



Mark Twain

A terrible enemy of injustice and confusion, Mark Twain wrote scores of attacks on the villainous and fraudulent pursuits of dishonest people, and on the weak, insipid facades of hypocrisy.

I was a trembling, because I'd got to decide, forever,
betwixt two things, and I knowed it. I studied a minute,
sort of holding my breath, and then says to myself:
"All right, then, I'll *go* to hell[.]"

—→←—
Excerpt from
The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn



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American writer and humorist Mark Twain demonstrated an uncanny understanding of childhood and human nature, often writing in the vernacular of the American South. Twain's biting social and political satires reflect his abhorrence of social and moral injustices. In the moral climax of Mark Twain's quintessential American novel *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Huck is deciding to help Jim, a runaway slave, escape.



1835-1910

- In order to make anything out of himself, Mark Twain had to struggle with his environment from the beginning. Born Samuel Langhorne Clemens in the one-horse village of Florida, Missouri, in 1835, he rose to become a world famous writer, lecturer and traveler before he died in 1910. Most of his success was due to a combination of indomitable drive, unceasing energy, and maximum use of his own talent.



Basic Facts

- The basic facts of Twain's life are well known. Four years after he was born, the family moved to Hannibal, Missouri, a village just a little larger than his birthplace. During his boyhood he had all the advantages and disadvantages of growing up in a country environment. He was close to the big river, and probably spent time exploring its wooded shores and islands. He grew up in tune with the life around him, swimming and playing hooky from school, and falling in love and reading (for his family was an intelligent one). Upon his father's death in 1847, Sam Clemens became a printer's apprentice.



Basic Facts

- He followed his trade over a good part of the country, working in towns as different as Keokuk and New York. But the pay wasn't too good for printers in those days, so after trying unsuccessfully to get to South America, he became a river pilot. He had thought he would go to South America to make some easy money. Before he got to New Orleans to take ship, however, he became friendly with a river pilot named Horace Bixby, who promised to teach him the river. Bixby was a good pilot, one who loved his work and established a reputation for excellence. The story of Twain's apprenticeship is told in *Life on the Mississippi*. The account is "stretched" somewhat, as Huck Finn would say.



Basic Facts

- After piloting steamers for about four years, Clemens retired to the Nevada gold country, because the onset of the Civil War had put an end to river commerce. He eventually ended up in California, back at the printing trade. He wrote short pieces for the newspapers he worked on, establishing a reputation as a humorist among the provincial readers of the Old West. The result of this writing and some lecturing was that he fell in with a group of writers who have come to be known as the "Local Colorists." Men like Bret Harte and Artemus Ward - not much heard of today - were extremely popular in the West for tales which were woven from folk stories and written in dialect with rough-hewn humor and plenty of recognizable concrete detail.



Success And Marriage

- In 1869 he published *The Innocents Abroad*, an account of a trip to Europe he made under the sponsorship of a newspaper. In the book, he satirizes the folly of going across the Atlantic to see dead men's graves when there are many living things to see right here. The book made him famous, and gave him a literary reputation in the East.



Success And Marriage

- As a successful writer he attained respectability enough to marry into a wealthy Buffalo, New York, family. His wife's name was Olivia Langdon, of the socially prominent Langdons. Five years later he moved to Elmira, N.Y., and then to Hartford, Connecticut, where he had a house built. Most of this time was taken up with writing, for he had made friends with a number of interesting literary people, among them William Dean Howells, the famous author (*The Rise of Silas Lapham*) and editor (*The Atlantic Monthly*). During this period he wrote *Roughing It* and *The Gilded Age*. The former is a memoir of the early days in the West; the latter, written in collaboration with Charles Dudley Warner, another friend, is a satire on the way the federal government was run. In 1875 he began work on his first novel: *Tom Sawyer*. The book was a success.

Mark Twain wrote the classic story *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* in 1876 about a boy's escapades along the Mississippi River. In this illustration from the book Tom tricks his friend into finishing his job of whitewashing a fence by making the work appear like fun.





American writer Mark Twain lived from 1874 to 1891 in a 19-room house built for him in Hartford, Connecticut. The picturesque house, wrapped in porches, has a painted brick exterior and interiors created by the American design firm of Louis Comfort Tiffany.

A decorative background on the left side of the slide features a light green balloon at the top, a light blue balloon in the middle, and a light purple balloon at the bottom. Yellow streamers and triangular flags are scattered around the balloons.

Huck Finn

- In 1876 he sat down to its sequel, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Although this is the work on which the greatest proportion of his literary fame rests, it was not an easy book to write. The history of its composition has been traced by Walter Blair, and is discussed in the "Introduction to *Huck Finn*," below. It is sufficient to note here that the book didn't appear until 1884 in England, and 1885 in America. It was an immediate success, despite adverse criticism by some of the more conservative literary judges of the day.

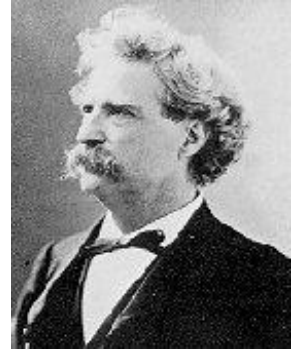
Huck Finn

- Between 1876 and 1885 Twain had written several books, among them *The Prince and the Pauper*, *A Tramp Abroad*, and *Life on the Mississippi*. After *Huck Finn*, his next major work was *Pudd'nhead Wilson* (1889). Then came *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (1894).



Sorrows And Difficulties

- Mark Twain's final years were not full of the satisfactions a man hopes to find at the end of a life well led. Instead he suffered a series of financial disasters and personal losses which would have taken the heart out of a lesser man. His publishing company failed in 1894, and shortly thereafter he lost a great deal of money which he had invested in a project to invent a typesetting machine. In spite of his advanced years-he was in his sixties-he took on a foreign lecture tour to pay back every cent he owed. By 1898 he was out of debt. But before he finished the tour, there began for him a series of losses which were to color the rest of his life.





Sorrows And Difficulties

- These were deeper losses, more personal than merely financial misfortunes. First, his daughter Suzy died, then his wife died, then his daughter Clara went with her husband to live in Europe. This left Clemens with only his daughter Jean, whose epilepsy resulted in a heart attack from which she died.
- Four months after Jean's death, on April 21, 1910, Mark Twain died of a heart attack.



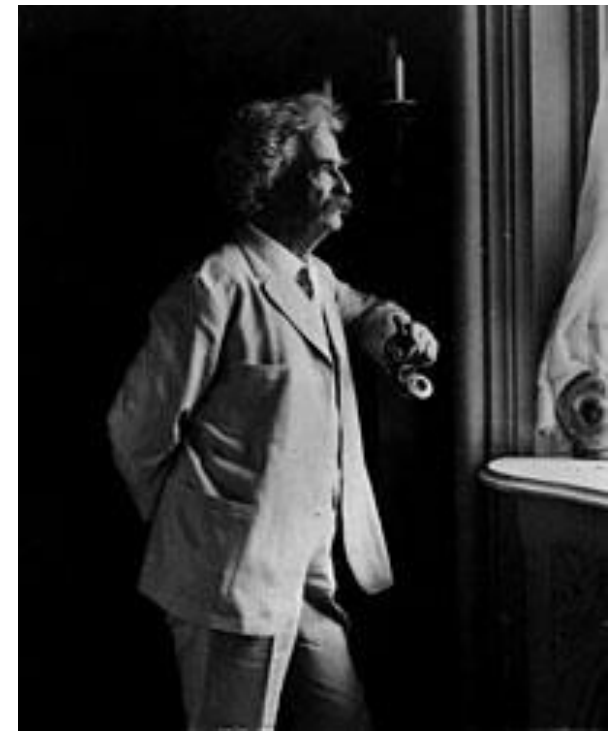
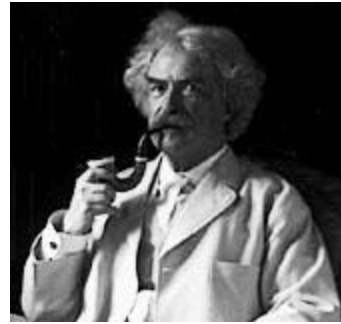
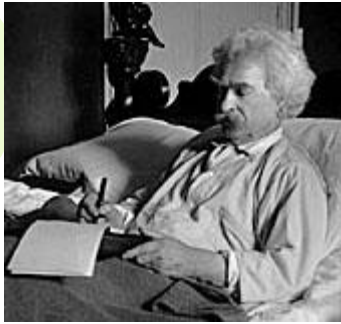
Sorrows And Difficulties

- Disillusioned by business reversals and personal losses, he was a bitter writer toward the end of his days. Some of his later writings are just being published. They have been withheld from the public by his estate because of the savage nature of their biting satire.



Sorrows And Difficulties

- His writings, from the earliest to those just appearing, can best be described as "iconoclastic." That is, they are "image breakers." The picture that most often comes to mind while one is reading his works is that of a man sitting on a hill overlooking a valley populated by foolish people. Every once in a while he shakes his head sadly at their folly and rants at the false symbols and standards they have raised. A terrible enemy of injustice and confusion, Mark Twain wrote scores of attacks on the villainous and fraudulent pursuits of dishonest people, and on the weak, insipid facades of hypocrisy.



"All you need is ignorance and confidence; then success is sure."



His Influence

- Successive generations of writers, however, recognized the role that Twain played in creating a truly American literature. He portrayed uniquely American subjects in a humorous and colloquial, yet poetic, language. His success in creating this plain but evocative language precipitated the end of American reverence for British and European culture and for the more formal language associated with those traditions. His adherence to American themes, settings, and language set him apart from many other novelists of the day and had a powerful effect on such later American writers as Ernest Hemingway and William Faulkner, both of whom pointed to Twain as an inspiration for their own writing.
 - "Twain, Mark." Microsoft?Encarta?Encyclopedia 2001. ?1993-2000 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.



Do you know?

- Mark Twain, the pseudonym used by Samuel Langhorne Clemens, first appeared on February 3, 1863, in a piece he contributed to the *Virginia City Territorial Enterprise*.
- Prior to adopting Mark Twain as his pen name, Clemens wrote under the pen name Thomas Jefferson Snodgrass for three humorous pieces he contributed to the *Keokuk Post*.

A decorative background featuring a light green balloon in the top left, a light blue balloon in the middle left, and a light purple balloon in the bottom left. Yellow streamers and triangular shapes are scattered around the balloons.

Do you know?

- On the Mississippi River, “mark twain” meant “two fathoms deep.”
- Twain received an honorary doctorate from Oxford University in 1907.
- To pay off debts accumulated as a result of failed business ventures, Twain toured the world as a lecturer, publishing his experiences in *Following the Equator* (1897).



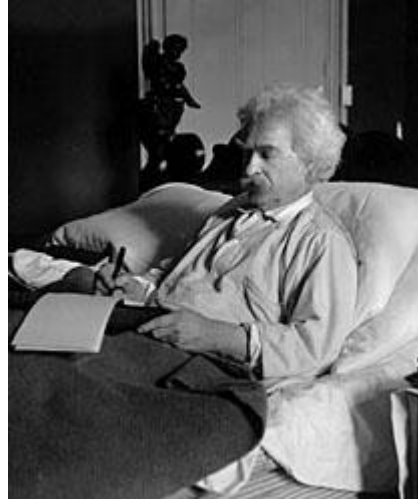
"Every one is a moon, and has a dark side which he never shows to anybody."



"Let us endeavor so to live that when we come to die even the undertaker will be sorry"



"The man who does not read good books has no advantage over the man who can't read them."



"Man will do many things to get himself loved; he will do all things to get himself envied."



"Of all the animals, man is the only one that is cruel. He is the only one that inflicts pain for the pleasure of doing it."



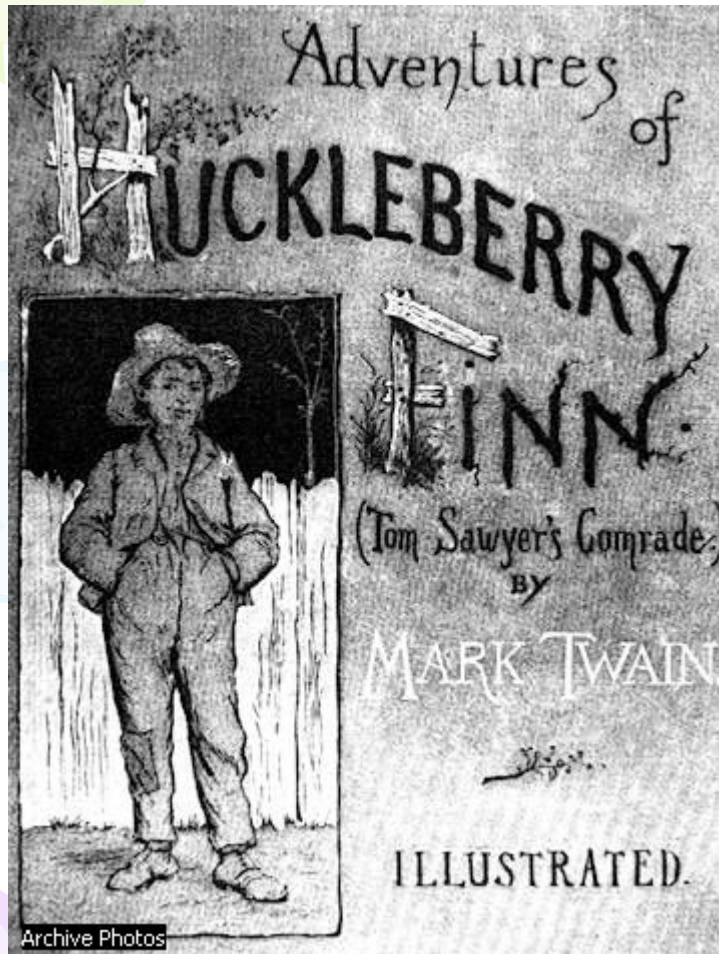
Mark Twain National Forest is the only national forest in the state of Missouri. It is situated in the southern part of the state in a region known as the Ozark Plateau, a large area characterized by forested hills, low mountains, and deep gorges.

The Adventur es of Huckleber ry Finn



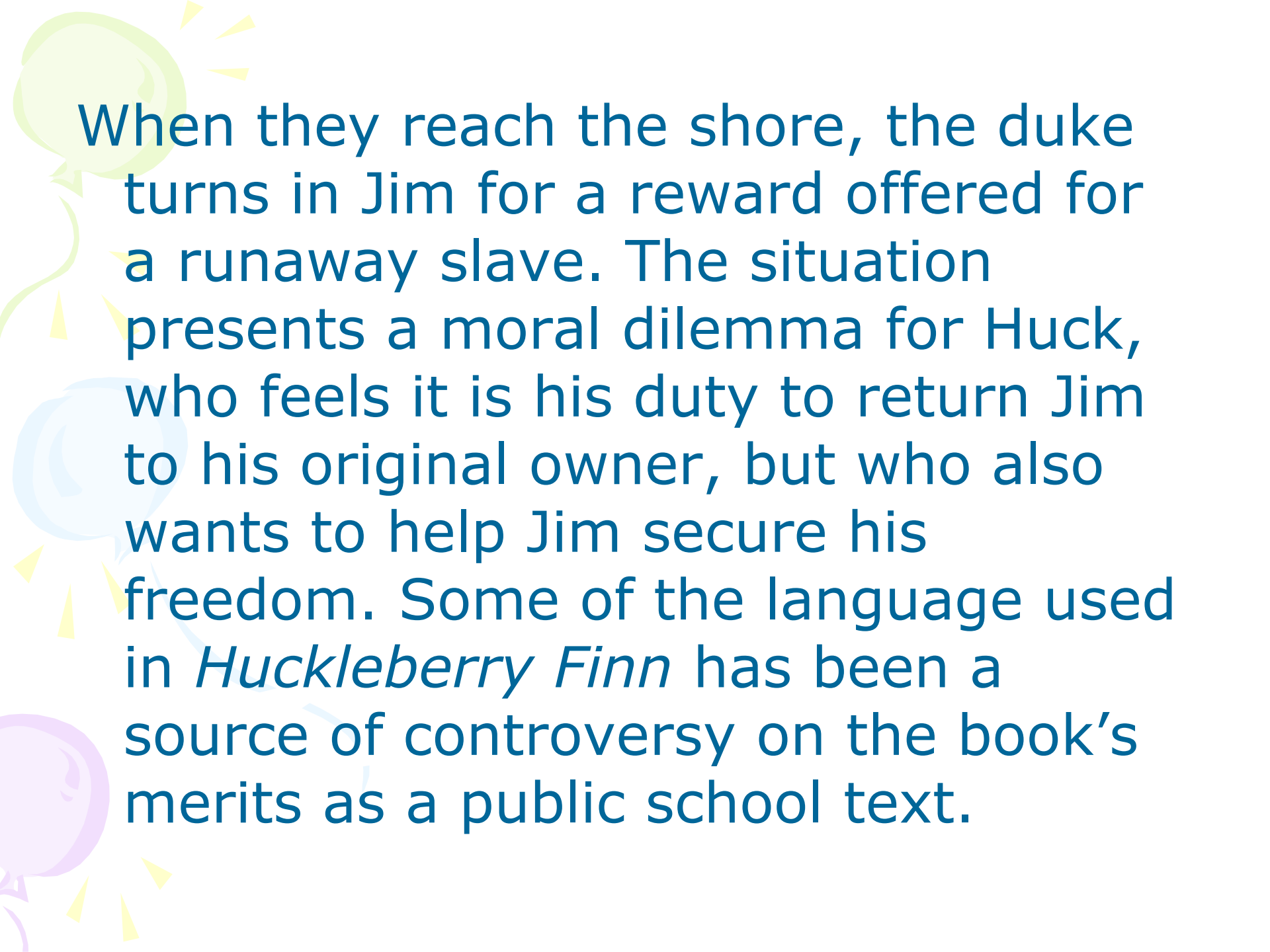
HUCK STEALING AWAY.





