The Adventures of Tom Sawyer Study Guide

The Adventures of Tom Sawyer by Mark Twain

BOOKRAGS

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Introduction

Mark Twain's publication in 1876 of his popular novel *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* reversed a brief downturn in his success following the publication of his previous novel, *The Gilded Age.* Twain wrote *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* while he and his family were living in Hartford, Connecticut, and while Twain was enjoying his fame. The novel, which tells of the escapades of a young boy and his friends in St. Petersburg, Missouri, a village near the Mississippi River, recalls Twain's own childhood in a small Missouri town. The friendship of Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn is one of the most celebrated in American literature, built on imaginative adventures, shared superstitions, and loyalty that rises above social convention. Twain's American reading audience loved this novel and its young hero, and the novel remains one of the most popular and famous works of American literature. The novel and its characters have achieved folk hero status in the American popular imagination. Scenes such as Tom Sawyer tricking his friends into whitewashing Aunt Polly's fence for him, Injun Joe leaping through the window of the courthouse after Tom names him as Dr. Robinson's murderer, and Tom and Becky lost in the cave have become so familiar to American readers that one almost doesn't have to read the book to know about them. But the pleasure of reading *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* has kept readers coming back to the novel for over a century.

Beyond the fact that *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* is fun to read, there is another reason for the novel's contemporary popularity: It introduces the character of Huckleberry Finn, who, with the publication of Twain's 1884 novel, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn,* would become one of the greatest characters in American literature.

Overview

Tom Sawyer introduces several significant figures in American mythology, including the hero of Huckleberry Finn, one of the central works of American literature. Nonetheless, Tom Sawyer is not just a dress rehearsal for its more powerful sequel. Allowing for nineteenth-century conventions of language and sentimentality in literature for young adults, the novel retains vitality and humor in exploring questions of freedom and responsibility. Like Huckleberry Finn, the book presents limitation, alienation, and horror as elements profoundly affecting a small Missouri town's young people, whose minds are shaped as much by superstition, romantic fiction, and nightmare visions as by social convention. It also resembles Huckleberry Finn in showing a painful moral growth that demands the risk of one's own welfare to assist another, while at the same time treating the reader to outlandish humor, melodramatic action, and a happy ending.

Author Biography

Samuel Langhorne Clemens, more commonly known by his pseudonym, Mark Twain, was born in 1835 in what he later called "the almost invisible village" of Florida, Missouri. When he was a young child, Twain moved with his family about twenty miles away to Hannibal, Missouri, which is situated on the Mississippi River. Hannibal, Twain later said, was a town where "everybody was poor but didn't know it, and everybody was comfortable and did know it." Hannibal became Twain's model for the fictional town of St. Petersburg in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer,* and in Hannibal began Twain's lifelong love for the great Mississippi River. As a boy, Twain played often near the Mississippi, fascinated by the many steamboats traveling up and down the river, and for fun he would build his own small rafts and float upon the river himself. Twain's childhood activities in Hannibal are often compared to those of Tom Sawyer in St. Petersburg, and Twain wrote in his autobiography about how certain characters in the novel had been suggested by persons he had known in Hannibal. In 1847, when Twain was twelve years old, his childhood was cut short when his father died. Young Sam Clemens was forced to leave school and begin working. He became apprenticed to a typesetter for a local newspaper, and began his long association with journalism.

For the next thirty years, Twain worked in the newspaper business, mainly as a writer; traveled extensively, including trips to the West, Europe, and the Middle East; learned how to pilot a riverboat on the Mississippi River and obtained his pilot's license, working for a while as a riverboat captain; served briefly in the Confederate Army during the Civil War; panned for gold; and married Olivia Langdon, the sister of his friend Charles Langdon. Trained as a journalist, Twain wrote about many of his experiences during this period, and his first two books, *Innocents Abroad* and *Roughing It,* are fictionalized accounts of his trips to Europe, the Middle East, and the American West. Twain's success with these two books brought him greater fame and put him in demand as a public speaker. He was known as a great storyteller both on and off the page, and when he published *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* in 1876, it buoyed and secured his reputation as a teller of rollicking adventure tales.

About the Author

Mark Twain's life is important to his writing, for his major works rely upon materials from his Hannibal, Missouri, boyhood and his careers as a Mississippi River pilot, a western miner, and a journalist.

Four years following his birth on November 30, 1835, in Florida, Missouri, Twain moved with his family to Hannibal, where he was shaped by experiences that would be transformed into such works as Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn. When Twain was eleven his father died. Apprenticed as a printer, he began to contribute sketches to his brother's newspaper. As a young man he worked as a printer and journalist in a number of cities, including New York, but returned to the Mississippi River in 1857 to fulfill a childhood dream of becoming a river pilot. He held this job until 1861 when river traffic was halted by the Civil War.

After serving very briefly with the Missouri militia, he traveled to the Nevada Territory with his brother Orion, who had been appointed secretary to the governor. In Nevada he worked as a journalist and as a prospector for silver and gold. By 1864 he was a reporter in San Francisco, and in 1865 he published "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County" in a New York newspaper. Reprinted widely, the story gave him his first literary fame when it was reissued two years later. He delivered his first lecture in 1866, beginning a forty-year career as a performer whose public image became as famous as his books.

As a California correspondent, he traveled to Hawaii, then known as the Sandwich Islands, and later to Europe, the Mediterranean, and Palestine. His 1867 foreign travels became the basis of his first book, Innocents Abroad (1869).

While enjoying the popular success of his writing, Twain settled in the East. In 1870 he married Olivia Langdon, daughter of a wealthy merchant from Elmira, New York, and became editor and part owner of a Buffalo newspaper.

A year later, he moved to Hartford, Connecticut, where he spent a large portion of his increasing income on a spectacular mansion (now restored as a memorial) on Farmington Avenue.

Twain's prolific writing career stemmed partly from the financial demands of his expensive life style. He turned to a variety of sources for his material: travel, his early life, and history. In 1872 he published Roughing It, a collection of irreverent sketches based upon his travels and his western experiences. While The Gilded Age (1873), written with Charles Dudley Warner, employed contemporary issues and provided a label for an era, Tom Sawyer made use of his Hannibal boyhood. A Tramp Abroad (1880) was another travel book, and The Prince and the Pauper, a historical comedy. Life on the Mississippi recounted the author's pilot days, and Huckleberry Finn, by most estimates his greatest work, was a sequel to Tom Sawyer.

By the time he produced his historical fantasy A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court, Twain had finished his most important work. The 1890s brought him great personal misfortune with a financial collapse resulting from his unprofitable investment in a typesetting machine and the bankruptcy of the publishing company he had founded to distribute his works. In 1896, while he was making a worldwide lecture tour to pay his debts, his daughter Susy died of meningitis in Hartford. Susy's death, like that of his first child and only son, Langdon, in 1872, devastated Twain, and the family never again resided in the Hartford house.

After Following the Equator (1897), another travel book, Twain worked on a variety of projects, many of which were published after his death. These works, most of which were overwhelmingly pessimistic, included "The Man that Corrupted Hadleyburg" (1900), "What Is Man?" (1906), and "The Mysterious Stranger" (1916). His final years were marked by increasing infirmity and unhappiness as he endured the deaths of his wife in 1904 and his daughter Jean in 1909. Toward the end of his life, Twain lived in New York, and he died at "Stormfield," his estate in Redding, Connecticut, on April 21, 1910.

At the time of his death, Twain had achieved international celebrity and was perhaps the most famous American. Like many famous people, he created a public image that masked inner conflicts. A complex and brilliant man, he was more than a simple humorist; as a social critic, historian, philosopher, novelist, and popular entertainer, he continues to fascinate readers and biographers.

Plot Summary

Vignettes

The novel opens with a stern Aunt Polly searching for her nephew Tom in order to punish him. The reader, also looking for Tom, is introduced to the basic elements of his life - exploits and punishments. Aunt Polly finds Tom, and he and his half-brother Sid are presented to readers as contrasting versions of boyhood. Tom is the prototypical appealing bad boy while Sid is the obnoxious goodie-goodie. The reader is on Tom's side from this point onward.

The story moves through a series of chapter length vignettes featuring Tom and his richly imaginative life. These include the most famous scene in the novel, and arguably the most famous scene in American literature - whitewashing the fence. Sentenced to re-paint Aunt Polly's fence, Tom is desperate to get out of it by any means necessary. He spends the day persuading a series of local boys that whitewashing is fun. This "reverse-psychology" is so convincing that the boys not only beg to take over, they actually bribe him with their most treasured possessions. At the end of the day Tom is loaded with this juvenile largess, and is rewarded by Aunt Polly for a job well done.

The episodic structure continues with scenes of mock warfare, the appearance of Becky Thatcher - with whom Tom falls instantly in love - and a thematically important episode in which Tom imagines and stages his own death scene. A Sabbath School episode shows Tom using his largess to barter for the paper equivalent of 2000 successfully memorized verses, and he presents them to the teacher to get his reward. His real ignorance is quickly and embarrassingly exposed.

Next readers are introduced to a boy who will become - in a later novel - one of the most important characters in American fiction: Huckleberry Finn. Huck is a sort of comic figure in his clown's outfit of discarded adult's clothes. After talking to Huck, Tom goes to school, where he "courts" Becky Thatcher. They get engaged, but Tom mentions a prior relationship and Becky is devastated. Hurt, Tom takes out his frustration by playing Robin Hood with a friend. Here readers discover that his inability to learn simple Bible verses is due to lack of interest, since he is capable of memorizing whole pages of his favorite books.

Injun Joe

When Tom and Huck go to the town cemetery, the story that threads the novel together begins. In a scene straight out of the novels Tom loves, Injun Joe and Muff Potter enter the graveyard with young Dr. Robinson in order to "snatch" bodies. While Tom and Huck watch, Injun Joe attacks the doctor, and the men fight. After Muff is knocked unconscious, the scene climaxes with the grisly stabbing of Dr. Robinson. The boys run away, and Joe makes Potter believe that he is the murderer.

From this point, the shadow of Injun Joe hangs over Tom's adventures. The boys decide not to tell anyone for fear of reprisals, and they swear in blood to stay silent. Tom's depression over the murder deepens when Becky refuses to forgive him. The discovery of Dr. Robinson's body "electrifies" the village, and Tom and Huck go to the crime scene. They watch as Muff is arrested and confesses to the murder.

Their consciences troubled, both boys try to appease their guilt over Muff's false arrest by taking the condemned man food and gifts. Convinced that he is unloved, Tom decides to take up a life of crime. Together with Huck and Joe Harper, he decides to live out another of his favorite stories and become a pirate. They raft away and watch as a search is conducted for drowned people. Tom realizes that the "drownded people" are themselves - the town thinks that they are dead. Tom has gotten his earlier wish: he will be able to witness his own funeral. After sneaking home and watching his heartbroken Aunt, Tom makes his plans, and the boys make a dramatic entrance in the middle of their own funerals.

The trial of Muff Potter grows closer, and Tom gets into more scrapes, culminating in a heroic act in which he saves Becky from punishment and she forgives him. The happiness does not last; the trial is now due. In a dramatic turn, Tom is called to the stand by Muff's lawyer. As he exonerates Muff, Injun Joe flees from the building.

Though Tom is terrified at first, time passes and it seems less likely that Joe will come back for revenge. Tom returns to his favorite occupations, and he and Huck go searching for buried treasure in a haunted house. While the boys hide in the loft, two strangers enter the building; one of them is Injun Joe in disguise. The men have stolen money, and while they are burying it they find more - thousands of dollars in gold. They take it and leave, Joe vowing to get his revenge. The boys decide that the target of Joe's revenge must be Tom himself.

The boys decide to track down the "treasure" and go in search of Joe. They find him at a tavern, and Huck begins his surveillance of the men. Tom, however, is distracted by a newly-returned Becky and her plans for a picnic. On the day of the excursion, Becky arranges to stay at a friend's house. After eating, the village children decide to play in the caves. As they play, the story returns to Huck, on watch for Injun Joe. He follows Joe and his partner out of their lair and listens as Joe explains who the real object of his revenge is: the Widow Douglas. The widow's husband had once had Joe horsewhipped, and he has decided to "slit her nostrils." Panicking, Huck runs for help. Some townsmen scare off the villains, but fail to catch them. Huck tells them that one of the villains is Injun Joe, but keeps quiet about the treasure.

It is not until the next day that the village realizes that Becky and Tom are missing. A desperate search through the caves begins and Tom's wish to stage his funeral seems to have come terrifyingly true this time. In a "flashback" readers find out what has happened. Wandering away from the others, Tom and Becky become lost in the caves. As their supplies run out and they search for an escape route, they narrowly miss bumping into Injun Joe, who is hiding in the caves. Scared, they retreat, and Becky seems near death.

Next, the novel jumps to celebrations in the village - the children have been found. Through the narrative device of Tom telling his story to his family, we learn that the children escaped when Tom found a side route out. Weeks pass and the children begin to recover, while Injun Joe seems to be forgotten. Tom is told that the caves have been sealed up for two weeks, and the horrible truth becomes clear. Joe is still in there. When the doors to the caves are opened, Injun Joe's dead body is found lying at the entrance.

Tom and Huck realize that the treasure is in the caves, and they retrieve it. They return to an excited crowd, and the Widow Douglas announces that she plans to adopt Huck. Tom blurts out that Huck is rich. The story is told, and the money is invested for them, while poor Huck is civilized almost to death. Escaping back to his old life, he can only be enticed back by Tom's promise that they will be "robbers" together, for which they both need to be respectable. With that promise of further adventures, the novel closes.

Chapters 1 and 2

Chapters 1 and 2 Summary

The old woman is looking high and low and is calling out for the boy, Tom. Aunt Polly looks under the bed, in the garden, and finally in a closet from which he emerges and she is quick enough to grab him. By looking at his face, she can tell he has been in the jam and scolds him and just when she thinks she has him for good, he tells her to look behind her and when she does, he escapes. Tom's aunt knows full well that he will play hooky for the rest of the day but he is out of her grasp.

Polly scolds herself for not being wise to his tricks by now. Tom is her dead sister's son and she has taken him to raise and is trying to do good by him, but he is making it quite a challenge. However, Aunt Polly doesn't have the heart to spank him so the only punishment she can ever come up with is some work around the house because Tom hates that more than anything.

Tom did play hooky and got home in time to tell Jim, the colored boy who worked at the house. Tom's half brother Sid was not around for Tom to tell - besides he was a good boy not prone to adventures.

At suppertime, Aunt Polly tries to catch Tom up on his going swimming that afternoon instead of going to school, but he successfully evades her questioning and was now on to his next area of interest: whistling. Tom has just learned and wanted some time alone to perfect his art and that's what he was doing when he runs into a boy a little bit bigger than he. This boy is dressed up which is odd for a weekday. The boy has shoes on too and it was only Friday.

The two boys face off, trying to see who is the braver of the two and Tom emerges the victor and the boy goes off sobbing and threatening retribution. Tom only taunts him, follows him home, and makes threats until the boy's mother comes out and shoos him away. Upon seeing the condition of his clothes when he returns home, Aunt Polly pronounces that tomorrow will be spent in work.

When Saturday morning comes, Tom learns that his work sentence is to whitewash the front fence.... 30 yards long and nine feet high. Tom is in utter despair at the ruination of his day and he knows that the other boys will be along soon and will jab at him for his punishment. Then Tom is struck with an inspiration. Ben Rogers, who is approaching and impersonating the sounds of a steamboat, will be his first victim.

Tom positions the whitewashing job as one that doesn't come along just everyday and not just anyone is capable of doing it. It takes someone with considerable skill to accomplish such an important job. Taking the bait, Ben trades his apple for the paintbrush and works until the next victim comes along. All tolled, Tom makes quite a killing that afternoon in the form of tadpoles, firecrackers, kittens, and other treasures,

and would have ended the day even wealthier if he hadn't run out of the precious whitewash.

Chapters 1 and 2 Analysis

Tom Sawyer is definitely an incorrigible rascal as evidenced on the very first page. Poor Aunt Polly is completely exasperated by his antics but has a soft spot for him and even smiles to herself at his cleverness. It's going to be fun to see what his adventures are as we are introduced to more of his world.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

Tom is very satisfied in the accomplishment of the whitewashing task and presents himself to Aunt Polly to report in. Aunt Polly is in disbelief that he could be finished already but sees the proof for herself in the form of an elaborately coated fence and is so pleased with him that she gives him a beautiful apple and he grabs a donut for good measure on his way out. Tom does manage to throw a few dirt clods at the goody-goody Sid before leaping over the fence to his next adventure.

The boys are waiting for Tom at the town square where they are assembling their two armies for today's battle. Tom and Joe Harper are generals and don't actually fight but survey the carnage from afar. Today it is Tom's army who wins the imaginary war. After the boys tally the victims and agree upon the date for the next encounter, they all scatter and Tom turns homeward.

