Tom Brown's Schooldays Study Guide

Tom Brown's Schooldays by Thomas Hughes

BOOKRAGS

Contents

Overview

Despite Hughes's tendency to be didactic, his reticence about sexual matters, the remoteness of the time and school depicted in the novel, and the frequently obscure British schoolboy slang, Tom Brown's Schooldays still appeals to modern readers. Like modern young adults, Tom and the other boys at Rugby suffer pangs of separation from family, stand up against peer bullies, ponder the ambiguities of friendship and the finality of death, and gradually assume adult responsibilities.

Tom is no saint; like his American contemporary Huckleberry Finn, he gets into trouble with authority, cuts corners when convenient, sees the hypocrisy of many conventional viewpoints, and relishes an active, outdoor life. Even when Tom is "civilized" under the indirect guidance of his headmaster, Thomas Arnold, he is not transformed into a prude or a snob. He is aware of his own weaknesses and feels great sympathy for those who do not possess his strengths. Thus, although the world that Hughes describes is one that modern readers will never enter, the characters and their internal struggles are relevant.

About the Author

Thomas Hughes was born on October 20, 1822, near Uffington in southern England, the second of Margaret Wilkinson Hughes and John Hughes's eight children. The Hughes family were members of the rural squirearchy, a loose confederation of landed proprietors that provided traditional leadership in the community.

John Hughes spent most of his life as a well-connected literary dilettante who enjoyed the traditional social and sports activities of the countryside.

Hughes had a conventional upbringing for his social class, beginning his education at home, attending Rugby, a "public school" (the British equivalent of an American private school), and eventually entering Oxford University at age twenty.

At Rugby, Hughes came under the influence of Dr. Thomas Arnold, father of the poet Matthew Arnold. Believing that his students would be the future leaders of the British Empire, Dr. Arnold hoped to transform the purposes and practices of boarding schools in order that they might produce leaders distinguished for their intellectual achievements and moral strength. But in spite of Arnold's efforts to improve the academic rigor and moral tone of the school, Rugby was still an institution where the older boys exercised an often ruthless control over the younger students, and where learning took second place to sports and escapades.

Hughes flourished in the Rugby environment, excelling at both sports and academics. He was equally successful as a student at Oriel College of Oxford University. Upon completion of his studies, in 1847, Hughes married Frances Ford, the daughter of a well-connected clergyman.

During his time at Oxford, Hughes developed an interest in several progressive religious and social movements then current in England. From the late 1840s on, Hughes became a major advocate of Christian Socialism—which called for a merger of Christian and Socialist principles—as a means of improving the human lot. He helped establish a cooperative movement that called for economic reform of British retailing and manufacturing practices.

Hughes had studied law after leaving Oxford and was called to the bar in 1848, but he gradually found writing to be a more powerful means of effecting social change than litigation. His most popular work, though, proved to be Tom Brown's Schooldays, which he originally envisioned as preparatory reading for his eight-year-old son, who was about to enter school. Once published, the book received an enthusiastic response and was a best seller.

Buoyed by this success, Hughes set to work on other fiction, publishing The Scouring of the White Horse; or, The Long Vacation Ramble of a London Clerk (1859) and Tom Brown at Oxford.

Neither met with the success of the earlier work, but Hughes's fame nonetheless continued to spread as Tom Brown's Schooldays became popular throughout the English-speaking world.

His fame as an author helped publicize the various religious and reform causes with which he was affiliated, and in 1865 he was elected to the British House of Commons from a workingclass district near London. He served in Parliament until 1874, and he was one of the founders of an institution called The Working Men's College, acting as its principal from 1872 to 1883.

During the last two decades of his life, Hughes gradually fell out of touch with growing extremism in both religious and labor circles, and saw both his influence and his fortunes decline. Defeated for re-election to Parliament in 1874, he turned his attention to religious matters, publishing The Manliness of Christ in 1879. This book publicized Hughes's faith in what came to be called "muscular Christianity." He then poured his financial resources into a cooperative society in Tennessee. Here he hoped to settle young British men who would learn to work with their hands and contribute to the experimental community.

After initial success, the community collapsed, and Hughes suffered financial ruin. In 1882 his friends found him a post as a county court judge in Chester, England, where he spent his last years writing in support of liberal causes.

Hughes died on March 22, 1896, in Brighton, England.

Plot Summary

This novel tells the story of a rambunctious young student at a traditional English all-boys school in the mid 1800s, and his transformation from a thoughtless, shallow youth into a thoughtful, selfless, and moral young man. The narrator is as much of a character as the student, his schoolmates, and their teachers, giving the clear impression that the story is as much a lecture on proper behavior and morality as it is a narrative.

The novel begins with a detailed description of Tom's small-town life, the home in which he grew up, the attitudes of his parents, activities in the nearby village, and how they all formed the basis of his character. The strong relationship with his father, his distant relationship with his mother, and his non-discriminatory friendships with members of the so-called "working classes" defined in the first few chapters all play important roles in the development of Tom's relationships during his years at public school, which begin after an abruptly shortened stay at a private school.

Tom arrives at Rugby Public School eager for education and new experiences. Before he has even walked through the gates, he meets a fellow student named East, who quickly becomes Tom's best friend and companion on several adventures. Tom quickly learns the routines and tricks of his new life, all the while aware of the sometimes gracious, sometimes wise and sometimes stern but always looming presence of the Doctor, the school's quietly authoritative headmaster.

In an early stage of their school careers, Tom and East become "fags," or semi-servants of the boys in the upper grades. Being independent and strong willed, they quickly come to resent being at the beck and call of those older than they, and initiate a rebellion among the other boys in an attempt to get the older boys to stop making unnecessary demands. Their rebellion succeeds, but at a cost - Tom and East earn the resentment and enmity of Flashman, the school bully. They have several confrontations with him, one of which results in Tom having to withdraw from school activities for several days as the result of injuries he suffers at Flashman's hands. Shortly afterwards Flashman is expelled for drunken misbehavior, and the progress of Tom and East toward young manhood continues even more freely.

The Doctor becomes concerned about Tom's lack of discipline and academic progress. On the advice of one of the other teachers, he arranges for Tom to become a mentor to Arthur, a small, sickly, much younger boy who arrives at Rugby shortly after the death of his father. At first, Tom resents having so much of his time taken up by a boy who is so little fun, but over time he becomes more and more accepting and understanding, and eventually learns a great deal about responsibility and respect. Their friendship is challenged when Arthur, always a good performer academically, is challenged to a fight by a less studious boy who feels threatened by Arthur's intelligence. Tom steps in to defend Arthur, and challenges the other boy to a fight. The narrator comments on how necessary fighting is to the successful living of human life. The Doctor is informed, but before he can intervene, the combatants get word that he is approaching and their fight

is declared a draw. The following day they shake hands, having each earned the respect of the other. The narrator's, and the novel's, key point is made.

Several years into his stay at Rugby, a potentially fatal fever burns its way through the young men at the school. One of those affected is Arthur, who comes close to death. Tom becomes very worried about him but Arthur recovers, and has a conversation with Tom about life, death, and faith that sets Tom firmly on a path to a traditional belief in God. Some years later, Tom learns the truth about how the Doctor engineered his friendship with Arthur, and after contemplating how much good has resulted from that friendship, regards the Doctor and his accomplishments with more respect than ever. This leads to the novel's final chapter, which takes place several years after Tom's graduation and following the Doctor's death and funeral. Tom returns to Rugby to pay his respects, and the novel concludes with a tribute to the Doctor, whose exemplary common sense, wisdom, and respect for the boys in his charge, and their effect on Tom, are described by the narrator as being an ideal example of the spirit of God at work in man.

Part 1, Chapters 1, 2 and 3

Part 1, Chapters 1, 2 and 3 Summary

This novel tells the story of a rambunctious young student at a traditional English all-boys school in the mid 1800s, and his transformation from a thoughtless, shallow youth into a thoughtful, selfless, and moral young man. The narrator is as much of a character as the student, his schoolmates, and their teachers, giving the clear impression that the story is as much a lecture on proper behavior and morality as it is a narrative.

These first three chapters describe Tom's life at home and in his community before he goes off to school, the beliefs in equality and opportunity instilled in him by his parents, and the friendships with those more vulnerable than him that shaped his attitude to other boys at school.

Chapter 1 - *The Brown Family*: The narrator speaks at length about his frustration at British people not knowing much about their home country, and about his own pride in being British. He also refers to the excellent qualities of the Brown family (strength, courage and determination), and then speaks in rhapsodic detail about the beauty of England, particularly the part of the country he and Tom Brown's family are both from. He describes how Tom's landowning family rarely, if ever, left the county in which Tom was born, and how he (the narrator) admires people who travel all over the world. "So having succeeded in contradicting myself in my first chapter," he says, "I shall . . . shut up for the present and consider my ways . . . you'll probably get the truth out of me."

Chapter 2 - *The Veast*: The narrator describes Tom's home life, starting with the way he is cared for by a local girl named Charity, the latest in a series of young women Tom's mother, known as Madam Brown, takes in, trains, and passes on to other jobs. The narrator also speaks of Tom's friendship with two elderly farm hands, one in particular - Benjy, who takes Tom to "the veast" (feast), a traditional, local village fair with booths of food for sale, games of chance, and contests of physical strength and courage. One such contest is called back-sword, and involves two men, each carrying a wooden cudgel or club, climbing into what might be described as a kind of boxing ring, and fighting to see who can make the other's scalp bleed first. The narrator comments on his sadness and disappointment that such games and competitions have disappeared from the culture, and tells how Tom watches the combat with excitement. The narrator closes the chapter by commenting on how young men busy with intellectual pursuits, politics and social reform would be much better off if they cultivated friendships. Instead of focusing on increasing their level of sophistication and the amount of money they possess, they would be able to "value a man wholly and solely for what was in him."

Chapter 3 - *Sundry Wars and Alliances*: Tom accompanies Benjy to the farm of an Old Man who reportedly knows the medicinal powers of herbs. Tom is given a cure for a wart on his hand, while Benjy's search for a cure for his rheumatism meets only with a half-heartedly offered potion. The narrator tells how the potion did no good at all, how

Benjy became less and less able to move, and how Tom found new friends. Also, the narrator explains, that even though he was conservative politically, Tom's father, the Squire, was liberal when it came to the boys he believed Tom could or should make friends with - he encouraged, for example, Tom's friendships with the sons of the village laborers. The narrator also tells how the clever, mischievous Tom made friends with the boys attending the local private school and how he was taught to wrestle by one of them. He adds that "Tom had often afterwards reason to be thankful" for that lesson. Finally, the narrator tells how Tom began to attend private school, some distance from the village, and how all the boys at school were sent home shortly after Tom's arrival as the result of an outbreak of flu. The narrator then tells how the Squire made plans for Tom to start attending Rugby, a public school.

