

PRESTWICK HOUSE LITERARY TOUCHSTONE CLASSICS

THE ADVENTURES OF TOM SAWYER

by Mark Twain



UNABRIDGED WITH GLOSSARY AND NOTES

THE ADVENTURES OF TOM SAWYER



Mark Twain



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SENIOR EDITOR: Paul Moliken

EDITORS: Sondra Y. Abel, Dan Welch

DESIGN & PHOTOGRAPHY: Jen Mendoza
Costume provided by Actor's Attic
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PRODUCTION: Jeremy Clark



LITERARY TOUCHSTONE CLASSICS™

P.O. BOX 658 • CLAYTON, DELAWARE 19938

TEL: 1.800.932.4593

FAX: 1.888.718.9333

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Notes

N O T E S

What is a literary classic and why are these classic works important to the world?

A literary classic is a work of the highest excellence that has something important to say about life and/or the human condition and says it with great artistry. A classic, through its enduring presence, has withstood the test of time and is not bound by time, place, or customs. It speaks to us today as forcefully as it spoke to people one hundred or more years ago, and as forcefully as it will speak to people of future generations. For this reason, a classic is said to have universality.

Mark Twain (Samuel Langhorne Clemens) was born in Missouri in 1835. He was raised in Hannibal, Missouri, on the banks of the Mississippi River, which is the setting for *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.

The major influence on Twain as an adolescent was the activity on the river, having worked as a riverboat pilot. The invention of the steamboat had transformed the Mississippi into a major thoroughfare for commerce, travel, and excitement. Twain supposedly took his pseudonym from the way a river's depth was measured: a piece of line was dropped into the river, and when it hit the bottom, the depth was called out to the pilot. Therefore, "Mark Twain" or "two fathoms" literally means "twelve feet."

When the Civil War began, Twain headed west. Avoiding the war, he found work as a newspaperman, where his skill as a writer and satirist soon led him to pursue a literary career. The success of his early books, including *Tom Sawyer*, won him fame and fortune, and when the war ended, he went east to enjoy and enlarge his new fame. Other popular books include: *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, *The Prince and the Pauper*, and *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*.

Twain spent much of his time traveling. A trip with his family around the world inspired his book *The Innocents Abroad*. He also made and lost several fortunes, mostly due to bad investments. In his later years, Twain became a very popular lecturer, often drawing crowds to hear him read his own works.

Family tragedy, including the death of his favorite daughter, left him bitter and depressed in his old age. Mark Twain died in 1910; his death, like his birth, coincided with the appearance of Halley's Comet.

Pointers

READING POINTERS

Reading Pointers for Sharper Insights

To better understand *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, we need to look at the concepts, experiences, and techniques that Twain explores and employs:

1. Twain's main purpose is to capture (and remind us of) the complex emotional and social world of a boy on the edge of adolescence. Be aware of how Tom deals with the following issues:
 - his changing view of the world
 - the ways his emotional state fluctuates
 - Tom's cleverness in manipulating the world around him
 - his misunderstandings about the goals and values of the adult world
 - his relationship with Becky Thatcher

Notice how Tom matures throughout the novel. It is important to note that the first words Tom speaks are a lie. As he develops, pay attention to how he deals with telling the truth versus lying.

2. Tom's world is a well-preserved snapshot of the life and times of a youth in the years before the Civil War. Notice how the following issues relate to this time period:
 - his treasures
 - recreations, such as games and imaginary activity
 - daydreams
 - the romance books he reads
 - the allusions that Twain uses throughout the novel
 - racial prejudices
3. Tom's relationship with Becky Thatcher is particularly difficult for both of them as they try to learn the best way to understand their feelings for each other. As their relationship progresses, pay attention to the following:
 - their first encounter
 - the way Tom treats Becky while at school as opposed to when they are in the cave
 - the ways in which they demonstrate affection and jealousy
 - the effect of Tom's previous "engagement" to Amy Laurence



C H A P T E R I

Y-O-U-U TOM — AUNT POLLY DECIDES UPON HER DUTY — TOM PRACTICES MUSIC — THE CHALLENGE — A PRIVATE ENTRANCE

“TOM!”

