

The Supporting Paragraphs

(Strong Pieces of Evidence)

- > Begins with a topic sentence
- > Explains topic sentence and uses a quote for support
- > Ends with a concluding sentence which sums up the idea

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1. Decide upon your most important pieces of evidence or ideas to support your thesis. Organize your supporting evidence from weakest to strongest.

- Example:
- a) *Jim's flight to freedom directs the course of the novel's action on the Mississippi River.*
 - b) *The bond between Jim (a black man) and Huck (a white youth) demonstrates the equality of the races and the power of diversity.*
 - c) *Jim's moral superiority over all the other characters in the novel shows Twain's disgust with the institution of slavery.*

2. Write out each paragraph. Pull out one word or idea to connect each sentence to the next as you did in the introduction.
3. Connect each supporting paragraph to the next using transitions.
4. Revise your paragraphs in preparation for the conclusion.

Example:

Jim's flight to freedom directs the course of the novel's action on the Mississippi River. When Huck Finn, the white youth who fakes his own death to escape his father's beatings, arrives at Jackson Island the course of the novel becomes unsure until Jim happens on the scene. With Jim's arrival Twain can now steer the novel's action towards the slavery debate. Not until Twain sends Huck and Jim on their epic journey to the Free States do Twain's ideas about slavery become clear. Up to this point in the novel, Huck's attempts to escape civilization and reclaim his independence from his father dominate the course of events. However, Jim's arrival causes Huck to face the slavery dilemma head on. Huck must now decide whether to save the runaway slave or turn him in to the authorities. Huck finally decides to free Jim by using his conscience as his guiding force when he says, "Then I thought a minute, and says to myself, hold on; s'pose you'd 'a' done right and give Jim up, would you felt better than what you do now? No, says I, I'd feel bad" (91). Huck's ultimate decision to resist society's notions and free Jim clearly illustrates Twain's desires to free all men from any constraint placed upon them.

Additionally, Huck's decision to free Jim results from the friendship shared between the two runaways. Nowhere else in the novel does Twain allow a true bond to develop between a black person and a white person. Huck consistently fights his conscience for Jim, resists the temptation to abandon Jim, and sincerely attempts to bring Jim to freedom. Jim in turn assists Huck by providing companionship, easing Huck's burdens of responsibility, and remaining loyal to Huck throughout the tale. Huck eventually plays a mean trick on Jim and sees Jim's genuinely injured feelings, which causes Huck to think, "It made me feel so mean I could almost kissed *his* foot to get" his friendship back (86). Twain creates this true bond of fellowship between the unlikeliest of characters: a runaway slave and a "wild" white youth. Jim and Huck demonstrate the strength of diversity and the evils of enslaving men. Jim's natural ability to care for Huck and Huck's inherent sense of right and wrong allow the two to strengthen this bond throughout the course of the novel. With this bond Twain points out the narrow scope of society's vision and that the oppression of any man ultimately must be deemed immoral.

Finally, Jim's moral superiority over all the other characters in the novel shows Twain's disgust with the institution of slavery. Jim, a runaway slave and scourge of society, shows himself to be the most admirable character in the novel, an irony not lost on the careful reader. The one character supposedly without value transcends those around him to ultimately be portrayed as the novel's moral center. Twain creates no other character with such a genuine love of his man than Jim. Jim harms no person en route to freedom, tells no lies, and harbors no grudges regardless of the offenses he endures. In fact, Jim risks his own freedom to save the life of Tom Sawyer, the boy who tortures Jim in a sadistic game of adventure. When Tom lies before Jim with a bullet in his leg, Jim resolutely states, "I doan' budge a step out'n dis place 'dout a *doctor*; not if it's forty year!" (276). At this moment Jim decides to possibly sacrifice the freedom of himself and that of his family for a young boy whom he owes nothing. This genuine act of kindness and selflessness places Jim upon a higher moral plane than that of any other character in the novel and again illustrates Twain's view that all men must be seen as equals, denouncing slavery once again.