Just as he is passing by the home of Jeff Thatcher, Tom sees the most glorious creature he had ever seen. In that instant, Tom loses all thoughts of Amy Lawrence, who he has wooed for months and who finally fell to his attentions. Now all Tom can see is this blonde angel before him. Tom catches her eye and he performs all types of acrobatics on the sidewalk in order to impress her. The girl tosses a pansy over the fence before going inside and he puts it inside his jacket, close to his heart and walks home in a dream.

Tom's high spirits at suppertime are supplemented by the fact that good boy Sid breaks the sugar bowl. As if by instinct, Aunt Polly reprimands Tom and doesn't apologize when the mistake was pointed out to her. Tom knows in his mind that Aunt Polly is sorry but that isn't good enough. Tom has mental images of her wailing over his poor lifeless body someday, knows that Aunt Polly will be punished in the end for her indiscretion today, and leaves the house to wallow in his sorrows.

Tom finds himself on the street where his new love interest has been spotted. Watching the candlelight from a window in the girl's house, Tom wonders if she is she lurking just beyond. A maid opens a window and throws water on Tom which brings an end to his reverie and he skulks home to bed. Sid makes a mental note that Tom has not said his prayers.

Chapter 3 Analysis

Tom's inventiveness about getting the fence whitewashed has bought him a few minutes of good graces with Aunt Polly who is pleased with him. Tom also has another success that day with the victory of his "army." Life is good and about to get much better when Tom happens upon the angelic creature in the garden at the Thatcher house. Tom is endearing as he struts and performs for the girl in front of the house. Although Tom's

high spirits are squelched a little when Aunt Polly punishes him by mistake, there is hope for attention from the girl at the Thatcher house and it will be interesting to see what tomorrow brings.

Chapters 4 and 5

Chapters 4 and 5 Summary

Sunday morning arrives with the usual routine of breakfast and Aunt Polly's family worship. Sid has memorized his bible verses already but Tom is struggling with his. Tom's cousin, Mary, is helping him and promises to give him the reward of a Barlow knife for his efforts. The next hateful task of the morning is Tom's bath. After a couple of attempts, Tom passes Mary's inspection, dresses, and the family heads off to church.

When the family arrives, Tom begins to barter licorice and marbles for Sunday School tickets. The tickets are supposed to be earned for learning Bible verses and when a certain amount is saved up the tickets can be exchanged for a new Bible. Mary has earned two Bibles this way and it took her two years to accomplish this feat.

The class settles down as Mr. Walters, the superintendent, begins the session. Soon after, the children are interrupted by the introduction of some guests who are quite important to the community. The man is introduced as Judge Thatcher, brother of the town lawyer, Jeff Thatcher. Immediately, all present in the room began to show off in order to catch the eye and the favor of this most important person.

Mr. Walters knows that the bestowing of a Bible will make for a wonderful conclusion to the morning and falls into disbelief when Tom Sawyer marches up to the front of the room to redeem his tickets. It is a stunning surprise to the superintendent but also to the boys who had been hoodwinked out of their tickets earlier this very morning. Mr. Walters has no choice but to give Tom the Bible and Amy Lawrence sat staring at Tom with love in her eyes. Tom, however, only has eyes for the angelic blonde who he finds out is the daughter of the visiting judge. Amy sees Tom's furtive looks at the other girl and instantly rages with jealousy.

Fortunately for Tom the bell rings signaling the start of Sunday services and he, Aunt Polly, Sid, and Mary take their seats in one pew. The congregation is fully assembled now and settles in to hear the ebb and flow of the reverend's words. Praying for every conceivable soul in this town and all over the world, Tom concentrates on the capture of the fly that has landed on the back of the seat before him. With the reverend's last Amen, the fly meets its demise and Tom catches a stern look from Aunt Polly.

However, the fly incident is just a warm up for the main event. Tom remembers a beetle in his pocket and removes the insect from its little box. Unfortunately, the beetle nips Tom's finger and he tosses the insect where it lands in the aisle. A poodle wandering into the church, spies the beetle, and snatches it up between its two front paws. Then to the surprise and to the amusement of many of those in the church, the beetle fights back and nips the dog on its chin. The dog seems to vow revenge and growls and snarls at the beetle for a short while but soon loses interest until the poodle unwittingly sits on the beetle and lets out an agonizing yelp. The poodle then lands in his master's

lap and is promptly tossed out the side window. The whole incident is over in a matter of a couple minutes but it buoys Tom's spirits enough to see him through to the end of the service.

Chapters 4 and 5 Analysis

Aunt Polly is diligent in her commitment to impart some religion to Tom who definitely has other things on his mind. Tom does the least amount of work possible on things that show no purpose to him, whether it's Bible lessons or taking a bath. Tom is certainly aware of the children who do the right thing but almost seems to see them as naïve in their pursuit of doing what's expected of them. However, Tom isn't a bad kid, just ornery, and Twain writes about Tom with such a fondness that you can't help but be endeared to the young Sawyer. The episode of the beetle and the poodle is presented so humorously, it's easy to imagine yourself alongside Tom laughing with him.

Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

Monday morning dawns with the usual dread Tom feels on school mornings but Mondays seem to be particularly bad. Lying in bed, Tom tries to think of some fabricated illness that will keep him home for the day. Tom moans and groans as part of his act until Sid wakes up and rushes downstairs to get Aunt Polly. Tom is not at death's door as Sid had originally thought and the only ailment Tom could come up with in front of Aunt Polly is a loose tooth, which was promptly pulled.

On the way to school, Tom runs into Huckleberry Finn, the juvenile delinquent of the town. Huck is the free spirit that all the boys aspire to be. Huck wore what he wanted and went where he wanted at any time he wanted. Tom is one of those who envies Huck greatly.

Tom asks about Huck's dead cat and the conversation drifts to the feline's wart-curing properties. Tom swears by spunk water for such a thing. However, the ultimate wart zapper is to take a dead cat into a cemetery after somebody wicked has been recently buried and invoke the devils to do their work on the warts in question. The boys agree to meet in the cemetery that night but before they leave, they make an exchange of a tick in Huck's possession for Tom's extracted tooth.

Of course, Tom is now late for school. After being rapped by the teacher, Tom is made to sit with the girls. This is not at all an unfortunate situation for Tom as he takes his seat next to the blonde vision spotted last week. The girl's name is Becky Thatcher. Tom takes the opportunity to show off in the means available to him at the moment and draws pictures for Becky on his slate. Tom's antics cause too much of a commotion though and Tom is removed from the seat and ushered back to his own seat.

Chapter 6 Analysis

Aunt Polly is wise to Tom's tricks and takes care of his Monday morning aches and pains by pulling his tooth and sending Tom on his way to school. Polly is exasperated by his antics but maintains good humor in raising her nephew. Polly feels lucky that she has Tom, and not Huckleberry Finn, who Tom meets on the way to school. It's not clear if Huck is an orphan or not, but it would seem so because of his vagabond lifestyle. Huck seems to be a hero for Tom who is in awe of his worldliness. The association with Huck has already brought him a whipping at school and there is certainly more mischief and punishment ahead.

Chapters 7 and 8

Chapters 7 and 8 Summary

Tom is struggling to stay awake in class and eventually gives in to the lure of the outside world through the schoolroom window. Tom longs for something to pass the time until lunch and happily remembers the tick in the tiny box in his pocket. Soon Tom's friend Joe Harper joins Tom in tormenting the poor tick in a game, which employs some pins and a great deal of competitive spirit.

Finally, it is lunchtime and Tom tells Becky to put on her bonnet and pretend that she is going home but to circle back and meet Tom back at the school. When Becky returns, Tom is in bliss and the two of them sit in the schoolroom and talk of important things like rats and circuses. Tom then changes the subject to a most serious topic and asks Becky is she wants to be engaged. The couple seals the promise with a kiss and all is well until Tom has the misfortune of mentioning Amy Lawrence's name and the storm clouds arrive. Becky sobs now and refuses Tom's gift of a brass knob from an andiron. Tom's pride has no recourse but to leave despite Becky's attempts to call him back.

Tom's wandering leads him to dense woods where he plants himself to think about his situation. With deep sadness, Tom thinks about dying just to be rid of these kinds of complications for evermore. If only Tom's Sunday school record were better, he might think harder on how to do it. Becky Thatcher has treated him like a dog and Tom wants her to be sorry and thinks that it's too bad that you can't die temporarily. Tom will show Becky, though, one way or another!

Tom thinks about other means to leave his current distressing situation. Maybe he will be a clown or a soldier. Yes, a soldier would work and he could barge into Sunday school one morning and be the envy of everyone. However, there is something even better than that... Tom could become a pirate! With his future all planned, Tom vows to start tomorrow morning.

Just then, Tom hears a blast from a small tin trumpet and Joe Harper appears dressed as Robin Hood. The two boys enact a scene that they have done many times before. Then they switch so Tom can be Robin Hood and play it out until he had succumbed to an arrow. It is late now and the boys walk toward home thinking that being an outlaw would be better than being President any day.

Chapters 7 and 8 Analysis

Tom is forced to sit still in class but no one can stop his active imagination. Fortunately, Tom has a diversion at the ready and can make the minutes go by quicker until he can spring outside again. Tom's zeal is almost infectious as you read and you can almost feel him fidgeting beside you. Tom's imagination is so lively that no matter what his endeavor, someone is willing to participate. Joe plays with the tick game, Becky accepts

his proposal, and Joe is back in the picture as Robin Hood. Not bad for a day's adventures.

Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

Sid falls asleep as soon as night prayers are said but Tom lies in the darkness listening to every little sound. Tom thinks that it surely must be dawn and the clock strikes only ten and he dozes past eleven until being awakened by the crash of a bottle against the side of the woodshed. Tom crawls out the window, along the roof and jumps down to find Huck and a dead cat.

It takes the boys only a half hour to reach the cemetery up on the hill. It is an old one with sunken in places and tombstones that can no longer be read. The wind moans through the trees and it is surely spirits of the dead according to Tom. The boys wait without speaking until they hear a noise that freezes them to the ground. The two boys knew for sure that it is devils coming to get them.

When the figures get closer Tom and Huck can see that the figures are actually humans-Muff Potter, Injun Joe, and Doctor Robinson. Injun Joe and Muff have a wheelbarrow, some rope, and a couple shovels and the boys soon find out what their gruesome work is. The doctor urges them to hurry as they are digging at a grave. Soon the coffin is raised and the corpse is loaded into the wheelbarrow and secured with the rope.

The men demand more money from the doctor who has already paid them up front for this ghoulish job. The three men fight and eventually Injun Joe stabs the doctor and puts the knife in the hand of Muff who is now knocked out on the ground. When Muff comes to and sees the knife, Injun Joe doesn't bother to tell him the real facts and Muff runs off as fast as possible, leaving the murder weapon behind.

All that is left at the site now are the empty coffin and a corpse in a wheelbarrow. Tom and Huck had long ago run off fleeing for their lives.

Chapter 9 Analysis

Now there is real intrigue for Tom. The days of ticks and beetles will pale in comparison to what he and Huck witnessed tonight in the cemetery. Tom wonders: What purpose did the doctor have in mind for the corpse ? How did the doctor convince Muff and Indian Joe to help him? Did Tom and Huck see the actual murder and will they tell if they did? Will they carry Injun Joe's secret out of fear?

Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary

The boys ran as fast as their feet would carry them back to the village. The growls from every disturbed dog seem to add wings to their feet. When the boys have a chance to stop and catch their breath, they discuss what they saw and what they should do about it. Tom and Huck figure that if the doctor dies, somebody will hang and the boys debate about who should tell who really did it. Suppose the boys tell that it had been Injun Joe and then for some reason he didn't hang. Injun Joe will kill Tom and Huck for sure.

Deciding to keep mum about the event and knowing that a mere handshake will not suffice, Tom and Huck find an old roof plank and write an oath and sign their initials in blood. Spotting a shadowy figure at the other end of the abandoned building , the boys realize that it is Muff Potter. Muff is a doomed man in the eyes of Tom and Huck and the boys leave as quickly as they had come.

Tom slips into his room and into bed thinking that he has escaped discovery. However, Sid has been awake and notes the time of his cousin's arrival. When Tom awakes and realizes that it is past his normal time to be called and no one has roused him, he dresses and goes down to breakfast where the family is still at the table. After breakfast, Aunt Polly takes Tom aside and telling him how her heart is broken but if Tom wants to ruin his life, then he can go on and do it. Aunt Polly is tired of trying with her exasperating nephew.

This is sore punishment for Tom's heart especially when realizing that he is to receive a whipping for playing hooky the day before. However, the thing that really tears at Tom is that Becky has returned the brass andiron knob to his desk. This is the thing that broke Tom's spirit that day.

Chapter 10 Analysis

Huck and Tom are just beside themselves with the intrigue of the cemetery incident, agreeing they neither one has ever witnessed anything so vile and their blood oath has sealed them both to secrecy. Suddenly these two boys, who had been casual acquaintances, are bound in a very important way and both of them will honor it or so they think. It will be interesting to see what develops as the murder is discovered and an investigation begins. The boys are not finished with this episode just yet. Unfortunately, Aunt Polly's patience will continue to be tried. Even though Tom feels remorse, his sense of adventure will always get the better of him, and the adventures don't get much better than this one.

Chapter 11

Chapter 11 Summary

By now, the news of the murder has spread through the town and Tom joins in the procession heading to the crime scene. Huck sees Tom in the crowd and they exchange furtive glances but no one is paying any attention to the two boys. The crowd has determined that the weapon lying there is Muff Potter's knife and everyone is shocked when they see Muff come stumbling onto the scene. Muff begs Injun Joe to tell the truth but Injun Joe lies and the Huck and Tom think for sure that lightning will surely strike his head at any second! However, Injun Joe repeats his story under oath and the boys think that he must have sold his soul to the devil and vow to watch Injun Joe every chance they have to see if he cavorted with the demon.

Sid reports that Tom is talking in his sleep every night about blood so Tom wraps his head as if he has a toothache to prevent his jaws from flapping at night. However, Sid coyly removes the wrap and listens anyway.

Tom does manage to sneak little treats to Muff in the jail, which helps to relieve the boy's conscience somewhat.

Chapter 11 Analysis

Tom and Huck have sworn to secrecy over the events surrounding the doctor's murder in the cemetery so they must join in with the rest of the town in the questioning. The boys felt that it would be suspicious if they were to remain distant from something that held the attention of everyone else. Tom and Huck have also adopted a fear over the power that Injun Joe must surely have now because of what they believe to be his link with the devil. More mystery and close calls are in store for Tom and Huck because they have vowed to keep an eye on Injun Joe and they wouldn't mind seeing the devil beside the man either!

Chapters 12 and 13

Chapters 12 and 13 Summary

Tom's mind now drifts to troubles of a different sort. Becky Thatcher is ill and has been missing from school and Tom is driven to distraction with the thought that his love interest might die. Tom lingers around Becky's house and shows no interest in the normal pursuits of war and piracy. Aunt Polly is moved by Tom's melancholy and tries all manner of water cures on the boy to no avail.

Finally, Aunt Polly hears about a tonic called Pain-killer and orders a good supply. Tom's mood improves almost immediately much to Aunt Polly's relief. Tom's demeanor has nothing to do with the tonic, but rather his boredom with being sad. At least showing interest in the tonic is a way out of his lethargy. Aunt Polly is glad to see that the content in the bottle is going down but has no way of knowing that Tom is pouring it down a crack in the parlor floor. Then another victim enters into view and the cat receives a good dose of the tonic and somersaults and wails all around the room and flies out the window for some relief. Tom is beside himself with hysterics until realizing that Aunt Polly has spotted the spoon in his guilty hand.

Finally, Becky Thatcher has returned to school and Tom does all his best showing off stunts but Becky is unmoved, stomping away declaring that some people think they're so smart, always showing off. Tom's pride is crushed so he decides to run away. Feeling that no one really loves him and he's not any good to anybody, Tom thinks that the only answer is to remove himself from their presence.

Tom runs into Joe Harper who has the exact feelings about nobody loving him either so the boys vow to be friends until the death. The first plan of action is to become pirates and the two include Huck in their grand scheme and part company until later that night when they all meet at a predetermined spot on the river.

The boys each arrive at their favorite hour, midnight, with the provisions each could muster. With the password safely uttered by all, the three boys show themselves and inspect the goods which they would take on their adventure. The raft is then shoved off with Tom in command and the trio is able to steer safely for a couple hours when they decide to dock for the night. Huck goes right to sleep but the other two have some business with God in the form of prayers and guilt over the food that they had taken from their pantries at home. From that point on, the boys vow not to be the kind of pirates who steal anymore and drift to sleep.

Chapters 12 and 13 Analysis

The pangs of puppy love are anguish for Tome who is literally pining away over the absent Becky. Tom is so lovelorn that Aunt Polly's treatments don't even bother him. Finally, with his strength recovered, Tom seems to be getting back to normal when

Becky returns to school. Tom's happiness is short lived though because Becky rebuffs the attentions, obviously still mad that Tom has had the gall to mention Amy Lawrence's name when she and Tom were in the process of becoming engaged. Tom is too young and too wounded to know that Becky's behavior is just a part of the courting ritual of young people. However, Tom is so hurt that he wants to hurt Becky in return and maybe if he runs away, Becky will be sorry. Everyone will be sorry. Aunt Polly and Sid included. Since hermits have very boring lives, the occupation of pirate seems the only real choice.