Part 1, Chapters 1, 2 and 3 Analysis

Three key themes appear for the first time in this section: fighting, friendships, and openness to those of different status. The fighting theme manifests throughout the novel in two ways. On a literal perspective, throughout the novel Tom is frequently involved in physical confrontation: the narrator's comment about Tom's gratitude for having been taught the wrestling move is foreshadowing his use of the move on at least two later occasions (in Part 1 Chapter 9 and Part 2, Chapter 5). From the narrator's philosophical perspective, which he defines in detail in Part 2, Chapter 5, fighting and conflict are essential aspects of the human condition, serving to trigger physical growth and expansion of the spirit, if conflict is entered into in a healthy and respectful way. The physical fights in this section and throughout the novel are dramatizations of this thematic perspective.

In terms of the friendship theme, the development of Tom's friendships with Benjy and his schoolmates in this section foreshadows the development of several similarly close friendships throughout the novel. As such, these friendships are the first illustration of the thematic importance placed on such friendships by the narrator. That importance is summed up by the narrator's comments in the final chapter that the development of personal relationships is a manifestation of the spirit of God. The open-ness to relationships with those of lower social, financial, physical, or spiritual status that Tom learns from his open-minded father and open-hearted mother in this section is a sub-theme of the friendship theme. The lessons Tom learns here through his friendship with Benjy in particular is a manifestation of this, and foreshadows the development of the friendship with Arthur who is in many ways as physically handicapped as Benjy, and similarly emotionally under-developed.

Another important aspect of the novel introduced here and repeated throughout is the idiosyncratic, individualistic voice of the narrator. In an introduction, the author is quoted as saying his intent in writing the book was as much to lecture as to entertain. This intent clearly manifests itself in the language in which the narration is written and the interjections of specific opinions about behavior, attitude, and morality by the narrator. The above-mentioned perspectives on fighting and friendship are the most notable examples of the way this stylistic approach is utilized - the narrator makes frequent and

very specific references to his (the author's) belief that those aspects of life are extremely important and must be positively shaped in the lives and psyches of young men like Tom.

There is an additional important comment in the introduction that must be noted, in that the author comments that it was also his intent to make Brown not just the name of the central character and his family, but also a symbol of a certain class of Englishman. This he defines as the hard working, open-minded but clearly moral upper middle class working man or woman who simply is what he or she is and does what he or she needs to do to make good lives for themselves and their family. These people are not ambitious, not downtrodden, just good, solid citizens with traditional values that manifest in the novel as traditionally Christian - tolerance, compassion for those less fortunate, and faith in God.

The definitions of "public" and "private" schools in England are exactly opposite from those in America. In America, "public" schools, in which enrolment is universal and non-exclusive, are funded and administered by government, while in England such schools are called "private." Schools in England in which enrolment is limited and controlled and which are funded and administered by individuals, organizations or societies, are called "public," while similar schools in America are called "private."

Part 1, Chapter 4

Part 1, Chapter 4 Summary

Chapter 4 - *The Stage Coach*: This chapter begins with Tom being woken up by a servant in the roadside inn where he and his father are staying while they wait for the coach to take Tom to Rugby School. Narration describes how Tom got there, traveling via London and arriving around suppertime. Narration also describes the Squire's final words of wisdom to his son, and the complex thought process the Squire went through to choose exactly the right words. Narrative then describes Tom's early morning ride on the stagecoach to Rugby, during which the coachman tells him stories about the wild misbehavior of the other Rugby boys he has driven. After stopping for breakfast, which Tom proudly pays for himself, just like a grownup, the coach begins the last stage of its journey. At one point two students run alongside the coach and the coachmen times them on how quickly they run a mile. As they run off to join their schoolmates, Tom reflects on how he's never had a more pleasant day, and the narrator comments that for many years, Tom thought that was the greatest day he would ever have.

Part 1, Chapter 4 Analysis

This transitional chapter is notable for two important points. The first is the playing out of the gruff intimacy that exists between Squire Brown and Tom - in particular, the Squire's thought process as he determines what to say to Tom, which is careful and rational but also grounded in genuine affection and concern. Meanwhile, Tom's near-tearful reaction to the speech illustrates both the emotional and intellectual respect with which he regards his father.

The second key point in this chapter is the way the narrative voice shifts from first person past tense to first person present tense, from "Tom rode the stage coach" to "Tom rides the stage coach." There is the sense in these shifts that the author intends to give the reader a more immediate and visceral sense of Tom's experience, a stronger feeling of action and activity.

Part 1, Chapters 5, 6 and 7

Part 1, Chapters 5, 6 and 7 Summary

These chapters tell the story of Tom's first few months at school, which are also the last few months of the term. The novel's principal antagonist, the bully Flashman, is introduced.

Chapter 5 - *Rugby and Football*: Upon his arrival at the school, Tom is shown around by East who has only been at school six months but is already confident in his knowledge and his worth by simply being at Rugby. East tells Tom he's arrived on a good day - his (East's) house is going to play in a game of football (soccer). After a noisy meal in the common room and an equally noisy roll call, Tom joins the rest of the students rushing out to the football pitch. He asks East whether Brooke, the team captain, will let him play, but East firmly tells him that because he doesn't yet know the rules Tom will have to be content with watching. The game gets underway and proves to be very exciting, with East's house, under the leadership of Old Brooke and his brother, Young Brooke, somewhat surprisingly gaining control of the game. The excitement becomes too much for Tom. Against all the rules, he rushes in and attempts to defend the goal from an onrush of schoolboys, but gets knocked over. After the rush has passed Old Brooke helps him up, is introduced by East, and comments that he's sure Tom will be a good player.

Chapter 6 - *After the Match*: Tom and East, who hurt his foot during the game, go into the village to buy some food for their tea (afternoon meal). Tom has more money than East, and is therefore able to buy some sausages, which he shares with the other boys in their house. Later that evening the older and younger boys get together in the common room and sing a series of traditional songs, with the older ones drinking mild beer and giving the dregs in their glasses to the younger ones. At the end of the singing Old Brooke, who is leaving school at the end of the current term, stands up and gives a speech in which he encourages all the boys to work and play with integrity and courage, and to endure bullying the same way. At this point narration refers to some of the younger students looking pointedly at Flashman. Old Brooke also encourages all the boys in the house to respect the Doctor, the head of their house, even though he has strong new ideas that some might think go against the school's traditions. His speech ends with a rousing cheer, and the boys troop off to bed. As they go, East warns Tom that Flashman and some of the other older boys will come looking for them to play the game of tossing them in a blanket, and says Tom can hide if he's afraid. Tom, presumably remembering the words of both Old Brooke and the Squire, says he won't hide and allows himself to be taken aside by Flashman and the others. He endures the blanket tossing without complaint, even though he feels frightened. Flashman is not pleased, and wants to toss him and East together in the hopes that they will cry out, but one of the other boys tells him to forget it. Just then, one of the room monitors comes by, and the boys all disperse.

Chapter 7 - *Settling to the Collar*: The morning after the football match, Tom and East are both stiff and in pain after both the game and the tossing, but nevertheless go down to church for the first of the day's two services. Tom is too curious about the church and his fellow students to pay much attention to the service or do much actual worshipping, but at the second service he's much more focused, and finds himself very moved by the Doctor's sermon, which encourages the boys to live life well, rather than let it pass by them. In the days following, Tom quickly settles in to his new life, and participates in sports, does well in his classes, and eagerly accepts responsibilities for serving the older boys from which he normally would have been excused because he was new.

Late in the term Tom, East, and several other boys of various ages participate in a cross-country chase. Tom and East, in spite of their determination and stamina, fall far back of the pack, become lost, arrive late back at the school, and are sent up to see the Doctor to take their punishment. The Doctor, however, is understanding and forgiving, and does not punish them at all. This increases the respect Tom feels for him. The end of term comes. Tom, like the other boys, is sent home for a few weeks. At the end of the chapter, he is sitting down to an evening meal with his parents.

Part 1, Chapters 5, 6 and 7 Analysis

The essential purpose of this section is defined in the title of Chapter 7. "Settling to the collar" means getting used to routine, rules and discipline. That being said, a key tension throughout the novel, between those rules and routines and Tom's determination to break them and go his own way, is also defined in this section. Specifically, Tom's rushing into the game serves both to illustrate the key rebellious streak in his character and to foreshadow several other occasions through the book in which he breaks the rules. It is interesting to note that, while the narrator clearly believes that adhering to the rules as an essential component of the morality Tom must learn, he (the narrator) just as clearly believes that breaking such rules is inevitable and ultimately essential for learning how important the rules are.

Other foreshadowing occurs in the reference to Flashman, who bullies Tom and East mercilessly in later chapters. The most significant piece of foreshadowing in this section, however, can be found in the appearances of the Doctor, and in Tom's increasing respect for him, thematically significant motifs that reappear frequently throughout the book. The Doctor is always portrayed as a figure worthy of the respect of both reader and student, while Tom's regard for him and the way his sense of discipline is tempered with wisdom and perspective constantly grows, climaxing in the book's final chapter. It is this relationship, even more than the relationship between Tom and Arthur, that the narrator has in mind when, in the final chapter, he describes human relationships as being manifestations of the will and ways of God.

Also in this section, previously discussed narrative elements are repeated. There is a further example of the narrative's tendency towards switching tenses, as the football game is narrated in the present tense and the action before and after is narrated in the past tense. Meanwhile, the novel's thematic emphasis on fighting also manifests itself in

the football game, which is the kind of fight or battle the narrator holds to be so important. Finally, the narrator, or author's focus on the importance of living a moral life is reiterated in the speech by Old Brooke.

Part 1, Chapters 8 and 9

Part 1, Chapters 8 and 9 Summary

These chapters focus on the development of the rebellious side of Tom's character, and his ongoing conflict with Flashman.

Chapter 8 - *The War of Independence*: Tom starts his first full year in the company of East and several other young students who seem more interested in playing games and taunting their teachers than in concentrating on their lessons. Two incidents teach Tom the foolishness of this attitude - at one point he is caught playing in the teacher's desk, causing this teacher and several others to change their view of him from respect to wariness. The second incident is an oral examination from the Doctor, in which he physically disciplines a boy who had been just as careless in learning his lessons as Tom.