Summary:

American literary critic Lionel Trilling called Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884) "one of the world's great books and one of the central documents of American culture." In this excerpt, Huck, a runaway teenage boy, and Jim, an escaped slave, are traveling down the Mississippi River with two confidence men called "the king" and "the duke," who perform their fractured versions of Shakespeare and other dramas under the guise of the Royal Nonesuch theater troupe.

The background features several colorful balloons in shades of green, blue, and purple, with yellow streamers and triangular flags trailing from them. The text is centered and written in a blue, sans-serif font.

When they reach the shore, the duke turns in Jim for a reward offered for a runaway slave. The situation presents a moral dilemma for Huck, who feels it is his duty to return Jim to his original owner, but who also wants to help Jim secure his freedom. Some of the language used in *Huckleberry Finn* has been a source of controversy on the book's merits as a public school text.



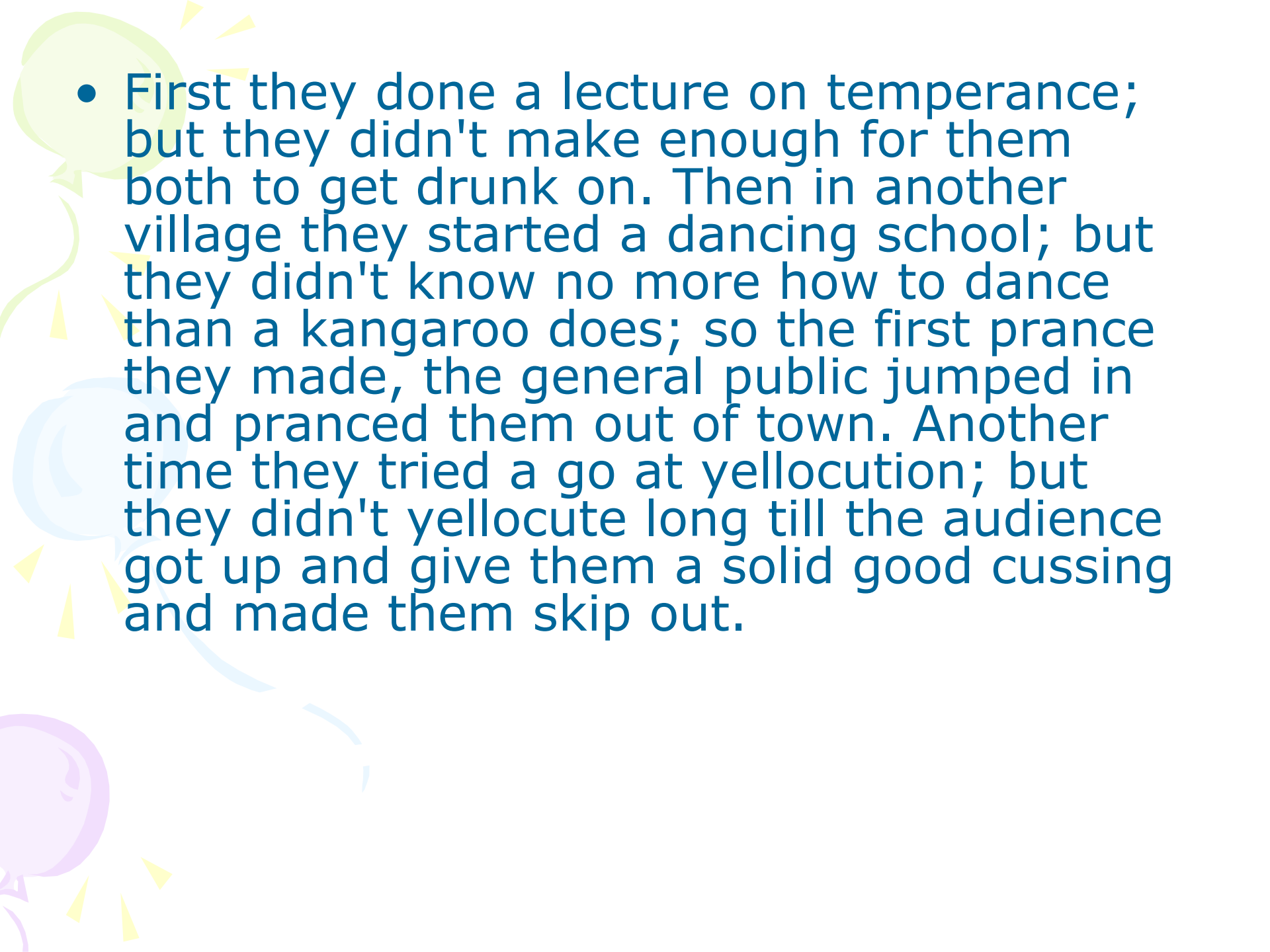
SPANISH MOSS.

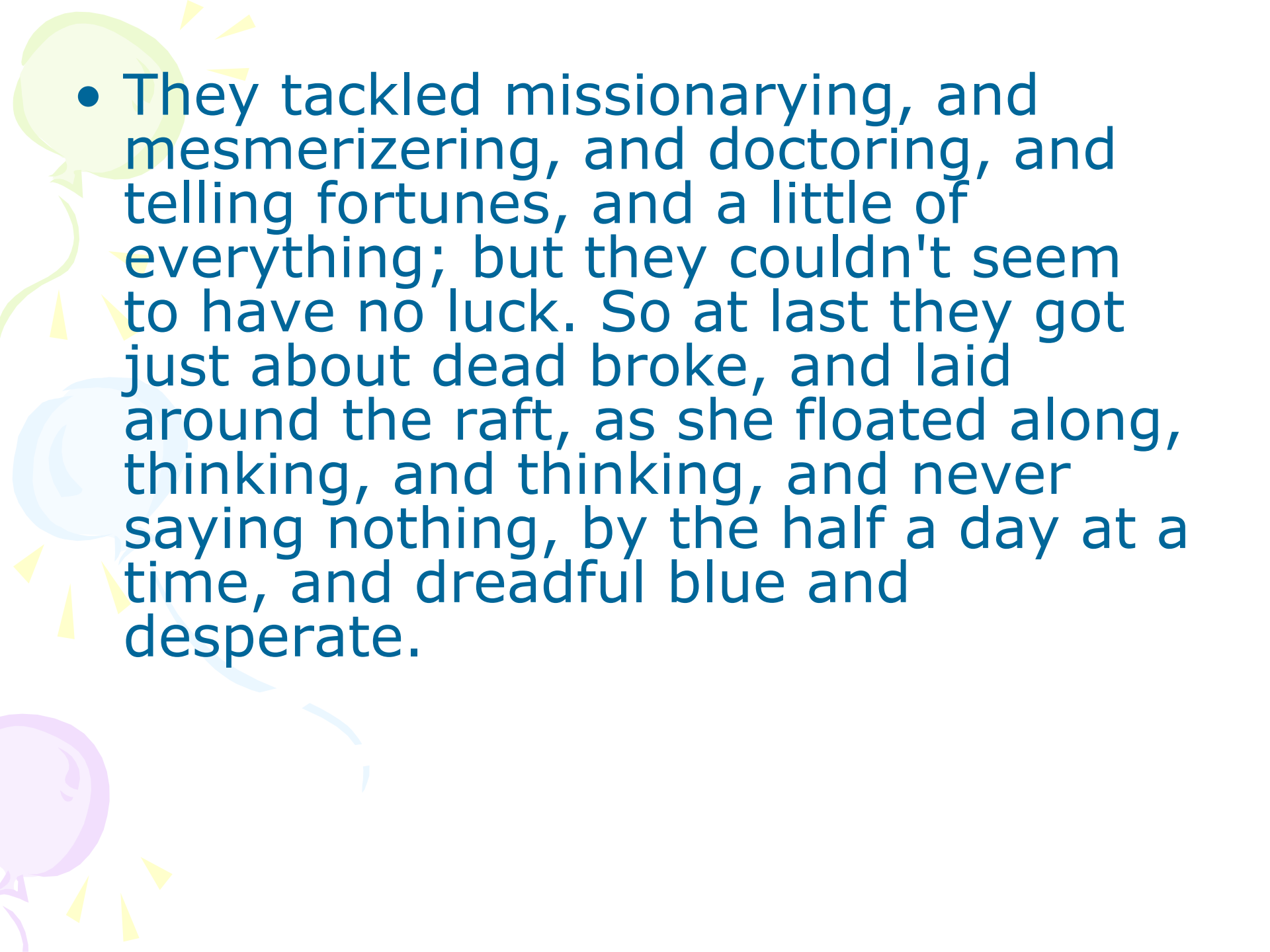
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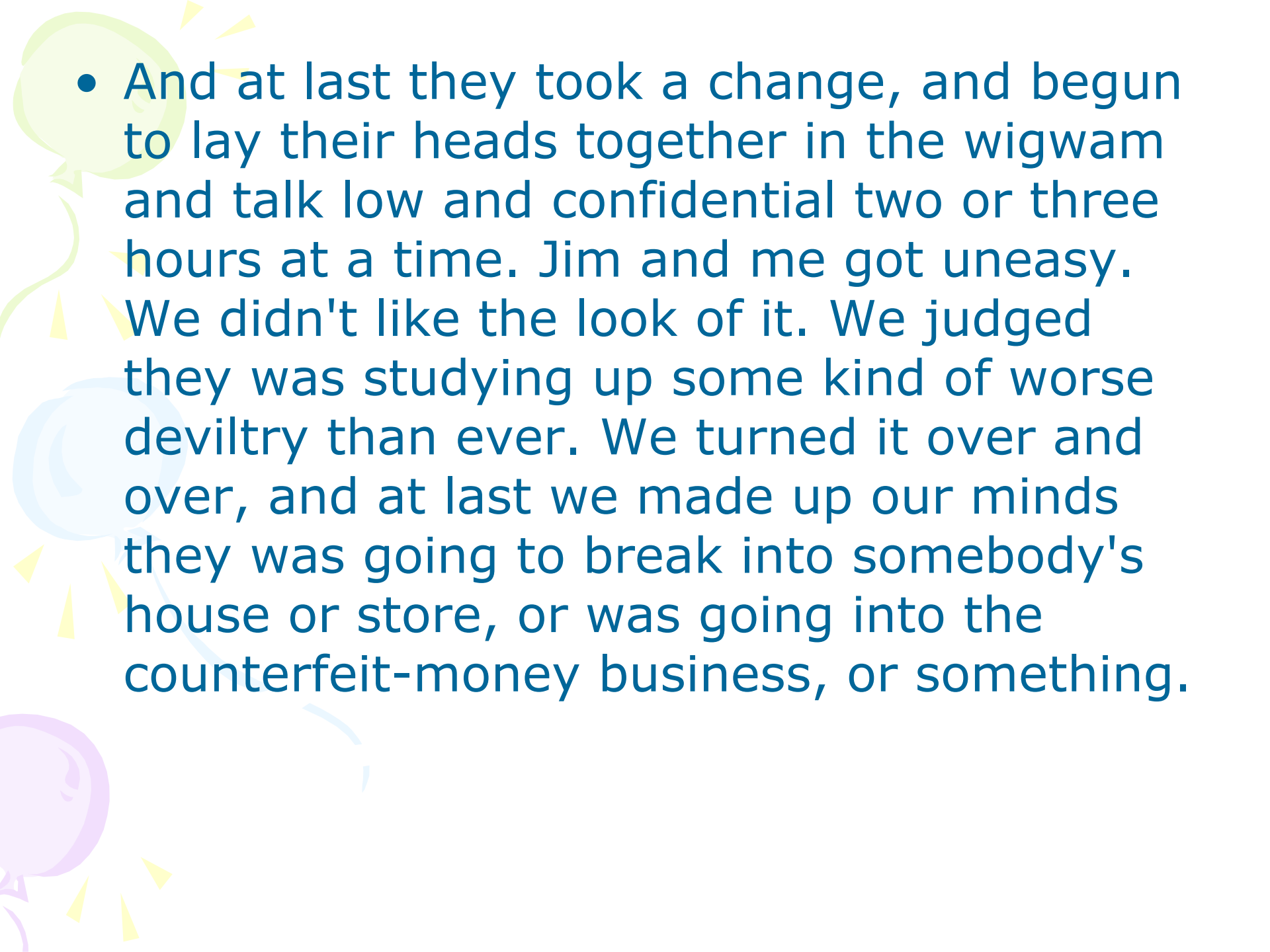


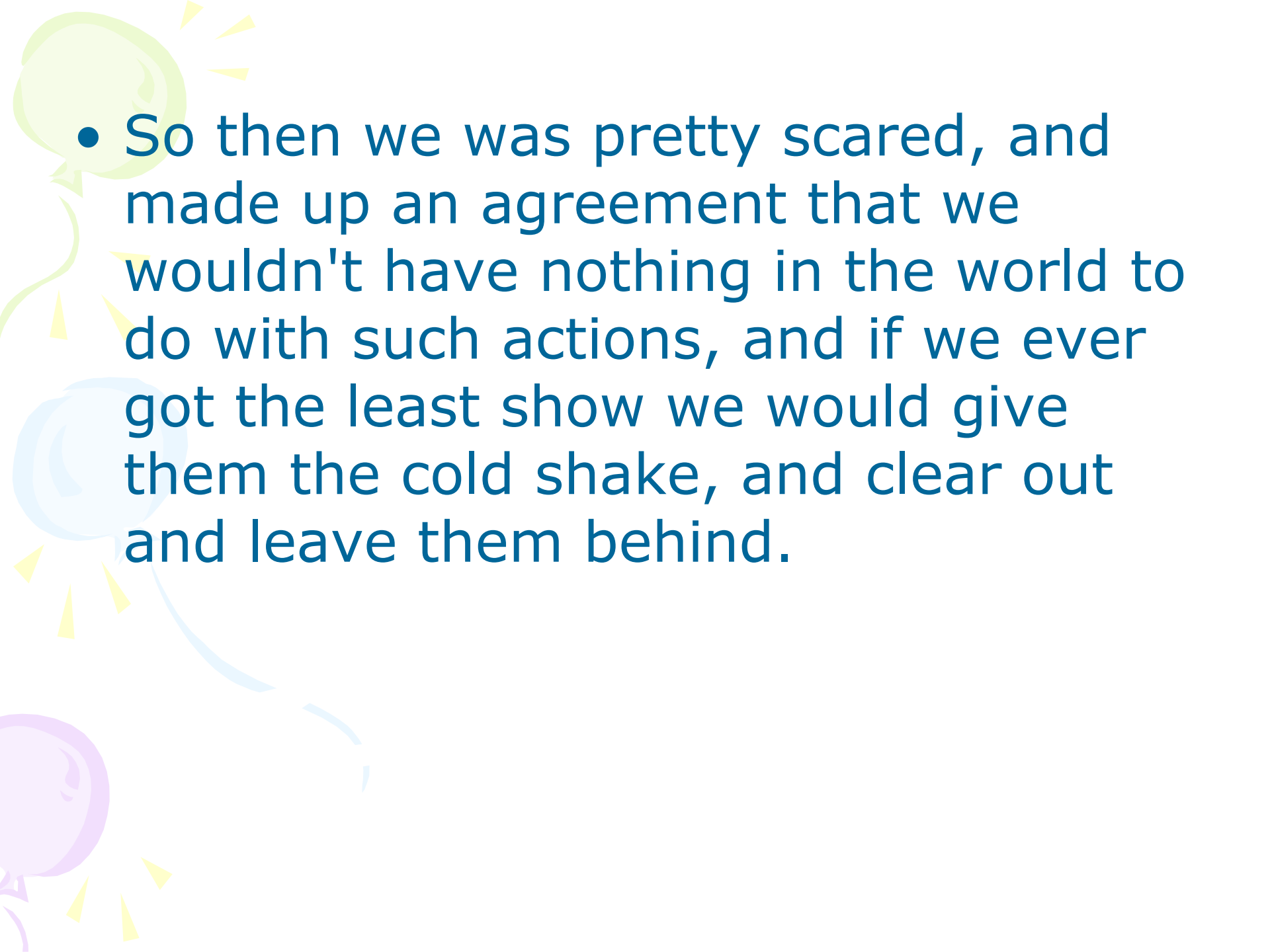
Chapter XXXI

- We didn't stop again at any town, for days and days; kept right along down the river. We was down south in the warm weather, now, and a mighty long ways from home. We begun to come to trees with Spanish moss on them, hanging down from the limbs like long gray beards. It was the first I ever see it growing, and it made the woods look solemn and dismal. So now the frauds reckoned they was out of danger, and they begun to work the villages again.