No answer.

“TOM!”

No answer.

“What’s gone with that boy, I wonder? You TOM!”

No answer.

The old lady pulled her spectacles down and looked over them about the room; then she put them up and looked out under them. She seldom or never looked *through* them for so small a thing as a boy; they were her state pair, the pride of her heart, and were built for “style,” not service—she could have seen through a pair of stove-lids just as well. She looked perplexed for a moment, and then said, not fiercely, but still loud enough for the furniture to hear:

“Well, I lay if I get hold of you I’ll—”

She did not finish, for by this time she was bending down and punching under the bed with the broom, and so she needed breath to punctuate the punches with. She resurrected nothing but the cat.

“I never did see the beat of that boy!”

She went to the open door and stood in it and looked out among the tomato vines and “jimpson” weeds that constituted the garden. No Tom. So she lifted up her voice at an angle calculated for distance and shouted:

“Y-o-u-u Tom!”

There was a slight noise behind her and she turned just in time to seize a small boy by the slack of his roundabout and arrest his flight.

"There! I might 'a' thought of that closet. What you been doing in there?"

"Nothing."

"Nothing! Look at your hands. And look at your mouth. What IS that truck?"

"I don't know, aunt."

"Well, I know. It's jam—that's what it is. Forty times I've said if you didn't let that jam alone I'd skin you. Hand me that switch."

The switch hovered in the air—the peril was desperate—

"My! Look behind you, aunt!"

The old lady whirled round, and snatched her skirts out of danger. The lad fled on the instant, scrambled up the high board-fence, and disappeared over it.

His aunt Polly stood surprised a moment, and then broke into a gentle laugh.

"Hang the boy, can't I never learn anything? Ain't he played me tricks enough like that for me to be looking out for him by this time? But old fools is the biggest fools there is. Can't learn an old dog new tricks, as the saying is. But my goodness, he never plays them alike, two days, and how is a body to know what's coming? He 'pears to know just how long he can torment me before I get my dander up, and he knows if he can make out to put me off for a minute or make me laugh, it's all down again and I can't hit him a lick. I ain't doing my duty by that boy, and that's the Lord's truth, goodness knows. Spare the rod and spile the child, as the Good Book[†] says. I'm a laying up sin and suffering for us both, I know. He's full of the Old Scratch,[†] but laws-a-me! he's my own dead sister's boy, poor thing, and I ain't got the heart to lash him, somehow. Every time I let him off, my conscience does hurt me so, and every time I hit him my old heart most breaks. Well-a-well, man that is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble, as the Scripture says, and I reckon it's so. He'll play hookey this evening, and I'll just be obleeged to make him work, to-morrow, to punish him. It's mighty hard to make him work Saturdays, when all the boys is having holiday, but he hates work more than he hates anything else, and I've got to do some of my duty by him, or I'll be the ruination of the child."

Tom did play hookey, and he had a very good time. He got back home barely in season to help Jim, the small colored boy, saw next-day's wood and split the kindlings before supper—at least he was there in time to tell his adventures to Jim while Jim did three-fourths of the work. Tom's younger brother (or rather, half-brother) Sid, was already through with his part of the work (picking up chips) for he was a quiet boy, and had no adventurous, troublesome ways.

[†]Terms marked in the text with (†) can be looked up in the Glossary for additional information.

While Tom was eating his supper, and stealing sugar as opportunity offered, Aunt Polly asked him questions that were full of guile, and very deep—for she wanted to trap him into damaging revelations. Like many other simple-hearted souls, it was her pet vanity to believe she was endowed with a talent for dark and mysterious diplomacy, and she loved to contemplate her most transparent devices as marvels of low cunning. Said she:

“Tom, it was middling warm in school, warn’t it?”

“Yes’m.”

“Powerful warm, warn’t it?”

“Yes’m.”

“Didn’t you want to go in a-swimming, Tom?”