Chapters 14 and 15

Chapters 14 and 15 Summary

Tom awakes the next morning and wonders for a few minutes where he is. The woods are still and hazy. Waiting for Huck and Joe to wake up, Tom entertains himself with the bugs that have crawled onto him-first a little green worm, then some ants, a ladybug, and finally a tumblebug. By now, the birds are vying for his attention and Tom marvels at all of nature around him.

Before long, the three boys, as naked pirates, are tumbling in the waters of the sandbar with no thought of their former lives of yesterday. The boys cook bacon and fish for breakfast and declare it the best that they ever ate. All day long, they explore the island and are happy that the current has taken their raft the night before so that they are no longer obliged to return to civilization.

Toward late afternoon the boys hear a noise they can't identify and finally realize that it is a ferryboat on the shore of the town. The boys know by the sound that someone has drowned and then to their astonishment, they realize that they are the victims. The boys feel like instant heroes. Clearly, people are mourning the trio's loss and the boy pirates couldn't have been happier. Toward twilight though, the ferryboat went back to its normal routine and the pirates return to their camp. After supper, misgivings begin to set in with Tom and Jim who throw out the idea of returning to civilization someday. After Huck and Jim are asleep, Tom finds two pieces of bark, writes notes on each, and puts one in his jacket pocket, the other in Joe's hat. Tom also leaves Joe his prized possessions of chalk, a rubber ball, three fishhooks, and a precious marble and heads for the sandbar.

Soon Tom had waded as far as he could and decides to swim the rest of the way to shore. Tom makes his way back into town, finally up, and over Aunt Polly's fence. Tom then sneaks inside the house and under a bed to watch the group of mourners which include Aunt Polly, Mary, Sid, and Joe's mother. The mourners are lamenting over the loss of the two boys and how they hadn't been bad, just mischievous. The people then talked of things they each wish they hadn't done or said if they had known that the boys would have so little time left with them.

Tom thinks of the high drama it will create if he were to present himself as alive at this moment but fights back the idea and heads back to the river. Tom treks back to the pirate camp and hears Joe telling Huck that Tom is true blue and if he said he will be back, he will be back and so he was. Tom only embellishes the story of the mourners a little bit and steals away to take a nap while Huck and Joe go fishing.

Chapters 14 and 15 Analysis

What freedom these three pirates are enjoying! However, they do feel some pangs of guilt when they see that the ferryboat and its skiffs have been called out to find their drowned little bodies. However, it is not enough guilt to send them home contritely. Tom's escape back to town to view the mourning is just the validation Tom needs that they are indeed missed and people are sorry for the way they have treated the boys. It will probably be only a short-lived victory because there will surely be punishment ahead as the adults realize that they had been duped.

Chapters 16 and 17

Chapters 16 and 17 Summary

The boys feast on scrambled turtle eggs that night and again the next morning. The morning is spent swimming and playing in the water off the sandbar and the young pirates rest naked in the sun when the feeling strikes them. Joe starts to feel homesick and begins to pack up his belongings while Tom taunts him for being a baby. It becomes clear that Huck, too, is ready to go back to town and the two boys leave Tom standing where he is. Finally, Tom has an inspiration and runs after them to tell them a secret which delights them and makes them decide to stay a little longer.

With some time to kill now, they decide that it would be a good time for Huck to teach the other two how to smoke pipes which they had fashioned from old cobs. The boys were brave and confident at first, but after awhile Tom and Joe decide that they each need to go look for their respective knives in completely different directions. Huck finds each of them an hour later sound asleep and still a little green around the gills.

Around midnight, Joe wakes the other two because he is sure the Spirit of the Night is coming to call. What is actually a hurricane all but blows the boys back to town. The boys cling together under their makeshift canvas tent, weather the storm, and stay up until the morning because there is no dry place to sleep.

Finally, with a fire started, the three boys decide that today they will be Indians instead of pirates and spend the day scalping each other thousands of times. The boys even manage to smoke a peace pipe at the end of the day without any of them getting sick. All in all, it is a very good day.

However, things are quite different back in town. The Sunday morning church bell is tolling this morning instead of its normal clanging. Becky Thatcher mopes in the schoolyard wishing that she hadn't been so mean to Tom. The kids all over town are comparing stories of their memories of the three lost boys. Finally, it is time for the funeral services and into the church come Aunt Polly, Mary, Sid, and the Harper family.

The reverend tells tales about the boys that at one time would have seemed like rakish behavior but now seems more than mildly amusing. Everyone is crying and even the reverend breaks down in the pulpit until his eyes behold a most miraculous sight. The three dead boys are walking down the center aisle and unbeknownst to the other church members, hide in a closet to hear their funeral. This had been the secret that Tom told the other two pirates, convincing them to stay on the island that last night.

Upon discovery, the boys are immediately embraced and kissed and prayers go up to heaven along with the voices of the congregation as all join in celebratory song.

Chapters 16 and 17 Analysis

Imaginations are fueling them and taking them to worlds others only dream of. Tom's little secret about the upcoming funeral is powerful information and the boys can't resist holding out to make their splendid and miraculous entrance into the church on Sunday morning. It is inevitable though that the secret will be found out and hopefully the boys feel that the deception will have been worth the almost certain punishment.

Chapter 18

Chapter 18 Summary

At breakfast the day after the funeral service, Aunt Polly tells Tom that it wasn't nice to have deceived her about his still being alive. Tom should have at least slipped home and told her that he was all right. Tom consoled his aunt the best way by recalling the events of the night he had hid under the bed - only he told it to her as if he had dreamed it. Tom is accurate down to every word and teardrop and Aunt Polly believes even more in the power of dreams and superstitions.

All the kids wanted to be near Tom at school and clamor around him; the young ones wanted to be like the wayward pirate and the older ones envied him. However, Tom is concerned more with glory now than the attentions of Becky Thatcher. Becky is flirting and playing in the schoolyard but Tom is engrossed in Amy Lawrence which makes Becky furious. In retaliation, Becky spends the morning huddled with Alfred Temple over various picture books. Nothing seems to be working and Becky eventually tires of the pompous Alfred and releases him from duty. Alfred realizes what is really going on and spills ink on Tom's spelling lesson as Becky sees Arnold's prank through the window. For a moment, Becky considers letting Tom know what had happened but then remembers Tom's ignoring her this morning and vows that he can rot.

Chapter 18 Analysis

Tom is the hero of the schoolyard this morning and is content with his new found glory. It has become almost more important to him than Becky. Becky desperately wants Tom's attention but he ignores her as payback for snubbing him the last time. It's all very predictable as schoolyard romances go and hopefully the two will reunite and declare their everlasting love once more.

Chapters 19 and 20

Chapters 19 and 20 Summary

Aunt Polly is wise to Tom's deception about the dream. Polly visits the Harper's house and Joe's mother tells her that Tom had indeed been in the house that night; he hadn't dreamed the event. Tom redeemed himself a bit when he tells Aunt Polly about the piece of bark on which he had written that the three boys weren't dead, they had just gone pirating.

Aunt Polly's happy mood put Tom in a good mood too as he headed back to school. Tom spots Becky ;she won't give him the time of day and his spirits drop again. Tom doesn't know that his ruined spelling lesson is waiting for him which will mean another dent to the day.

Mr. Dobbins, the schoolmaster, has a special book he keeps in his drawer for reading when the children are reading. When Becky returns to the classroom, she sees that the key is in the drawer and takes a chance and opens it to find that the book is an illustrated book on anatomy. Mr. Dobbins had at one time hoped to be a doctor and still liked to read on the topic.

As Becky flips a few pages, Tom comes in and startles her to the point that a page is torn accidentally. Becky is aghast because this will mean a whipping for her for sure and she has never been whipped at school.

As the afternoon wears on, Tom gets whipped for his ink-spoiled spelling lesson and then Mr. Dobbins discovers the ripped page in his book. Of course, the teacher starts his questioning on the boys side of the room and then moves to the girls. Everyone denies committing the act and when Mr. Dobbins reaches Becky, Tom immediately blurts out that he himself tore the book and receives the whipping that should have been Becky's. The adoration that Becky showers on him was worth the punishment but Tom vows some sort of revenge on Alfred Temple for ruining the spelling paper.

Chapters 19 and 20 Analysis

Tom is so endearing and charming that he has again situated himself positively with the two women he loves, Aunt Polly and Becky Thatcher. Tom really does have a good heart and can't stand the thought of Becky being whipped at school. That would be so demeaning for her and he wants to save her that indignity. However, Tom is not above having his revenge on Alfred for getting him in trouble for the spelling paper. Tom has his own code of what is right and wrong and isn't afraid to exact punishment where it's due.

Chapters 21 and 22

Chapters 21 and 22 Summary

The end of the school year is approaching and Mr. Dobbins grows stricter with each day, wanting the classes to put on a good showing for the town on Examination Day. The boys are weary of the constant punishment and vow revenge in some way.

On the night of the presentations, Mr. Dobbins sits at the head of the classroom and rules over all the recitations and presentations by the selected students. At the end of the speeches, the teacher rises to draw an outline of the United States to prepare for the presentations of the geography students. Mr. Dobbins makes a few errors and the people in the audience begin to titter. The teacher erases and tries again and the audience is still chuckling. Mr. Dobbins does not know that being lowered from the ceiling is a cat with its paws tied together and its jaws tied shut. The creature dips lower and lower until it grabs the wig right off the schoolmaster's head. The cat is whisked back up again, the hairpiece in its claws. The audience is in hysterics now and the evening ends abruptly. The boys have exacted their revenge and vacation officially begins.

Tom joins a temperance group because of its fine regalia at public events and promises to stay away from tobacco and profanity while a member. The fact that Tom is banned from these vices makes him desire them all the more. It seems to Tom that the summer starts out at a disadvantage and goes downhill. Becky goes home for the summer, the other boys are also abstaining and then Tom himself gets the measles. Even Huck is trying to reform.

Chapters 21 and 22 Analysis

Twain's use of humor is so effective when describing the prank the boys played on the demanding schoolmaster. Twain writes in such a descriptive manner that you imagine that you're in the classroom laughing with the other people in the audience. Tom makes sure that no one is physically harmed in any of his antics but dignity is always an open target. Still Tom has some redeeming qualities and joins a temperance group but finds that the denial of the named vices has brought his attention to them and makes Tom want them more than he ever did when he wasn't a card carrying member. Surely, the temperance won't last and something will happen to redeem the melancholy beginning of this summer vacation.

Chapters 23 and 24

Chapters 23 and 24 Summary

Finally the monotony breaks. The murder trial of Muff Potter is set to begin. Huck and Tom confide that neither one has spoken of what they witnessed that night. The boys continue to bring treats to Muff at the jail and the prisoner is grateful, as the rest of the town has abandoned him.

Tom arrives at the courthouse on the day the trial is set to begin. The prosecution calls many witnesses whose testimonies seem to point to Muff's guilt. However, Muff's own attorney never questions any of these witnesses. Finally, the prosecution rests and Muff's attorney calls Tom Sawyer to the stand. The courtroom is abuzz with this unexpected twist. Muff's attorney asks questions about the night of the murder and as soon as Tom says that Injun Joe attacked the doctor, not Muff, Injun Joe springs out of a window and is gone.

Tom is a hero in the town once again and Muff Potter is a free man. Tom delights in this positive twist by day but by night, he lives in fear that Injun Joe will show up and kill him too. Tom spends his life now filled with apprehension.

Chapters 23 and 24 Analysis

Tom and Huck's consciences are heavy after they talked with Muff through his jailhouse window. Finally they do the right thing and visit Muff's attorney one night to reveal the sordid information that will free Muff and implicate Injun Joe. Their bravery and the recognition of doing the right thing indicate a new level of maturity for the two boys. Interestingly, Tom is still the only one in potential hot water as Huck's name is never mentioned in court and he never has to testify. Tom carries the weight of apprehension as he learns another lesson in doing the right thing.

Chapter 25

Chapter 25 Summary

Tom is overwhelmed by the need to dig for buried treasure and Huck is the only one who is game for this adventure. However, Huck is willing on most things when other boys aren't. They Debate about a digging site and Tom has some theories that pirates and robbers have buried treasure on islands, under dead trees, and certainly in haunted houses. The first attempt under a dead true doesn't bring anything but sweat. They come back at midnight to try under the shadow of the longest limb. That is to no avail either and the boys determine that their best plan now is to try the haunted house, but it will have to be during the day so the ghosts and spirits won't bother them.

Chapter 25 Analysis

Twain has captured the superstitions and legends of the boys growing up in the mid 1800's. The boys are always certain that there are ghosts and spirits lurking around them. Because most of their antics occur at midnight and in places like cemeteries and haunted houses, the scenes are just perfect for such haunted thoughts. They'll try the haunted house in daylight but if that doesn't produce anything, they'll probably muster the courage to come back at night because buried treasure is a powerful lure.

Chapters 26 and 27

Chapters 26 and 27 Summary

At noon the next day, the boys meet at the old tree to retrieve their tools and it dawns on them that it is Friday, which is not a lucky day and certainly not one for digging for treasure, so the boys decide to start again tomorrow. In the meantime, Tom teaches Huck about Robin Hood and Friday passes quite pleasurably.

When the boys reach the haunted house the next day, it takes them quite awhile to get used to the sights and sounds, even though it is high noon and the sun is beating down. As far as the boys are concerned, you can never be too sure about spooks. Just as Tom and Huck are about to start digging, they hear voices and fall to the floor to look through some knotholes in the planks.

Instead of ghosts, two men entered; one the deaf and dumb Spaniard that they had seen around town lately and they didn't recognize the other man. When the two men begin to talk, the boys almost jump out of their skins because the voice of the old Spaniard belongs to none other than Injun Joe! Injun Joe is telling the other man to head back up the river and wait for him. Injun Joe still wants to head back into town and do that dangerous job. Then the two men will head to Texas together.

The two men fall asleep after eating lunch and Tom tries to escape but the floorboards of the old house threaten to give him away and he and Huck hunker down. When the men awake they talk about the $650 they have and that they need to bury it because it's too heavy to carry with them all the time. They took out $30 each for now and Tom and Huck couldn't believe their eyes! This would be the easiest treasure hunt of all time!

As Injun Joe is digging a hole in the corner to bury the money, the knife hits on an old box. The men use Tom's pick, which is leaning against the wall to dig it up and find that the box is filled with gold coins. The boys cannot believe their good fortune! Suddenly Injun Joe realizes that the dirt on the pick is fresh and someone has been around-maybe still in the house. The boys' hearts stop as Injun Joe heads up the stairs. However, their luck holds as the stairs come crashing down with Injun Joe in the middle of them.

The two men finally leave after Injun Joe reminds his partner to go home and wait for word. Joe is going to bury the money at his Number Two hideout. Tom and Hank breathe a sigh of relief but then it dawns on them that they are probably Injun Joe's revenge job in town.

Tom has nightmares over the events at the haunted house and hopes they are only dreams but Huck validates that they had happened. Tom's only recourse is to take the offensive and find Injun Joe and the money. The boys determine to find where Number Two is and narrow it down to a room in a tavern that the owner says is always locked

and someone just comes and goes once in awhile usually at night. The boys vow to break into the room which has a door opening onto the back alley. At the very least Tom and Huck will follow Injun Joe when he comes into town because he will surely lead them to the treasure.

Chapters 26 and 27 Analysis

Tom and Huck must be the luckiest or the unluckiest boys around. Sometimes it's hard to tell because their fortunes change so quickly. If only they hadn't left their freshly used pick and shovel leaning against the wall, Injun Joe would have buried the money right there at the haunted house and their treasure hunt would have been so easy. However, as luck would have it, they now have to enter a world of intrigue and danger in order to get the money. At least they have each other for their secret missions and hopefully they can get to the money before Injun Joe gets it.

Chapters 28 and 29

Chapters 28 and 29 Summary

The boys are diligent in their commitment to watching the tavern but nothing happens for three nights. On the night when the moon is hidden, Tom tries the door and discovers that it is unlocked. Tom opens it to find Injun Joe asleep on the floor and runs away urging Huck to follow him. The boys vow that they will continue to watch the tavern every night and monitor Injun Joe's comings and goings.

The next day brings the good news that Becky Thatcher is back in town and is making plans for a big picnic. Tom stays awake most of the night in anticipation of the picnic and also waits to hear Huck's signal which never came.

The next day Tom escorts Becky to the picnic and is beside himself with pleasure. Tom sure hopes that Huck's signal doesn't come tonight and interrupt this grand time. All the kids meet at the ferryboat which carries them three miles and docks so they can have their lunch and go exploring in an old cave. The day is a glorious success and the returning passengers on the ferryboat that night are silent with their exhaustion.