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- First they done a lecture on temperance; but they didn't make enough for them both to get drunk on. Then in another village they started a dancing school; but they didn't know no more how to dance than a kangaroo does; so the first prance they made, the general public jumped in and pranced them out of town. Another time they tried a go at yellocution; but they didn't yellocute long till the audience got up and give them a solid good cussing and made them skip out.

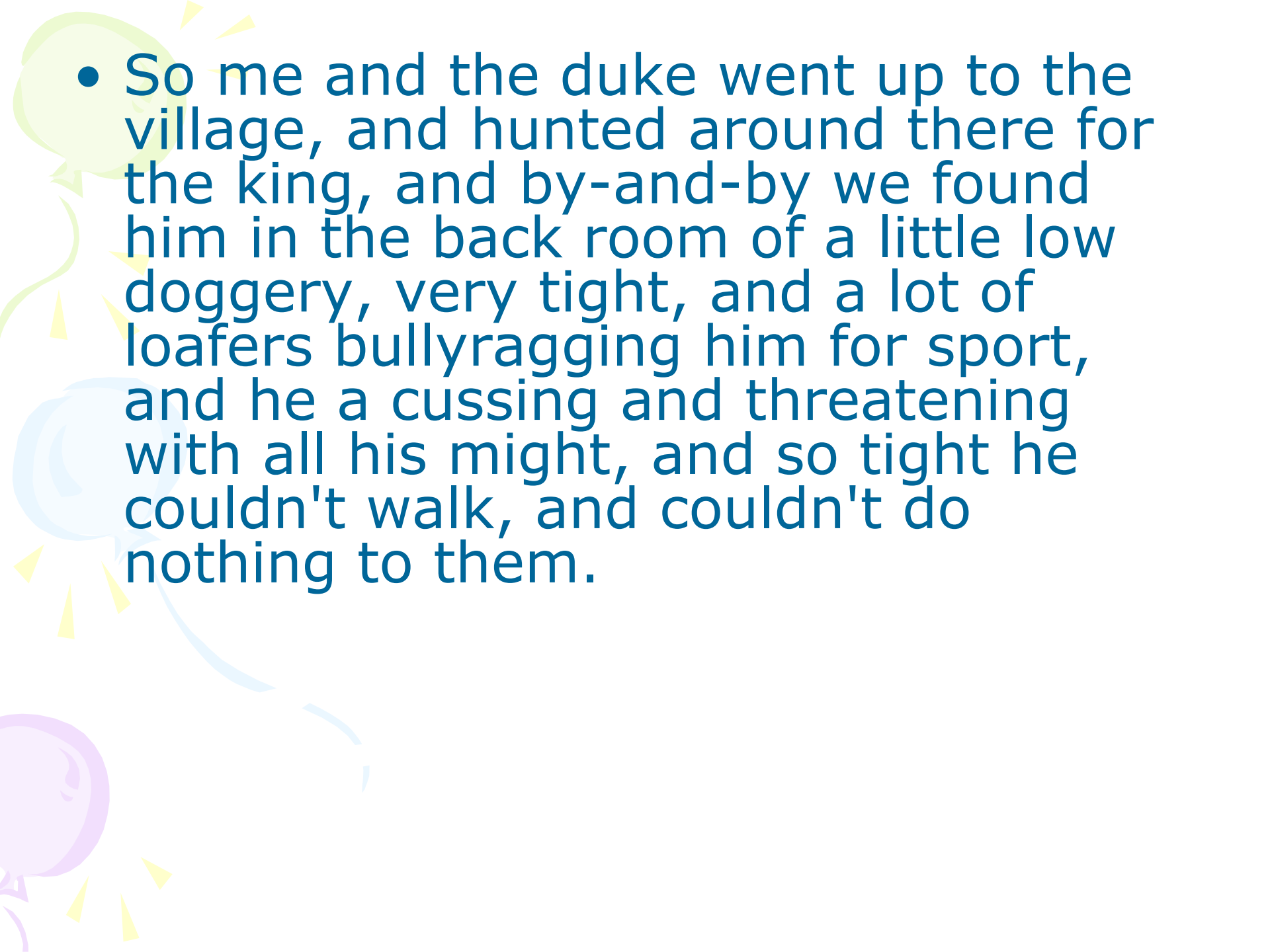
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- The background features several colorful balloons: a large light green one at the top left, a light blue one in the middle left, and a purple one at the bottom left. Yellow streamers and triangular flags are scattered around the balloons.
- They tackled missionarying, and mesmerizing, and doctoring, and telling fortunes, and a little of everything; but they couldn't seem to have no luck. So at last they got just about dead broke, and laid around the raft, as she floated along, thinking, and thinking, and never saying nothing, by the half a day at a time, and dreadful blue and desperate.

- 
- And at last they took a change, and begun to lay their heads together in the wigwam and talk low and confidential two or three hours at a time. Jim and me got uneasy. We didn't like the look of it. We judged they was studying up some kind of worse deviltry than ever. We turned it over and over, and at last we made up our minds they was going to break into somebody's house or store, or was going into the counterfeit-money business, or something.

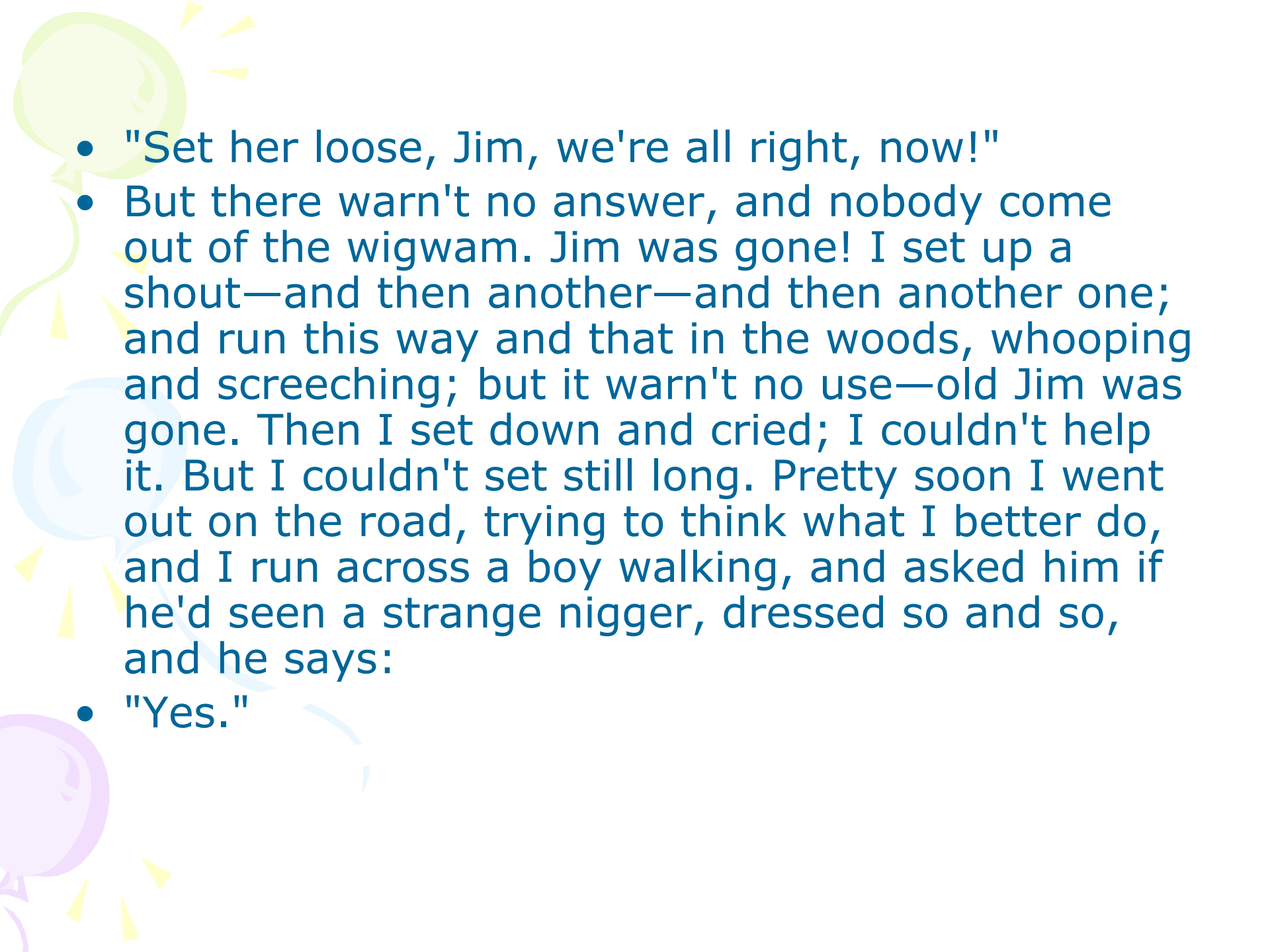
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- The background features three stylized balloons: a green one at the top left, a light blue one in the middle left, and a purple one at the bottom left. Each balloon has a thin streamer and several small yellow triangular shapes radiating from it, resembling sunbeams or confetti.
- So then we was pretty scared, and made up an agreement that we wouldn't have nothing in the world to do with such actions, and if we ever got the least show we would give them the cold shake, and clear out and leave them behind.

- Well, early one morning we hid the raft in a good safe place about two mile below a little bit of a shabby village, named Pikesville, and the king he went ashore, and told us all to stay hid whilst he went up to town and smelt around to see if anybody had got any wind of the Royal Nonesuch there yet. ("House to rob, you *mean*," says I to myself; "and when you get through robbing it you'll come back here and wonder what's become of me and Jim and the raft—and you'll have to take it out in wondering.") And he said if he warn't back by midday, the duke and me would know it was all right, and we was to come along.

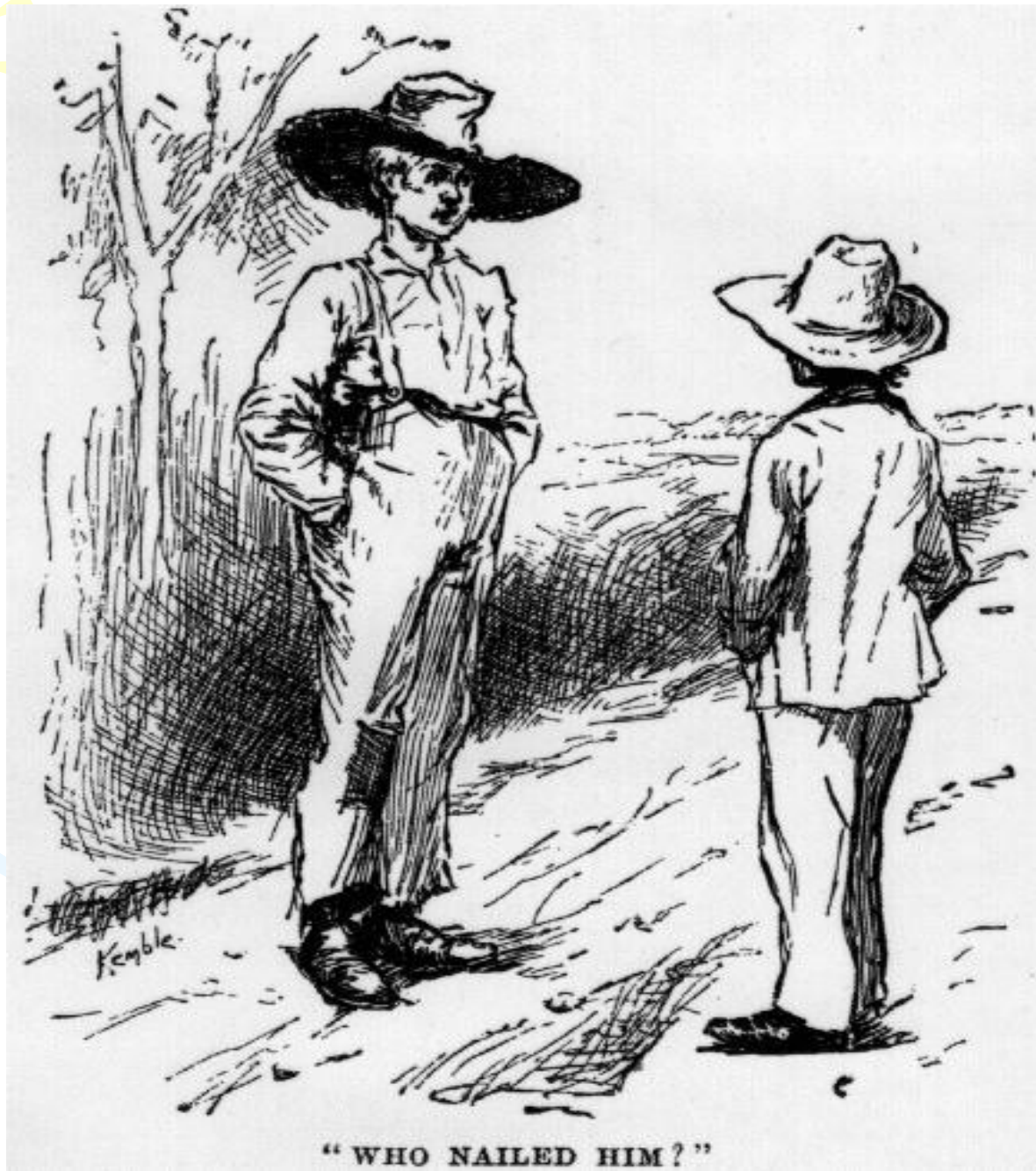
- So we staid where we was. The duke he fretted and sweated around, and was in a mighty sour way. He scolded us for everything, and we couldn't seem to do nothing right; he found fault with every little thing. Something was a-brewing, sure. I was good and glad when midday come and no king; we could have a change, anyway—and maybe a chance for *the* change, on top of it.

