

Tom Sawyer





The Adventures of Tom Sawyer

By Mark Twain

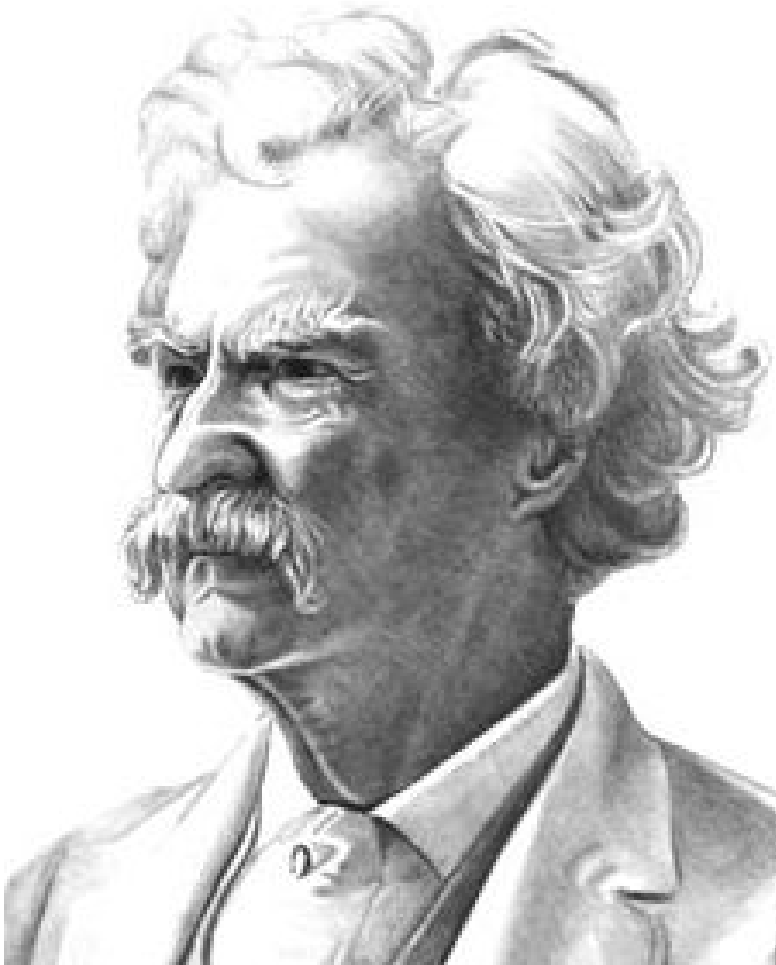
MARK TWAIN

(1835-1910), American

Mark Twain, born Samuel Langhorne Clemens in 1835, grew up in Hannibal, Missouri, which inspired his famous novels «The Adventures of Tom Sawyer» and «The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn.» After his father's death, he worked as a printer and then a riverboat pilot, where he adopted his pen name. Twain's river experiences influenced his writing significantly.

During the Civil War, he briefly joined a Confederate unit but soon moved west to become a journalist, adopting the name Mark Twain in 1863. His works, known for their wit and depiction of American life, made him famous. His notable novels include «The Innocents Abroad,» «Tom Sawyer,» and «Huckleberry Finn.»

Twain faced personal and financial hardships, including the death of his son, his wife's illness, and poor investments. Despite these challenges, he continued writing and achieved critical acclaim with «Huckleberry Finn.» His later works, such as «A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court» and «Pudd'nhead Wilson,» were popular, though he struggled financially and emotionally. Twain remained a celebrated figure until his death in 1910.





Themes

Moral and Social Maturation

In «The Adventures of Tom Sawyer,» we see Tom grow from a mischievous child into a responsible young adult. Initially, he enjoys playing pranks and games without considering the consequences. However, as he faces increasingly serious situations, such as navigating a dangerous cave or testifying in court, he learns to prioritize the well-being of others over his own amusement.

Tom's adventures away from society help him mature and gain a new perspective on his role in the community. While he initially looks up to his friend Huck as a model of freedom, he ultimately chooses to embrace social expectations and encourages Huck to do the same.

Overall, Tom's journey highlights themes of moral and social maturation, as he learns to take responsibility for his actions and consider the welfare of those around him.

Society's Hypocrisy

In «The Adventures of Tom Sawyer,» Twain exposes the hypocrisy and flaws of adult society through satire. He criticizes institutions like school, church, and the law, showing how they often fail to uphold wise or consistent principles. Twain also portrays parental authority tempered by love and indulgence, as seen in Aunt Polly's treatment of Tom.

The community's response to Tom's misadventures

reveals a tendency toward forgiveness and indulgence, but Twain highlights the dangers of this sentimentality, especially in the case of the villainous Injun Joe.

While Tom and his friends rebel against authority through games and pranks, Twain suggests that their behavior isn't as unconventional as it seems. Tom is still guided by societal norms, and their superstitions mirror the adult society's focus on religion.