Huck is at his post by now and a little after eleven o'clock he hears an alley door closing softly. There are the two men and one of them is carrying a box under his arm. There is no time to go after Tom, so Huck follows them all the way up to the entrance to the Widow Douglas' house. One of the men mentions that the widow seems to have company and then he hears Injun Joe say that he is not going to leave the country and leave this job undone. The widow's husband had been the judge in the town and had more than once punished Injun Joe - even had him horsewhipped once in front of the town. The judge was dead now but Injun Joe could take his revenge on the judge's widow. The other man begged him not to kill the widow and Injun Joe said that the way to take revenge on a woman was to mar her looks in some way; slit her nostrils or notch her ears like a sow. If she happens to bleed to death from it, then that isn't his fault.

Huck cannot believe what he is hearing and runs back down the hill to the Welshman's house where he bangs as hard as he can on the door. Huck tells the man and his sons about the imminent danger for the widow and the men follow Huck into the night with their guns. Huck falls back a little bit and before long hears gunshots and a cry which sends him bolting back down the hill.

Chapters 28 and 29 Analysis

Tom's future seems bright in all areas now. The boys have identified Injun Joe's hiding place; the treasure will soon be theirs. Becky Thatcher has come back to town. Unfortunately for Huck, Tom is occupied the night that the two criminals emerge from the hiding place forcing Huck to act alone so as not to lose sight of the treasure.

Hopefully Huck has been able to act quickly enough to save the Widow Douglas from the imminent danger of Injun Joe and his partner.

Chapter 30

Chapter 30 Summary

Huck finds his way back to the Welshman's house the next morning and is welcomed with a warm reception and a hot breakfast. The Welshman is glad that Huck came back to share more about the two men and how Huck had known who they were and why Huck followed the two men out of town. Huck is trying to avoid telling too much but the Welshman determines that Huck is trying to cover up something and finally Huck tells the Welshman who the evil men are. Immediately the Welshman sends his sons to tell the sheriff. As it turns out, the Welshman had sneezed as he and his sons had come upon the two criminals at the Widow Douglas' last night and the two criminals were able to escape despite some gunfire exchange.

People from the town converge on the Welshman's house including the Widow Douglas who is grateful for the intervention of the Welshman and his sons. The Welshman tells the widow that there is someone to whom she should be more thankful but that person wanted to remain unnamed. The Welshman puts Huck to bed for he had an exhausting time the night before.

Things are beginning to stir in town as news of the widow's close call becomes widely known. In the course of conversation, it becomes evident that Tom and Becky had not come home and the worst is feared. The couple must still be in the cave. The whole town turns out to search or prepare food but all the searching is in vain. For three days, the people look for the two finding only a soiled hair ribbon and Tom and Becky's names scratched on the cave walls.

Chapter 30 Analysis

Crisis has been averted for the Widow Douglas and Huck has earned new respect from the townspeople. However, a new emergency has arisen in the form of the missing Tom and Becky. Is it possible that they have met their demise in the murky dark cave or has Tom's luck held out and they have been able to escape through some twist of fate?

Chapter 31

Chapter 31 Summary

Tom and Becky are indeed still inside the cave. The two have wandered away from the others during the picnic outing to explore some passageways they had never seen before. After a time the two children realize that they are quite alone and there are no replies to their calls to the others. Tom and Becky try their best to retrace their steps but to no avail. The two are hungry and their candles are burned out. Tom did have the presence to get them to a stream so they could at least have some water. Becky is starting to panic and Tom is glad when she is able to sleep for a little bit. However, they are deep into the cave and have no idea how long they have been there. Would the others be searching for them or would they have given up by now and gone home? Tom lets Becky rest and tries venturing out a little further and his heart leaps when he sees a gleam from a candle but recoils in fear when the hand holding it turns out to be Injun Joe's. Injun Joe and Tom both run in opposite directions. Tom returns to Becky who is sure she is counting her last moments on earth while Tom sets out one more time to find a passage out.

Chapter 31 Analysis

Once again, Tom's adventuresome spirit has him in a real dilemma. Only this time he has someone else along who is not enjoying it anymore. The readers hopes that the people of the town be able to find the two kids in time. Will Tom stop to think that if Injun Joe is in the cave, there must be a way out if he can work up the courage to follow in the criminal's footsteps? Tom's luck will undoubtedly hold and he and Becky will depart the cave and share a glorious return to town.

Chapters 32 and 33

Chapters 32 and 33 Summary

The town is still in mourning over the two lost children. The Thatcher family and Aunt Polly are inconsolable in their grief. Then in the middle of the night, the church bells ring out: Tom and Becky have been found! The village comes to life and stays up celebrating all the rest of the night.

Tom explains how he had left Becky briefly to go exploring again and saw a slit of light coming through one of the cave walls. Tom is able to push himself through a hole into the sunshine right near the river. Becky is incredulous when he returns for her but when she sees that he is telling the truth she is delirious with joy. The couple pushes themselves through the hole and sits on the grass laughing and crying. Tom and Becky flag down some men in a boat who tell them that they are five miles up river from the mouth of the cave. The men give them some food, make them rest, and then return the two lost children back to the town and the open arms of their families and friends.

A few days later, after Tom has recovered, Judge Thatcher tells Tom that that cave wouldn't swallow up anyone anymore. The judge has the mouth of it sealed with a huge iron door and the judge has the only keys. Tom blanches and tells the judge the awful fact. Injun Joe is still in that very cave.

Within minutes, dozens of men are on their way back to the cave. When the door is opened, the men make the awful discovery of Injun Joe's dead body lying with his face close to the crack. Joe's knife was broken in two and the door was scratched where Injun Joe had tried to claw his way out but his fate was sealed with that door.

The men bury Injun Joe near the mouth of the cave and people come from miles around to see the awful site. The morning after the funeral, Tom and Huck return to the cave because Tom knows that is where Injun Joe buried the money. Tom leads Huck to the hole from which he and Becky escaped a few days ago and the two boys crawl in. The boys both agree that this is a perfect place for them to hide when they become robbers or pirates for good.

That's when Tom holds his candle up and shows Huck the cross that has been scratched into the wall. Injun Joe said that the money would be buried in his Number Two den under the cross. Huck is too spooked and wants to scramble but Tom reminds him that there wouldn't be any ghosts coming to a place that has a cross. Huck has to agree with that logic and the boys start digging.

Eventually they find the wooden box and the long lost treasure is theirs. The boys drag the money as far as they can and agree to hide it in Widow Douglas' woodshed. Tom departs for a minute and returns with Benny Taylor's wagon. As they approach their destination, the Welshman steps out of the bushes and tells them that they are keeping

everyone waiting. The two boys have no idea what he is talking about but soon find out that there is a party about to begin at the widow's house. Tom's family and all their friends are there. There are even two new sets of clothing that they hurriedly change into.

Chapters 32 and 33 Analysis

Tom's persistence has paid off in getting Becky and him rescued. In addition, he is lucky that it just happened to be daylight when he went exploring. Had it been nighttime, he never would have seen the hole that led to their escape. Tom has such a positive spirit and fortitude. The very sense of adventure that got them into the depths of the cave is the one that will see them out. The boy is so good hearted that he tells the judge that Injun Joe is still in the cave. It would have been easy to ignore the fact and know that his apprehension about the criminal would have disappeared forever with the bolting of that new iron door. However, it was too late for Injun Joe. Tom isn't happy to see the dead body like he thought he would be and he has some sorrow in his heart knowing what the man must have suffered as he just recently went through a similar experience. At any rate, his days of worrying about Injun Joe taking revenge on him are over. Tom and Huck finally do get their treasure and life is looking very sweet.

Chapters 34 and 35

Chapters 34 and 35 Summary

Huck tries to convince Tom to jump out the window with him. Huck is not used to being around people and certainly not used to being in a fresh set of clothes. Just then, Sid comes into the bedroom and tells them that the widow is giving the party for the Welshman and his sons on account of their bravery in her defense the other night. Sid knows that the Welshman is going to spill Huck's secret too and the two boys are outraged.

The boys survive the dinner and the Welshman thanks the widow for her hospitality but tells everyone that it is Huck who is the real hero of the event. The widow makes a great display over the orphan and vows then and there to take him as her own and raise him and educate him and even give him money to start a business when the time comes.

Tom interrupts to tell everyone that Huck doesn't need her money because he is already rich. Then he produces the mountain of gold coins from their treasure which totals twelve thousand dollars. No one in the room has ever seen that much money in one place before.

Nevertheless, Huck moves into the widow's house and manages to live by her rules and her schedules for three weeks before he makes a break for it. Tom finds him in a barrel, dressed in his old rags and eating some scraps of food. Huck laments that the widow is a good person but he is not one who can live with all the rules she has. Tom convinces him that there are some benefits to being educated and knowing some manners. In fact, Tom won't let anyone into his robber gang who doesn't know how to behave. The gang is having its first meeting tonight so Huck has to agree to go back or he cannot be part of it. Huck thinks about it and decides that maybe he can do it and Tom offers to talk to the widow and ask her to go a little easier on Huck. Huck is happy with that resolution and vows to make the widow proud that she rescued him.

Chapters 34 and 35 Analysis

This is a book that you don't want to see end. It is such a fun story of an ornery boy with a good heart and in some ways it is about every boy. The pranks may be different and the rules may have changed a bit, but the sense of adventure and a code of what is right or wrong is still at the heart of every boy at this age.

Characters

Aunt Polly

The sister of Tom and Sid's dead mother, Aunt Polly has taken in both boys to live with her and her daughter Mary. Aunt Polly loves Tom but is both exasperated and amused by him. She is always shaking her head and wringing her hands over his behavior, but her soft heart prevents her from punishing him very strictly.

Widow Douglas

Huck Finn saves the Widow Douglas from Injun Joe when he overhears Injun Joe's plans to mutilate her and enlists the help of the Welshman and his sons to protect her. A pious and good-hearted woman of St. Petersburg, the Widow Douglas later takes Huck Finn into her home with the intention of "civilizing" him.

Huckleberry Finn

Referred to by the narrator as both the "juvenile pariah of the village" and as a "romantic outcast," Huckleberry Finn is "cordially hated and dreaded by all the mothers" of St. Petersburg and secretly admired by their children. The son of the town drunkard, who is usually absent from the village and thus from his parental responsibilities, Huck sleeps in hogshead barrels or on doorsteps, wears castoff men's clothing, swears, smokes, and lives by his own rules. Huck and Tom Sawyer are good friends because, although Tom is "under strict orders not to play with" Huck, he admires Huck so much that he disobeys Aunt Polly's orders and secretly finds ways to play with his outcast friend. Viewed by adults as being "idle and lawless and vulgar and bad," Huck actually possesses a conscience and a heart. When he goes to the Welshman to report Injun Joe's threats against the Widow Douglas, he admits to the older man that he worries about his character and the way he is perceived by others. He confesses that "sometimes [he] can't sleep much, on account of thinking about [his bad reputation] and sort of trying to strike out a new way of doing." Huck saves the Widow Douglas from Injun Joe's revenge, and she in turn takes Huck in and attempts to "civilize" him, with clean clothes and church and polite manners. But Huck is miserable under her protective care and runs away, explaining later to Tom, "It's awful to be tied up so."

Joe Harper

Tom Sawyer's "bosom friend," Joe is a member of Tom's pirate gang and as such calls himself "the Terror of the Seas." When the "pirates" run away on a short-lived pirating adventure, Joe is the first to admit to homesickness.

Injun Joe

Known as a "half-breed," meaning he is half white and half Native American, Injun Joe is the villain of the novel and a force of evil in St. Petersburg. He is an angry, vengeful, amoral man who thinks nothing of robbing Hoss Williams's grave, killing Dr. Robinson, stealing gold, or threatening old widows and young boys. Injun Joe's name, which is an abbreviated slang pronunciation of "Indian Joe," shows that his identity is so closely tied to his being a Native American that the townspeople - and the narrator - cannot think of him except in terms of his being an Indian. When Injun Joe, Muff Potter, and Dr. Robinson are in the cemetery to rob Hoss Williams's grave, Injun Joe begins to argue with Robinson about money. He points out that years before, Robinson had treated him poorly when he was in need, and he tells Robinson, "I swore I'd get even with you if it took a hundred years…. Did you think I'd forget? The Injun blood ain't in me for nothing." The inhabitants of St. Petersburg appear to be basically decent, good people; yet Injun Joe represents a dark force among them, embodying the possibilities of human evil.

Mr. Jones

See The Welshman

Amy Lawrence

Tom was in love with Amy before Becky Thatcher arrived in St. Petersburg.

Mary

Tom Sawyer's cousin, Mary is Aunt Polly's daughter and treats Tom sweetly, patiently helping him learn his Scripture verses and get dressed up for church.

The Model Boy

Hated by all the boys in town, the Model Boy is "the pride of all the matrons" because he is so polite and well-behaved.

Willie Mufferson

See The Model Boy

Muff Potter

Set up by Injun Joe to take the blame for Dr. Robinson's murder, Muff Potter is disreputable enough to be a believable murderer. Unable to recall what really happened on the night of the murder because Dr. Robinson had knocked him unconscious in a scuffle, Potter denies killing the doctor. Out of guilt for their secret knowledge of the truth, Tom and Huck are kind to Potter when he is in jail, and in spite of his mortal fear of Injun Joe, Tom finally tells the truth about the murder at Potter's trial, resulting in Potter's freedom.

Dr. Robinson

Dr. Robinson is killed by Injun Joe after they set out together on a midnight grave robbery. Tom and Huck are silent witnesses as Injun Joe takes revenge on the young doctor for having insulted him five years before.

Ben Rogers

Ben is the first boy Tom dupes into whitewashing Aunt Polly's fence for him.

Sid Sawyer

Tom's younger half-brother, Sid is "a quiet boy" with "no adventurous, troublesome ways," and so he and Tom do not get along with each other. Sid takes pleasure in tattling on Tom when Tom has gotten into mischief.

Tom Sawyer

Mischievous but lovable, Tom Sawyer is a fictional character so well known that he has become a folkloric figure. Even those who have not read *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* may be familiar with the episodes in which Tom tricks his friends into whitewashing his aunt's fence for him, spies on his own funeral, acts as the surprise witness against Injun Joe at Muff Potter's murder trial, and gets lost in the cave with his beloved Becky Thatcher. Tom's Aunt Polly takes good care of Tom and his half-brother Sid, although often Tom exasperates her when he gets into trouble. He sneaks out his window at night to go on adventures with his friend Huck Finn, believes in superstitions, and yearns to lead what he sees as the exciting life of a pirate or robber. He can't sit still in church or in school and always finds some diversion, such as watching a bug, to make the time pass more quickly. Tom is happiest when he is off having thrilling adventures with his friends: searching for buried treasure, running away for a few days to a sandbar in the Mississippi River in a game of pirates, or hiding in the cemetery at midnight. He adores Becky Thatcher, the new girl in town, and shows off to get her attention. Tom is a boy of strong emotions and great imagination, and in spite of his

mischievous ways he has a good heart: his rescues of Becky when she is heading for trouble with the schoolmaster and of Muff Potter when he is on trial for murder show that Tom knows the right thing to do.

Becky Thatcher

Becky is the new girl in town, daughter of the "august" Judge Thatcher. When Tom sees Becky for the first time, with her blue eyes and "yellow hair plaited into two long tails," he falls in love with her immediately, forsaking his old love, Amy Lawrence. At Becky's picnic, Tom and Becky become lost together in the cave and are missing for five days. During their ordeal inside the cave, Becky fears for her life and depends upon Tom for reassurance and support.

Judge Thatcher

Becky Thatcher's father, Judge Thatcher is a respected county judge, brother to St. Petersburg's lawyer Thatcher.

Rebecca Thatcher

See Becky Thatcher

The Welshman

The Welshman listens carefully to Huck when Huck reports that he has overheard Injun Joe's threats of injuring the Widow Douglas. The Welshman and his grown sons hurry out to investigate the trouble and later welcome Huck back into their house, a rare experience for the outcast Huck.

Setting

The intent of the novel, Twain states, is to entertain "boys and girls" and to "pleasantly remind adults of what they once were themselves." In order to appeal to such a wide audience, Twain chooses a setting that permits both adventure and nostalgia. The story takes place in "the poor little shabby village of St. Petersburg," the fictional equivalent of Hannibal, the Mississippi River town where Twain spent his early years. In his preface the author dates the action at "thirty or forty years ago," between 1836 and 1846, the era of his own boyhood. Twain also notes that Huck Finn is "drawn from life," and Tom Sawyer is a lifelike, though composite, character based on a number of boys.

The setting supports the major action and themes of the work. Institutions such as the home, the school, and the church provide a social order that Tom disrupts with pranks. Jackson's Island, where the boys camp and pretend to be pirates, offers the freedom of nature. But both the town and nature have their dark sides: the cemetery where the boys witness Dr. Robinson's murder, the "haunted" house where Injun Joe hides out, and the cave where Tom and Becky are lost and Injun Joe dies. Tom affirms social order when he returns from the island because of homesickness and guilt. He apologizes to his aunt for pretending to have drowned, and in the courtroom, another symbol of social order, he assumes responsibility by telling the truth about Dr. Robinson's murder. Later he and Becky escape the menace of the cave to rejoin the society of the village.