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- The background features several colorful balloons: a light green one at the top left, a light blue one in the middle left, and a purple one at the bottom left. Yellow streamers and triangular shapes are scattered around the balloons.
- So me and the duke went up to the village, and hunted around there for the king, and by-and-by we found him in the back room of a little low doggery, very tight, and a lot of loafers bullyragging him for sport, and he a cussing and threatening with all his might, and so tight he couldn't walk, and couldn't do nothing to them.

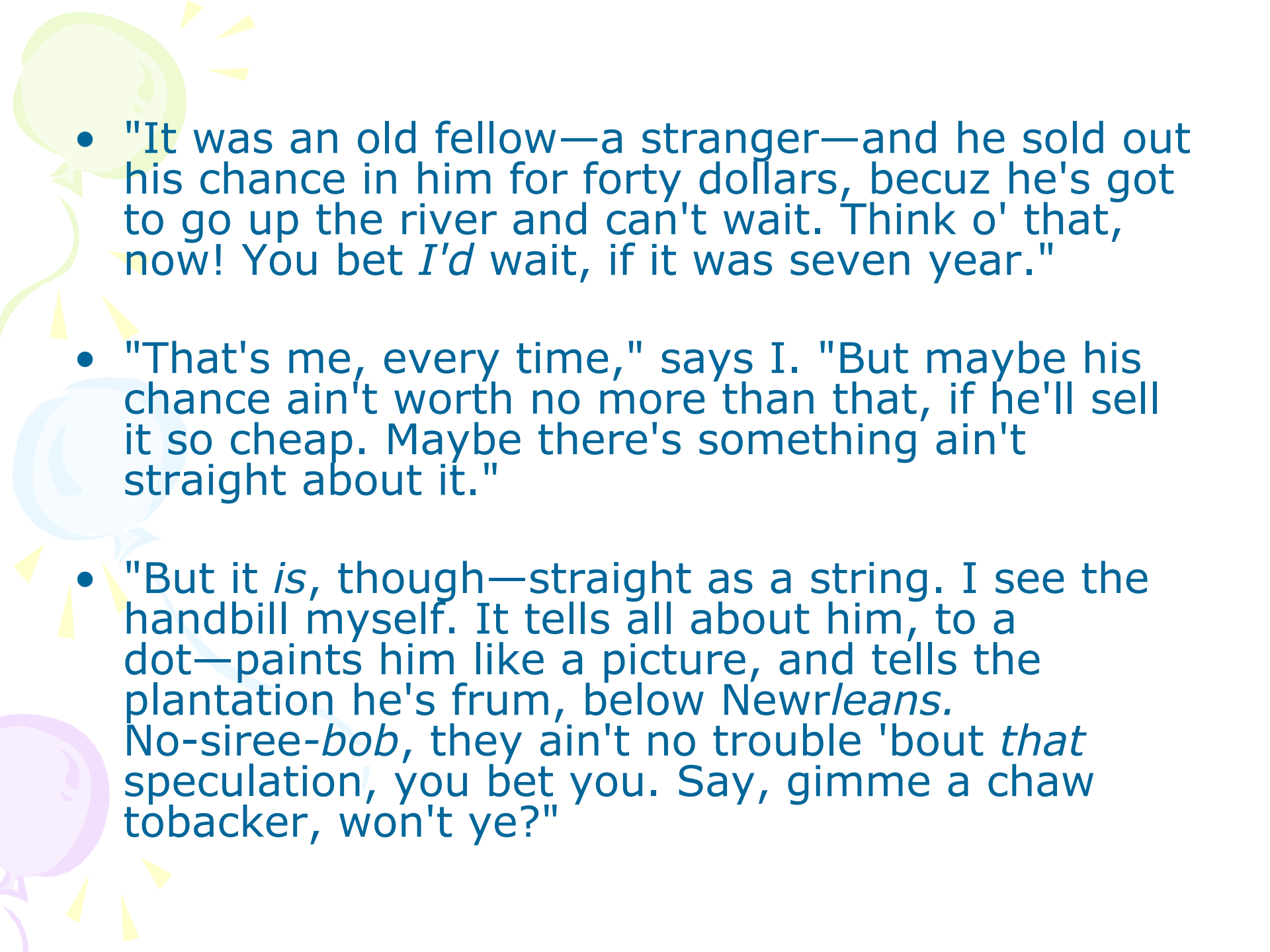
- The duke he begun to abuse him for an old fool, and the king begun to sass back; and the minute they was fairly at it, I lit out, and shook the reefs out of my hind legs, and spun down the river road like a deer—for I see our chance; and I made up my mind that it would be a long day before they ever see me and Jim again. I got down there all out of breath but loaded up with joy, and sung out—

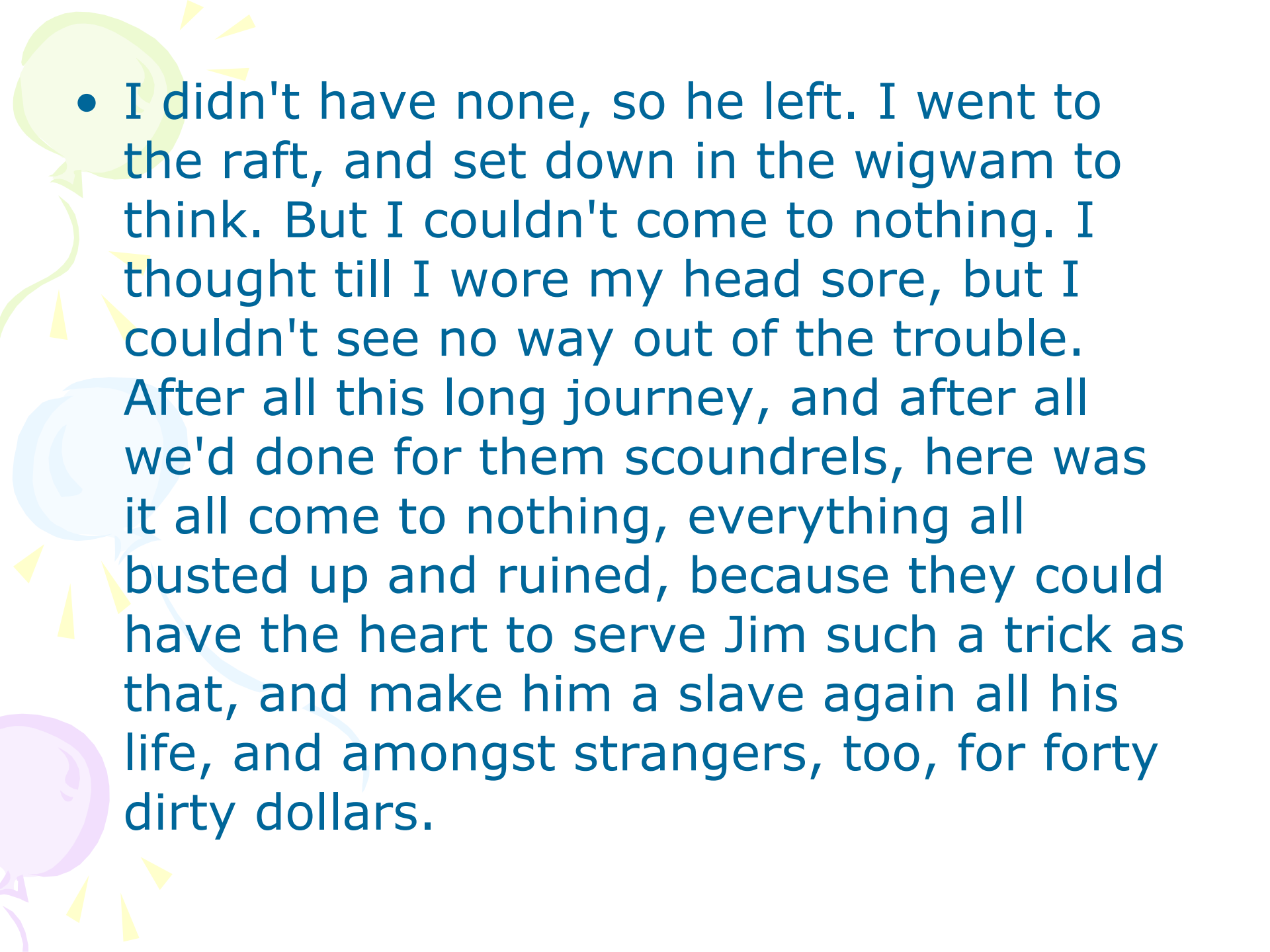
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- "Set her loose, Jim, we're all right, now!"
 - But there warn't no answer, and nobody come out of the wigwam. Jim was gone! I set up a shout—and then another—and then another one; and run this way and that in the woods, whooping and screeching; but it warn't no use—old Jim was gone. Then I set down and cried; I couldn't help it. But I couldn't set still long. Pretty soon I went out on the road, trying to think what I better do, and I run across a boy walking, and asked him if he'd seen a strange nigger, dressed so and so, and he says:
 - "Yes."

- "Whereabouts?" says I.
- "Down to Silas Phelps's place, two mile below here. He's a runaway nigger, and they've got him. Was you looking for him?"
- "You bet I ain't! I run across him in the woods about an hour or two ago, and he said if I hollered he'd cut my livers out—and told me to lay down and stay where I was; and I done it. Been there ever since; afeard to come out."
- "Well," he says, "you needn't be afeard no more, becuz they've got him. He run off f'm down South, som'ers."
- "It's a good job they got him."
- "Well, I *reckon!* There's two hunderd dollars reward on him. It's like picking up money out'n the road."
- "Yes, it is—and *I* could a had it if I'd been big enough; I see him *first*. Who nailed him?"



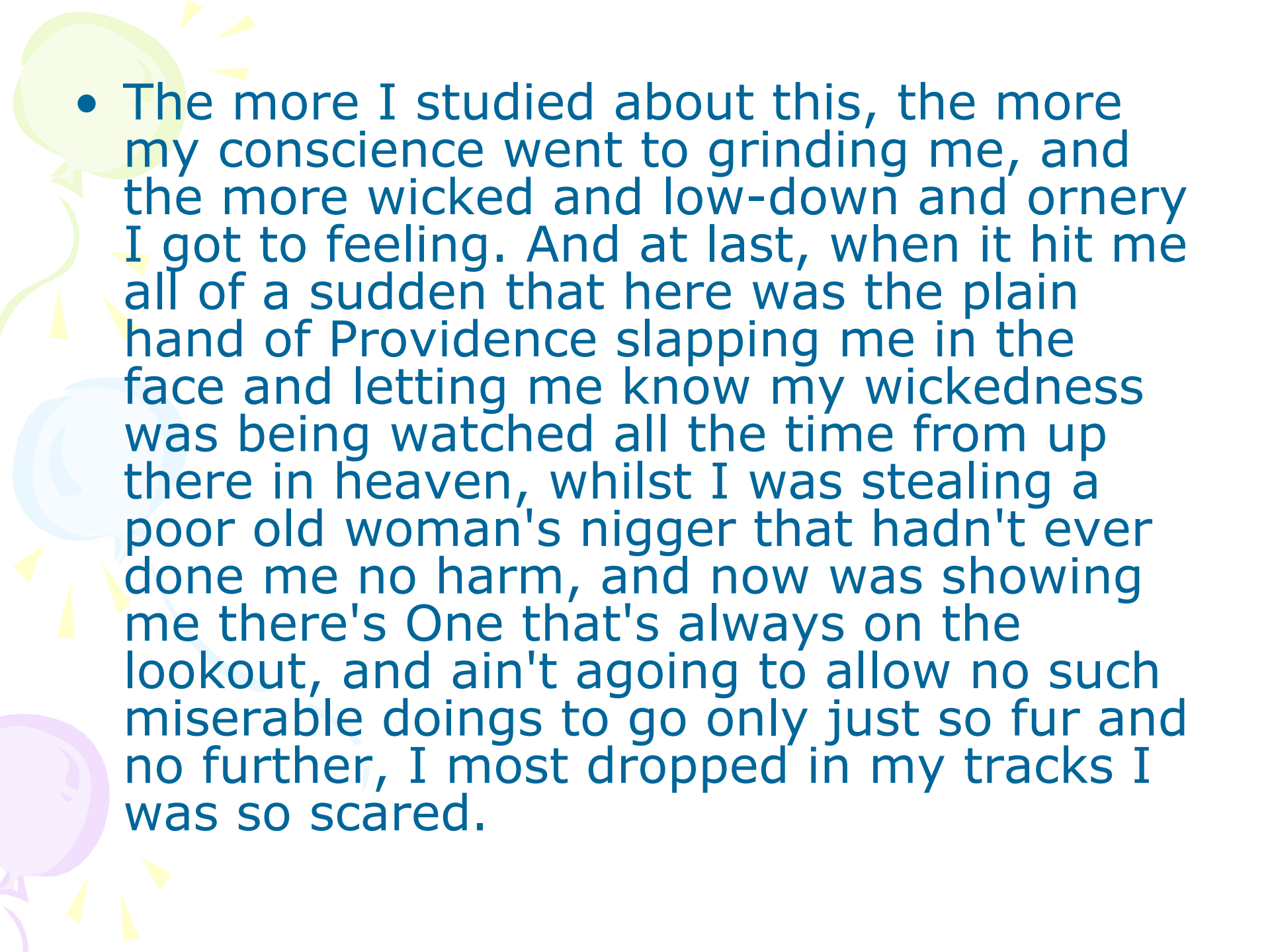
“WHO NAILED HIM?”

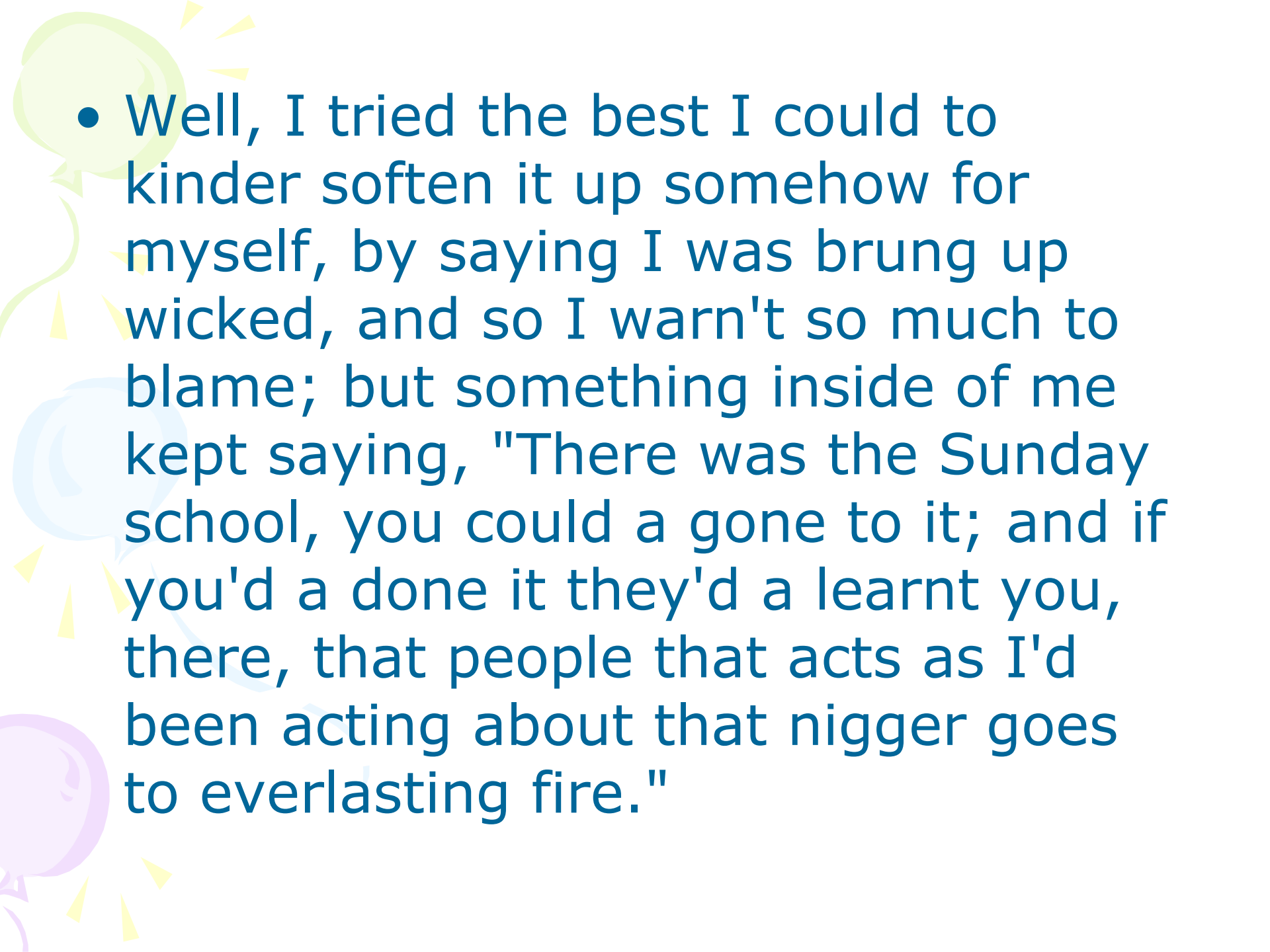
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- "It was an old fellow—a stranger—and he sold out his chance in him for forty dollars, becuz he's got to go up the river and can't wait. Think o' that, now! You bet *I'd* wait, if it was seven year."
 - "That's me, every time," says I. "But maybe his chance ain't worth no more than that, if he'll sell it so cheap. Maybe there's something ain't straight about it."
 - "But it *is*, though—straight as a string. I see the handbill myself. It tells all about him, to a dot—paints him like a picture, and tells the plantation he's frum, below Newrleans. No-siree-*bob*, they ain't no trouble 'bout *that* speculation, you bet you. Say, gimme a chaw tobacker, won't ye?"