Overall, Twain critiques society's hypocrisy but doesn't advocate outright rebellion. Instead, he warns of the dangers of both blindly adhering to authority and subverting it.

Freedom through Social Exclusion

In «The Adventures of Tom Sawyer,» the town of St. Petersburg is insular and easily identifies outsiders like Huck Finn, Muff Potter, and Injun Joe. Despite this, the community shows some tolerance towards outsiders, such as Muff Potter, who is a harmless drunk, and Huck, who is protected despite being on the fringes of society. Tom himself is an orphan taken in by Aunt Polly out of love. Injun Joe is the only one completely excluded, and even after his death, the townspeople manipulate his memory to make him tolerable to society.

Motifs

Motifs are recurring structures, contrasts, and literary devices that can help to develop and inform the text's major themes.



Crime

The boys in «The Adventures of Tom Sawyer» engage in various crimes, from skipping school to murder. They enjoy games centered on crime, which lets them feel brave and heroic without causing real harm to society. Even though they feel guilty about stealing bacon, they still want to be pirates, robbers, and murderers. Tom's portrayal of Robin Hood, stealing from the rich to help the poor, shows how he connects crime with standing up for what's right and challenging the rules of society.

Trading

In «The Adventures of Tom Sawyer,» the children create their own economy by trading items they find valuable among themselves. This mimics the real-world commercial transactions they will face as adults. However, these exchanges come with challenges similar to those of dealing with money. Tom tricks his friends into doing his chores by making them think it's a fun opportunity, and then uses what he gains to gain status. When there's a disagreement over ownership of a tick, it leads to a quarrel.

The transition from these small-scale exchanges to finding a \$12,000 treasure is significant. Despite their practice, the boys ultimately give the money to an adult. They continue to explore their role in commerce with their regular allowance, but at a more manageable pace.

The Circus

In «The Adventures of Tom Sawyer,» the boys express their fascination with circus life and their dream of becoming clowns when they grow up. This highlights their innocence and their tendency to romanticize certain occupations rather than consider their practical aspects.

Showing Off

In «The Adventures of Tom Sawyer,» Tom often shows off, especially to impress Becky Thatcher. Initially, his showing off involves physical feats like prancing around and doing gymnastics. Later, he and Becky become more subtle, trying to make each other jealous by manipulating others. Even adults, like those in the Sunday school scene, engage in showing off. They act childishly to gain the approval of authority figures, leading to embarrassing situations, such as Tom's lack of knowledge about the Bible.

Tom Sawyer

Plot Overview

In «The Adventures of Tom Sawyer,» a mischievous boy named Tom lives in St. Petersburg, Missouri, with his Aunt Polly and half-brother Sid. After skipping school and getting into a fight, Tom is punished by having to whitewash a fence. Instead of doing it himself, he persuades his friends to do it for him by tricking them into thinking it's fun. He then trades the treasures he gets for prizes at Sunday school.



Tom falls for a girl named Becky but ruins his chances by revealing he was previously «engaged.» He witnesses a murder by Injun Joe and becomes haunted by guilt. Tom and his friends run away to become pirates but return home after realizing they're thought to be dead. Tom redeems himself by taking blame for Becky's mistake and testifying against Injun Joe, who escapes.

Later, Tom and Huck go treasure hunting and discover Injun Joe's hiding spot. Huck overhears a plot to attack a widow, and Tom and Becky get lost in a cave. Injun Joe dies in the cave, and Tom finds the hidden treasure. The Widow Douglas adopts Huck, and Tom convinces him to return and join a robber band.

Character List

Tom Sawyer - Tom Sawyer is a playful and imaginative boy who often finds himself in trouble. Despite his mischief, he has a kind heart and cares about doing the right thing. As the story goes on, he learns to take on more responsibility as a leader among his friends.

Aunt Polly - Tom's aunt. Aunt Polly is Tom's caring guardian who tries to keep him out of trouble. She loves him but finds it challenging to discipline him because she doesn't want to restrict him too much. Ultimately, she just wants to be loved and appreciated by Tom.

Huckleberry Finn - Huckleberry Finn is the son of the town drunk and is considered an outcast by respectable society. Despite this, he is admired by local boys for his freedom. Huck shares Tom's superstitious nature and

love for adventure, becoming Tom's main companion in their escapades.

Becky Thatcher - Becky Thatcher is Judge Thatcher's daughter, known for her beauty with yellow hair. Tom develops a romantic interest in her, and they both try to make each other jealous, showing their playful and sometimes naive romantic sides.

Joe Harper - Joe Harper is Tom's close friend and frequent playmate. They share a strong bond, often thinking alike and getting into mischief together. However, Joe struggles with homesickness on Jackson's Island, showing a softer side compared to Tom's adventurous spirit. As the story progresses, Huck replaces Joe as Tom's primary companion.

Sid - Sid is Tom's half-brother, known for his uptight and tattletale nature. He often delights in seeing Tom get into trouble and presents himself as a model of good behavior. Unlike Tom, who is mischievous but kind-hearted, Sid is cold-hearted and deceitful, showing the opposite traits of his brother.