Social Concerns

As in The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, the characters in Tom Sawyer exhibit attitudes typical of the mid-nineteenth century. The stereotypical villain, Injun Joe, derives from the frontier figure of the violent and vengeful Native American, and black Americans are derivative of slave stereotypes. These elements should be recognized both for their negative connotations and their historical significance. Twain's realistic representation of his characters' attitudes should not be mistaken for his own attitude. The controversy surrounding The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn has produced substantial evidence of Twain's integrity: he intended much of what he wrote to reveal the inconsistencies in his characters' beliefs. By looking at society through the eyes of boys, who are supposedly more innocent than adults, Twain ridicules the weaknesses in adult values and behavior.

Techniques

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Thematic Overview

The Adventures of Tom Sawyer introduces several significant figures in American mythology, including the hero of The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, one of the central works of American literature. Nonetheless, The Adventures of Tom Sawyer is not just a dress rehearsal for its more powerful sequel.

Allowing for nineteenth-century conventions of language and sentimentality in literature for young adults, the novel retains vitality and humor in exploring questions of freedom and responsibility. Like The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, the book presents limitation, alienation, and horror as elements profoundly affecting a small Missouri town's young people, whose minds are shaped as much by superstition, romantic fiction, and nightmare visions as by social convention. It also resembles The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn in showing a painful moral growth that demands the risk of one's own welfare to assist another, while at the same time treating the reader to outlandish humor, melodramatic action, and a happy ending.

Themes

Friendship

Children's friendships are at the center of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer.* Tom's family - Aunt Polly, Mary, and Sid - does not always appreciate him and does not figure into his rich imaginative life. However, Tom's friends - Joe Harper and Huck Finn in particular - look up to him precisely because he is so imaginative and adventurous. The boys see each other as they want to be seen, and together they create an exciting world of intrigue and adventure. The friendship between Tom and Huck especially is highlighted in the novel. Tom admires Huck for his freedom from adults' rules, and he knows that his association with Huck makes him appear daring, an image he relishes. Tom also cares about Huck, concerned that he is alone in the world. When the boys return from their pirating adventure to attend their own funerals, Tom and Joe are smothered with affection by their families while Huck stands awkwardly alone, with no one to welcome him home. Tom points out to Aunt Polly that "it ain't fair. Somebody's got to be glad to see Huck." Tom and Huck share a deep belief in superstitions and a love of adventure, imagining themselves as pirates and robbers in partnership with one another. Tom is so loyal to Huck that he repeatedly disobeys Aunt Polly's orders not to play with Huck, and Tom proudly announces to the schoolmaster that he was late for school because he was playing with the forbidden Huck, even though he knows he will be punished for it. The boys often use dramatic conventions to represent their loyalty to one another. For example, after they secretly observe Injun Joe's murder of Dr. Robinson in the cemetery, Tom writes an oath that "they will keep mum about this and … wish they may drop down dead in their tracks if they ever tell and Rot." Tom and Huck then sign the oath with their own blood.

Because Tom is a child of the community, and thus assured of adult protection, he feels safe enough to testify against Injun Joe in Muff Potter's murder trial. But Tom keeps secret Huck's knowledge of the same situation, because Huck fears Injun Joe's retaliation and knows he is without serious protection. Huck and Tom's friendship rises above the social conventions of St. Petersburg. They are friends because each likes the other for who he is, and it matters little to either that their society frowns upon their friendship.

Imagination

Tom Sawyer's imagination rules his life and shapes his world. He takes every opportunity to make a game of life, embarking on such romantic endeavors as digging for buried treasure or organizing his friends into a band of pirates with names like "the Black Avenger of the Spanish Main," "Huck Finn the Red-Handed," and "the Terror of the Seas." Perhaps not always completely original in their imaginings, Tom and his friends play Robin Hood by reciting dialogue that they have memorized from the book. Although he claims to reject many of the rules of the adult world, Tom has his own clear

rules about how pirates must behave, what social class robbers must come from, and how certain superstitions work. His imaginings may free him from his rule-bound world, but they often place him in another such world. His imaginative world and his "real" world - the mundane life of St. Petersburg - do not often collide. Yet when these two worlds do collide - such as when Tom and Huck witness the murder in the cemetery, and when Tom realizes how badly he hurt Aunt Polly when he ran away to play pirates, and when Tom and Becky's adventure in the cave turns life-threatening - Tom is able to understand the limits of imagination. In each case, Tom's empathy for another person - Muff Potter, Dr. Robinson, Aunt Polly, Becky - causes him to realize that he needs to stop pretending and deal with the situation at hand.

Truth and Falsehood

The first words Tom Sawyer speaks in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* are a lie. Aunt Polly is looking for Tom and shouting his name, and when she finds him hiding in the closet and asks him what he is doing, he replies, in an obvious lie, "Nothing." She points to the jam all over his mouth and hands and asks what it is, and he replies, "*I* don't know, aunt," another obvious lie. Tom is thus introduced as a mischievous boy who gets into trouble, although Aunt Polly's laughter upon Tom's escape from her disapproval shows that his lies and disobedience are essentially unimportant to her. Tom lies frequently throughout the novel, mostly about where he's been or what he's been doing, and mostly to avoid getting into trouble. However, when telling the truth really matters, Tom knows he must not lie. When he first returns home after his pirating adventure, he feels bad about having hurt Aunt Polly by scaring her with his long absence, so he lies to her about having had a dream about her when he was away on his pirating adventure. When she later discovers that the story of the dream had all been a lie, Tom realizes that "what had seemed like a good joke before, and very ingenious … merely looked mean and shabby now." His conscience prods him finally to tell her the truth of what really happened. But this time, Aunt Polly doesn't believe him, and she refuses to until she finds the piece of bark in his jacket pocket with the note to her on it that he had said he had written. Tom's conscience again leads him to tell the truth when he decides he must help Muff Potter. Because he cannot in good conscience let Potter be convicted of Dr. Robinson's murder, Tom decides to be a witness at Potter's murder trial, even though he knows by doing so he places himself in some danger with Injun Joe. In spite of the ease with which lying comes to him, Tom's conscience and his ability to tell the truth when he should place him in stark contrast to Injun Joe. Injun Joe, a man without a conscience and thus capable of evil, lies and misrepresents himself for the purpose of personal gain.

Style

Point of View

The novel's narration is third person, limited omniscient, with Tom Sawyer as the central consciousness. This means that the story is told about Tom's world and is particularly focused on him by a narrator who is able to understand the motivations and feelings of some of the characters. This point of view earns the reader's amused admiration of an unlikely hero. Tom is a mischievous boy, an orphan, who cares nothing for school or church or any other polite social conventions but instead spends most of his time pretending that he is a pirate or a robber, sneaking out his window at midnight to have secret adventures with his friends in places like cemeteries, and entirely likely to have in his possession objects like dead cats. Tom Sawyer's character is a realistic portrayal of a young boy who gets into trouble constantly, trying the patience of the adults around him while making them smile. The novel's point of view makes Tom sympathetic by showing how he often feels guilty or sorry or brave. A more objective narration of Tom's antics□one that does not look into his mind□might make him seem only naughty and tiresome. The glimpses into his often noble intentions as he conjures up his schemes serve to temper his character: he is not a bad boy, just an imaginative one.

Setting

The Adventures of Tom Sawyer is set in the 1840s, mainly in St. Petersburg, Missouri, a small fictional village where everyone knows everyone and the people are unsophisticated. When Judge Thatcher, the county judge, visits the village church during the Sunday service, the children are fascinated, impressed that he has come from "Constantinople, twelve miles away□so he had traveled, and seen the world." Yet in spite of their lack of worldliness, the people of St. Petersburg attempt to keep up "civilized" practices such as having their children memorize Scripture passages and recite poems and other readings at school on Examination Evening. The adults of the village watch out for each other's children: when Tom and Becky are discovered to be lost in the cave, the entire town turns out to help search for them. St. Petersburg is a true community. Even the threat of evil, embodied by Injun Joe, is squelched by the human desire to help others. For example, Huck swallows his fear of Injun Joe and goes to the Welshman to help save the Widow Douglas, and the Welshman gladly goes to the Widow's aid. In this safe world, Tom Sawyer can feel secure in his human connections but also free to exercise his imagination. St. Petersburg mirrors Twain's childhood home of Hannibal, Missouri. St. Petersburg, like Hannibal, is situated along the Mississippi River, a source of transportation, beauty, and power. The river's presence near St. Petersburg makes the boys' pirate adventure possible and reminds them of the great world beyond their tiny village.

Realism

Realism involves the portrayal of characters and situations that appear to be drawn from real life. In the nineteenth century, realism often involved characters and settings that were ordinary and far from genteel. While *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* takes a somewhat romantic view of childhood in general□full of freedom and imaginative adventures□most of the children in the novel are themselves not romanticized. Tom and his friends get dirty, spit, sneak around behind their elders' backs, and carry around dead cats. Although he can also be charming and appealing, Tom lies to Aunt Polly, shows off to gain Becky Thatcher's attention, scratches himself when his clothes itch, and tricks his friends into doing his work: in short, he is human, possessing flaws and weaknesses. Twain's illustration of both sides of Tom□the appealing and the exasperating□makes Tom more realistic. Huck Finn's character, too, is shown in some depth, which also makes him more realistic. Huck is romanticized by many of the other children in town, as they envy what appears to be his utter freedom from rules and constraints. However, he has moments when he worries about his status in the world and wishes he weren't such an outcast, and his dark moments make him more real.

Historical Context

The Gilded Age

Mark Twain's 1873 novel, *The Gilded Age,* which he wrote in collaboration with his Hartford neighbor Charles Dudley Warner, gave its name to the mood of materialistic excess and cynical political corruption that started with the Grant administration in 1869 and prevailed in the 1870s and beyond. To be gilded is to be coated in gold, so the phrase "The Gilded Age" refers directly to the opulent tastes and jaded sensibilities of America's wealthy during this period. The appearance of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* during the Gilded Age represents a nostalgic look back at a simpler, less expansionist and less industrialized time in American history.

Expansion was a major theme of American society in the post-Civil War period. When the war ended in 1865, the United States was bigger, more powerful and richer than ever before, and it continued to grow. The way post-war Americans behaved and saw themselves was different: as a group they possessed greater energy, greater ambition, and a greater sense of potential. The American economy was becoming increasingly more industrialized. The transcontinental railroad was built, immigrants from Europe were pouring into the cities, westward expansion was occurring, and new farming technologies made it possible for farmers to grow more crops more successfully. The population was growing rapidly, helping to create a large labor pool, and labor unions were on the rise. The growth of industry, supported by the war and the demand it created for supplies, created enormous wealth for many Americans. Powerful businessmen such as Andrew Carnegie, John D. Rockefeller, and J. P. Morgan built their companies□U.S. Steel, Standard Oil, and Morgan Bank, respectively□into multimillion-dollar enterprises and became known by their detractors as "robber barons." The very wealthy flocked to summer vacation colonies like Newport, Rhode Island, where they built huge summer "cottages" that often were opulent mansions. Money and power were equated with each other during this period, and some of the rich and powerful were not above political corruption. At the time, U.S. senators were elected by the state legislators rather than by the voting public, and it was not uncommon for a legislator to accept bribes for electing a wealthy man's senator of choice.

However, not every American during this period was wealthy or able to vote; many Americans remained disenfranchised and poor. Women did not yet have the right to vote, and the women's suffrage movement had been underway for years. Black Americans also could not vote, and beginning at the end of Reconstruction in the 1870s, the legal apparatus that kept blacks separate from white society came into being, as Jim Crow laws were enacted by Southern states in an effort to suppress blacks. The Ku Klux Klan also began its brutal work in this period, with its goal of frightening and murdering Southern blacks into submission. The U.S. Army's main opponent during this time was Native Americans, who were being suppressed and forced onto reservations. So while the Gilded Age, as it is now called, was about controlling the population and

exploiting the land and other resources, all in the service of expanding the power of American culture and society, many Americans remained powerless.

American Literature of the 1870s

American literature following the Civil War began to reflect Americans' new sense of nationalism and diversity. Realism dominated the literary scene, as the arts began to portray ordinary people in their everyday lives. The three major literary figures of the last twenty-five years of the nineteenth century—Twain, Henry James and William Dean Howells—did much to bring realism into the forefront of American letters. In the 1870s alone, Twain published *The Gilded Age* (1873) and *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876), along with many other shorter works; James published his first two popular and successful works of fiction, *The American* (1877) and *Daisy Miller* (1878); and Howells, while he published several novels during the 1870s, achieved more success as the powerful editor of the *Atlantic Monthly,* the most influential literary magazine of the time. Howells was a friend and editor to both Twain and James, whose bodies of work could not be more different from each other.

Twain's work from this period brought him wide popularity: it is mostly humorous, focusing on characters who are typically uncultivated and not part of the Eastern establishment. In contrast, James's work, which was never especially popular with the reading audience, subtly probes the social conventions that shape the world of the wealthy, educated, and civilized American. Howells saw the genius in both writers and their work and helped to guide them in their careers.

While Twain and James were the best-known and most influential writers of their day, many other writers and styles of writing were also emerging in the 1870s. The nation's expansionist mood was reflected by the proliferation of regional, or "local color," writers, who wrote about their own corners of the rapidly growing nation. Local color writing, another form of realism, generally sought to preserve through fiction the small-town ways that were being threatened by industrialization. By the 1870s, writers such as Bret Harte, Joel Chandler Harris, and Sarah Orne Jewett had begun publishing their work on the West, the South, and New England, respectively. In the next ten to twenty years, Kate Chopin, Mary E. Wilkins Freeman, Charles W. Chesnutt, and Hamlin Garland would add their regional voices—New Orleans, New England, the South, the Midwest—to the mix.

Critical Overview

Often discussed alongside its critically acclaimed and more popular sequel, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* is generally thought by critics to be artistically a lesser work than *Huckleberry Finn.* Yet in spite of its shortcomings as a work of art, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* has remained popular around the world throughout the more than 120 years since its publication in 1876. Twain himself called this novel his "hymn to boyhood."

About Twain in general, Henry Nash Smith says that "there can be no doubt that Mark Twain was an artist of the people. His fresh handling of the materials and techniques of backwoods storytellers is the clearest example in our history of the adaptation of a folk art to serious literary uses." Walter Blair discusses in his article "*Tom Sawyer*" the novel's sources, both autobiographical and literary. Twain is widely known to have used people and places from his childhood in the writing of *Tom Sawyer,* and Blair also shows in his article that "Literary influences … shaped both incidents and the over-all pattern of *Tom Sawyer.*" In his 1960 book *Mark Twain,* Lewis Leary refers to the fact that upon its publication, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* "placed Mark Twain once more at the head of best-seller lists." Leary states, "Probably no more continuingly popular book has ever appeared in the United States." Leary discusses the con- struction of the novel, claiming that although it seems "loose and shambling … there is artistry in it also … [and] … perhaps because [Twain] worked long over it, this first independent novel … is better constructed than any he was to write again."

Granville Hicks writes in *The Great Tradition* (1935) that *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* starts out as seeming to be more than just a boys' book. Hicks believes that the novel begins as "a fine and subtle portrayal of the Missouri frontier." However, Hicks goes on to say that Twain's artistic powers were limited and that the book ends "in the tawdry melodrama of conventional juvenile fiction." In short, Hicks feels that Twain's book does not deliver on its promise. In *Mark Twain: An Introduction and Interpretation,* Frank Baldanza claims that Twain's reputation "is based firmly on the unparalleled achievement of his books about boys," namely *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn.* Baldanza calls *Tom Sawyer* "a delightful book," one that "gives a genial and warmhearted backward glance at boyhood in Missouri" yet that also is "a serious and adult book." Baldanza sees the seriousness of the novel in the fact that "in the moral sphere, both Tom and Huck pay plentifully for their natural desires and impulses." John C. Gerber, in his book *Mark Twain,* acknowledges that "*Tom Sawyer* may not have the art or the profundity of *Huckleberry Finn,* but as an idyll of boyhood it has no peer anywhere." Gerber defends *Tom Sawyer* as a portrait of "boys as they are" and as a comic work. Like so many other critics, Gerber highlights the book's broad popularity, pointing out that *Tom Sawyer* "has been translated into over two dozen foreign languages and its sales, domestic and foreign, extend into the millions." According to Gerber, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* is second in popularity among Twain's books only to *Huckleberry Finn.*

Contemporary criticism about both *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn* often looks at the treatment of race and racism in these novels and the world they portray. While *Huckleberry Finn* has become controversial in some circles because of its use of language that degrades African Americans, *Tom Sawyer* does not offend in the same way, perhaps because slavery and its implicit racism exist more in the background of this novel than they do in *Huck Finn.* Shelley Fisher Fishkin points out in *Lighting Out for the Territory: Reflections on Mark Twain and American Culture* that "the Hannibal of Twain's youth, like the St. Petersburg of both *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn,* was a slave-holding society; but only in *Huckleberry Finn* would this fact struggle to the foreground. The world of childhood fantasy, play, and adventure had preoccupied him in *Tom Sawyer.*" Fishkin sees none of Twain's growing "moral indignation" in *Tom Sawyer,* and she speculates that "Twain may have suspected that to recreate the boyhood pastoral of *Tom Sawyer* effectively, he had to suppress that troublesome thing called a 'conscience' that had begun to make him ask some difficult questions - such as whether that boyhood world was not so 'innocent' after all."