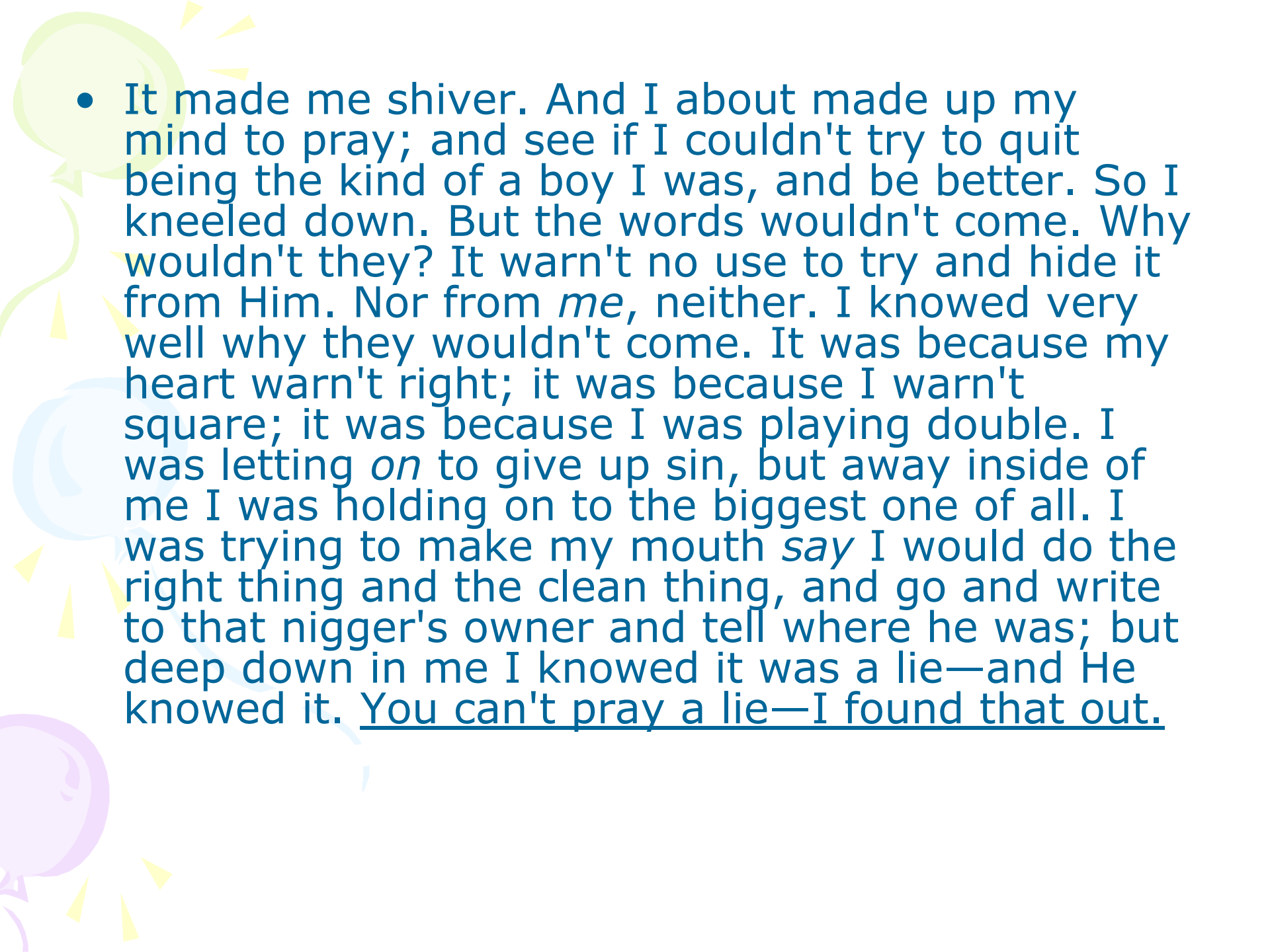
- 
- I didn't have none, so he left. I went to the raft, and set down in the wigwam to think. But I couldn't come to nothing. I thought till I wore my head sore, but I couldn't see no way out of the trouble. After all this long journey, and after all we'd done for them scoundrels, here was it all come to nothing, everything all busted up and ruined, because they could have the heart to serve Jim such a trick as that, and make him a slave again all his life, and amongst strangers, too, for forty dirty dollars.

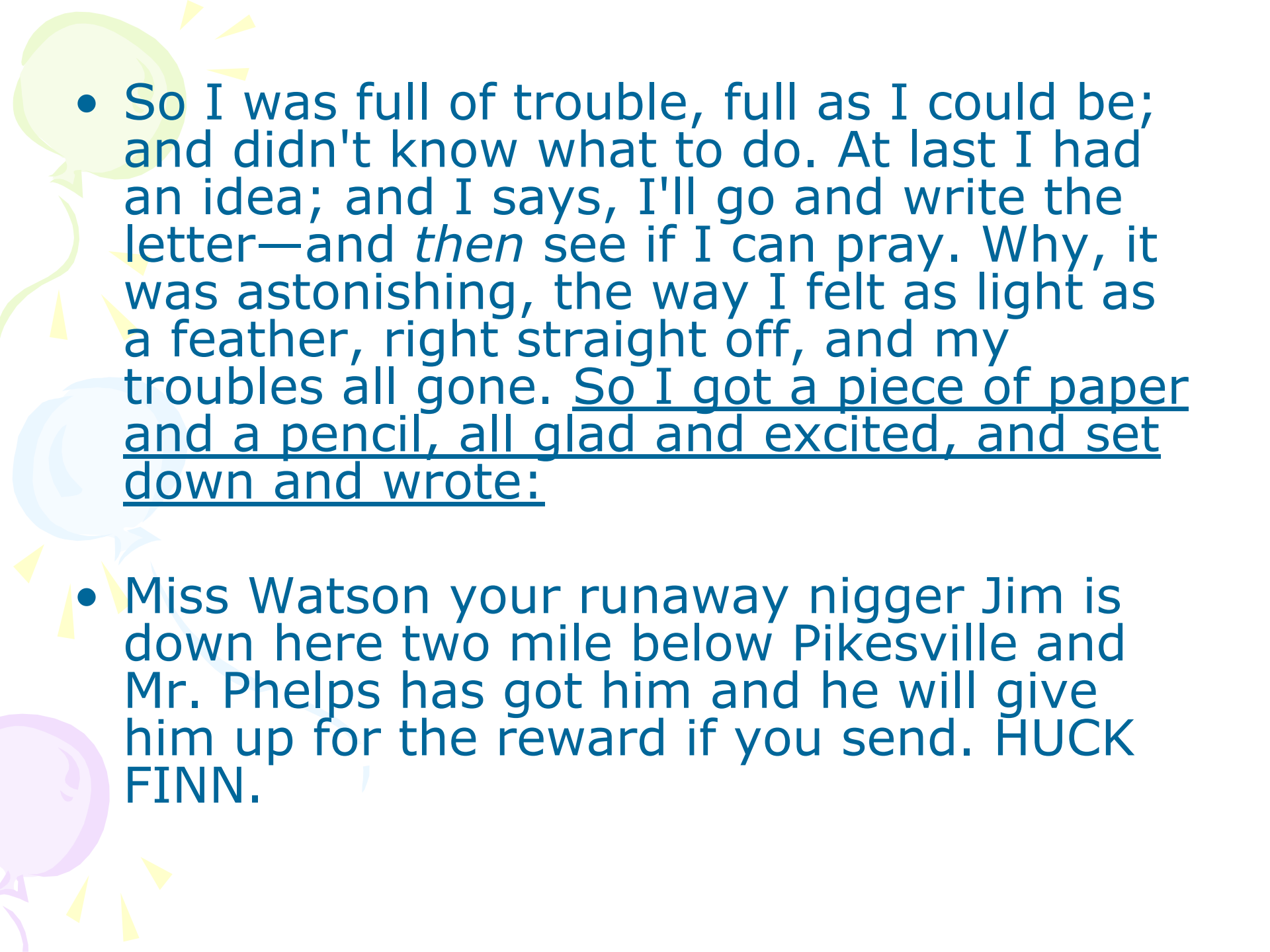
- Once I said to myself it would be a thousand times better for Jim to be a slave at home where his family was, as long as he'd *got* to be a slave, and so I'd better write a letter to Tom Sawyer and tell him to tell Miss Watson where he was. But I soon give up that notion, for two things: she'd be mad and disgusted at his rascality and ungratefulness for leaving her, and so she'd sell him straight down the river again; and if she didn't, everybody naturally despises an ungrateful nigger, and they'd make Jim feel it all the time, and so he'd feel ornery and disgraced.

- And then think of *me!* It would get all around, that Huck Finn helped a nigger to get his freedom; and if I was to ever see anybody from that town again, I'd be ready to get down and lick his boots for shame. That's just the way: a person does a low-down thing, and then he don't want to take no consequences of it. Thinks as long as he can hide it, it ain't no disgrace. That was my fix exactly.

- 
- The background features several colorful balloons in shades of green, blue, and purple, with yellow streamers and triangular flags trailing from them. The text is overlaid on this background.
- The more I studied about this, the more my conscience went to grinding me, and the more wicked and low-down and ornery I got to feeling. And at last, when it hit me all of a sudden that here was the plain hand of Providence slapping me in the face and letting me know my wickedness was being watched all the time from up there in heaven, whilst I was stealing a poor old woman's nigger that hadn't ever done me no harm, and now was showing me there's One that's always on the lookout, and ain't agoing to allow no such miserable doings to go only just so fur and no further, I most dropped in my tracks I was so scared.

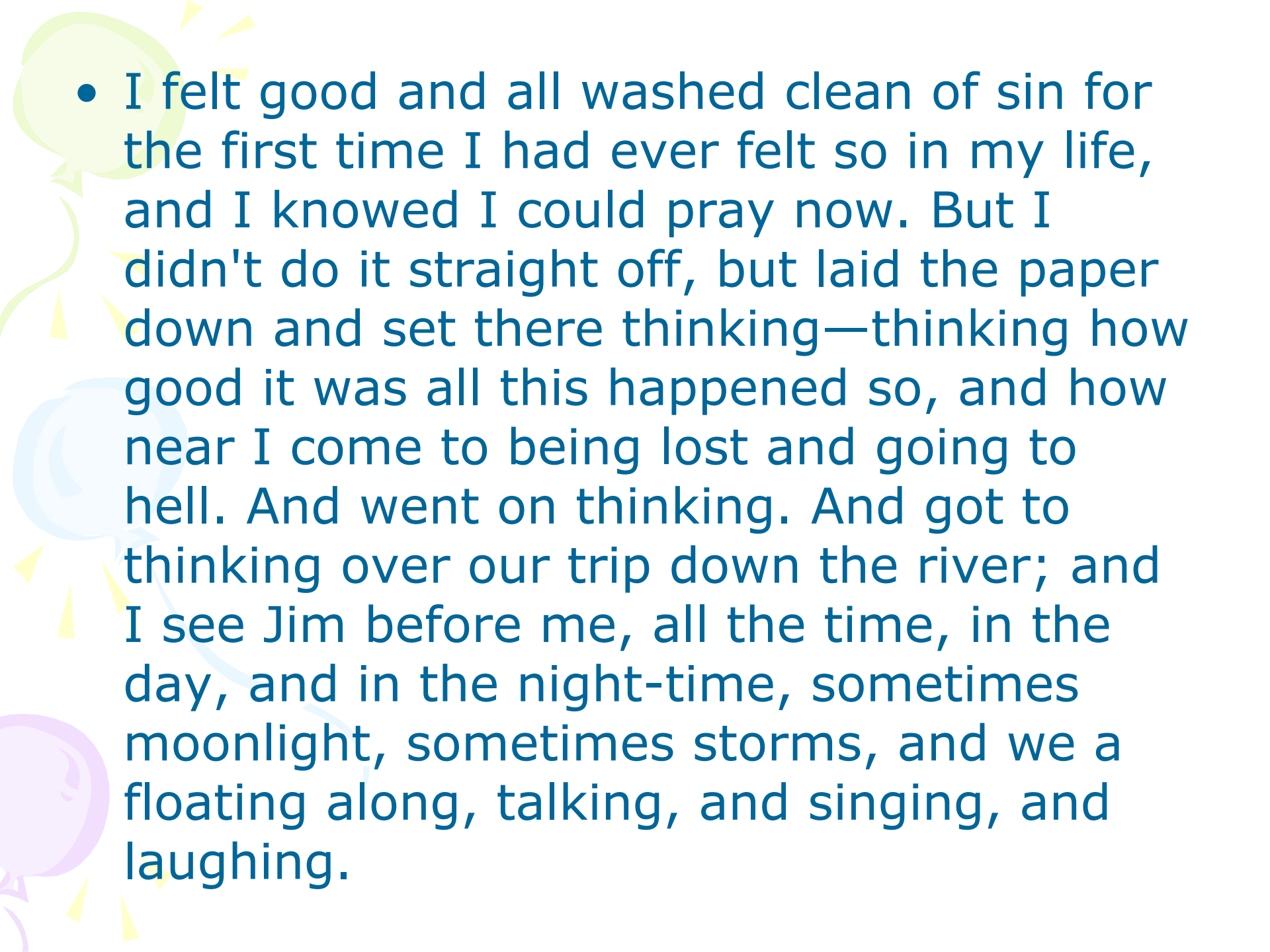
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- The background features a white background with several colorful balloons (green, blue, purple) and yellow triangular rays scattered around, suggesting a festive or celebratory theme.
- Well, I tried the best I could to kinder soften it up somehow for myself, by saying I was brung up wicked, and so I warn't so much to blame; but something inside of me kept saying, "There was the Sunday school, you could a gone to it; and if you'd a done it they'd a learnt you, there, that people that acts as I'd been acting about that nigger goes to everlasting fire."

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- A decorative background featuring several colorful balloons (green, blue, purple) and yellow streamers or confetti scattered across the page.
- It made me shiver. And I about made up my mind to pray; and see if I couldn't try to quit being the kind of a boy I was, and be better. So I kneeled down. But the words wouldn't come. Why wouldn't they? It warn't no use to try and hide it from Him. Nor from *me*, neither. I knowed very well why they wouldn't come. It was because my heart warn't right; it was because I warn't square; it was because I was playing double. I was letting *on* to give up sin, but away inside of me I was holding on to the biggest one of all. I was trying to make my mouth *say* I would do the right thing and the clean thing, and go and write to that nigger's owner and tell where he was; but deep down in me I knowed it was a lie—and He knowed it. You can't pray a lie—I found that out.