A bit of a scare shot through Tom—a touch of uncomfortable suspicion. He searched Aunt Polly’s face, but it told him nothing. So he said:

“No’m—well, not very much.”

The old lady reached out her hand and felt Tom’s shirt, and said:

“But you ain’t too warm now, though.” And it flattered her to reflect that she had discovered that the shirt was dry without anybody knowing that that was what she had in her mind. But in spite of her, Tom knew where the wind lay, now. So he forestalled what might be the next move:

“Some of us pumped on our heads—mine’s damp yet. See?”

Aunt Polly was vexed to think she had overlooked that bit of circumstantial evidence, and missed a trick. Then she had a new inspiration:

“Tom, you didn’t have to undo your shirt collar where I sewed it, to pump on your head, did you? Unbutton your jacket!”

The trouble vanished out of Tom’s face. He opened his jacket. His shirt collar was securely sewed.

“Bother! Well, go ’long with you. I’d made sure you’d played hookey and been a-swimming. But I forgive ye, Tom. I reckon you’re a kind of a singed cat, as the saying is—better’n you look. *This time.*”

She was half sorry her sagacity had miscarried, and half glad that Tom had stumbled into obedient conduct for once.

But Sidney said:

“Well, now, if I didn’t think you sewed his collar with white thread, but it’s black.”

“Why, I did sew it with white! Tom!”

But Tom did not wait for the rest. As he went out at the door he said:

“Siddy, I’ll lick you for that.”

In a safe place Tom examined two large needles which were thrust into the lappels of his jacket, and had thread bound about them—one needle carried white thread and the other black. He said:

“She’d never noticed if it hadn’t been for Sid. Confound it! sometimes she sews it with white, and sometimes she sews it with black. I wish to geeminy she’d

stick to one or t'other—I can't keep the run of 'em. But I bet you I'll lam Sid for that. I'll learn him!"

He was not the Model Boy of the village. He knew the model boy very well though—and loathed him.

Within two minutes, or even less, he had forgotten all his troubles. Not because his troubles were one whit less heavy and bitter to him than a man's are to a man, but because a new and powerful interest bore them down and drove them out of his mind for the time—just as men's misfortunes are forgotten in the excitement of new enterprises. This new interest was a valued novelty in whistling, which he had just acquired from a negro, and he was suffering to practise it undisturbed. It consisted in a peculiar bird-like turn, a sort of liquid warble, produced by touching the tongue to the roof of the mouth at short intervals in the midst of the music—the reader probably remembers how to do it, if he has ever been a boy. Diligence and attention soon gave him the knack of it, and he strode down the street with his mouth full of harmony and his soul full of gratitude. He felt much as an astronomer feels who has discovered a new planet—no doubt, as far as strong, deep, unalloyed pleasure is concerned, the advantage was with the boy, not the astronomer.

The summer evenings were long. It was not dark, yet. Presently Tom checked his whistle. A stranger was before him—a boy a shade larger than himself. A new comer of any age or either sex was an impressive curiosity in the poor little shabby village of St. Petersburg. This boy was well dressed, too—well dressed on a week-day. This was simply astounding. His cap was a dainty thing, his close-buttoned blue cloth roundabout was new and natty, and so were his pantaloons. He had shoes on—and it was only Friday. He even wore a necktie, a bright bit of ribbon. He had a citified air about him that ate into Tom's vitals. The more Tom stared at the splendid marvel, the higher he turned up his nose at his finery and the shabbier and shabbier his own outfit seemed to him to grow. Neither boy spoke. If one moved, the other moved—but only sidewise, in a circle; they kept face to face and eye to eye all the time. Finally Tom said:

"I can lick you!"

"I'd like to see you try it."

"Well, I can do it."

"No you can't, either."

"Yes I can."

"No you can't."

"I can."

"You can't."

"Can!"

"Can't!"

An uncomfortable pause. Then Tom said:

"What's your name?"

“Tisn’t any of your business, maybe.”

“Well I ’low I’ll *make* it my business.”

“Well why don’t you?”

