*In the novel, Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, Mark Twain shows the theme that morality is a character trait that must be developed over time, through the progression of Huck’s conscience after being exposed to racism and deception.*

Surprisingly, Huck’s experiences helping two frauds named the King and the Duke did much to shape his moral code due to the fact that Huck vehemently disliked these two rapscallions even though he felt compelled to help them. These conmen make their living deceiving and taking advantage of innocent people, which is what they did to Mary Jane Wilks and her sisters when they poses as the girls’ uncles in order to inherit Mr. Peter Wilks’s estate. After seeing the King and the Duke pull off such a disreputable con, Huck thinks, “Well, if I ever struck anything like it, I’m a nigger. It was enough to make a body ashamed of the human race” (Twain 160). Huck has never seen such inhumane treatment of grieving orphans before and feels the lowest form of shame by likening himself to an African American by calling himself a “nigger.” He is able to acknowledge that the behavior of the King and the Duke is reprehensible and thus, he is beginning to develop his moral code. It is due to the King and the Duke “[trying] to control [the Wilks girls’] wealth, [that] Huck takes issue with their deceit. Huck helps the men because he feels he has to, but he also feels guilty and thinks of a way for Mary Jane to retain what is rightfully hers” (Hacht). Huck’s desire to help Mary Jane and her sisters overcomes his need to help the King and the Duke, demonstrating that he is starting to see wrongs in society and trying to right them. His conscience will not permit him to acknowledge what is happening with this deception and not help the girls, demonstrating that deception of the innocent goes against his morals.

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