- So I was full of trouble, full as I could be; and didn't know what to do. At last I had an idea; and I says, I'll go and write the letter—and *then* see if I can pray. Why, it was astonishing, the way I felt as light as a feather, right straight off, and my troubles all gone. So I got a piece of paper and a pencil, all glad and excited, and set down and wrote:

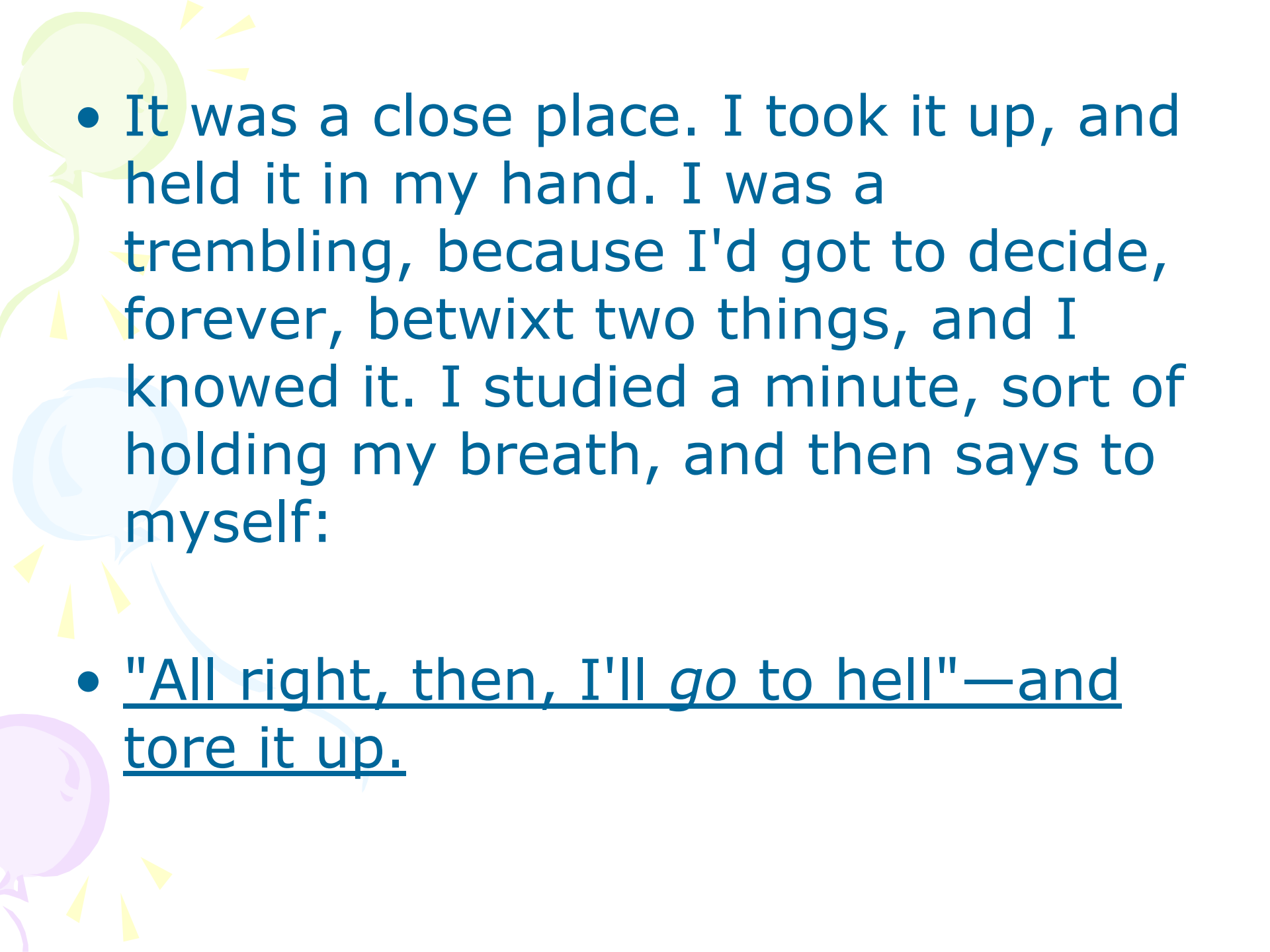
- Miss Watson your runaway nigger Jim is down here two mile below Pikesville and Mr. Phelps has got him and he will give him up for the reward if you send. HUCK FINN.

- 
- The background features several colorful balloons in shades of green, blue, and purple, with yellow streamers and triangular flags trailing from them. The text is presented as a single bullet point.
- I felt good and all washed clean of sin for the first time I had ever felt so in my life, and I knowed I could pray now. But I didn't do it straight off, but laid the paper down and set there thinking—thinking how good it was all this happened so, and how near I come to being lost and going to hell. And went on thinking. And got to thinking over our trip down the river; and I see Jim before me, all the time, in the day, and in the night-time, sometimes moonlight, sometimes storms, and we a floating along, talking, and singing, and laughing.



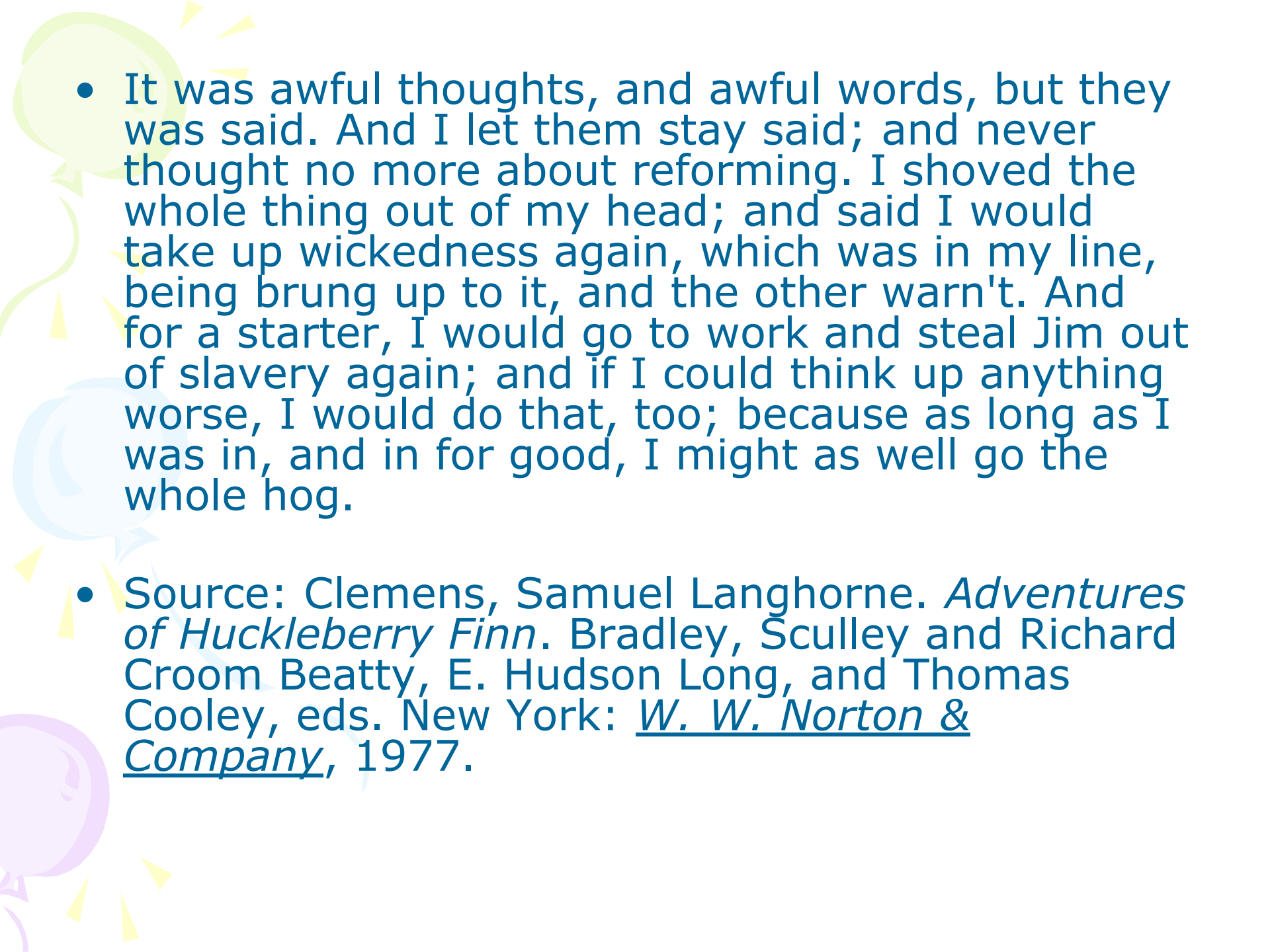
THINKING.

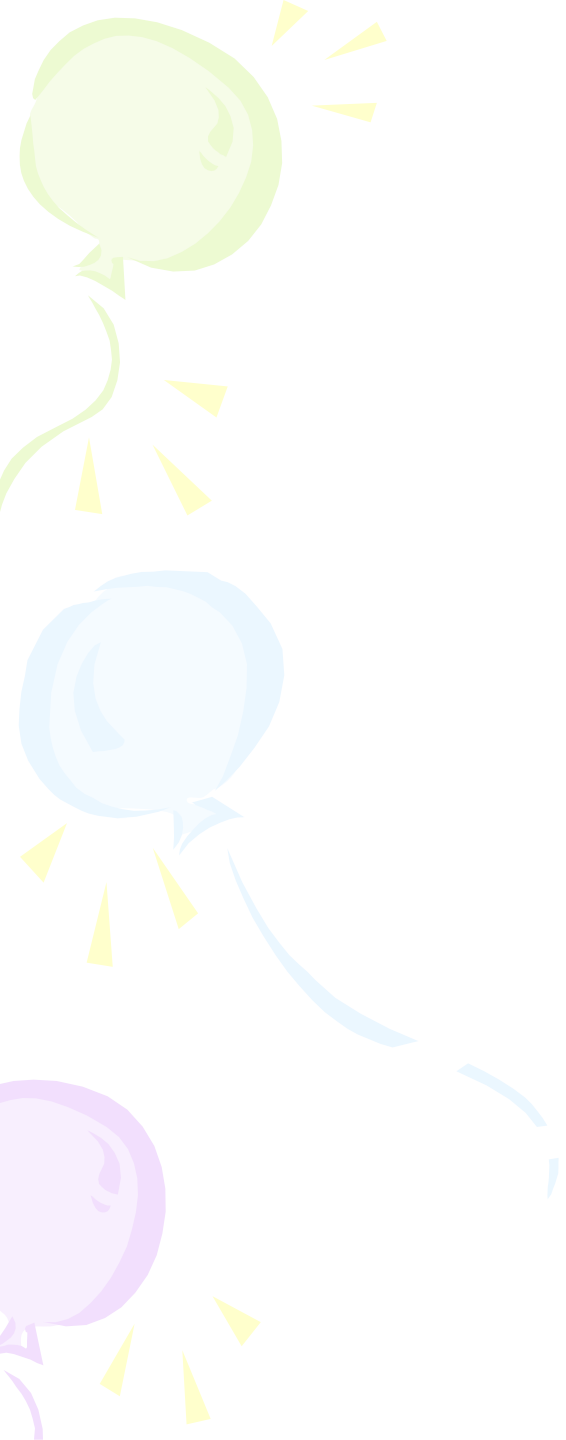
- But somehow I couldn't seem to strike no places to harden me against him, but only the other kind. I'd see him standing my watch on top of his'n, stead of calling me, so I could go on sleeping; and see him how glad he was when I come back out of the fog; and when I come to him again in the swamp, up there where the feud was; and such-like times; and would always call me honey, and pet me, and do everything he could think of for me, and how good he always was; and at last I struck the time I saved him by telling the men we had small-pox aboard, and he was so grateful, and said I was the best friend old Jim ever had in the world, and the *only* one he's got now; and then I happened to look around, and see that paper.



• It was a close place. I took it up, and held it in my hand. I was a trembling, because I'd got to decide, forever, betwixt two things, and I knowed it. I studied a minute, sort of holding my breath, and then says to myself:

• "All right, then, I'll *go to hell*"—and tore it up.

- 
- It was awful thoughts, and awful words, but they was said. And I let them stay said; and never thought no more about reforming. I shoved the whole thing out of my head; and said I would take up wickedness again, which was in my line, being brung up to it, and the other warn't. And for a starter, I would go to work and steal Jim out of slavery again; and if I could think up anything worse, I would do that, too; because as long as I was in, and in for good, I might as well go the whole hog.
 - Source: Clemens, Samuel Langhorne. *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Bradley, Sculley and Richard Croom Beatty, E. Hudson Long, and Thomas Cooley, eds. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1977.



The background features a light blue sky with several colorful balloons (green, blue, purple) and yellow streamers. The title is written in a large, dark green, sans-serif font.

"Huck Finn" And The Picaresque

- The story of Huck Finn's adventurous journey down the Mississippi River on a raft is really a series of short adventures. This is the kind of plot that is known in literature as episodic. Each event is an episode, a self-contained little story. Plots like this are characteristic of a certain kind of novel, the picaresque novel. (This type of novel had its beginning in Spain during the sixteenth century. Among the first of these novels is one called Lazarillo de Tormes.) To say that Huckleberry Finn is simply a picaresque novel is incorrect, however, because there is something missing from it that would be necessary in a picaresque novel.



"Huck Finn" And The Picaresque:

- In addition to having an episodic plot, picaresque novels have as their chief characters the low-life and criminal classes of a nation. While it is true that Huck Finn is not of the upper or even the middle class, he is not a proper picaresque hero because he is not hard-hearted and cruel and selfish enough. Perhaps Huck's pap might be a picaresque here; certainly the king and the duke would be. But not Huck.



WATCHING THE BOAT.



IN THE WOODS.