Narration reveals how Old Brooke left school, how other older boys like him (calm, steady, responsible) also left, and how bullies like Flashman and his crowd of friends took control, treating the younger boys like Tom and East like the lowest of servants. Tom and East become tired of this treatment and refuse to obey Flashman's orders, eventually convincing other boys their age to do the same. Flashman and his cronies beat and taunt them but to no effect - the younger boys have freed themselves from their control. Flashman realizes that East and Tom were the leaders of "the war of independence," and continues to bully and berate them. At times, they regret their determination, but are advised by a sturdy older boy named Diggs to stand their ground.

Diggs is a target of Flashman's bullying as well - Flashman frequently steals his belongings and auctions them off to the other boys, leaving the uncomplaining Diggs with nothing. At one auction, however, Tom and East use their saved pocket money to buy back some of Diggs' things and return them to him. Tom, East, and Diggs are all embarrassed when Diggs expresses his gratitude, but narration reveals how proud Tom is of himself for having done the right thing.

At one point, Flashman's bullying becomes dangerous. When the boys hold a lottery to bet on a popular horse race, Tom draws the name of the most favored horse. Flashman and his cronies pressure him to sell them his ticket. Tom refuses. Flashman and the others try to beat him into submission. East tries to help, but is pushed back as Flashman and the others hold Tom to the fire. East runs to get Diggs as Tom's clothes begin to burn and he falls unconscious. Diggs rushes in and forces Flashman and the others to let Tom go. Flashman retreats as East runs out to get the school nurse, who demands to know what happened. Tom is barely conscious, but has his wits about him enough to keep Flashman's involvement a secret (presumably he fears that something even worse will happen to him if he tells). As he recovers, there are moments when Tom longs to return home, but resolves to stick it out.

Chapter 9 - *A Chapter of Accidents*: Tom returns to regular school life after a couple of days of recovery and discovers that, for the most part, the attitude of Flashman's cronies towards him has improved. The attitude of Flashman himself, however has not - he no longer bullies Tom and East physically, but taunts them verbally at every opportunity. One evening he discovers Tom and East by the fire together, and tries to give them orders. Diggs, who is studying nearby, tells Tom and East to tackle Flashman together. They are somewhat frightened, but so is the cowardly Flashman, who is quickly overwhelmed by the younger, faster, more agile boys. Tom uses some of the moves taught to him by the wrestlers in Chapter 3, and eventually sends Flashman to the floor, bleeding. For a while Flashman while pretends to be unconscious, leading Tom to panic and start for the door to fetch the school nurse. Diggs realizes Flashman is only faking, hauls him to his feet, and shoves him out of the room. Over the next few weeks, Flashman spreads rumors that blacken the reputations of Tom and East even more. The narrator comments that those reputations lingered long after Flashman left, which he does fairly soon after being caught getting publicly drunk.

Once Flashman leaves, Tom and East become even more rebellious, frequently behaving badly and breaking rules just because they can. At one point, Tom gets caught fishing where he and all the Rugby boys have been forbidden to fish, and is taken to the Doctor. Tom recalls the relatively easy confrontation he had with the Doctor earlier (Chapter 7) and believes he will not be punished too severely, but to his consternation, he is severely disciplined. At another point, Tom and East accidentally change the time on the school's clock, and both fear what will happen to them, but this time the Doctor lets them off with only having to memorize a few lines of Greek literature. The next day they are called back to the Doctor's study, and become quite concerned about what they might be about to face. The Doctor warns them that unless their behavior improves significantly, they will be expelled from the school. They leave his office, now quite chastened.

Shortly afterwards, the Doctor speaks with one of his assistants about East and Brown. The assistant suggests that one way to settle them down might be to give them responsibility for mentoring or supervising a younger boy. The Doctor says he will consider the idea.

Part 1, Chapters 8 and 9 Analysis

The contrasting manifestations of Tom's rebellious nature are clearly defined in this section. On the one hand, his determination to break the rules is shown to be a positive attribute, with his leadership inspiring East and the other "fags" (servants) to free themselves from the bullying control of Flashman and his cronies. The narrative suggests in this section that spiritual freedom and personal integrity both depend on action and on breaking oppressive rules to thrive. On the other hand, through the incidents of the forbidden fishing and the resetting of the clock, the narrative also makes clear that such rebelliousness and independence of spirit can go too far. The point seems to be that life must include some kind of balance between living by the rules and living independently.

Once again in this section, the Doctor's influence plays a defining role in the development of Tom's character. On one level, this manifests directly, in terms of how he punishes, or does not punish, misbehavior. It also manifests indirectly in terms of his concern for Tom's overall well being, his seeking advice from another teacher, and his following through on that advice in the following section. The conversation between the Doctor and his subordinate is a turning point in the novel, in that it sets in motion the central series of events in the following chapters. More importantly, it foreshadows the moment in the penultimate chapter when Tom learns (from the same teacher that the Doctor consults with at the end of Chapter 9) just how interested the Doctor has been in him all along, and solidifies the novel's thematic point about human relationships embodying the will and spirit of God. In fact, it could be suggested that, throughout the novel, the Doctor has a benevolently controlling God-like aspect.

The theme of fighting is developed in this section in positive and negative aspects. The positive is developed through Tom's fighting for the rights of all the "fags" for independence from the whims of the older boys like Flashman. This is the independence of spirit and courage praised by the narrator and held to be so necessary for the development of good character. The negative aspect of fighting is developed through the actions and character of Flashman, whose bullying can be seen as a warning example of the dangers of fighting in order to create a sense of dominance, or for covering up a sense of inadequacy, which the narrative makes clear is Flashman's motivation for bullying. This is a clear example of a particular narrative technique, how the presence of a negative can illuminate and/or define a positive. By portraying Flashman's cowardice and callousness so vividly, Tom's courage and compassion become more vivid and more of a positive value. In this context, it becomes possible to interpret Flashman's name as having a degree of thematic significance. His physical attributes and attitudes are "flashy," utilized to increase his own status. Tom's physical attributes, on the other hand, are utilized to increase the common good, and it is here that the author's stated determination to have Tom and his non-flashy name embody and symbolize solid, traditional, middle class British values can clearly be seen. These values are also embodied in the character of Diggs, who, like Martin in later chapters, embodies the value of integrity and being true to oneself in the way Flashman never is and in the way Tom is learning to be. In other words, they (as well as the Doctor) are *his* mentors in the way that Tom is about to become a mentor himself.

Part 2, Chapters 1, 2, 3 and 4

Part 2, Chapters 1, 2, 3 and 4 Summary

These chapters introduce the character of Arthur, and tell how Tom's life and attitudes were changed because of their relationship.

Chapter 1 - *How the Tide Turned*: Tom and East return to Rugby after a holiday, full of excitement and plans for the new term. Just as they are about to rush off for dinner, the School Nurse pulls Tom aside and gives him two pieces of news - that he has been assigned the large study he wanted, and that he has also been assigned to mentor a quiet, physically vulnerable, timid little boy named Arthur. Tom is at first reluctant to accept the responsibility, but when he discovers that he and Arthur have been invited to have tea with the Doctor and his family, he realizes that with responsibility comes status, and more eagerly moves into acceptance of his new role. He defends Arthur from the taunts of some of the older boys to the point of flinging a shoe at an older boy who taunts Arthur for kneeling by the side of his bed and saying his prayers before he sleeps.

In the nighttime quiet after this incident, Tom realizes that he has broken his promise to his mother to say his prayers every night, and weeps at the thought that he has betrayed her trust. He resolves to write her in the morning and confess everything, does so, and then follows Arthur's example and kneels to say his prayers. At first, he too faces taunting comments, but such is his reputation for toughness that anyone who dares to comment is quickly silenced. Narration tells how other boys begin to follow Tom's example, and how by the time Tom and Arthur had left the school there was not a single dormitory in which most of the boys there did not kneel and pray at bedtime. Comments from the narrator indicate his belief that this is a good and honorable habit.

Chapter 2 - *The New Boy*: Narration recounts how Tom spends increasing amounts of time with Arthur and endures the playful but sometimes significantly pointed comments of East and the other boys, who encourage Tom to let Arthur find his own way. Following an encounter with a manipulative younger boy, East too begins to spend more time with the more honest and respectful Arthur, and grudgingly acknowledges that he has possibilities.

One night Tom discovers Arthur in his office weeping as he reads his Bible. He asks Arthur what's wrong, and Arthur speaks at length about his family life. Narration sums up what Arthur speaks of over the course of several nights. His father was a respected, gentle, and wise minister, and his mother had been born into high society but was happy in the quiet rural life she shared with her husband. Arthur, who was always sickly, did not play with other boys but spent time studying the Bible and discussing philosophy with his father. A few weeks before Arthur was to be sent to Rugby, his father and mother both became ill with typhus. His father died, his mother survived, and was such a gracious and loving woman that the entire town supported her in her widowhood. The

narrator comments that as the result of having the father he did, Arthur had great reserves of strength and wisdom in him and offers an example of how that wisdom manifested, recounting an incident that takes place after the events of the following chapter but is relevant to the developments in Tom's character being explored in *this* chapter.

East gets into the habit of joining Tom and Arthur in their Bible studies. One night the three of them debate a story from the Old Testament that leads into an intense conversation about compromise, which Tom objects to in general but supports as long as "you don't give up your principle." East comments that Tom will only compromise when the compromise means he gets "everything that he wants, and nothing that you want." Tom tries to prove that his point of view is right by quoting from the Bible, but Arthur comments that the verse Tom chose doesn't prove the point at all. Tom tries again, but East interrupts by saying they've got to get down to work. Narration reveals that Arthur thought about that conversation for a long time afterwards.

Chapter 3 - *Arthur Makes a Friend*: One night while studying together, Arthur tells Tom that he is interested in becoming friends with another schoolboy, Martin. Narration tells how Martin is something of an odd boy out at school, with his love for and collection of wild animals. Tom, in spite of accepting the responsibility of mentoring Arthur, also feels relief at the possibility of someone sometimes relieving him of Arthur's company. He invites Martin to supper, and the three of them (Tom, Martin and Arthur) have a very enjoyable time, making plans to investigate a kestrel's nest that Martin had discovered. East, curious as to why they disappeared so quickly and eager to join their adventure, interrupts them. They have an agreeable conversation, after which East leaves. Tom, Martin, and Arthur then settle down to do their homework, with narration describing their very different work habits.