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2
- Critical Essay #3

Critical Essay #1

McIntosh-Byrd is a doctoral candidate at the University of Pennsylvania. In the following essay she explores the ways in which Mark Twain's Adventures of Tom Sawyer *can be read as a powerful critique of American identity.*

The Adventures of Tom Sawyer is an extremely difficult work to approach analytically because it is so embedded in the reader's own childhood. It is read in classrooms throughout the English-speaking world, and has become iconographic of childhood itself - especially American childhood. Indeed, this has been its reception from its initial publication. The first review, written by William Dean Howells in 1876, called it "a wonderful study of the boy-mind" which exists beyond the control or comprehension of adult society. His comments appeared in *Atlantic Monthly* before the book was even published, and thus set the framework for the way in which the novel would be read. Clemens himself did not read his book this way, a fact that is suggested by his initial conviction that the story was written for an adult audience. Though his wife persuaded him to publish it as a children's book, Tom Sawyer's story can still be recovered as a novel for adults - a savage satire on adult hypocrisy and American cultural identity.

Tom Sawyer is generally read as the first truly American novel: a cathartic attempt by Clemens to write his own childhood and the childhood of America into a coherent literary whole. His success is attested to by the timeless status of Tom as a sort of "Every-Boy" for American culture - the literary epitome of the ingenuity, imagination, and pluck which form the basis of America's understanding of its own national character. In this reading, Tom's flouting of authority is a paradigm for American self-determination in the face of tyranny, his character expressing the intrinsic essence of freedom from tyranny and restraint. If we accept this and then look more closely at the structural motifs and internal parallels of Clemens' novel, a very different picture of the national character begins to emerge. The novel, like the village in which it is set, seems to be bathed in perpetually fair weather and sunshine. There is, however, always a darker side. Just as the sunshine of the village is belied by the dank, labyrinthine caves, so the novel has deeper and more disturbing resonances than are at first apparent.

To find this darker side, we must start by questioning the validity of Howells' distinction between the adult and the child mind in the novel. Are Tom's behavior, responses, needs, and follies *really* any different from those of the adults around him? In two early scenes this distinction would seem to be untenable. The first is the Sabbath School scene where Tom's "wily fraud" wins him a Bible. Several direct parallels are made here between the behavior of the adults and the children. Faced with the unexpected appearance of a guest of honor, adults and children alike respond with the same show of self-importance:

Mr. Walters fell to "showing off "…. The librarian
"showed off "…. The young lady teachers "showed
off "…. The little girls "showed off " … the little boys

"showed off " … and above it all the great man sat
and beamed … for he was "showing off " too.

The only thing that differentiates the individuals in the Sabbath School is the method with which they express the same desire to be noticed. This series of comparisons suggests that public altruism, making spit-wads, enforcing discipline, and fulfilling the duties of public office should all be understood as essentially the same act. More subtly, the language that Clemens uses to describe Tom's actions in this episode is insidiously reflective of the adults that surround him. Tom's successful and hard-nosed bartering for the chits that will win him a Bible is described in the language of the adults' economy. In this way, the chits become "certified checks," which represent "warehoused" knowledge on the "premises" of Tom's brain. Judge Thatcher encourages him to say that he would rather have this "warehoused" knowledge than "any money" he could be offered, which draws the analogy tighter. Tom's gathering of this paper "wealth" is done to elevate himself above his peers and impress the powerful. If this wealth performs the same function in the adults' economy as it does in the children's, then the acquisition of money is being presented as foolish, egotistical, and childlike.

The second incident again takes place in church. Bored during a long service, Tom falls back on teasing a pinch-bug and then watches with smothered amusement as it torments a stray poodle. Despite their public show of faith and piety, the adults of St. Petersburg partake of exactly the same feelings:

Other people, uninterested in the sermon, found relief
in the beetle and they eyed it too … the whole
church was red-faced and suffocating with suppressed
laughter.

Just as the Temperance Tavern in the village contains a secret and squalid whisky-drinking den, so the church-going community hides its secret boredom beneath a show of public faith. Just as Tom goes to church because his Aunt compels him, so the villagers go to church because the need to appear acceptable to their peers compels them. In this insistent parallel, the motivations of human beings are presented, again, as identical in essence. The desire to show off and the compulsion to go to church are both shown to be expressions of the same need to be accepted. Further, because it is the adults' own need that compels them, they are shown as more willfully self-deluded. After all, the children have no choice but to be told what to do. The adults give up their own pleasure on purpose.

The fact that both of these scenes take place within the church is indicative of an implicit critique of the role of religion in St. Petersburg culture that threads throughout the text - a critique that finds its main expression through the subtle development of the role of books within the text. Again, this is created through a series of oblique parallels. Tom's relationship to books and the Book (the Bible) is contrasted throughout. While he cannot successfully commit a single verse of the Good Book to memory, he has whole pages of his favorite books memorized. The deliberate juxtaposition of these failures and feats of memory suggests a basic similarity among all of the books in question - a sneaky way,

as it were, of suggesting that all of the books in question are nothing more or less than fiction. With this juxtaposition firmly established, Tom's relationship to fiction becomes more understandable as satire. Just as the adults of the church act out their public lives in accordance to the teachings of the Book, so Tom acts out his public life in accordance with books. The charity that the village women want to posthumously extend to Injun Joe is thus performance, in the same way that Tom's posturing and playing is a performance of his favorite stories. The language of the Bible pervades the language of the adults and the language of adventure novels pervades Tom's language. The comparison that this provokes, like the comparisons between adult and child public behavior, devalues and deflates the self-importance of adult life.

There are darker aspects to these parallels. The single most important aspect of Tom's vivid fictions is that they are all actualized during the course of the novel. Tom is saturated in the lore of swashbuckling, Robert Louis Stephenson-style adventures. This is harmless until one by one his obsessions take form in village life. Tom dreams of piracy and buried treasure. Lo and behold, there is an actual theft and real buried treasure hidden by a man who, like Tom's pirates, wears a patch over one eye. Tom fantasizes about a literary-romantic version of his own funeral. By the end of the novel his real funeral has only been averted by luck. Tom stages and provokes mock-battles and wars. Almost immediately he is witness to an actual fight, with real bloodshed, resulting in a horrible murder. If we maintain the implicit conjunction between the Bible and Tom's books, this can be read as a very serious critique of the abuses of religion. Tom's utter belief in fiction shapes the world around him for the worse, and by extension, the adults' utter belief in the Bible is shown to warp the world in which they live. Biblical stories and romantic yarns become one and the same thing - both of them foolish and dangerous when they are acted out.

Ultimately, then, the reader is forced to ask questions that have painful answers. What does it mean if, as so many readers and critics have said, Tom is, in some essential way, America; if his story is America's story, and his character America's own? When we look at the bare bones of Tom's life and the evidence outlined above, it means that Clemens' America is an orphan country of unknown origins that begins - like the novel - in *media res.* It has no history and no future, existing in the framed bookends of the author's comments at the beginning and end of the tale. As he says:

It being strictly the history of a *boy* it must stop here;
the story could not go much further without becoming
the history of a man.

If Tom is America, then America too will never have a "man's history." In place of history it has only narrative - fictions and performances through which it lives out a permanent pre-adolescence with no possibility for maturity. The adults of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* are as childish as the children are adult - there is no distinction to be made, and hence no maturing wisdom to be counted on. We open where we end - in the middle of a fiction, with the end of an adventure and the start of a new one. In this disturbing world, the danger of these imagined adventures, as Tom's story so vividly illustrates, is that every last one of them comes true. Writing in the 1870s in the aftermath of the Civil

War, Clemens has set his novel in the 1840s. Tom's blustering aggression, his acting out of battles, and his fascination with death and heroism become far less amusing when we keep these dates in mind. Seen through this lens, the book becomes a savage indictment of a country that has brought itself to the brink of death because it is infatuated with vainglorious stories of heroism, battle, and divine sanction. What is more, because it has learned nothing from its experiences, it is - like Tom - doomed to repeat them.

Source: Tabitha McIntosh-Byrd, in an essay for *Novels for Students,* Gale, 1999.

Critical Essay #2

In the following excerpt, Wolff asserts that Tom Sawyer *is a protest against the female-dominated moral code of Twain's day and the lack of suitable masculine role models for boys.*

Initially Twain had intended [*The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*] to be a kind of *bildungsroman:* as Justin Kaplan reports, it was to have had four parts - "'1, Boyhood & youth; 2 y[outh] & early man[hood]; 3 the Battle of Life in many lands; 4 (age 37 to [40?]).…'" Yet the finished novel shows no sign of this early intention. In fact, Twain writes his "conclusion" with a kind of defensive bravado: "So endeth this chronicle. It being strictly a history of a *boy,* it must stop here; the story could not go much further without becoming the history of a *man.*" At least one reason for the author's decision may be found in the very nature of the world he was moved to create. There are no available men in it - no men whom Tom can fancy himself imitating - no newspaper office with a garrulous editor, no general store owner to purvey gossip and candy, no lawyer lounging in an office buzzing with flies and heavy with the odor of musty books. Of course there *is* Judge Thatcher, "a fine, portly, middle-aged gentleman with iron-gray hair." But Judge Thatcher presides in the county seat, twelve miles away; he enters the novel only very briefly in chapter IV (to witness Tom's triumph-turned-humiliation in Bible class) and thereafter disappears entirely until chapter XXXII, when he is summoned to rejoice in the safe return of the children from the cave. Many adults who have not read *Tom Sawyer* since the days of their youth are apt to recall Judge Thatcher as a rather more vivid personage than he truly is in the novel. Perhaps we are recollecting cinematic images, or perhaps our own imaginations supply his presence because we feel compelled to remedy the novel's deficiencies and "normalize" the town. But the stubborn fact remains. The town is not normal, certainly not congenial to a boy's coming of age.

It is, of course, a matriarchy (and in this respect, contrasts markedly with the various patriarchal systems that Huck encounters in his journey down the river), a world that holds small boys in bondage. The town that we are shown in this book is saturated with gentility, that is, with women's notions. A man may dispense Bible tickets or conduct the ceremony on Sundays; but the church service, the Sunday School exercises, the daily ritual of family prayers - these are all clearly defined as fundamental components of something that Aunt Polly (and other women like her) have defined as "duty" or "morality." Similarly, the mayor himself may judge the elocution contest; but this masculine salute to "culture" merely reinforces already established female allegiances to the melancholy and banally "eloquent" in literature. The very opening word of the novel establishes the situation. "'Tom!'" The boy's name called by his impatient aunt. " 'Tom!'" The demanding tone permeates the novel, no other voice so penetrating or intrusive. What is a male child to do against this diminutive drill master? Surrender is out of the question: the dismal results of capitulation greet him in mournful, not quite masculine figures. Mr. Walters, the superintendent of the Sunday School, "a slim creature of thirty-five, with a sandy goatee and short sandy hair; he wore a stiff standing-collar … a fence that compelled a straight lookout ahead, and a turning of the

whole body when a side view was required." And, more contemptible, "the Model Boy, Willie Mufferson [who took] as heedful care of his mother as if she were cut glass. He always brought his mother to church, and was the pride of all the matrons. The boys all hated him, he was so good."

Rebellion, however, is no easy thing to manage. Tom cannot bring himself to dislike Aunt Polly. Occasionally, he admits to loving her; and when he genuinely saddens her (as during his disappearance to the island), he discovers that "his heart [is] full of pity for her." Pity and its cousin guilt: these are Aunt Polly's most formidable weapons (no less so for being used without guile). "'She never licks anybody,'" Tom complains as he sets about beginning to whitewash the fence. "'She talks awful, but talk don't hurt - anyways it don't if she don't cry.'" Tom might be able to contend with open anger, but he receives only reproaches that insinuate themselves into that budding thing called "conscience." Discovered after a stealthy trip abroad at night, "Tom almost brightened in the hope that he was going to be flogged; but it was not so. His aunt wept over him and asked him how he could go and break her old heart so; and finally told him to go on, and ruin himself and bring her gray hairs with sorrow to the grave, for it was no use for her to try any more. This was worse than a thousand whippings, and Tom's heart was sorer now than his body. He cried, he pleaded for forgiveness, promised to reform over and over again." In Tom's world, female children are no easier to deal with than their adult models. Becky Thatcher rules him by alternating tears with lofty reproaches; and although Tom's angry feelings toward her are a good deal more available to him than any genuinely hostile feelings he might have toward the generation of mothers, he nonetheless continues to wish for a more direct and "manly" emotional code. "He was in a fine rage.… He moped into the schoolyard wishing she were a boy, and imagining how he would trounce her if she were."

With no acceptable model of "free" adult masculinity available, Tom does his best to cope with the prevailing feminine system without being irretrievably contaminated by it. His principal recourse is an entire repertoire of games and pranks and superstitions, the unifying motif of which is a struggle for control. Control over his relationship with Aunt Polly is a major area of warfare. Thus the first scene in the book is but one type of behavior that is repeated in ritual form throughout the book. Tom, caught with his hands in the jam jar - about to be switched.

"My! Look behind you, aunt!" The old lady whirled round, and snatched her skirts out of danger. The lad fled, on the instant, scrambled up the high board fence, and disappeared over it. His Aunt Polly stood surprised a moment, and then broke into a gentle laugh. "Hang the boy, can't I never learn anything? Ain't he played me tricks enough like that for me to be looking out for him by this time?"

Crawling out his bedroom window at night is another type of such behavior, not important because it permits this or that specific act, but significant as a general assertion of the right to govern his own comings and goings. Bartering is still another

type of this behavior. Trading for blue Bible coupons or tricking his playmates into painting the fence - these are superb inventions to win the prizes of a genteel society without ever genuinely submitting to it.

The logical continuation of such stratagems would be actual defiance: the rebellion of authentic adolescence to be followed by a manhood in which Tom and his peers might define the rules by which society is to be governed. But manhood never comes to Tom; anger and defiance remain disguised in the games of childhood.

Twain offers these pranks to us as if they were no more than humorous anecdotes; Aunt Polly is always more disposed to smile at them than to take them seriously. However, an acquiescence to the merely comic in this fiction will blind us to its darker side. A boy who seeks to control himself and his world so thoroughly is a boy deeply and constantly aware of danger - justifiably so, it would seem, for an ominous air of violence hangs over the entire tale. It erupts even into the apparently safe domestic sphere.

When the children depart from their schoolmaster in chapter XXI to begin the lazy summer recess, they leave him disgraced - his gilded, bald pate blazing as the ultimate spectacle in the school's pageant. "The boys were avenged. Vacation had come." Mr. Dobbin (even his name invites laughter) is hilariously humiliated, and he is apt to linger in our memories primarily as the butt of a good joke. Yet for most of the children most of the time, he is a source of genuine terror.

The one "respectable" man whom Tom sees regularly, Mr. Dobbin, is a sadist. Having reached maturity with the unsatisfied ambition to be a doctor, he spends his free time perusing a book of "anatomy" (that is, a book with pictures of naked people in it). His principal active pleasure is lashing the children, and the preparations for the approaching commencement exercises merely provide an excuse to be

> severer and more exacting than ever.… His rod and his ferule were seldom idle now - at least among the smaller pupils.… Mr. Dobbin's lashings were very vigorous ones, too; for although he carried, under his wig, a perfectly bald and shiny head, he had only reached middle age and there was no sign of feebleness in his muscle. As the great day approached, all the tyranny that was in him came to the surface; he seemed to take a vindictive pleasure in punishing the least shortcomings.

If the village itself (with taverns, courthouse, jail, and deserted slaughter-house) is composed of the elements of crime and punishment, then Mr. Dobbin might be construed as one of the executioners - disarmed at only the final moment by the boys' "revenge" and exiting to catcalls and laughter. The joke is a fine exercise in imaginative power, but it does not fully succeed in countering the potency of the masculine "muscle" that is used with such consistent vindictiveness and violence.…

Given the precarious balancing of control and violence in Tom's fantasies, we can easily comprehend his terrified fascination with Injun Joe's incursions into the "safety" of St. Petersburg. Accidentally witness to Injun Joe's murderous attack, Tom's first response is characteristic: he writes an oath in blood, pledging secrecy. "Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer swears they will keep mum about this and they wish they may Drop down dead in Their tracks if they ever tell and Rot." It is an essentially "literary" maneuver, and Tom's superstitious faith in its efficacy is of a piece with the "rules" he has conned from books about outlaws. However, Injun Joe cannot easily be relegated to the realm of such villains. It is as if one element in Tom's fantasy world has torn loose and broken away from him, roaming restlessly - a ruthless predator - genuinely and mortally dangerous.