Chapter

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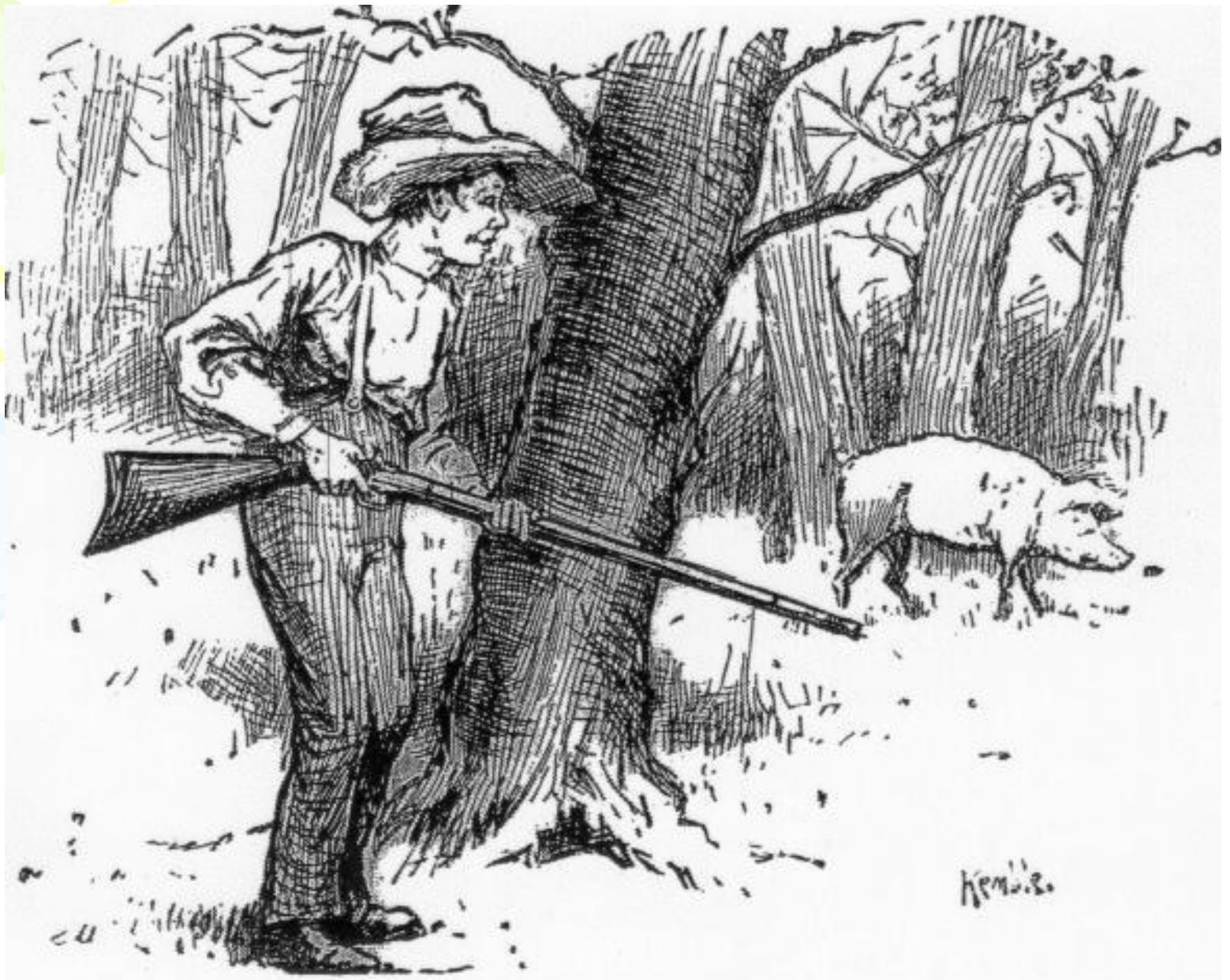
the picaresque novel

- There is no doubt that Mark Twain borrowed from the traditions of the picaresque novel, particularly from *Don Quixote*, the novel by Cervantes that sprang from the picaresque tradition. But as with any literary genius, Mark Twain changed and shaped what he borrowed until it was something a little different, and good in its own way.



the picaresque novel

- The story was begun in 1876, but not completed until 1884 when it was published in England. The history of its composition has been told by Walter Blair in his book, *Mark Twain and Huck Finn*. When Twain got as far as Chapter 16, he ran into trouble. First, he didn't know what to do with the plot; it had gotten out of hand. There was no way to get Jim and Huck upstream once the raft and canoe were lost, and they were past Cairo. He had been working so hard lost his inspiration to continue the book.



SHOOTING THE FIG.



TOM SAWYER'S BAND OF ROBBERS.



Shifts Of Viewpoint

- So he laid it aside for a while. But notice how the first sixteen chapters of the book deal with Jim's escape from slavery. Every time freedom is talked about, Jim's freedom is meant. After the sixteenth chapter, Jim recedes into the background. He disappears from the story altogether in the Grangerford chapters, coming in only to save Huck from the "civilization" of plantation feuds. After this, even though the two travelers have a canoe, they make no effort to go back north to Cairo. Once the king and the duke come aboard, Jim is of no importance to the story until he is sold off. Then, when Tom Sawyer makes his appearance, Jim is no more than a minstrel-show-Negro until he sacrifices his freedom, and is picked up as a human character again.



Shifts Of Viewpoint

- This shifting around would be a major flaw in the novel if Jim were the central figure, or if his escape from slavery were the central theme of the story. But neither of these is true. The central figure of the story is Huck Finn: the story is told to us from his point of view—in the first person. Huck sees and reports; sometimes he understands what he sees, and so he interprets it. Sometimes he doesn't understand, and this too is significant. The central theme of the story is the theme set by the first and last chapters: Huck's fight against getting "sivilised." The civilization he is running from is peopled by characters like the Widow, Miss Watson, Pap, Aunt Sally, and Tom Sawyer, although Tom attracts Huck in a way.



RUBBING THE LAMP.



Contrast

- The story is full of striking comparisons, many of which are pointed out in the section of "Comment" following the summary of each chapter. Indeed, there are so many of these comparisons and contrasts that at times Mark Twain seems to be burlesquing his own story. The swearing in of Tom Sawyer's robber-gang, for instance, is a clear foreshadowing of the events that take place on the wrecked Walter Scott. Tom's love of adventure and Huck's search for adventure (in the Walter Scott episode) are obvious parallels (see the "Essay Question and Answers").



Contrast

- There is also an obvious contrast in the character of Tom Sawyer and that of Huck Finn. Tom's ambition is to become famous without counting the cost to himself or others. The adventure's the thing; the hurt and anguish of Aunt Sally, the pain and discomfort of Jim, these never occur to him. But Huck, involved in real adventures, is continually bothered by his conscience. All during the trip down river, he tries to answer the question whether he's doing right by the Widow's sister and by Jim, or not.



Contrast

- The preoccupation with justice has him on the horns of a dilemma. Whatever he chooses to do, he's wrong. He's wronging Jim if he returns him to slavery; he's wronging Miss Watson if he helps Jim escape. Huck has no way of knowing what is right. He must follow the dictates of his feelings every step of the way. The only thing he can do is learn by experience. And he does.



HUCK AND HIS FATHER.



JIM AND THE GHOST.



JIM AND THE SNAKE.

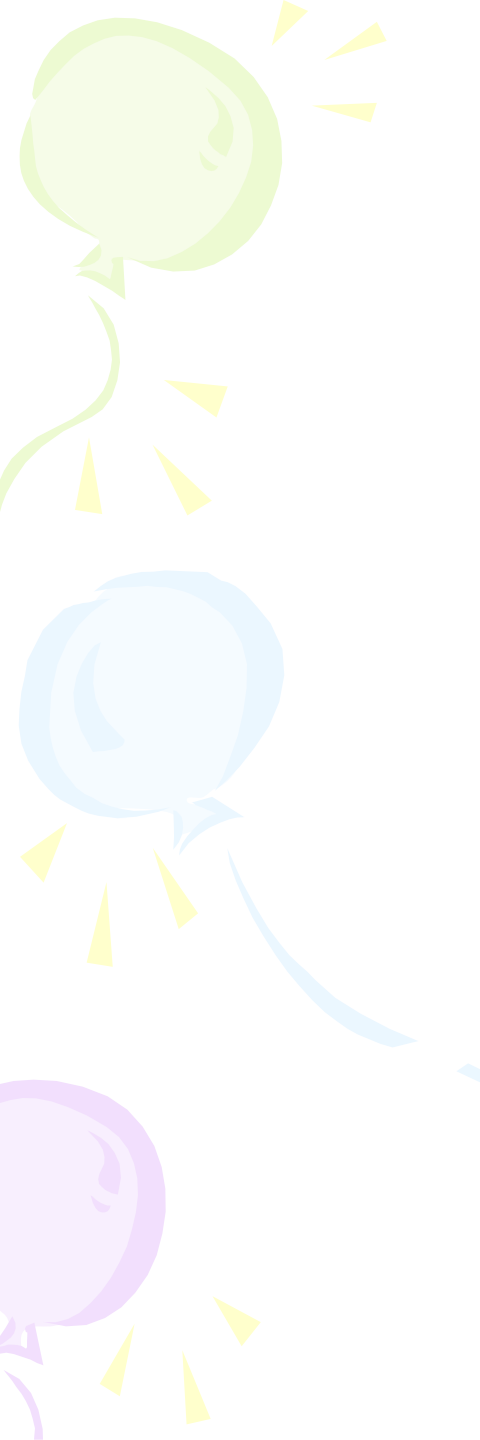


Huck And Jim

- He learns from Jim, who is in some ways his substitute father. He doesn't believe in Jim's superstition until the superstition proves itself true. Note how he scoffs at the snakeskin, until the snakeskin does its work. Huck rises to Jim's level. By accepting Jim's superstitions, Huck enters Jim's primitive world which, though crude, is much more sincere and honest than Miss Watson's world. Beyond it he cannot go. He won't pray because he has not experienced any benefits from prayer.



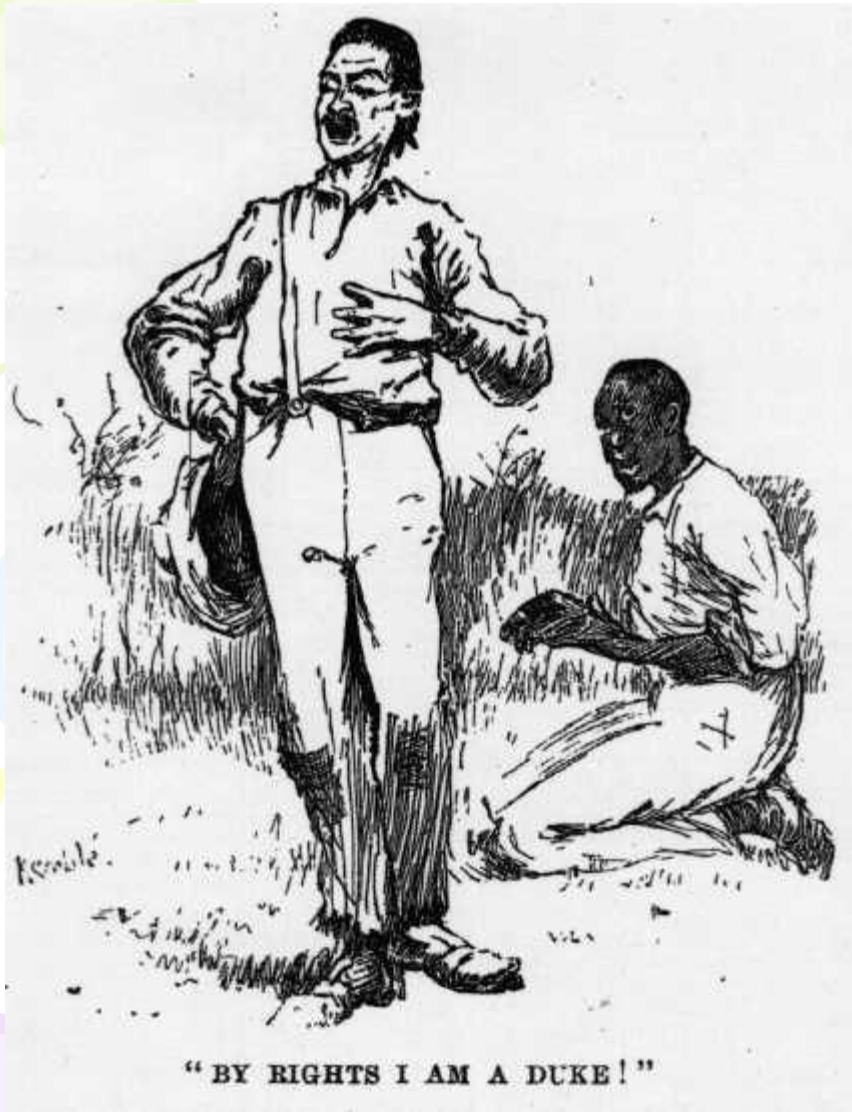
ON THE RAFT.





Second Part

- In the second part of the story - the chapters dealing with the Grangerford feud and the adventures of the king and the duke - we are taken on a tour of the Mississippi River valley. We see the romantic ideas of Tom Sawyer in their practical applications.





Second Part

- The Grangerfords, with their senseless pride and basic crudity, are held up as examples of the real culture of the South. Huck describes them, their house and its decorations. These descriptions seem to us to be descriptions of ignorant and arrogant people. We understand this, and we laugh at the sentimentality of Emmeline's poetry and paintings; but Huck, who also sees all this, doesn't understand what it means, and he doesn't laugh at it. He thinks it's noble. And so do all the members of the Grangerford family, and all their neighbors.



Second Part

- The king and the duke are illustrations of Tom Sawyer's desire to "promote" things when that desire has taken hold of grown-ups. These two men choose their own comfort at the expense of those around them. They trade on the ignorance, pride, and laziness of the residents of the villages along the mighty river's shore. They do just what Tom does when he draws up a coat of arms for Jim, a coat of arms that he himself doesn't understand, let alone Jim. And Huck accepts the king and the duke just the same way he accepts Tom. He shrugs an intellectual shoulder and murmurs something about how you can't get Tom to explain a thing to you if he doesn't want to. Tom's ambition is to become famous; the frauds want to get rich.



THE DUKE WENT FOR HIM.



Third Part

- Finally, the third part of the novel brings us back to Tom Sawyer as the focus of the plot. (Huck is still the main character in the novel, however. He is reporting all that goes on; and even if he doesn't seem to understand the action, he is involved in it and he colors what he reports by just being what he is.) But it is this part of the novel that ties together all that comes before it.

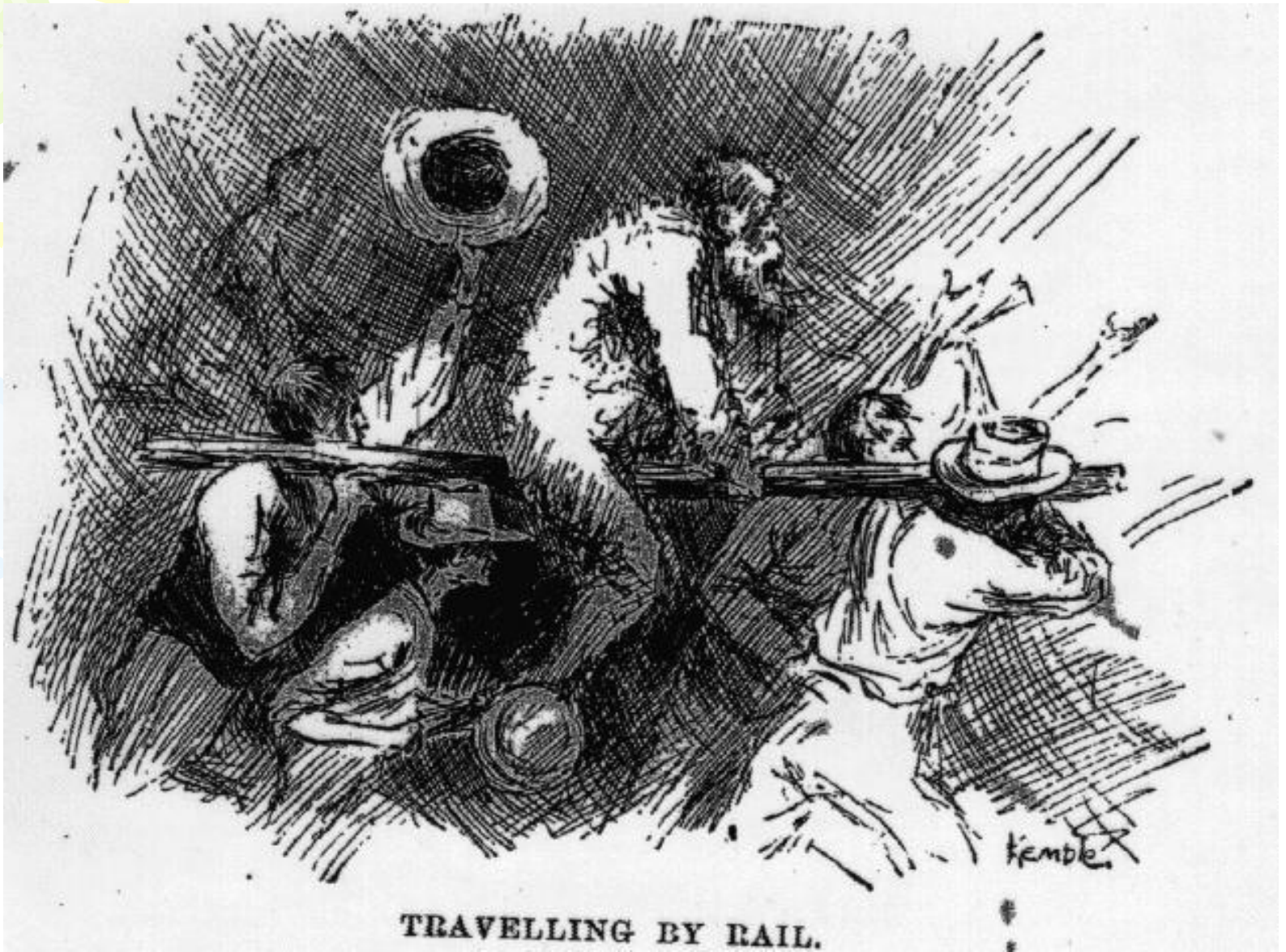


“IT WAS TOM SAWYER.”