Chapter 4 - *The Bird Fanciers*: The next morning Tom becomes upset when he discovers that Martin and Arthur have been out hunting for birds' eggs without him, but quickly realizes how foolish he has been when he sees how excited and happy Arthur has become. Later he, Martin, Arthur, and East set off on their expedition in search of the kestrel's nest. It is a long walk and Arthur begins to tire, leading Tom to ask Martin, who is leading, to slow down. Arthur protests that he's all right and the four soon reach their destination. After being teased a bit by East, teasing that ends when Tom becomes angry and puts a stop to it, the four boys climb the kestrel's tree and collect the eggs. On their way back, they pass a farm where there are several kinds of farm birds. Narration tells how Tom and East, some time before, had stolen a duck from this farm and had taken it back to their rooms, and how they eventually had to dispose of the rotting carcass. Narration also recounts how several other Rugby boys had stolen other birds, and how the farmer had become watchful. As Tom and the other boys approach, the farmer is again watching. A guinea hen is startled by the boys' approach and flies into the air. The boys chase it, and in turn are chased by the farmer and his field hand. It is a long chase, and the stronger boys have to help Arthur. As they race towards the school, the farmer and the farmhand draw ever closer. The boys then run into Diggs and another boy, who stand with them as they face down the accusations of the angry farmer. Tom and his friends manage to escape punishment, but are warned by the older

boys to not do that kind of thing again. East soon forgets the warning, and narration tells how he went back to the farm to take revenge on the farmer, got caught, and was severely punished. Narration also tells how Martin and Arthur became fast friends, and how Tom had occasional moments of jealousy but eventually became grateful and accepting of the friendship.

Part 2, Chapters 1, 2, 3 and 4 Analysis

While the focus of this section is still on Tom and on developments in his character, in these four chapters he becomes reactive almost to the point of becoming secondary as the result of Arthur taking so much narrative focus. This shift is important because Arthur is a spiritual antagonist for Tom in the same way that Flashman was a physical antagonist. Through his conflict with Flashman, Tom learns the value of integrity and of sticking up for one's beliefs. Through his conflict with Arthur, which is less physically intense but no less challenging to his beliefs, Tom learns the value of expanding his spiritual, emotional, and intellectual horizons. This is another way in which the narrative uses the motif of fighting to make a point - the fight between Tom and Arthur is less violent, but is equally essential for Tom's development into the moral, sensible, responsible young man he becomes by the end of the book.

The narrative technique of contrast, first utilized to define the distinction between Tom and Flashman's approaches to physical conflict, is also utilized to illuminate the positive values brought into Tom's life by Arthur. Specifically, the manipulative boy in Chapter 2 is a direct contrast with the wholesome goodness, honesty, and earnestness of Arthur, thereby giving the latter additional impact. At the same time, Tom's negative reaction to the boy contrasts with his increasingly positive reaction to Arthur, said contrast illustrating yet again how important Arthur's presence and example are, and will continue to be, in Tom's life. Tom's growth in faith, his maturing beyond both jealousy and desire for less responsibility, and the lessening of his tendency towards selfishness and self indulgence are all aspects of his maturation process that begin in this section and climax in the book's final chapters.

This section contains one of the book's few direct symbols in the duck stolen by Tom and East. The fact that it rots is a symbol of the rotting of the soul that the novel contends is the result of such immoral acts, while the fact that Tom and East eventually get rid of it is a symbol of how both young men manage to rid themselves of their tendency towards wanton rule-breaking. It takes East longer to get there than it takes Tom, but both do eventually leave that part of themselves behind, the direct result of the influence of Arthur, who has a clearly allegorical side to his character.

Because there is such an intense, vividly defined context of Christianity to the novel's action and themes, and because the Doctor (as previously discussed) can be interpreted as a God-like character, it becomes possible in this section to see how Arthur can be interpreted as a Christ-like character. Arthur's teachings function on four Christ-like levels - firstly he, like Christ, teaches new and more personal interpretations of Old Testament prophecies and teachings. In addition, like Christ, in leading by

example, he teaches the values of honesty, integrity, godliness, and open-heartedness. Thirdly, in the way Christ (according to the Bible) was sent to Earth to bring humanity closer to God, Arthur brings Tom closer to God. Finally, simply by being who he is (physically and emotionally vulnerable) Arthur teaches Tom the Christ-like value of acceptance and defense of the disadvantaged. The similarities between Arthur and Christ become even more pronounced in later chapters when Arthur becomes seriously ill but returns to the world of the living, like Christ did after his death, both bringing with them greater spiritual understanding. This value to Arthur's character becomes yet more pronounced when his mother inspires awe and worshipfulness in Tom in the same way as Christ's mother (the Virgin Mary) has done throughout history.

Part 2, Chapter 5

Part 2, Chapter 5 Summary

Chapter 5 -- *The Fight*: The narrator introduces this chapter with an extended commentary on the necessity for fighting and its being an unarguable aspect of human nature. Narration then recounts how Tom got into a fight with a bigger, older boy named Williams following a classroom incident in which Williams threatened to beat Arthur, who in his mind had been too smart for his own good. The fight is conducted with all the formality of a professional boxing match, with each fighter having a trainer and other assistants in his corner. East acts as Tom's trainer, giving him advice on how he should fight - using speed and agility to avoid the worst of Williams' blows and wear Williams out so that his own attacks have more effect.

For the first couple of rounds East's advice falls on deaf ears as Tom merely rushes into combat, swinging wildly. Eventually, however, Tom sees the sense of East's suggestions and quickly gains the upper hand, even to the point of using the wrestling throw he learned in Chapter 3. Debate quickly breaks out between the watching boys as to whether the throw was legal; a debate quickly ended by Young Brooke, who says that as long as it's done properly it's perfectly legal. Meanwhile Arthur, who has not gone down to watch the fight, becomes fearful for Tom's safety and tells the School Nurse about the fight. The School Nurse apparently tells the Doctor, who comes out of the school to see what is going on. The boys, including Tom and Williams, quickly disperse so as not to be caught. Only Young Brooke, who is described as having a very good relationship with the Doctor, remains. Young Brooke convinces the Doctor that the fight wasn't necessarily a bad thing, and the Doctor tells him to make sure that the fight isn't resumed. The next day, Young Brooke makes Tom and Williams shake hands, and narration recounts how the two fighters treated each other with new respect from then on. The chapter concludes with a lengthy suggestion from the narrator that boys reading the book should learn to box.

Part 2, Chapter 5 Analysis

This chapter contains both narration and dramatization of the novel's central theme relating to the essential nature and value of fighting. In terms of the former, the chapter's first several pages clearly state (not merely suggest) that from the perspective of the narrator, and in all likelihood the author, life is one long fight or a series of fights, and for a young man to succeed he must learn to fight well, with integrity and moral courage. Tom's fight with Williams dramatizes this theme, with Tom's actions defining by example and illustration the *kind* of integrity and courage the narrator has been speaking about throughout the book. The character of Williams, on the other hand, is a clear echo and parallel to the character of Flashman in that both young men symbolize and embody the negative aspects of fighting - as a manifestation of power, pure and simple. It is interesting to note that in both fights (first with Flashman and then with Williams), Tom

uses a move he learned back in his hometown, where the seeds of living with integrity and respect were planted by his relationships with his father and with Benjy. In other words, back home Tom learned physical courage and skill at the same time as he learned spiritual honor, aspects of a young man's character that the novel and its narrator clearly believe go hand in hand.

It is possible to see in the Doctor's actions in this section a reiteration of the impression that he is a God-like figure. In his recognition that the fight went on but his allowing Young Brooke to ensure the fight's participants behave properly, the Doctor displays the Christian perspective that God allowed human beings free will to determine their own lives. He could discipline the boys involved in the fight, but instead allows events to take their course, albeit while making it clear what he believes that course should be. In other words, the Doctor's actions illustrate the balance between that free will and God's watchfulness - God, it seems, will let humanity do what it wants, but will always be prepared to step in to keep human beings from destroying themselves completely. This idea can be found again in the interest that the Doctor takes in Tom's life - he can see, God-like, that Tom (humanity) is on a path to destruction, so sends Arthur (a Christ-like savior) to save him from himself. In this section, and as the novel progresses, it is becoming easier and easier to see it as an allegory - a story told in earthly terms to illustrate a spiritual, usually Biblical truth. In this case, that relationship can be defined as that between a loving, objective, but active God (the Doctor), an intermediary (Christ/Arthur), and needy, self-destructive humanity (Tom).

Part 2, Chapters 6 and 7

Part 2, Chapters 6 and 7 Summary

These two chapters focus on significant developments in Tom's spiritual character.

Chapter 6 - *Fever in the School*: This chapter is set two years after the end of the previous chapter. Arthur has moved rapidly into the higher grades, and has become physically sturdier and more active. Martin has left the school and is on an expedition to the South Seas on a boat owned by a relative. East and Tom are still in school, progressing not quite as quickly as Arthur but still doing well. One night a rumor is heard that a potentially dangerous fever has started to spread through the school. After several days of more rumor and increasing numbers of sick boys, Arthur catches the fever and is quarantined. Tom makes several efforts to see him, but is always turned back. As he begins to brood on the nature of death, one of the first students to catch the fever dies and is buried after a funeral service and sermon conducted by the Doctor that gives Tom a small degree of comfort. Tom's comfort increases when he learns Arthur is getting better, and that he is to be allowed to see him.

Tom is surprised and startled by Arthur's appearance, and after some small talk about Martin and East, becomes even more startled when Arthur insists that Tom stop cheating on his schoolwork and gain success (which Tom defines as approval from the Doctor) through discipline and actual study. Tom tries to argue, but Arthur quietly insists. As their conversation continues, Arthur speaks at length about his fear of, and resistance to, death, and how that fear and resistance ebbed away after a spiritual vision he experienced at a moment when his fever was most intense. As he is urging Tom to think of death in the same way, his mother comes in. Arthur comments that he now has his fondest wish - to have his mother and Tom in the same room. Tom, for his part, is struck speechless by the grace, beauty, and generosity of spirit in Arthur's mother. They sit in conversation for a while, with both Arthur and Tom vigorously defending their home counties. Finally, Tom leaves, with Arthur's mother expressing deep gratitude to him for being such a good friend to Arthur. The depth of that gratitude becomes even more evident when Tom returns to his room and discovers that she and Arthur have left him two gifts - a new fishing rod and a Bible. The narrator closes the chapter with this comment - "I leave you all to guess how [Tom] slept, and what he dreamt of."

Chapter 7 - *Harry East's Dilemmas and Deliverances*: The following morning Tom sits down to study with East and another boy, determined to avoid cheating and work in the way he promised Arthur he would learn. East convinces Tom that their old way of studying (copying the work of previous students who have done the same assignments) functions perfectly well within Arthur's guidelines. Tom goes along with him, feeling guilty and resolving to change his habits.

