POLLY: You have to say it, you're Huckleberry Finn. Where's your hat?

(She puts his hat on him.)

HUCK: No, I mean, this word. I don't think I can say this in school [in public].

(JIM bursts in.)

JIM: I'll say it. Let me be Huck.

POLLY: Jim, I told you, you can't be Huckleberry Finn.

JIM: Why not?

POLLY: Because you're already Jim!

JIM: I don't want to be Jim. He spends half the book tied up on a raft.

(Enter WIDOW DOUGLAS and MISS WATSON.)

WIDOW DOUGLAS: You read the book? Why would you do that? It makes the rest of us look bad.

MISS WATSON: I don't understand why Miss Watson has to dress like an old lady time traveler.

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POLLY: All right, stop it, all of you! *(To Jim:)* You have to be Jim. *(To Watson and Douglas:)* And you two have to read the book. *(To Huck:)* And you... What word is giving you trouble?

HUCK: *(Pointing in the script:)* This one.

POLLY: Oh, for Pete's sake!

HUCK: And it's all over the place. It's on, like, every page.

POLLY: "Nigerian"? You can't say "Nigerian"?

HUCK: I don't think that's how it's pronounced.

POLLY: It's where they come from. It's a real place. People from Nigeria are called Nigerians.

HUCK: *(Shaking his head:)* Nuh uh. Nope. I can't do this. I have to quit.

(He exits.)

POLLY: Huck, come back here! You can't quit! We already started!

JIM: Can I play Huck now?

POLLY: No! Now nobody gets to be Huckleberry Finn!

WATSON AND DOUGLAS: Why not?

POLLY: Because he took the hat!

(She throws up her hands and storms out, followed by the others.)

SCENE - ANOTHER PART OF THE SCHOOL

(If a unit set is required, this scene can be played in the auditorium, as the actors are leaving the rehearsal to go home.)

(Huck storms in from the dressing room, on his way home. Jim runs after him.)

JIM: Hey, Huck, wait up! I'm coming with you. I quit the play, too.

HUCK: What? Why?

JIM: Because after you left, they still wouldn't even let me play Huck.

(Enter the Girls who played Widow Douglas and Miss Watson as themselves. But we shall call them KING and DUKE. They drag in a bag of props.)

DUKE: Hey, are you guys really quitting? We wanna quit, too.

KING: She's being all bossy and won't let us do anything fun.

JIM: We should start our own show so we can be whoever we want to be.

KING: We stole a bunch of props. We could do Shakespeare.

(Puts on a wig.)

O Romeo, Romeo! Wherefore art thou Romeo?

DUKE: I always wanted to play Hamlet, Duke of Denmark.

(Draws a sword.)

To be or not to be! That is the bare bodkin!

KING: Ha! If you're the Duke of Denmark, I'm Martin Luther King.

DUKE: If you say so. *(Bowling to King:)* Your Majesty.

KING: *(Bowling to Duke:)* Your Majesty.

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JIM: I'm gonna be a robot.

(Jim robots around.)

KING: Hey, I know! Let's plan a heist!

DUKE: We'll need disguises.

(Hands Huck a wig.)

Here, put this on.

HUCK: Why?

KING: You could be a poor little orphan girl.

DUKE: Whose parents have died suddenly and tragically!

KING: But then at the funeral it is secretly revealed that I am your long lost uncle William from England. Pip pip! Cheerio! And in his will, your father left us all of his riches to split between us. *(Melodramatically:)* Oh my poor dead brother! How could this tragically have happened?

DUKE: And I'm your other uncle. Harvey. From Harvard. And I want some riches, too! *(Melodramatically:)* Oh my poor dead sister! Curse the day that she ever set foot on that ill-fated river boat!

JIM: Can I be somebody's uncle?

(The Girl who played Aunt Polly storms in as herself.)

POLLY: No, you're nobody's uncle! *(To King and Duke:)* And neither are you!

JIM: *(Trying to cover:)* Tom Sawyer's Aunt Polly? What are YOU doing here at the funeral home?

POLLY: You can't just be what you want to be and make stuff up and do whatever.

DUKE: It's a free country!

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POLLY: No, it's 1845, and this is a play. With historical accuracy. There are rules and lines, and you have to do what you're told. Now knock it off, all of you, and get back in the play!

HUCK: No! My conniving uncles are right! It's a free country. And if I want to give away all my riches and run off to New Orleans, you can't stop me!

POLLY: I'm warning you!

HUCK: From now on, we're gonna make our own rules and if you don't like it...too bad!

POLLY: All right, fine! But two can play at this game!

(She storms out.)

KING: Hooray! We did it!

DUKE: Now we can do whatever we want!

JIM: So can I be Huck now?

HUCK: *(Shrugs.)* It's a free country.

(Jim puts on the Huck hat.)

KING: I know! Let's tell people that "Jim" is an escaped criminal and turn him in for the reward!

(Duke and King turn to Huck, grinning malevolently. Huck suddenly realizes that he is Jim now.)

HUCK: Wait, what?

DUKE: Quick, get him! Tie him up!

(Duke and King pull some rope out of the prop bag.)

HUCK: *(Fleeing:)* I'm not Jim! I'm not playing! Let go of me!

(King and Duke chase Huck around the stage and off. There is lots of yelling and crashing around. Jim is not entirely comfortable with this.)

JIM: Guys? Come on, leave him alone. If he doesn't want to be Jim, he doesn't have to.

(King and Duke return with the Boy who used to be Huck tied up in a gunny sack.)

KING: All right, we're going into town to collect the reward.

DUKE: You stay here and guard the prisoner till we get back.

(They exit.)

HUCK: Help!

JIM: I don't know how I feel about this.

HUCK: Argh! Come on! Let me out of here!

JIM: *(To himself:)* What would Huckleberry Finn do?

HUCK: You're not Huck Finn! This is all just pretend! It isn't real!

JIM: Look, I understand how you feel. But I'll tell you what's real: This is my big chance to play a starring role for a change, and I'm not gonna mess it up, because you don't want to wear a bag for a couple minutes. Now I'm gonna find a way to help you, but you gotta calm down and let me think.

(Enter the Girl who used to play Aunt Polly and is now dressed like TOM SAWYER. She sticks a gun finger in Jim's back.)

TOM: Hold it right there, varmint! Turn around real slow and put your hands in the air.

(He does.)

JIM: *(Baffled:)* Who are you supposed to be?

TOM: What's the matter, Huck? Don't you recognize your ole pal Tom Sawyer?

HUCK: You can't be Tom Sawyer! You're already Aunt Polly.

TOM: I'm making my own rules, too! And lucky for you, because I've come up with an elaborate plan to bust Jim out of prison.

JIM: You hear that, Jim? You're gonna be free!

HUCK: I was free before you all put me in this bag!

TOM: Now listen close. We're gonna tunnel in at night. And then tunnel back out at daybreak. Hop a train to the territories and join up with the first band of outlaws we see. But we gotta hurry, because somebody tipped off the local militia.

(The Girls who played Widow Douglas and Miss Watson enter as LOCAL MILITIA. They both have shotguns or unwieldy blunderbusses.)

MILITIA 1: Halt, who goes there? I thought I heard voices.

MILITIA 2: They could be escaped criminals. Fire at will!

Want to read the entire script? Order a perusal copy today!