Third Part

- We see Tom as he is, a romantic, a muddlehead, but bound to be a successful community leader. He has visions of grandeur; he is capable of stupidly leading an escaped slave into a Southern village and having all the slaves who are still bound hold a torchlight parade in honor of the escaped slave. The only logical outcome of such goings-on would be the hanging of most of the slaves in the village. And this is undoubtedly what would have happened if Tom had not caught the bullet that night at the Phelps' farm.



TRAVELLING BY RAIL.



The Realist

- We also see Huck as he is, the opposite of Tom. He is a realist, and generally level-headed except when he goes off after Tom Sawyer's adventure, or when he follows Tom's lead. He is not "civilizable." The end of the book makes this clear. He is where he was in the beginning: he left the Widow's house, and he will leave Aunt Sally's. Something in civilization appalls Huck Finn.



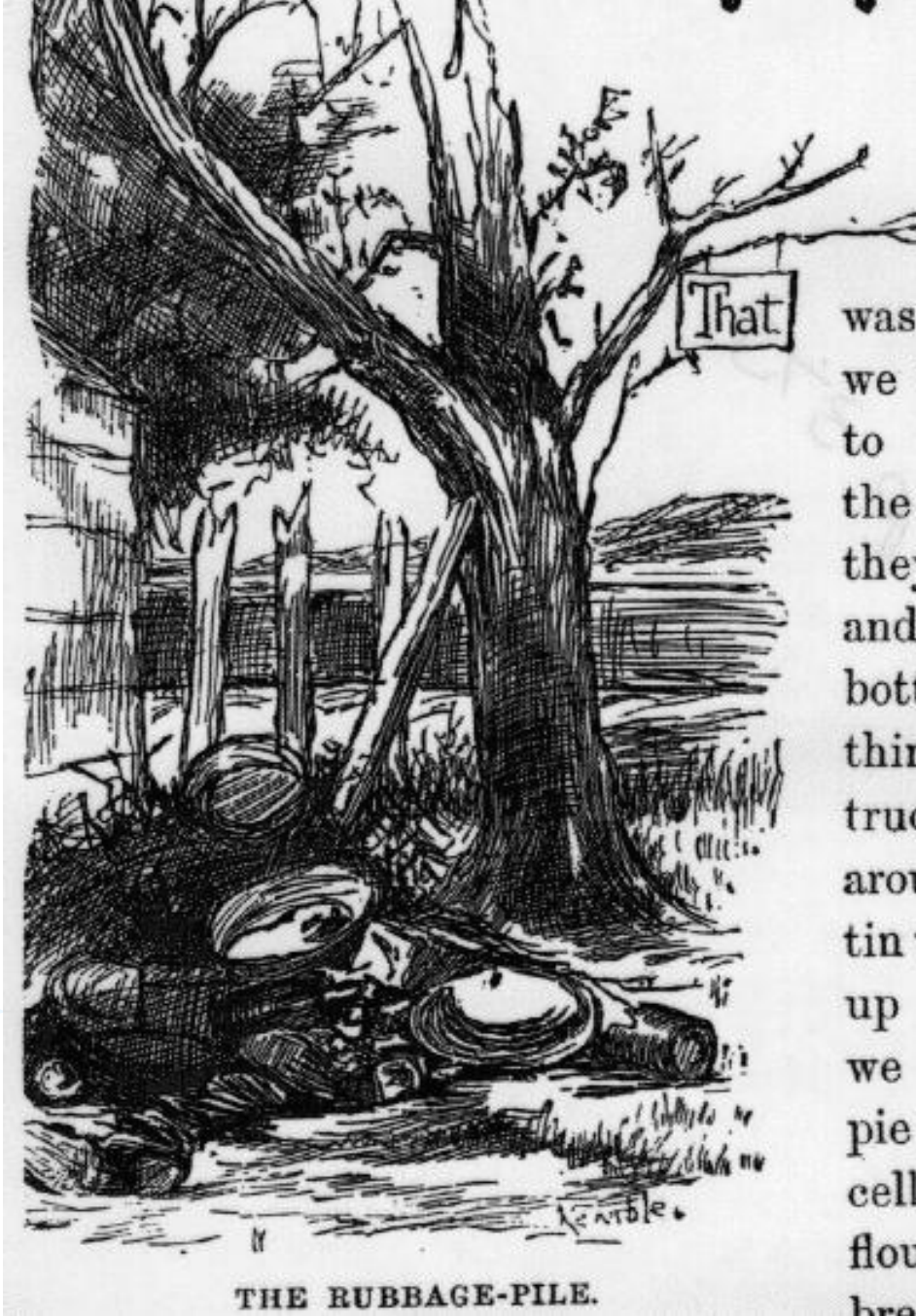
The Realist

- So far as the mechanics of composition are concerned, Mark Twain was considerably limited by the fact that Huck Finn is a living, breathing personality who shines through the pages of the book. Since Huck Finn tells the story himself, in the first person, Mark Twain had to put himself in the place of this thirteen-year-old son of the town drunkard. Twain had to see life as Huck saw it. He had to conceive a character who could believably see life as Mark Twain saw it. But Huck is more than Twain's mouthpiece. As a living character he is capable of shaping the story. The very language Huck uses colors what he sees and how he will pass it on to us.

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The Realist

- Very obvious is the fact that the humor of the book often depends on Huck's language. However, it is through his use of language that Twain creates character and sets down objective truth. The very innocence of Huck is reflected through his credulous explanations of what he sees-explanations couched in language characteristic of primitive, basic society. Huck is capable of making Twain write something merely because it is the kind of thing Huck would do or say; and he can force Twain to leave something out because Huck would not do or say that kind of thing.



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THE RUBBAGE-PILE.





TOM'S LIBERALITY.



THE END, YOURS TRULY, HUCK FINN.



Dialects

- So far as the dialects of the characters are concerned, we can only remark that Mark Twain was a master at reproducing the speech of his day. He doesn't need to indicate the speaker's name. The dialect indicates him just as exactly as if he were named. Twain uses, he says, "The Missouri negro dialect; the extremest form of the backwoods South-Western dialect; the ordinary 'Pike-County' dialect; and four modified varieties of this last." The careful and consistent attention to details of speech is one of the many characteristics of this book which make it worth serious and careful reading. Mark Twain drew his knowledge of these dialects from personal experience. And it is the concrete and graphic products of experience which make this story so appealing.

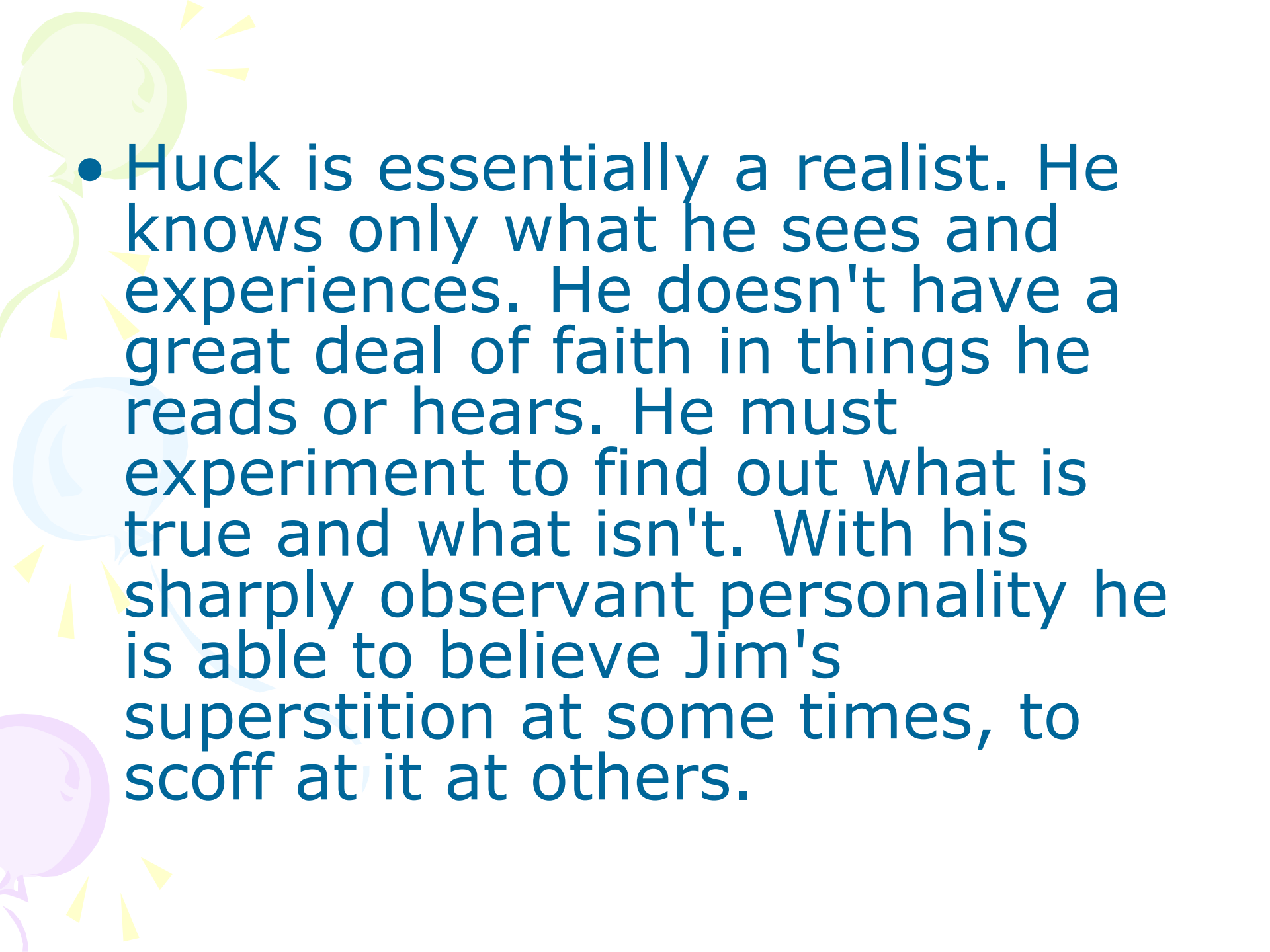


The Main Characters

Huckleberry Finn



- This is the central figure of the novel, the son of the town drunkard. He is essentially good-hearted, but he is looked down upon by the rest of the village. He dislikes civilized ways because they are personally restrictive and hard. He is generally ignorant of book-learning, but he has a sharply developed sensibility. He is imaginative and clever, and has a sharp eye for detail, though he doesn't always understand everything he sees, or its significance. This enables Mark Twain to make great use of the device of irony.

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- A decorative background on the left side of the slide features three balloons: a light green one at the top, a light blue one in the middle, and a light purple one at the bottom. Yellow streamers and triangular shapes are scattered around the balloons.
- Huck is essentially a realist. He knows only what he sees and experiences. He doesn't have a great deal of faith in things he reads or hears. He must experiment to find out what is true and what isn't. With his sharply observant personality he is able to believe Jim's superstition at some times, to scoff at it at others.

The Widow Douglas



- The wife of the late Justice of the Peace of St. Petersburg - the village which provides the story's setting. Huck likes her because she's kind to him and feeds him when he's hungry. Her attempts to "civilize" him fail when Huck prefers to live in the woods with his father. He doesn't like to wear the shoes she buys him, and he doesn't like his food cooked the way hers is.

Miss Watson

- The Widow's maiden sister. She leads Huck to wish he were dead on several occasions by trying to teach him things. Her favorite subject is the Bible. She owns Jim and considers selling him down river. This causes Jim to run away. Filled with sorrow for driving Jim to this extreme, Miss Watson sets him free in her will.





Tom Sawyer

- Huck's friend. A boy with a wild imagination who likes to play "games." He reads a lot, mainly romantic and sentimental novels about pirates and robbers and royalty. He seldom understands all he reads; this is obvious when he tries to translate his reading into action. He doesn't know what "ransoming" is: he supposes it to be a way of killing prisoners. He has a great deal of nerve, and can get people to do things his way.



Jim

- Miss Watson's slave, and the one really significant human character Huck meets in the novel. Though he is referred to as Miss Watson's "nigger," it is clear that the expression is used as a literary device-it is part of the Missouri dialect of the nineteenth century. Aside from Huck, Jim stands head and shoulders above all the characters in the book, in every respect. He is moral, realistic, and knowing in the ways of human nature. He appears at times as a substitute father for Huck, looking after him, helping him, and teaching him about the world around him. The injustices perpetrated by the institution of slavery are given deep expression in his pathos.



Pap

- Huck's father, the town-drunkard. He is in every respect the opposite of Jim. He is sadistic in his behavior toward his child. He is dirty, greedy, and dies violently because of his involvement with criminals. He is typical of the "white trash" of the day. Pap is an example of what Mark Twain thought the human race was: unreformable. A person is what he is, for good or bad, and nothing can change him.



Judge Thatcher

- The guardian of Tom's and Huck's money. He is very wealthy, and the most respected man in the village. He becomes involved in a lawsuit to protect Huck from the cruelty of his father.



The Grangerford Family

- Southern aristocrats of the pre-Civil War south. They are portrayed as men who are jealous of their honor and cold-blooded in revenge. They are excellent horsemen and good fighters, and they respect their enemies as being the same. Their women are sentimental, but accustomed to hard living. Their taste runs to plaster of paris imitations of things and melancholy poetry. The general influence of Sir Walter Scott's romantic novels is clearly seen in the details of these people's daily lives.



The King And The Duke

- Two river tramps and con-men who pass themselves off to Huck and Jim as the lost Dauphin of France and the unfortunate Duke of Bridgewater (Bilgewater). They make their living off suckers they find in the small, dirty, ignorant Southern villages. Of the two men, the duke is less cruel and more imaginative than the king, though neither has any moral sensitivity worth mentioning. These men represent the starkly materialistic ideals of "the man who can sell himself" in their most logical extreme. Mark Twain holds them up as examples of the anti-social tendencies of the human race. Readers are usually satisfied when they come to the part of the story where these two get tarred and feathered and driven out of town on a fence rail. Huck is more humane about their suffering.

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The Wilks Girls

- Nieces of Peter Wilks, a dead man. The king and the duke try unsuccessfully to rob the girls' inheritance. Mary Jane, the eldest, causes Huck to almost fall in love with her. He admires her spunk, or "sand." Susan is the middle sister, and Joanna, the "Harelip," is the youngest. Joanna questions Huck about his fictive life in England. His discomfort at being caught in a situation where he can't lie very easily is removed by Mary Jane and Susan who berate Joanna for upsetting the peace and quiet of their guest. The girls are innocent sheep, ready for snatching by the king and duke. Only Huck of the three "visitors from England" feels sorry for their plight.



The Phelps

- Tom Sawyer's uncle and aunt. They buy Jim from the king and the duke. Kind, gentle people who do right as their consciences dictate. Sally is going to adopt Huck, but he would rather go live among the Indians.



Aunt Polly and Sid

- Aunt Polly: The aunt with whom Tom lives. She is fairly well off, a member of the middle class. With a nephew like Tom, she is long-suffering.
- Sid: Tom Sawyer's half-brother. He doesn't figure in this story, except that Tom uses his name because the Phelps family thinks Huck is Tom.



WELL, three or four months run along, and it was well into the winter, now. I had been to school most all the time, and could spell, and read, and write just a little, and could say the multiplication table up to six times seven is thirty-five, and I don't reckon I could ever get any further than that if I was to live for ever. I don't take no stock in mathematics, anyway.

At first I hated



Links

- Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*:
Text, Illustrations, and Early Reviews
[http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/twain/hu
ckfinn.html](http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/twain/hu
ckfinn.html)
- UCR/California Museum of
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