Later, after saying goodbye to Arthur, and after hoping to catch another glimpse of Arthur's beautiful mother, Tom takes East back to his rooms, determined to tell him everything that passed between he and Arthur the previous night so that East will see the value of working truthfully. At this point, the narration goes into considerable analysis of East's character, which essentially boils down to the idea that he cannot stand hypocrisy. He still believes that using other people's work is not a bad thing, and that the teachers do not care how the students learn, they just want the students to *have* learned. He also, however, confesses to Tom that Arthur's vision and beliefs have affected him deeply, saying that he has often asked himself the same questions about death. He confesses that while he may seem to Tom and the other boys that he is all fun and games, he has got a very serious and spiritual side to his personality. He then admits that he has never been confirmed.

When Tom expresses his shock, East tells him he didn't get confirmed with the other boys at the school because he saw them doing so only because they wanted to gain the favor of the Doctor. He also confesses, however, that he's felt the desire to become confirmed for his own spiritual security. Tom urges him to ask the Doctor whether it is possible. The next day East has a conversation with the Doctor and later tells Tom everything that happened, saying the Doctor could not have been more sympathetic, understanding, or non-judgmental. East concludes by saying he's going to be confirmed the following summer, and thanks Tom profusely for helping him become so happy. The following day, after attempting to study properly, they perform poorly in class, but according to the narrator, they did not mind.

Part 2, Chapters 6 and 7 Analysis

This section contains the novel's narrative climax, its point of greatest dramatic tension, and the point of highest crisis for the protagonist. Arthur's illness, near-death and recovery, aside from triggering concern in Tom about his friend, also is the point at which he becomes most aware of the necessity of changing his ways, and live the kind of life that Arthur has been exhorting him to live all along. Because of reaching this climactic point, Tom, like other protagonists in other books reaching similar points, makes a choice that sets the course for the rest of his life. The book's final two chapters describe the beginnings of that course.

The possibility that Arthur is intended to be interpreted as a Christ figure becomes more likely in this section, as his teachings and example repeatedly inspire even hardened "sinners" like Tom and East to change their ways and live lives of more integrity. This is similar to the way Christ's teachings converted hardened sinners like the hated tax collector who became an author of the gospels. Secondly, Arthur's description of his near-death experience is written in terms that sound quite Biblical, bearing particular resemblance to similar visions of life and death contained in the Book of Revelation, in which the writer has a vividly defined vision of life after death.

Another manifestation of the Christian aspect of the novel can be found in the reference to Arthur's mother, an idealized female figure representing the maternal purity and

spiritually illuminative beauty of the Virgin Mary. Still another manifestation can be found in the gifts Tom receives: literally the Word of God (the Bible) and a fishing rod, which makes him akin to Saint Peter, once described by Christ himself in the Bible as a "fisher" of men. To look at it another way, Tom receives gifts in recognition of his having lived God-inspired, Christian values in the same manner as believers on earth will receive gifts in heaven, as the Bible indicates..

Finally, the idea of Arthur being an allegorical, Christ-like figure is developed even further through the discussion of confirmation. In the Christian faith, being confirmed is a rite of passage, a movement into the "adult" life of the church. Being confirmed enables a person to participate in the sacrament of Holy Communion, a re-enactment of Christ's Last Supper, the meal he shared with his disciples on the night before his crucifixion. During that meal, Christ defined the ritualized, prayerful consumption of consecrated bread and wine as symbolizing the consumption of his body and blood - union with him, and, therefore, given that he was the Son of God, union with God. For the hyper-truthful East, who cannot accommodate hypocrisy of any kind, his decision to be confirmed and by so doing accept the teachings of the church as truth is profoundly significant. In making his decision, he is declaring himself willing and able to accept communion with God and live a godly life of integrity and faith, the goal towards which Tom, as well, has been striving, albeit in a slightly different way. It is important to note how East receives approval from the Doctor before taking this dramatic step. Keeping in mind that the Doctor is a figure representing the Christian view of God, the Doctor's acceptance of East represents God's acceptance of everyone who seeks Him and His truth.

Part 2, Chapters 8 and 9

Part 2, Chapters 8 and 9 Summary

Chapter 8 - *Tom Brown's Last Match*: This chapter begins with an extended commentary on the passing of time, and how all change brought about by that passing ends in the same result - being brought to heaven. The narrative then changes focus, indicating that two more years have passed and using considerable detail to narrate the reasons for, and the beginnings of, an important cricket match between the Rugby School team and a team from London. Narration reveals that both Tom (now nineteen) and Arthur are on the team, and that Tom is in fact the team captain. Debate between Tom and one of the teachers over Tom's studies in Greek, and whether they are more or less useful in life than his increasing skills at cricket, are frequently interrupted by plays on the cricket pitch (field). Their conversation also includes debate over whether the changes in the running of the school made by the Doctor are positive (the teacher's view), or negative (Tom's view). At one point Tom has to choose which player to send into the game next, and even though his team might take the win if Arthur were not to go in, Tom decides to send Arthur in anyway, out of respect for Arthur's commitment to the game and also for what Arthur has done for him. Arthur comes close to winning the game for his team, but not quite close enough. The team loses, but has done so well that its members consider their loss a victory.

As the schoolboys and the spectators prepare for a post match party, the teacher invites Tom back to his home for tea. After a semi-comic scene in which the teacher discovers he has forgotten his keys and he and Tom have to break in, the two men settle down to tea and conversation. It is at this point that narration reveals that the teacher is the same one who told the Doctor that giving Tom responsibility for helping and guiding a younger student might settle him down (Chapter 9). Tom immediately understands that all the good that has come into his life as the result of his relationship with Arthur is the result of the Doctor's interest in his well being, an interest he finds amazing given all the other things the Doctor has to worry about. He leaves the teacher's home with the gift of a hardbound collection of the Doctor's sermons, and joins the post-match party. Narration recounts how the following day, Tom left Rugby School and traveled to London to begin the next stage of his life.

Chapter 9 - *Finis*: Some years later Tom is on a fishing trip in Scotland with two friends from Oxford when he receives news of the Doctor's death. He breaks off his holiday and travels hurriedly to Rugby, going out immediately to the school and discovering that the Doctor has been buried in the Chapel. He goes to the Chapel, sits in what the narrator says is the same seat he sat in when he first came to the school, and is quickly overcome by both memories and a grieving gratitude for the Doctor's life. The narrator asks the reader to pardon Tom for being filled more with thoughts of the Doctor than of God, explaining the situation this way. "It is only through our mysterious human relationships . . . that we can come to the knowledge of Him (God) in whom alone the

love, and the tenderness, and the purity, and the strength, and the courage, and the wisdom of all these dwell forever and ever in perfect fulness (sic)."

Part 2, Chapters 8 and 9 Analysis

These two chapters bring the novel to its thematic climax, the point at which Tom's struggle to leave his childhood behind ends and he becomes a responsible adult, fully aware of the importance of human relationships. This has been the novel's central theme all along, from the very first chapters in which Tom learned the value of respectful relationships from his father. This is the fight Tom has fought all along. It is only in these final chapters, however, that the novel's full point becomes clear: such relationships are the work of, and manifestations of, God's spirit.

The motif equating life to fighting and competition appears again in Chapter 8. Tom's final cricket match is both an ending, representing the way that one phase of his struggle towards maturity is over, and a beginning, with his first full match against professionals and adults indicating that he is about to enter the next phase of struggle/fighting - life outside school. It is important to note, however, that this new beginning is not completely available to him until he has his conversation with the teacher and learns of the important role the Doctor has played in shaping his character. Because of making this discovery, Tom, for the first time, fully accepts the Doctor (God) and His influence. Moving forward "manfully" and with integrity into his future is only possible after he comes to that acceptance.

It is interesting to note that Arthur disappears from the narrative completely after Chapter 8, while only East is mentioned. This suggests the thematically relevant point that once an individual has reached maturity he or she is on his or her own. The death of the Doctor reinforces this idea further - no longer does Tom have someone willing to take action to help him make necessary transformations. He must complete his journey on his own, make his relationships on his own, learn from those relationships on his own, and deal with his feelings on his own. Here again there is the possibility that part of the novel's allegorical context relates to the idea of free will - yes, God is a guide, but ultimately a soul is responsible for his or her own choices, actions, reactions, and growth. That being said, the sense of Tom being alone is contrasted with the idea that relationship with God can be found through relationship with other human beings. The suggestion seems to be that while relationships are essential and valuable for both inspiration and greater knowledge, life is a struggle that must be fought alone.

Characters

The Narrator

The voice of the narrator is vividly present throughout the novel, presenting opinions, attitudes, and beliefs in no uncertain terms. This aspect to the novel might be regarded as unusual - in most contemporary writing first person narrators tell stories and offer perspectives but are often limited to offering subjective, individual opinions. Rarely do such narrators make pronouncements on moral issues and make statements about how readers should behave, as the narrator in this book does. As previously discussed, however, the author is quoted in an introduction as saying that lecturing, or offering instruction on good behavior, was one of the purposes he had in writing this book. It is therefore reasonable to assume that the voice of the narrator is the voice of the author, and that Tom Brown's journey of transformation over the course of his schooldays is the kind of transformation that the author believes all such young men should make.

Tom Brown

Tom is the novel's protagonist, the focus of both its narrative and thematic development. There are clear indications that the author intends him to be an archetypal, Everyman kind of character; embodying universal traits common not only to similar young men but humanity as a whole such as loyalty, honesty, moral courage, and by the end of the novel, deep Christian faith. At the beginning of his journey of transformation, Tom is a rambunctious rule breaker and is transformed into a moral, upright, and compassionate young man. In some cases, Tom learns his lessons the hard way, but more often, he learns as the result of being firmly guided, both directly (by the Doctor) and indirectly (by the Doctor *through* Arthur). In the views of the narrator/author, Tom is the embodiment of "the good Englishman," but it is not going too far to suggest that in the view of the narrator/author, he is also the embodiment of a good Christian, and a good human being.

Squire Brown

The Squire is Tom's father, a wealthy landowner with open-minded ideas about how people should relate to each other respectfully and openly without regard to status of any kind. These are unusual ideas for the time in which the book was written and the class from which the Squire comes - the landowning class, which in the Victorian era was generally seen as having ambitions above its station and little regard for those below. it is from the Squire that Tom learns the lessons relating to integrity, respect and genuine feeling that define his character and actions throughout the novel.

East

East is Tom's first and best friend at Rugby School. Eager, energetic and something of a troublemaker, he is Tom's partner in crime and eventually partner in spiritual growth. At first, he seems a shallow human being, but by the end of the novel, it becomes clear that his shallowness is actually a mask for a sensitive, deep thinking soul - perhaps an even deeper soul than Tom.