He has murdered a man, but perversely, he does not flee. Instead, he loiters about the town in disguise, waiting for the moment to arrive when he can take "revenge." Humiliated once by the Widow Douglas's husband (no longer available to the Indian's rage), Joe plans to work his will upon the surviving mate. "'Oh, don't kill her! Don't do that!'" his nameless companion implores.

> "Kill? Who said anything about killing? I would kill *him* if he was here; but not her. When you want to get revenge on a woman you don't kill her - bosh! you go for her looks. You slit her nostrils - you notch her ears like a sow! … I'll tie her to the bed. If she bleeds to death, is that my fault? I'll not cry, if she does."

It is almost a parody of Tom's concocted "rules" for outlaws; even Injun Joe flinches from killing a woman. Sadistic torture (of a clearly sexual nature) is sufficient.

His grievance is twofold: against the absence of the man who would be his natural antagonist; and then against the woman who has inherited the man's property and authority. Seen in this light, his condition is not unlike the hero's. Tom, denied the example of mature men whom he might emulate, left with no model to define an adult nature of his own. Tom, adrift in a matriarchal world - paying the continuous "punishment" of guilt for the "crime" of his resentment at genteel restraints, conceiving carefully measured fantasies within which to voice (and mute) his feelings. Injun Joe is Tom's shadow self, a potential for retrogression and destructiveness that cannot be permitted abroad.

Yet being genuinely vanquished is no easy task. No other adult male plays so dominant a role in the novel as Injun Joe. Indeed, no other male's name save Huck's and Tom's is uttered so often. The only contender for adult masculine prominence is that other angry man, Mr. Dobbin. But the schoolmaster's vicious instincts are, in the end, susceptible to control through humor: he can be humiliated and disarmed by means of a practical joke. After all is said and done, he is an "acceptable" male, that is, a domesticated creature. The Indian, an outcast and a savage, is unpredictable; he may turn fury upon the villagers or act as ultimate executioner for Tom. When Tom's tentative literary gestures

prove insufficient, desperate remedies are necessary. Twain invokes the ultimate adventure. Death.

Death has several meanings for Tom. On the one hand, it is the final loss of self - a relinquishment of control that is both attractive and frightening. Confronted with reverses, Tom sometimes longs for the blissful passivity of death, deterred primarily by the sneaking fear that "guilt" might be "punishable" even in the unknown land to which he would travel.

> It seemed to him that life was but a trouble, at best, and he more than half envied Jimmy Hodges, so lately released; it must be very peaceful, he thought, to lie and slumber and dream forever and ever, with the wind whispering through the tree and caressing the grass and the flowers over the grave, and nothing to bother and grieve about, ever any more. If he only had a clean Sunday-school record he could be willing to go, and be done with it all.

On the other hand, properly managed, "death" might be the ultimate assertion of control, the means a boy might use in this puzzling female world to win a satisfactory "self" after all. "Ah," Tom's fantasy runs, "if he could only die *temporarily!*"

The triumph of "temporary death" and the fulfillment of that universal fantasy - to attend one's own funeral and hear the tearful eulogies and then to parade boldly down the aisle (patently and impudently alive) - is the central event in the novel. The escapade is not without its trials: a terrible lonesomeness during the self-imposed banishment and a general sense of emptiness whenever Tom falls to "gazing longingly across the wide river to where the village lay drowsing in the sun." Yet the victory is more than worth the pain. Temporarily, at least, Tom's fondest ambitions for himself have come true. "What a hero Tom was become, now! He did not go skipping and prancing, but moved with a dignified swagger as became a pirate who felt that the public eye was on him." He has definitely become "somebody" for a while - and he has achieved the identity entirely upon his own terms.

Yet this central miracle of resurrection is merely a rehearsal. Its results are not permanent, and Tom must once again submit to death and rebirth in order to dispatch the specter of Injun Joe forever.

The escapade begins light-heartedly enough: a party and a picnic up river into the countryside. Yet this moderated excursion into wilderness turns nightmare in the depths of the cave. "It was said that one might wander days and nights together through its intricate tangle of rifts and chasms, and never find the end of the cave.… No man 'knew' the cave. That was an impossible thing." Existing out of time, the cave is a remnant of man's prehistory - a dark and savage place, both fascinating and deadly. Once lost in the cave, Tom and Becky must face their elemental needs - hunger, thirst, and the horror, now quite real, of extinction. For Tom alone, an additional confrontation awaits:

he stumbles upon Injun Joe, who has taken refuge in this uttermost region. The temptation to despair is very great; however, "hunger and wretchedness rise superior to fears in the long run.… [Tom] felt willing to risk Injun Joe and all other terrors." Thus he begins his long struggle out. Holding a length of a string lest he be separated from Becky, he tries one dark pathway, then another, then "a third to the fullest stretch of the kite-line, and was about to turn back when he glimpsed a far-off speck that looked like daylight; dropped the line and groped toward it, pushed his head and shoulders through a small hole and saw the broad Mississippi rolling by!" Born again upon his beloved river, Tom has earned his reward.

Afterwards, as Tom recounts his adventures to an admiring audience, he becomes a "hero" once again - now the hero of his own adventure story. Even more, he has become rich from finding buried treasure; Judge Thatcher conceives a great opinion of his future and says that he hopes "to see Tom a great lawyer or a great soldier some day." Endowed with an excess of acceptable identities which have been conferred upon him as the result of his exploits (no clearer, certainly, about the particulars of the adult male roles identified by them, but nonetheless christened, as it were, into the "rightful" inheritance of them), Tom seems to have surmounted the deficiencies of his world.

Yet it is a hollow victory after all. Just as Tom must take on faith the pronouncement of his future as a "great lawyer" or a "great soldier" (having no first-hand information about these occupations), so we must accept the validity of his "triumph." The necessary condition for Tom's final peace of mind (and for his acquisition of the fortune) is the elimination of Injun Joe. And this event occurs quite accidentally. Taking the children's peril as a warning, the villagers have shut the big door to the cave and triple-bolted it, trapping Injun Joe inside. When the full consequences of the act are discovered, it is too late; the outcast has died. "Injun Joe lay stretched upon the ground, dead, with his face close to the crack of the door.… Tom was touched, for he knew by his own experience how this wretch had suffered.… Nevertheless he felt an abounding sense of relief and security, now."

Tom's final identification with the savage, valid as it certainly is, gives the lie to the conclusion of this tale. What do they share? Something irrational and atavistic, something ineradicable in human nature. Anger, perhaps, violence, perhaps. Some unnamed, timeless element.

> The poor unfortunate had starved to death. In one
> place near at hand, a stalagmite had been slowly
> growing up from the ground for ages, builded by the
> water-drip from a stalactite overhead. The captive
> had broken off the stalagmite, and upon the stump
> had placed a stone, wherein he had scooped a shallow
> hollow to catch the precious drop that fell once
> in every three minutes with the dreary regularity of
> a clock-tick - a dessert-spoonful once in four-and twenty
> hours. That drop was falling when the Pyramids
> were new; when Troy fell; when the foundations

of Rome were laid; when Christ was crucified;
when the Conqueror created the British empire; when
Columbus sailed; when the massacre at Lexington
was "news." It is falling now; it will still be falling
when all these things shall have sunk down the afternoon
of history and the twilight of tradition and
been swallowed up in the thick night of oblivion.…
It is many and many a year since the hapless halfbreed
scooped out the stone to catch the priceless
drops, but to this day the tourist stares longest at that
pathetic stone and that slow-dropping water when he
comes to see the wonders of McDougal's Cave. Injun
Joe's cup stands first in the list of the cavern's
marvels; even "Aladin's Palace" cannot rival it.

Whatever Injun Joe represents in this fiction - whatever his complex relationship may be to Tom - he cannot be dealt with by summary banishment. Shut up by fiat; locked away. It is an ending with no resolution at all.

Taken seriously as a psychological recommendation, the ultimate disposition of the problem of Injun Joe offers no solution but that of denial. Lock away the small boy's anger; lock away his anti-social impulses; shut up his resentments at this totally feminine world; stifle rebellion; ignore adult male hostility: they are all too dangerous to traffic with.

Thus Tom's final "self" as we see it in this novel is a tragic capitulation: he has accommodated himself to the oddities of his environment and given over resistance. A resolution to the story is established not by changing the bizarre quality of the fictional world (not even by confronting it), but by contorting the small hero into compliance. He becomes that worst of all possible things - a "Model Boy" - the voice of conformity in a genteel society. Huck complains. "'The widder eats by a bell.… Everybody's so awful reg'lar a body can't stand it.'" And Tom responds. "'Well, everybody does that way, Huck. … If you'll try this thing just awhile longer you'll come to like it.… Huck, we can't let you into the gang if you ain't respectable you know.'"

He has even lost his sense of humor.

The fault is Twain's, of course. Tom has earned the right to "be somebody"; but his creator's vision has faltered. Twain averts his attention from the struggle that should be central and shrinks from uncivilized inclinations. In the end, his hero must settle for security in a world that will always be run by its women.

Source: Cynthia Griffin Wolff, "*The Adventures of Tom Sawyer:* A Nightmare Vision of American Boyhood," in *The Massachusetts Review,* Vol. XXI, No. 4, Winter, 1980, pp. 637-625.

Critical Essay #3

In the following essay, Trilling analyzes Twain's portrayal of childhood and parental responsibility in Tom Sawyer.

Mark Twain once said of *Tom Sawyer,* "It is *not* a boys' book at all. It will be read only by adults." We can suppose he was speaking defensively, with the extravagance of an irritated author. He had brought to the book his full powers of serious communication and he had no wish for it to be thought of as a mere children's book, what publishers call a "juvenile." Yet ever since its publication in 1876 until quite recently, the audience for *Tom Sawyer* has of course been primarily a youthful one. In fact, the American public has regarded it as one of those books peculiarly apt to induct any sensitive boy, and even any spirited girl, into the wholesome pleasures of reading.

This situation has now significantly altered. In the last few decades there has been a considerable change in American child life, so that *Tom Sawyer* has come closer to fulfilling Mark Twain's prophecy than at any previous time in its history. Much more than it is now thought to be a book *for* children, it is regarded as a classic *of* childhood, especially to be read by adults of college age with an interest in the American past. It would seem that American youngsters can no longer empathize - to borrow the language of current psychology, which is not without its responsibility for the change - with Mark Twain's little hero. For the big-city child in particular, there is a barrier to be got over before he can find his counterpart in Mark Twain's remembrance of himself as a small boy.

The nature of the difficulty is obvious enough. In today's most advanced view of what constitutes emotional health in the young, Tom is little less than certifiably disturbed. If he is not entirely committed to delinquency, he is manifestly deficient in those restraints upon instinctual conduct which have come to define a young person's potentiality for life in society. From the first chapter of the novel, in which Tom ducks out of the house for a day of truancy from school, a deed in defiance of his good Aunt Polly which he at once embellishes by lying and cheating and then compounds by beating up a boy who happens to walk toward him on the same road, we are in the company of someone whose relation to authority must seem to us to be alarmingly negative, who respects no principle of behavior other than the demand for the quick gratification of desire. In conduct like Tom's, from the very outset of the book, the young reader of our time is bound to recognize a deviation so extreme that he tolerates it only at a certain risk to his own moral well-being. Would Tom Sawyer, as Mark Twain introduces him, be welcome in a contemporary American school, especially an enlightened one? Clearly not. So much at odds with himself and society, Tom Sawyer can be sympathetic only to the view of history.

And as Tom's story progresses, his author can give us but small promise of his rehabilitation. Tom fails dismally at school: unable to concentrate on his age-appropriate job of learning, he squanders his mental powers in infantile sadomasochistic fantasies. For the teachings of religion he substitutes wild primitive superstitions; reality has but

the weakest hold on this unhappy victim of magical thinking. Tom has no proper goals of achievement and his exhibitionism is insatiable: he schemes to win a prize he does not deserve. He chooses his friends as we might expect: his great crony is Huckleberry Finn, the outcast ambitionless son of a drunkard, a boy who *likes* to sleep in empty hogsheads and beg for his food and idle away his days on the river. And with such as Huck, Tom indulges in dark rituals of blood-brotherhood, prowling the graveyards and back alleys of St. Petersburg, consorting with the lowest of low village characters. Witness to a murder, he conspires to keep his guilty knowledge a secret. He runs away from home, inflicting cruel suffering on his family. And when remorse strikes him, as occasionally, miraculously, it does, he handles his emotional conflict by still further indulging his antisocial impulses. Yet such is the behavior his poor, deluded author can allude to as Tom's "adventurous, troublesome ways," and in which he would have us see his own beginnings. And not only see them but celebrate them.

It was not until 1884, eight years after *Tom Sawyer,* that Mark Twain published *Huckleberry Finn.* As between the two books it is of course *Huckleberry Finn* that has always been the more admired, rightly so since it is the larger, more complex work. But Mark Twain retained a special affection for his earlier effort to recapture the scene of his childhood in Hannibal, Missouri. In a letter of his later years he wrote of *Tom Sawyer:* "It is simply a hymn, put into prose form to give it a worldly air." When Mark Twain calls *Tom Sawyer* a "hymn" he precisely intends the double connotation of music and sacredness, and certainly the book is nothing if not sung: the human voice is Mark Twain's instrument. And it is also nothing if not a celebration of something sacred, despite its funniness. What is sacred is the condition of grace in which we find Tom in early life. The hymn is a celebration not of God, nor of man as he has attained to what we are pleased to call his civilized maturity, but of boyhood. In every page of Tom's history Mark Twain proclaims his passionate belief that civilization, as it erodes instinct, destroys that which is most valuable in man: affection, honor, loyalty, manly pride, joy, imagination, community with nature. The book is first a hymn; second, with almost religious conviction, it is doctrine.

Mark Twain's position in American letters is so high, and his reputation for humor so prevailing, that we are likely to forget that this most amiable of authors seldom had a good word to say for any man, any full-grown man; women are of course something else again. Throughout his writing, maturity is virtually synonymous with corruption, hypocrisy, meanness, bombast; the men in *Tom Sawyer* are prime examples of Mark Twain's law of deterioration through growth. Alone among the male adults who touch Tom's life, Muff Potter, the town drunkard, boasts even the virtues of generosity and helpfulness; and Muff, like Jim in *Huckleberry Finn,* is still a child in spirit. The schoolmaster in *Tom Sawyer* is an ignorant bully, the Sunday-school superitendent a pious toady, the eminent judge a pompous ass; the owners of temperance taverns traffic in whiskey and harbor the town's most villainous ruffians. Such are the good citizens of St. Petersburg - and always ready for a good clean hanging even if, like Muff Potter, the victim is guilty only of the crime of never having joined their respectable masquerade.

And yet these people with so little claim to virtue have another aspect to their characters which Mark Twain reveals, as it were, unwittingly. When Tom and his cronies are off

being pirates and the whole town thinks they have drowned, the men of St. Petersburg search hard and long for them before they give over to their grief, which is genuine. Or when Becky and Tom are lost in the caves, the men push themselves to extremes of exhaustion trying to rescue them, and with no histrionics of heroism. Selflessness of this kind in people who are otherwise meanly self-engrossed is of course in the American pattern. Today, too, given the proper crisis, and especially if the drama involves a child, we can count on the sudden generous effort of people of ordinarily small spirit. But the difference is notable between the attitude that the townspeople in *Tom Sawyer* bring to their rescue missions and what we might expect today were children to be in difficulties like those of Tom and his friends. There is no word of reproach spoken of Tom for having been on the river when he should have been at home or in school, or for involving Becky in the adventure of the cave. No syllable of criticism is directed at Aunt Polly for having raised a boy so little to be relied upon. Twice Tom disappears, in circumstances where his fault is clear, but there is no hint on the part of neighbors or friends of adverse moral judgment on his character or upbringing. Corrupt and unfeeling as the adult world of St. Petersburg may be, it retains a concept of innocence - innocent childhood and innocent parenthood - which is now gone from American life. For, whatever our present-day concern with children - and it could scarcely be greater - we now bring to any violation of the childhood norm an extraordinary readiness of moral judgment, and on parents no less than on the child. In terms of "advantages," Tom and his friends may be markedly under-privileged compared to children today - to see the difference we have only to catalog the contents of Tom's pockets, the mad odds and ends of string and metal that make up his "worldly wealth." But Tom is accepted in all his quirkiness and error and mess as no boy today can hope to be. Indeed, the more serious the trouble in which Tom lands, the less, not the more, he is blamed.