“If you say much, I will.”

“Much—much—*much*. There now.”

“Oh, you think you’re mighty smart, *don’t* you? I could lick you with one hand tied behind me, if I wanted to.”

“Well why don’t you *do* it? You *say* you can do it.”

“Well I *will*, if you fool with me.”

“Oh yes—I’ve seen whole families in the same fix.”

“Smarty! You think you’re *some*, now, *don’t* you? Oh, what a hat!”

“You can lump that hat if you don’t like it. I dare you to knock it off—and anybody that’ll take a dare will suck eggs.”

“You’re a liar!”

“You’re another.”

“You’re a fighting liar and dasn’t take it up.”

“Aw—take a walk!”

“Say—if you give me much more of your sass I’ll take and bounce a rock off’n your head.”

“Oh, of *course* you will.”

“Well I *will*.”

“Well why don’t you *do* it then? What do you keep *saying* you will for? Why don’t you *do* it? It’s because you’re afraid.”

“I *ain’t* afraid.”

“You are.”

“I ain’t.”

“You are.”

Another pause, and more eyeing and sidling around each other. Presently they were shoulder to shoulder. Tom said:

“Get away from here!”

“Go away yourself!”

“I won’t.”

“I won’t either.”

So they stood, each with a foot placed at an angle as a brace, and both shoving with might and main, and glowering at each other with hate. But neither could get an advantage. After struggling till both were hot and flushed, each relaxed his strain with watchful caution, and Tom said:

“You’re a coward and a pup. I’ll tell my big brother on you, and he can thrash you with his little finger, and I’ll make him do it, too.”

“What do I care for your big brother? I’ve got a brother that’s bigger than he is—and what’s more, he can throw him over that fence, too.” [Both brothers were imaginary.]

Glossary

CHAPTER I

Good Book – the Bible

Old Scratch – a nickname for the devil

in high feather – upset; over-reacting

CHAPTER II

“white alley...bully taw” – kinds of marbles used in a popular game

Jews-harp – a small, metal musical instrument that is held between the teeth and plucked to produce a twanging sound

CHAPTER III

dismal felicity – Tom is enjoying feeling sorry for himself.

CHAPTER IV

“Barlow” knife – a pocketknife or jack knife

first two disciples – According to the Bible, the first two disciples were Simon Peter and Andrew. These brothers, who were fishermen, left their belongings and followed Jesus.

David and Goliath – [David and Goliath] David, a young shepherd boy, defeats a giant with a sling and a rock during a duel, thus winning the battle against the Philistines.

CHAPTER V

—

CHAPTER VI

nigger – This term is not derogatory as Twain/Tom would have used it, despite its modern connotations. Notice the traits of the characters to which the term is applied. Characters discuss the situations that the black characters must endure, such as being horsewhipped, their use of superstitions, such as the “spunk-water” remedy, and their generosity, such as getting food from Uncle Jake.

the Lord’s Prayer – the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

CHAPTER VII

—

Vocabulary

CHAPTER I

adamantine – like a diamond
ambuscade – an ambush
dainty – small; delicate
diplomacy – being sensitive with others
enterprises – businesses
kindlings – items used to start fire
spile – spoil
truck – stuff
vulgar – crude; common people

CHAPTER II

alacrity – moving or responding with great speed and enthusiasm
melancholy – deep sadness, usually lasting a long time
obliged – indebted
personating – [*impersonating*]; pretending to be something you are not
pomp – self-importance
starboard – the front, right side of a ship
vigor – with energy

CHAPTER III

anatomy – body structure
audacious – bold; adventurous
beseeking – requesting
blighted – ruined
ecstasies – intense emotions
eminence – person of high rank
evanescent – lasting only a brief time
faculties – the five senses plus the ability to think clearly
omission – something omitted; neglection
partiality – having a preference for
tallow – melted candle wax

CHAPTER IV

august – majestic
benediction – a blessing
counterfeited – faked
dignified – distinguished; honorable
lickrish – [*licorice*] a kind of candy
prodigious – extraordinary