Old Brooke and Young Brooke

These two brothers are two examples of the kind of young man the narrator/author clearly believes Tom and indeed all young men should grow into - straightforward, honest, humble, physically strong, and morally clear. Old Brooke is a more defined character in that he is simply more present and that he speaks at length about the kind of boys/young men the students beneath him in school should be. There is the sense that, like the narrator, Old Brooke gives voice to the author's agenda in writing the book.

Young Brooke is less well developed. The high point of his character comes when he prevents the Doctor from digging any further into Tom's fight with Williams. As such, and within the novel's allegorical Christian context, it becomes possible to see Young Brooke as representing a kind of intermediary between God and humanity, such as an angel, or messenger.

Flashman

Flashman is one of the novel's two principal antagonists. His bullying and arrogance are significant sources of conflict in Tom's life, and as such, he provides a negative contrast for the gentler, more positively directed and more spiritually oriented conflict generated between Tom and Arthur (the second antagonist). He is the embodiment of the negative aspects of one of the novel's key themes - fighting. Flashman is a fighter, but he fights to gain power for its own sake, as opposed to Tom who fights in the name of justice.

The Doctor

According to a biographical note about the author, the Doctor is a portrait of one of his (the author's) own headmasters. This headmaster was apparently adored by his students and highly respected by his professional colleagues. In the novel, the Doctor shares those attributes, playing an active role in the development of his students' lives. Within the novel's allegorically Christian context, the Doctor becomes representative of God on earth, a manifestation of God's wisdom and capacity for guidance and compassion.

Diggs and Martin

Diggs and Martin are both older students at the school. Both are outcasts in their own way - Diggs is large and physically awkward, while Martin is absent minded and intently focused on nature to the exclusion of almost everything academic. They are examples of the kind of less advantaged people Tom was taught to befriend when he was a boy. They also represent the value of living life with integrity in the face of negative attitudes of the less tolerant and open minded, such as Flashman. Within the novel's Christian context, they embody the Christian virtues of turning the other cheek, ignoring society's derision, and living a life of faith.

Arthur

Arthur is the novel's other principal antagonist, not so much because he comes into direct conflict with Tom the protagonist (although their views initially often clash) as most antagonists, like Flashman, do, but because he triggers change and transformation, often a secondary function of antagonists. Arthur is everything that Tom, at first, is not - small, physically weak, emotionally vulnerable, spiritually strong, and academically inclined. As their relationship develops, Tom passes on some of his capacity for physical vitality while Arthur passes on some of *his* capacity for intellectual development and academic pursuit. They end up fast friends, having changed and improved each other's lives immeasurably.

Williams

Williams is another student at the school, of a similar age to Tom and East. He appears briefly and performs a similar function to Flashman, illustrating the bullying, combative side of fighting. The difference between Williams and Flashman is that while Flashman remains resentful of Tom after their fight, Williams learns to respect Tom after theirs. As such, Williams' symbolic value transforms, becoming an example of the positive transformative value of fighting.

Objects/Places

The Village and the Vale

Tom's home village is never named so that the reader can project his or her own images and/or memories of a safe, loving, friendly home community onto it. The placement of the town in a vale or valley symbolizes the idealized safety of "home," and creates the additional sense that for most of his childhood, Tom was protected. This vividly defined sense of gentleness and safety makes his transition into the more dangerous, challenging, rough and tumble world of Rugby School more significant to both Tom and the reader.

Rugby (the Town)

Rugby is a small, friendly town used to the frequent invasions of rambunctious boys from the school. Its presence in the boy's lives is simultaneously a refuge from the drudgery and hard work they go through at the school and a reminder of the outside world that awaits them once they leave.

Rugby (the School)

The school is a typical British private boys' school of the period (the mid 1800s). The goal of such schools was to begin the process of preparing their students to become good British citizens - strong, moral, hardworking, and loyal to the empire and the crown.

Tom's Dormitory

This is where the boys sleep, and the sight of many late night conversations and confrontations. The key fight between the prayerful Arthur and the mocking, much less religious students, in which the much stronger Tom takes Arthur's side, takes place here.

The Avon River

This river runs near enough to the school that the boys, particularly Tom and East, frequently escape here to fish. The banks of the river are the site of an important confrontation between Tom, who is only allowed to fish on one side but repeatedly breaks the rules and fishes on the other, and a gamekeeper, who shows him mercy while at the same time telling him forcefully to never break the rules again. Their confrontation dramatizes in miniature the novel's key theme relating to the relationship between sinful, willful man (Tom) and the merciful Christian God (the gamekeeper).

Tom's Study

This is the room into which Tom moves when he comes back for his second year and discovers that he has been assigned to be Arthur's mentor. It is larger and better decorated than his old study, representing the larger scope of his responsibilities, both academically and personally. It also represents the opening of his spirit to others (particularly Arthur) and to the world.

The Farm

This is the farm where Tom, East, Martin, and Arthur get into trouble after accidentally startling a hen. The conflict with the owner of the farm, and the way the four young men resolve it, makes for important lessons for them all in the importance of obeying the rules and avoiding or preventing conflict.

The Stolen Duck

Tom and East stole the duck from the same farm where they later had the encounter with the farmer and the hen. The theft of the duck is the epitome of the rule breaking Tom and East habitually indulge in, while the fact that the duck's corpse rots and has to be quickly disposed of symbolizes the potential for the "rotting" of the boys' souls and moral character if they persist in this kind of behavior.

The Cricket Pitch and the Teacher's House

These two locations on the Rugby School grounds are the context for Tom's key discovery - that the Doctor took an active and profound interest in shaping his life and character. The conversation between Tom and the teacher who conveys this information to him begins on the cricket pitch (field), the site of Tom's many physical triumphs in athletic "fighting," a variation on one of the novel's key themes. Their conversation concludes in the teacher's home into which he and Tom have had to force entry, an unexpected aspect of the situation that echoes and foreshadows the unexpected surprise of the teacher's revelation to Tom - he makes a surprising entry into the home in the same way as he makes a surprising entry into a new awareness.

The Chapel

This is the chapel on the Rugby School grounds, the site of many of Tom's more significant encounters with the Doctor. These include important sermons at the beginning of his career at school and at the time of Arthur's near fatal illness, as well as the final encounter between Tom and his memory of the Doctor in the final chapter. The Doctor is buried in the Chapel, and visiting the site of his mentor's grave triggers in Tom the climactic union between his earthly and spiritual lives.

Setting

The novel takes place in the 1820s and 1830s in England. The opening chapters describe Tom Brown's early childhood in the rural county of Berks, west of London in the Vale of the White Horse. There Tom leads an active life under the tutelage of family retainers.

Although he is a member of the upper classes, Tom associates with members of various social classes in the course of his daily activities. Hughes depicts a close-knit rural community just before the onslaught of the railways and the Industrial Revolution.

The scene shifts first to a small private preparatory school and then to the primary setting of the novel, Rugby, where Tom spends the next eight years.

Located in a small, rural town, Rugby is a large, all-male public school run by Thomas Arnold, one of the great reformers in British educational history.

Except for a brief reference to the urban parish work performed by the deceased clergyman father of one of Tom's classmates, George Arthur, Hughes ignores the political and economic ferment occurring at the time in England.

Social Sensitivity

Tom Brown's School Days is a novel about upper-class boys developing into upper-class men. Women exist only on the periphery of the novel, mostly in the role of mothers and servants; young women are not mentioned. Because of this deliberate oversight, Hughes ignores a major part of the maturation process for most males: their relationships with females. More important, the female characters who are included in the story function only in relation to the men they nurture or serve. Hughes never portrays the women in the story as individual, fully developed characters. Thus, although Hughes viewed himself as a champion of social reform, his seemingly exclusive concentration on male issues—manifested in his advocacy of "muscular theology," his devotion to men's colleges and cooperatives, and his creation of books for and about boys—reveals his entrenched Victorian sexism. Moreover, despite his professed desire to improve the lot of all social classes, and despite his belief in human equality in the eyes of God, Hughes never questions the class system that permeates Rugby, the British public school system, and British society in general. Hughes and the boys he describes assume that their upper-class position is assured, and there is no indication in the novel that Tom Brown or his peers see anything wrong with the children of the poor being excluded from Rugby. The very popularity of Tom Brown's Schooldays has helped perpetuate boarding schools as bastions of social privilege in British society and in American society as well. The book also contains statements and terms that will offend modern readers because of the racist and colonialist attitudes reflected toward blacks and Asians.

Literary Qualities

Except for his occasional use of authorial intrusions in order to ensure that readers grasp the moral point of certain episodes, Hughes propels Tom Brown's Schooldays along quickly with a straightforward, action-packed narrative. The book is not deeply analytical, and character development hinges on the events of the plot. Hughes's characters speak in a highly colloquial dialect, leading some critics to argue that the novel contains so much slang that reader comprehension suffers.

Perhaps Hughes's greatest achievement in Tom Brown's Schooldays is the vividness and timelessness of his schoolboy portraits. Tom and his friends engage in the same activities enjoyed by modern adolescents. Never the creations of an idealistic do-gooder, they learn about what helps or prevents an individual's reaching maturity as they progress through their schooldays.

Despite the excitement and humor of the narrative, Hughes's tone is serious.

The boys are moving through a time that is bringing about great change for them, their circle of friends, and the society they inhabit. Although he seldom refers directly to political or social currents in mid-nineteenth-century Britain, Hughes nonetheless draws implicit parallels between the turbulence of his characters' adolescence and the havoc wreaked upon Victorian England by the Industrial Revolution. The boys gradually face the reality that their schooling has to end and that they must begin careers and assume responsibility for their lives. As each boy develops his own personality and interests, Hughes depicts the character's relationships with peers and adults changing in believable ways. It is this literary recreation of youth that continues to capture present-day readers.

Themes

Integrity and Loyalty

Tom develops his sense of integrity and loyalty early, in his days in his home village. As the result of his early relationships with farmhands, nannies, and others of the so-called "lower" classes, and by following the example of his father and mother, he learns that every human being is worthy of respect no matter their economic or social status. This is a core element of his personality, an aspect to his character that causes him to act repeatedly in defense and support of fellow students who are bullied or downtrodden. The most notable of these is Arthur - from welcoming him into his circle of friends to helping him become physically stronger to accepting the spiritual teachings he has to offer, Tom treats him with honesty, openness and respect (despite the occasional flare of resentment and jealousy).