Understandably, Mark Twain records this side of the life he knew as a child without conscious emphasis. In the 1870s he could have no premonition of a time when the idea that "boys will be boys" would be thought morally dangerous. It is not hard for us to imagine Mark Twain's horror if he had been told, for instance, that a century after Tom's boyhood, properly conscientious parents would signalize Halloween by providing their children with costumes, paper bags and lists of neighbors prepared to give them treats. But particularly in the character of Tom's Aunt Polly, he thoroughly documents the large faith that his society had in children, or at least the fatalism which underlay its refusal to assign ultimate blame when children misbehaved. His guardian's rearing of Tom rests on two beliefs: in God's mysterious ways and in childhood, or perhaps in progress. The strongest motive in Aunt Polly's character is her sense of duty: this together with her affectionate nature; and the two are often in strenuous conflict. It is the burden of her duty to her ward to inculcate in him the moral and social law as it has been established in her cultural tradition, which is at the same time her religious tradition: he must not steal or lie, he must obey his elders (at least he must be aware when he does not), he must be polite and he must wash (if only on Sundays), and he must go to church (in decent attire) and learn the Scriptures (at least he must show the signs of effort), and he must go to school; he must also be punished when he does wrong, preferably with a whipping. And it is the burden of her profound love for Tom that she must impose upon him these requirements of proper conduct, to most of which he has, understandably, the greatest natural resistance. It is a particular trial to her spirit that she must punish him.

The whippings she administers so regularly truly hurt her more than they do him; and when he escapes her switch, she is relieved.

Thus, the rod which is so ready to hand for Aunt Polly is never the extension of an adverse judgment on Tom for being such a troublesome little boy. It is the instrument of her defined duty to a child, any child in error, and it is an expression of her love - if you love a child, you want to do your best by him. For Aunt Polly, that is, the rules that govern a good woman in the rearing of her young have something of the same magical power that the rituals of superstition have for Tom. Often, as Tom goes through one of his elaborate mumbojumbos to fend off evil or to ensure the fulfillment of a wish, he is suddenly assailed by doubt that his method is really the right one, that it will work. But he has nothing with which to replace the tribal lore, and how can a boy risk *not* doing what his tribal lore prescribes? Just so, Aunt Polly questions the tenets of child-rearing in which she has been trained, but she dares not risk violating them.

The impact upon a child of a moral authority as benign and generalized as Aunt Polly's is very different, of course, from an authority rooted in individual judgment, and it is small wonder that Tom not only dearly loves his aunt but suffers no break in his attachment to her because of her frequent whippings. He accepts her punishments in the spirit in which they are administered: they are his aunt's duty to him and evidence of her devotion to his welfare; they convey no possible mitigation of her affection or of her essential and continuing approval of him. And, similarly, the beatings administered by the schoolmaster are part of the traditional, impersonal routine; they, too, leave no emotional scar; at their most severe, they scarcely hurt. While the schoolmaster no doubt brings to the exercise of his duty a certain nasty satisfaction that is wholly absent from Aunt Polly's corporal punishment of Tom, this represents no vital breach in the impersonal system of child-rearing that Mark Twain knew as a boy. It merely describes a difference in the characters of the two persons.

The result is that a boy like Tom Sawyer who, in our contemporary view, is grievously at the mercy of impulse, in reality has enough conscience for any civilized man. In our present-day world we have come to think of guilt as a most undesirable state of feeling rather than what it is if it but be kept in sound proportion to instinct: the clue to our humanity. Certainly Tom's well-educated sense of wrong and the remorse he suffers when he seriously misbehaves and gives pain to others is the key to his special lovableness. It is conscience that makes it necessary for Tom to break his vows of secrecy about the murder and, at considerable danger, save Muff Potter from being hanged. It is conscience - the ability to confront his guilt without exaggerating it - that permits the particular tenderness with which Tom treats Becky when the two of them are lost in the caves. And it is guilt at the pain he has given his aunt by disappearing from home that makes him return in the night to leave her a note of reassurance. That Tom decides not to leave the note because he is all at once struck by the beautiful possibility of attending his own funeral makes, finally, the difference between someone able easily to conform to social dictate, a "Model Boy," and the boy who grew up to be Mark Twain. It is the difference, to put it another way, between the ordinary, or ordinarily, decent youngster and a potential hero of the imagination.…

And it is not alone for Tom but for Huck, too, that the capacity for guilt and for love, or at least for genuine respect, live in the strongest connection. Unlike Tom Sawyer, Huck has known almost no adult affection in his life - none at all from his vagrant father, certainly, and little enough from the townspeople of St. Petersburg. What, we wonder, has molded his character so close to that of his friend and made him, too, so loving and brave and decent. It is an inquiry to which Mark Twain feels no need to address himself, except, perhaps, by negative implication. Unimpeded by the influences of civilization, Huckleberry Finn has been free to develop nobly; he exists in a state of nature. He is boyhood pure, unindebted even to an Aunt Polly for his decency of feeling. When the Widow Douglas undertakes to adopt Huck and train him, like Tom, in the ways of society, Huck cannot make the compromise that Tom has made. He is full of gratitude and loyalty to this kindly woman, he honors her teachings, but he cannot submit to clothes and a bed and washing and having the Scriptures read to him. Civilization is almost literal death to Huck rather than the mere encumbrance it is for Tom. He chooses life and leaves society, and in making the choice becomes his author's new and greatest hero.

In *Tom Sawyer* the tension between the Model Boy principle and the Huck Finn principle is surely strong enough. But it is not yet fierce, and its product is Tom, a boy whose sweet geniality is unmatched in fiction but who represents compromise and therefore, for all his appeal, a sacrifice of stature. While his story unmistakably has its point of departure in doctrine, doctrine in *Tom Sawyer* is not yet as urgent as it will be when it is Huckleberry Finn's boyhood rather than Tom's that Mark Twain celebrates - in, *Huckleberry Finn* we will have more than a hymn, a choral symphony, with distant but sure echoes of tragedy. The special reverberations of the later book have, however, their chief source in nature. Compared to *Huckleberry Finn, Tom Sawyer* is a town book. Its fields and woods are neighborly, the river lies beyond it. The river is where you go to *from* the main scene of action; it is not itself the main scene of action. It is not yet the great Mississippi.

Some years ago, crossing the country by train, I looked from the window and saw, below me, a narrow muddy river, bordered by a town. Suddenly I realized I was crossing the Mississippi into Missouri, into Mark Twain country. The catch I felt in my throat was for Tom Sawyer's place, not Huck's. This was not the *real* Mississippi I had reached so accidentally and casually. The real Mississippi, Huck's Mississippi, was yet for me to discover, and it would require a special expedition, for which my encounter with the world of Tom Sawyer was only a preparation.

Source: Diana Trilling, "Tom Sawyer, Delinquent," in her *Claremount Essays,* Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1964, pp. 143-225.

Adaptations

In 1930 *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* was adapted by Paramount as a film entitled *Tom Sawyer.* It was directed by John Cromwell and stars Jackie Coogan and Mitzi Green.

The novel was also adapted as a film entitled *Tom Sawyer* by Selznick International in 1938. Directed by Norman Taurog and starring Walter Brennan and May Robson, the film is available on video, distributed by Trimark.

A 1939 film adaptation, *Tom Sawyer, Detective* (Paramount), was directed by Louis King and starred Porter Hall, Donald O'Connor, Elisabeth Risdon, and Janet Waldo.

In 1973 Clemens's novel was adapted into a musical film version (United Artists) entitled *Tom Sawyer,* directed by Don Taylor and starring Johnnie Whitaker, Jodie Foster, Celeste Holm, and Warren Oates. Available on video (MGM Home Entertainment) and with a musical score composed by Robert and Richard Sherman, this film received three Academy Award nominations.

In 1995 Disney adapted the novel as a film entitled *Tom and Huck* directed by Peter Hewitt and starring Jonathan Taylor Thomas as Tom Sawyer and Brad Renfro as Huckleberry Finn. This version is also available on video (Walt Disney Home Video).

Read by Pat Bottino, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* is available on cassette from Blackstone Audiobooks.

Topics for Further Study

Research white Americans' attitudes toward Native Americans in the mid-19th century. Does Injun Joe's status as evil incarnate reflect the popular view of Native Americans in that period?

Consider the life of Huckleberry Finn in terms of today's standards: How would a homeless child, the son of an alcoholic who has essentially abandoned him, be treated in the United States today? What factors in Huck's world make it possible for him to live as he wishes, sleeping outside in barrels and on doorsteps and wearing rags? How can Twain romanticize a child like Huck, and why would Huck not be considered romantic in today's society?

The role of women in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* seems to be that of a civilizing force: Aunt Polly trying to teach Tom how to behave, the Widow Douglas taking Huck in to "introduce him to society," the young ladies on Examination Evening reading essays with titles such as "Religion in History" and "Filial Love." Research attitudes toward women in 1840s American culture. What kinds of tasks were white women expected to fulfill, and what was their role in helping to shape their world?

In the 1840s, Missouri represented the American frontier. What did this mean? What form of government existed for Missouri then, and how was it enforced? What attitudes did people "back East" have about those who had moved out West to the frontier, and how did the frontiersmen and women see themselves?

Compare and Contrast

1840s: Slavery of Africans was widely practiced throughout the Southern states of the nation. Slaves were considered the property of their owners and possessed no civil rights: they could not vote, legally marry, or own property.

1876: Following the Civil War and the abolition of slavery in the United States, the radical wing of the Republican party attempted to remake the South without slavery. This period of reformation, called Reconstruction, ended in 1876. The civil rights gains made during Reconstruction were lost following the end of President Ulysses S. Grant's administration.

Today: African Americans possess full civil rights under the U.S. Constitution and hold positions of power in the U.S. government, including seats on the Supreme Court, in the Senate, and in the President's Cabinet. In spite of these gains, race relations continue to be a divisive issue in American society.

1840s: In 1840, Missouri was the westernmost state in the Union. Presidents Polk and Tyler pursued policies to fulfill America's so-called "manifest destiny" to expand to the shores of the Pacific Ocean. The war with Mexico resulted in the annexation of the Southwest. Texas became a state in 1845; California, virtually unknown in 1840, became a state in 1850.

1876: Colorado entered the Union. Alaska had been purchased by the United States in 1872. The West was rapidly becoming populated, and in 1890 the U.S. government declared the frontier closed.

Today: Alaska and Hawaii became the 49th and 50th states in the 1950s, and in the 1990s the physical boundaries of the United States appear fixed, but some wish to make Puerto Rico the 51st state.

1840s: Industrialization was just beginning in the United States. Steam power transformed water transportation from rafts to steamboats. Steam was also beginning to transform travel on land with railroads. Samuel B. Morse's telegraph, a new means of communication, first operated successfully in 1844.

1876: Industrialization was transforming the country, and the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition celebrated technology. Alexander Graham Bell's telephone was introduced at the Exhibition. The transcontinental railroad had been finished in 1869, and by 1876 the railroad had become central to the industrial economy.

Today: The information economy has succeeded the industrial economy. While the railroad was at the center of the industrial economy, the computer is at the center of the information economy. The Internet has produced a global communication network, and travel by automobile and airplane has largely replaced rail travel.

1840s: From 1840 to 1855, about 3.5 million immigrants came into the United States, attracted by the promise of wealth and freedom. Most of the immigrants in this period came from Ireland and Germany.

1876: Changing the population and the way American cities developed, immigration had become by 1876 a huge influence on American culture. In 1876, the nation was on the verge of its largest-ever influx of immigrants: nine million in the last twenty years of the nineteenth century.

What Do I Read Next?

Twain's masterpiece, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884), reintroduces the character of Huck Finn, Tom Sawyer's best friend. While floating down the Mississippi River on a raft, Huck and runaway slave Jim escape the bonds of civilization and gain insight into human nature and conscience. Many critics consider *Huckleberry Finn* to be one of the greatest American novels of all time.

Twain's *Roughing It* (1871), a book which grew out of his journey to the West with his brother, is a humorous, loosely-constructed travel narrative that relies on the American storytelling tradition.

Twain's lifelong love affair with the Mississippi River is expressed in his *Life on the Mississippi* (1883), a compilation of travel narrative, anecdotes, history of the river, observations on American society, and stories from Twain's boyhood.

The Autobiography of Mark Twain (1958 edition edited by Charles Neider), which Twain worked on for years before his death, is a book in which Twain says he speaks "freely" because "I shall be dead when the book issues from the press."

Topics for Discussion

1. Twain prefaces the novel by stating that it is intended to "pleasantly remind adults of what they once were themselves," but much of the book deals with unpleasantness. Discuss the darker side of the book. How does Twain remind his readers of some of the fears and insecurities of growing up?

2. Twain is sometimes called a "realist" writer. Are Tom, Huck, and Becky accurate portraits of young people?

3. Discuss Tom Sawyer as an adventure book. Compare its plot with those of other books, films, or television shows in which young people are menaced by villains, search for treasure, and win community approval.

4. Does Tom change in the novel? Discuss ways in which he "grows up."

5. Discuss the setting of the book. How does each significant place help in telling the story? Are some places more memorable? Why? Read again the descriptions of the places you remember best. What details are significant?

6. Discuss Injun Joe. Is he a believable character? Why? Is he given any motivation for his actions? Is he extended any sympathy? Compare him with villains in other stories.

Ideas for Reports and Papers

1. Tom Sawyer also appears in Huckleberry Finn. How does his character differ in the two books?

2. Twain claims that his portrait of Huckleberry Finn in this book is drawn from life. Investigate Twain's early life to see how he derived Huck and other elements of the story.

3. Compare the language of Tom Sawyer with that of its sequel. Choose a significant passage from each and compare vocabulary and tone. What differences occur as a result of Huck speaking for himself?

4. Compare Tom Sawyer to one of Twain's later works (other than Huckleberry Finn) in which Tom appears. Is the later story less effective? Why or why not?

5. Discuss Tom as a rebel. Which conventions of society does he accept? Which does he reject?

Literary Precedents

The mid-nineteenth century produced a number of books dealing with boys rebelling against conventional society, such as Thomas Bailey Aldrich's Story of a Bad Boy (1869). While Twain's book is a powerful and original addition to literature about young people, it retains some of the "literary" language of nineteenth-century fiction.

Twain abandons these conventions in The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, in which he permits the title character to tell the story.

The novel contains many qualities of the adventure story: villains menace the innocent, hide treasures in caves, and inhabit haunted houses; heroes rescue helpless victims, discover buried treasure, and gain recognition from the women they love and from their community. Twain also employs conventions of frontier literature, in which pranks disrupt the order of the church and school, and the ominous Native American seeks revenge.

Further Study

Bernard DeVoto, *Mark Twain's America,* Chautauqua Institution, 1932.

DeVoto, who published his book following the publication of Albert Bigelow Paine's biography of Twain, called his own book "an essay in the correction of ideas." The book looks at Twain's works in the context of his American culture.

William Dean Howells, review in *Atlantic Monthly,* Vol. 37, May, 1876.

In this glowing review written before the novel's American publication, Howells singles out Clemens' depiction of the "boy-mind" as especially wonderful.
William Dean Howells, *My Mark Twain,* Dover, 1997.
Howells was "the dean of American letters" during Twain's day, and also Twain's close friend and editor. In this book, Howells presents his personal account of his friendship with Twain.

Jim Hunter, "Mark Twain and the Boy-Book in 19th-Century America," *College English,* Vol. 24, 1963.

Hunter provides a valuable survey of contemporary boys' literature, showing the role of the "Bad Boy" that Clemens adapted for Tom Sawyer.

Justin Kaplan, *Mr. Clemens and Mark Twain: A Biography,* Simon and Schuster, 1966.

A groundbreaking biography of Twain when it was first published, Kaplan's book made use of material about Twain's life and work that had been previously unavailable to biographers.

Charles A. Norton, *Writing Tom Sawyer: The Adventures of a Classic,* McFarland and Co., 1983.

Norton traces the creation of the novel, suggesting that Clemens' main motivation in writing it was to present an acceptable version of his childhood to his wife's family.

Dennis Welland, *The Life and Times of Mark Twain,* Crescent Books, 1991.

Lavishly illustrated, this book covers Twain's life and culture, organizing its information through a geographical approach.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Novels for Students (NfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's□For Students□ Literature line, NfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on □classic□ novels

frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of NfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of NfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of □classic□ novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members□educational professionals□ helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in NfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed□for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man-the character is listed as □The Narrator□ and alphabetized as □Narrator.□ If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. □ Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name □Jean Louise Finch□ would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname □Scout Finch.□
- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- Criticism: an essay commissioned by NfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an □at-a-glance□ comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

NfS includes □The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,□ a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Novels for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

Citing Novels for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Novels for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from NfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

□Night.□ Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from NfS (usually the first piece under the □Criticism□ subhead), the following format should be used:

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335-39.

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of NfS, the following form may be used:

Malak, Amin. □Margaret Atwood's □The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,□ Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of NfS, the following form may be used:

Adams, Timothy Dow. □Richard Wright: □Wearing the Mask,□ in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editor of Novels for Students welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via email at: ForStudentsEditors@gale.com. Or write to the editor at:

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