Mary - Tom's sweet, almost saintly cousin. Mary holds a soft spot for Tom. Like Sid, she is well behaved, but unlike him, she acts out of genuine affection rather than malice.

Injun Joe - Injun Joe is a dangerous and vengeful man who commits murder and becomes a robber. He



plans to harm the Widow Douglas out of revenge. As a mixed-race individual, he faces social exclusion, likely due to his ethnicity.

Muff Potter - Muff Potter is a kind but hapless drunk who becomes friends with Injun Joe. He is wrongly accused of murder, which troubles Tom's conscience. Tom eventually tells the truth at Potter's trial to help him.

Dr. Robinson - Dr. Robinson is a respected local physician who hires Injun Joe and Muff Potter to dig up a grave for medical experiments. However, he is murdered on the night of the dig.

Mr. Sprague - The minister of the town church.

The Widow Douglas the Widow Douglas is a kind and religious woman who is respected in St. Petersburg. She is known for her generosity towards children, often giving them treats like ice cream and allowing them to stay over at her house. She shows kindness to Huck even before she finds out that he saved her life.

Mr. Jones - A Welshman who lives with his sons near the Widow Douglas's house. Mr. Jones responds to Huck's alarm on the night that Injun Joe intends to attack the widow, and he takes care of Huck in the aftermath.

Judge Thatcher - Judge Thatcher is Becky's father and the county judge. He is highly respected in the town

and takes on important responsibilities, such as ensuring community safety by closing the cave and managing the treasure money found by the boys.

Jim - Aunt Polly's young slave.

Amy Lawrence - Tom's former love. Tom abandons Amy when Becky Thatcher comes to town.

Ben Rogers - One of Tom's friends, whom Tom persuades to whitewash Aunt Polly's fence.

Alfred Temple - A well-dressed new boy in town. Like Amy Lawrence, Alfred gets caught in the crossfire of Tom and Becky's love games, as Becky pretends to like him in order to make Tom jealous.

Mr. Walters - The somewhat ridiculous Sunday school superintendent. Because he aspires to please Judge Thatcher, Mr. Walters rewards Tom with a Bible, even though he knows that Tom hasn't earned it.

Mr. Dobbins - The schoolmaster. Mr. Dobbins seems a slightly sad character: his ambition to be a medical doctor has been thwarted and he has become a heavy drinker and the butt of schoolboy pranks.



Chapter 1

Tom Plays, Fights, and Hides

Aunt Polly scouring the house in search of her nephew, Tom Sawyer. She finds him in the closet, discovers that his hands are covered with jam, and prepares to give him a whipping. Tom cries out theatrically, “Look behind you!” and when Aunt Polly turns, Tom escapes over the fence. After Tom is gone, Aunt Polly reflects ruefully on Tom’s mischief and how she lets him get away with too much. Tom comes home at suppertime to help Aunt Polly’s young slave, Jim, chop wood. Tom also wants to tell Jim about his adventures. During supper, Aunt Polly asks Tom leading questions in an attempt to confirm her suspicion that he skipped school that afternoon and went swimming instead. Tom explains his wet hair by saying that he pumped water on his head and shows her that his collar is still sewn from the morning, which means that he couldn’t have taken his shirt off to swim. Aunt Polly is satisfied, but Sid, Tom’s half-brother, points out that the shirt thread, which was white in the morning, is now black. Tom has resewn the shirt himself to disguise his delinquency.



Tom goes out of the house furious with Sid, but he soon forgets his anger as he practices a new kind of whistling. While wandering the streets of St. Petersburg, his town, he encounters a newcomer, a boy his own age who appears overdressed and arrogant. Tom and the new arrival exchange insults for a while and then begin wrestling. Tom overcomes his antagonist and eventually chases the newcomer all the way home.

When he returns home in the evening, Tom finds Aunt Polly waiting for him. She notices his dirtied clothes and resolves to make him work the next day, a Saturday, as punishment.

Open-Ended Questions

1. What does Tom's escape over the fence reveal about his character?
2. How does Aunt Polly feel about Tom's behavior, and how does she handle it?
3. Why does Tom sew his shirt collar back on, and what does this action suggest about him?
4. What do Tom's encounters with the newcomer reveal about his personality?

Complete the sentences

1. Aunt Polly finds Tom in the closet with his hands covered in jam, indicating that he has been
2. Tom explains his wet hair by saying he pumped water on his head and shows that his collar is still sewn from the morning, suggesting that he couldn't have
3. Tom becomes furious with Sid for pointing out that the shirt thread is now black, which suggests that Tom is
4. Tom's encounter with the newcomer ends with him

Quotation comments

1. «Look behind you!» .
2. «Aunt Polly reflects ruefully on Tom's mischief».

Discussion questions

1. How does Tom's behavior toward the newcomer compare to his interactions with other characters in the story?