The process of developing his personal sense of integrity and worth is one of two or three key lessons that are not only defined by the action but by the repeated interjections of the narrator. At several points throughout the book the narrator (who can reasonably be assumed to be the voice of the author) comments that Tom's behaving with integrity and loyalty is an example of the ways boys and men should behave. In other words, Tom is clearly and specifically set up as a role model. Living with integrity and loyalty, as Arthur does naturally and Tom learns how to do, is an essential component, according to the Author, of a boy/young man's life.

Fighting

Another essential component of a young man's life, again according to both the action and the narrator's repeated interjections, is having skill at fighting. This means not only being able to handle oneself physically and morally in a boxing ring or school playground, but also means the struggle to conquer human failings like jealousy and failing faith, and live instead with respect. The motif of fighting also extends to competition, team sports like English style football and cricket. Here the metaphor is clear - play life by the rules, as one would play sports, and spiritual victory will be won in the way that physical victory is won on the soccer field or cricket pitch. Enter and win a fight from a place of righteousness and/or integrity, and victory surely will be yours. Enter from a place of antagonism and resentment (like Flashman), and defeat and humiliation will almost surely be the result. The novel makes it abundantly clear that in the narrator/author's view, fighting is an essential and unavoidable aspect of life - life is one long struggle, and care must be taken to ensure that any and all fights must be undertaken with the goal of coming closer to both God and one's fellow human beings. It is interesting to note that Tom does not always know the larger context of his fights. He fights to defend Arthur because Arthur is weak, he fights Flashman to show how strong he is, and he always fights to win on the cricket pitch. It is only through the words of the narrator, however, that it becomes clear that Tom's fights are archetypal - the fight

of every young man to live honestly in the world. What must be noted is the fact that Tom is not the only positive fighter - both Arthur and the Doctor are very definitely fighters in the cause of claiming Tom's soul for the good.

Man's Relationship with God

Both the themes of fighting and living with integrity serve the novel's primary theme, relating to the way humanity develops a relationship with God. Fighting for a positive, moral cause, both narration and action suggest, is one way to draw closer to God. Another way is to live with a high moral standard and helping others to see the value in such perspective without bullying or force. A third way, and the way the novel seems to present as the most important, is through developing open, honest, respectful, and supportive relationships. All the relationships that Tom makes at Rugby School, even the bad ones, bring this point home. His relationship with the spiritual, Biblically-learned Arthur literally brings him closer to God.

At the same time, Tom's growing sense of compassion for Arthur's physical weakness, which culminates in his increasingly desperate concern as Arthur gets more and more ill, illustrates the development of a relationship with God in a somewhat more abstract but nonetheless essential form. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Tom comes to an understanding of the full, Godly value of compassion when he finally comes to an awareness of just how involved the Doctor was in his life. The Doctor is the living embodiment of that compassion, and as such inspires Tom to live with even more compassion himself. In the narrator/author's mind, there is clearly the hope that the Reader will learn the same lesson.

Themes/Characters

Written in part to inform Hughes's son about what lay ahead for him in school and in life, Tom Brown's Schooldays focuses on the theme of what it means to be a mature English citizen. Hughes, a devout Anglican, sees maturity resting ultimately on the individual's acceptance of the sovereignty of God as evidenced in the life and teaching of Jesus Christ. But Hughes does not associate Christian maturity with self-denial but rather with active involvement in life and all that it has to offer. For Hughes the ideal man is physically robust, intellectually alert, socially aware, and morally forgiving.

Hughes develops his theme primarily through Tom Brown, the novel's protagonist. Initially Hughes emphasizes the physical side of Tom's personality—he loves to play games, take jaunts, and make mischief. Academically, Tom does only what he has to do to pass his courses. Tom is joined in his endeavors by young Harry East, and the boys persist in neglecting their studies and stirring up trouble to the extent that the headmaster, Dr. Arnold, fears for their futures at the school. To deflect Brown and East from the potentially self-destructive course they are following, Arnold pairs off Tom with a new boy, the shy, physically weak, but brilliant George Arthur. Tom protects George from the school bullies, helps him make friends, and introduces him to sports. George, in turn, makes Tom and Harry aware of the satisfactions that can come from intellectual work and religious faith.

Hughes depicts an array of schoolboy characters—including the scientifically precocious Diggs and Martin, the leader Brooke, and the ultimate bully, Flashman—to illustrate different forms of human nature and different degrees of maturation. In addition, Hughes provides a fascinating gallery of supporting characters: the ancient Benjy who takes the young Tom fishing and to fairs, the coachman who talks endlessly on Tom's first trip to Rugby, and the farmers and gamekeepers who chase the schoolboys from off-limits swimming holes and chicken coops. Except for Dr. Arnold and one young master, the teachers at the school go unrecognized. The bulk of the learning that Hughes considers most important takes place outside the classroom, on the playing fields or in the surrounding countryside.

Style

Point of View

The novel is written from the first person omniscient point of view, but *not* from the point of view of the central character as is often the case in novels written from the first person. The first person in this case is the narrator, who frequently uses the pronoun "I" as he makes equally frequent, clear, and pointed interjections of opinion and attitude. This makes the novel as much a lecture on proper behavior and learning as it is the telling of the story. That story is focused on the character of Tom Brown, whose thoughts are monitored and revealed more thoroughly by the narrator than those of the other characters. This is not to say that no attention is paid to the others - while Arthur and East in particular are examined in a little less depth than Tom, on certain occasions their motivations, attitudes, and thought processes are nevertheless recounted in no less detail. An interesting incorporation into the style of this piece is the way the narration shifts back and forth between present tense (during times of great action or emotional intensity) and past tense (during times of more intellectual, philosophical explorations). This shifting of tense gives a greater sense of presence in the moment, creating opportunities for greater identification with the characters (usually Tom) participating in a given sequence. The intent here is to inspire the reader to the same kind of growing, deepening relationship with God that Tom experiences, a goal that the narrator states point-blank on several occasions.

Setting

The novel is set in England in the middle of the 19th Century - the 1800s. England at the time was going through a period of growing conservatism in morality, religion, and social behavior. It was the beginning of the Victorian Era, in which men were expected to act out of unquestioning loyalty to God, the Queen, and country (not necessarily in that order). Women, by contrast, were intended to behave as though the men in their lives were their monarchs - it is no coincidence that all the women in *Tom Brown's School Days* are either idealized mother figures or low class serving wenches. Those were essentially the roles to which women of the period were confined. That is the novel's societal setting.

In terms of the actual location in which the action plays out, there are two main locations. The first is the small valley town in which Tom is born and raised. There is a sense of safety and open-ness about this village, and of relative peace. This latter location is particularly noteworthy in that Rugby School, where the rest of the novel is essentially set, is anything *but* peaceful. Aside from the fact that there is a great deal of rushing about, both in terms of getting to and from classes and of playing sports, there is little moral or spiritual peace for Tom here. He is challenged repeatedly, sometimes overtly, and sometimes subtly, to change or at the least re-think his belief systems. In

short, the rough-and-tumble physical environment is the ideal setting in which to place a story of a kind of elevated yet still rough-and-tumble spirituality.

Language and Meaning

There are essentially two different kinds of language utilized in this novel. The first is the formal, schoolteacher kind of language used by the narrator as he tells his story and, more importantly, as he makes the thematic points he is determined to make. The language tends to be a little more formal, a little more image and metaphor oriented, than the language of the schoolboys themselves. The point must be made, however, that there is not a great deal of metaphor here: like the vast majority of the boys attending Rugby School, there is no time in the novel for excessive ornamentation or high flown language. The general sense is one of getting on with it, both the lecturing of the narrator and the dramatization of the *point* of the lecture in the story. The second kind of language used here is in the dialogue, which is very clearly intended to be as close a transcript as possible to the way boys of the era spoke. That being said it is not entirely naturalistic. Yes, there are obvious attempts to include colloquial phrases and expressions of the time. However, there are several occasions in which the boys speak with a fullness of vocabulary and heaviness of phrasing that speaks of an author's agenda other than perfect realism. As is stated several times in narration, the goal of the book is to instruct young men in how to grow into mature, responsible, older men. By having the characters speak at least partially in the manner of such men, the author is showing the growth process already beginning - the older man is present in the younger, he just needs careful handling, such as the kind the Doctor gives Tom, to make the transition fully.

Structure

The novel is divided into two parts, essentially delineated by the arrival of Arthur at Rugby and the beginning of Tom's transformation from rambunctious but moral boy to more thoughtful and faithful young man. Each part is divided into chapters, with each chapter beginning with a quote from another work of literature - a play by Shakespeare or some other poet or philosopher. These quotes sum up the action and themes of the chapter that follows. Within each part, there are several sections consisting of two or more chapters that follow and develop a sub, or secondary, plot.

Noteworthy sections in Part One include Chapters 1-3, in which Tom's home life is described, Chapters 5-7 in which his process of settling in at Rugby is narrated, and Chapters 8-9, in which Tom's battle with the bully Flashman serves as a textbook example of how a sub-plot should work. It has a clearly defined beginning, middle, climax, and ending, has its own sense of narrative momentum and its own theme, and serves to both move the main plot forward and to develop the principle theme. This can also be said of the four-chapter section at the beginning of Part Two, in which Tom's relationship with Arthur is developed in the same way: beginning, middle, climax, and ending. This sense of repeated structure, with its frequent mini-climaxes, works well to

move the overall action of the novel along, creating a sense of narrative momentum, and keeping the reader's attention.

Quotes

"Squire [Brown] . . . believed . . . that a man is to be valued wholly and solely for that which he is in himself, for that which stands up in the four fleshly walls of him, apart from clothes, rank, fortune, and all externals whatsoever. Which belief I (the narrator) take to be a wholesome corrective of all political opinions, and, if held sincerely, to make all opinions equally harmless . . .." Chap. 3, p. 47

"If schools are what they were in my time, you'll see a great many cruel blackguard things done, and hear a deal of foul bad talk. But never fear. You tell the truth, keep a brave and kind heart, and never listen to or say anything you wouldn't have your mother and sister hear, and you'll never feel ashamed to come home, or we to see you." Squire Brown to Tom, Chap. 4, p 63

" 'First, there's a great deal of bullying going on . . . you youngsters . . . [will] be all the better football players for learning to stand it, and to take your own parts, and fight it through'." Old Brooke to his house, Chap. 6, p. 109

"Two or three years, more or less, and then the steadily advancing, blessed wave will pass over your names as it has passed over ours. Nevertheless, play your games and do your work manfully - see only that that be done, and let the remembrance of it take care of itself." Chap. 7, p. 124

"Quit yourselves like men, then; speak up, and strike out, as necessary, for whatsoever is true, and manly, and lovely, and of good report never try to be popular, but only to do your duty and help others to do theirs, and you may leave the tone of feeling in the school higher than you found it, and so be doing good, which no living soul can measure, to generations of your countrymen yet unborn." Chap. 8, p 148

"Bear in mind that majorities, especially respectable ones, are nine times out of ten in the wrong and that if you see a man or boy striving earnestly on the weak side, however wrong-headed or blundering he may be . . . remember that he has found something in the world which he will fight and suffer for, which is just what you have got to do for yourselves . . .." Chap. 9, p. 172

"Tom was too honest to take in the youngster and then let him shift for himself; and if he took him as his chum instead of East, where were all his pet plans of having a bottled-beer cellar under his window, and making night-lines and slings, and plotting expeditions . . .." Chap. 10, p. 190

"[Tom] went down to the great school with a glimmering of another lesson in his heart - the lesson that he who has conquered his own coward spirit has conquered the whole outward world." Chap. 10, p. 200

"Arthur . . . was sadly timid; scarcely ever spoke unless Tom spoke to him first; and, worst of all, would agree with him in everything, the hardest thing in the world for a

Brown to bear . . . [Tom] was on the point of breaking out a dozen times with a lecture upon the propriety of a fellow having a will of his own and speaking out, but managed to restrain himself by the thought . . . of the lesson he had learnt from [Arthur] on his first night . . .." Chap. 11, p. 202

"Tom was becoming a new boy, though with frequent tumbles in the dirt and perpetual hard battle with himself, and was daily growing in manfulness and thoughtfulness, as every high-couraged and well-principled boy must, when he finds himself for the first time consciously at grips with self and the devil." Part 2, Chap. 3, p. 224

"From the cradle to the grave, fighting, rightly understood, is the business, the real, highest, honestest (sic) business of every son of man. Every one who is worth his salt has his enemies, who must be beaten, be they evil thoughts and habits in himself or spiritual wickednesses in high places . . . the world might be a better world without fighting, for anything I know, but it wouldn't be our world; and therefore I am dead against crying peace when there is no peace, and isn't meant to be." Part 2, Chap. 5, p. 249

"Tom remembered a German picture of an angel which he knew; often had he thought how transparent and golden and spirit like it was; and he shuddered to think how like it Arthur looked, and . . . realized how near the other world his friend must have been to look like that." Part 2, Chap. 6, p. 271

"'about the masters . . . it's a fair trial of skill and last between us and them - like a match at football, or a battle. We're natural enemies in school, that's the fact . . . if we can . . . do so much less without getting caught, that's one to us. If they can get more out of us, or catch us shirking, that's one to them. All's fair in war but lying'." East to Tom, Part 2, Chap. 7, p. 290

"by twelve o'clock [Tom] was in the train and away for London, no longer a school-boy, and divided in his thoughts between hero-worship, honest regrets over the long stage of his life which was now slipping out of sight behind him, and hopes and resolves for the next stage, upon which he was entering with all the confidence of a young traveler." Part 2, Chap. 8, p. 325

Topics for Discussion

1. What social value does Hughes see in the village feast days? Has the importance of these days changed at all over the years?

2. Why does Hughes describe in such detail the history of the Brown family and the Vale of the White Horse? How would you explain the role of the Brown family in the social system of the vale?

What features of this contained social system serve to diminish class differences?

3. What sorts of activities does Hughes consider appropriate for boys and young men? For girls and young women? Cite evidence from the book to support your answers. How might his views put him in conflict with modern critics?

4. Squire Brown debates at length over what advice he should give his son upon the boy's departure for Rugby. Do you think the squire offers Tom valid advice?

Why or why not?

5. The maturation process is dramatized through various symbolic events in Tom Brown's Schooldays. What are some of the symbols Hughes uses? Do you think these symbols would be appropriate for a treatment of maturation in contemporary American society? If yes, why? If no, what symbols would you substitute?

6. Tom Brown's first days at Rugby are marked by dramatic events involving sports. How do the sports Hughes describes resemble or differ from modern athletics? What value does Tom's society place on athletics?

7. Little is said in the novel about the academic curriculum at Rugby, but much is said about the development of character. What sort of student does Tom's headmaster, Dr. Arnold, hope to nurture? Do you see any flaws in the concept of "character" as defined by Dr.

Arnold?

8. The arrival of George Arthur changes the tone of the novel. In what ways does George mold Tom's attitudes and conduct?

9. Hughes's religious beliefs receive their fullest explanation in the summary of the life of George Arthur's father.

What characterizes Mr. Arthur's faith and conduct?

10. In the chapter The Fight," Hughes writes, "From the cradle to the grave, fighting, rightly understood, is the business, the real, highest, honestest business of every son of man." What does he mean? Do you agree?

11. Why does Hughes include a final chapter dealing with Tom's response to the death of Thomas Arnold? Would the book be better or worse if this chapter were omitted? Why?

Essay Topics

Discuss the novel's central thematic premise. Is life a series of fights? What other kinds of fights are there besides physical? Can good moral character only be developed by fighting with integrity? How is such integrity defined? Where is the line between good fighting and bad fighting?

Tom Brown is clearly intended to act an as inspirational example or role model for young men at the time in which the novel was written and published. What aspects of his character and journey can be applied to students, male and/or female, in contemporary society?

Discuss the conclusion arrived at in the novel's final chapter. What are the specific aspects of human relationships that can be described as being manifestations of God, and not necessarily just the Christian God. What spiritual truths in other religions might be made manifest in positive human relationships?

What would have the effect on Tom been if Arthur had died from the fever in Part 2? How would his life have been different? What would have been the path or pattern of his behavior? In what way does Arthur's survival keep him from going down this path?

Given the novelist's stated goal of instructing boys on the proper way to become moral young men of integrity, imagine the young adult lives of some of the other characters. Narration reveals that East has become a soldier - what kind of soldier would he be? How far in the ranks would he rise? What would Arthur have become? Martin? Flashman? Diggs? The Brookes? How might the lessons Tom learns about integrity be applied (or not) in the lives of his classmates?

What is it about Tom that warrants the Doctor's particular attention? Aside from the fact that Tom is clearly the "hero" of the story, why would he assign Arthur to him and not to East, Martin, Diggs, or even Flashman?

Discuss the novel's technique of having the narrator offer so many opinions so directly. Does this bring you into the story, or take you out of it? Do you find it intrusive or do you find it helps the author make his point more clearly?

What parallels are there in your school life and relationships to Tom's experiences? Is there room for you to find as much meaning in your experience as Tom finds in his?

Ideas for Reports and Papers

1. Tom Brown's Schooldays draws frequently on an academic, schoolboy, and sports vocabulary that may be un familiar to modern readers. Using the Oxford English Dictionary or other appropriate sources, develop a glossary of unfamiliar terms. Do you think that the inclusion of these terms stregthens or weakens the novel?

2. Tom Brown's Schooldays is the first of many so-called "prep school novels."

The most famous American examples are J. D. Salinger's Catcher in the Rye and John Knowles's Separate Peace.

Read one of these works and compare it to Hughes's novel.

3. Hughes wrote a sequel to Tom Brown's Schooldays called Tom Brown at Oxford. Read it and compare the two works. Which do you find more interesting? Why? Are Hughes's views consistent in the two books?

4. Hughes believed that team sports such as Rugby football and cricket were superior to individual sports such as running because team sports encouraged cooperation. Investigate the history of scholastic sports in nineteenthcentury America.

5. Thomas Hughes was an advocate of Christian Socialism and the cooperative movement. Research and report on these movements. How do the philosophies that guided these movements resemble the principles Hughes outlines in Tom Brown's Schooldays?

6. Several film versions of Tom Brown's Schooldays have been made over the past five decades. Some are available on videotape. Find one or more of these film versions and compare the film director's handling with Hughes's work.

7. Research and report on British boarding schools for girls during the Victorian era. How did these schools differ from schools for boys?

Further Study

Cordery, Gareth. "Tom Brown's Schooldays and Foreskin's Lament The Alpha and Omega of Rugby Football."

Journal of Popular Culture 19 (Fall 1985): 97-104. A critical study of how the ethos of sports as presented in Tom Brown's Schooldays has permeated New Zealand society as depicted in Foreskin's Lament, a play.

Gathorn-Hardy, Jonathan. The Old School Tie. New York: Viking Press, 1977. This comprehensive history of British public schools traces their evolution from the Middle Ages. Of special interest is chapter 4.

Mack, Ernest C., and W. H. G. Armytage.

Thomas Hughes: The Life of the Author of "Tom Brown's Schooldays." London: Ernest Brown, 1952. A full overview of the life of Hughes. Chapter 6 deals with the writing and publication of the novel.

McLachlan, James. American Boarding Schools. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970. In this historical study of the emergence of American boarding schools in the nineteenth century, McLachlan shows the influence exerted by Hughes and Arnold on Americans attempting to establish schools comparable to Rugby.

Related Titles

The bulk of Hughes's writing addressed economic and political issues, but in 1861 he wrote a sequel to Tom Brown's Schooldays called Tom Brown at Oxford. The sequel gives a picture of life at a British university where sports and parties seem to overwhelm academic studies. The novel focuses on Tom's efforts to sort out his priorities.

Two notable motion-picture versions of Tom Brown's Schooldays were released in 1940 and 1951. The first of these was produced by David O. Selznick in America, but directed by an Englishman, Robert Stevenson. This movie reflects an Englishman's concerns about World War II and consequently emphasizes Tom's victory over Flashman as an example of right triumphing over might. Directed by Gordon Parry, the 1951 movie emphasizes period authenticity and Tom's school life, although Flashman remains a cruel antagonist. Of the two, the latter film better captures the mood of the novel and is likelier to interest the general audience.

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Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction

Editor
Kirk H. Beetz, Ph.D.

Cover Design
Amanda Mott

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction

Includes bibliographical references and index

Summary: A multi-volume compilation of analytical essays on and study activities for the works of authors of popular fiction. Includes biography data, publishing history, and resources for the author of each analyzed work.

ISBN 0-933833-41-5 (Volumes 1-3, Biography Series)
ISBN 0-933833-42-3 (Volumes 1-8, Analyses Series)
ISBN 0-933833-38-5 (Entire set, 11 volumes)

1. Popular literature□Bio-bibliography. 2. Fiction□19th century□Bio-bibliography. 3. Fiction□20th century□Bio-bibliography. I. Beetz, Kirk H., 1952-

Z6514.P7B43 1996[PN56.P55]809.3□dc20 96-20771 CIP

Printed in the United States of America First Printing, November 1996