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Prestwick House
Literature
Teaching Unit

Chapter-by-Chapter Study Guide



The Adventures of Tom Sawyer

by Mark Twain

- Learning objectives
- Study Guide with short-answer questions
- Background information
- Vocabulary in context
- Multiple-choice test
- Essay questions
- Literary terms



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Item No: 301141

The Adventures of Tom Sawyer

Objectives

By the end of this Unit, the student will be able to:

1. Support or refute the following generalization by referring to incidents or comments in the novel: Tom Sawyer is a good example of a coming-of-age story.
2. Define the terms “episodic novel” and point out how this term might apply to *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*.
3. Define the term “foil” and point out how Sid performs that function.
4. Define the term “caricature” and point out how Injun Joe may fit the definition.
5. Write a character study for the following:
 - Tom
 - Becky Thatcher
 - Huck Finn
 - Aunt Polly.
6. Define the term “idyll” and discuss the possibility that this work fits that description.
7. Point out and comment on the picture of small-town life in mid 1800s America, identifying and commenting on the variety of social classes and character types.
8. Identify incidents or comments that relate to these motifs in the novel:
 - bad boys versus model boys
 - adults versus children
 - sincerity versus insincerity.
9. Trace the development of these themes and support ideas by referring to incidents and comments from the novel:
 - material success as the passport to respectable adult society
 - malignant human behavior as motivated by revenge
 - the moral uncertainty of right and wrong behavior as a part of growing up

The Adventures of Tom Sawyer

Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. Discuss how the meanings of a word may change over time and differ from one part of the country to another. Point out the role of dialect in this story.
2. Because Huck's father is a drunk and no longer in town, Huck is left to fend for himself. How does Huck deal with this fact?
3. What are some superstitions shown in the novel. Do these superstitions have any practical purpose?
4. Coming-of-age stories are usually one of two types:
 - *Loss of Innocence* – The young person is innocent or naive. Through the events in the story the character comes face to face with evil and recognizes that evil is part of life and, as a result, is now wiser about the world and may also be a little sadder.
 - *Rite of Passage* – The boy or girl becomes an adult by undergoing a test or ordeal and passing the test.

Is *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* a coming-of-age story? If so, which kind?
5. Briefly review the attitudes toward women as depicted in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*?
6. Why is this book considered a “classic”? What elements make it pass the test of time?
7. Discuss the role religion plays in the lives of the people of St. Petersburg. How do you think Twain feels about religion in general?
8. Racial bigotry is a part of this story. Find instances of this element and discuss how they illustrate the beliefs of the time. Are any of these instances prevalent in our society today?
9. Mark Twain is famous as a master story-teller. In the preface, he states that these adventures really occurred to himself or his schoolmates. Do you think the plot is believable? Why?
10. Do you think Injun Joe and Muff Potter receive justice? In what way may Injun Joe be a caricature?
11. Tom has adventures all over the town and the surrounding area. Is that kind of freedom available to children today?

The Adventures of Tom Sawyer

Chapter I

Vocabulary

dainty – small; delicate
diplomacy – being sensitive with others
Good Book – the Bible
kindlings – items used to start fire
vulgar – crude; common people

1. Find an example of the following literary terms in this chapter:

- hyperbole
- cliché
- simile

- _____

- _____

- _____

2. What theme might Twain be expressing in the paragraph that begins, “Within two minutes, or even less,…”?

- 3. Support the following statement: The new girl appreciates Tom's performances and likes him, too.

- 4. Why do you think Tom loses interest in Amy Lawrence? Is this quick change of heart normal? Do you find it common that young people fall in and out of love quickly?

- 5. Do you think Tom is really angry at Aunt Polly for striking him? Find a quotation to support your answer.

- 6. What has Sid "thought better of" in the following passage?

"Not long after, as Tom, . . . was surveying his drenched garments . . . Sid woke up; but if he had any dim idea of making any 'references to allusions,' he thought better of it."

Chapter VII

1. Briefly identify Joe Harper.

2. Why does Becky agree to meet Tom at lunch time?

3. What promises does Tom claim are part of their engagement?

4. How does Tom break Becky's heart? How does he try to make amends?

5. Compare Tom's problems with Becky to his argument with Joe. How does he solve his problems?

Chapter XIII

Vocabulary

imminent – about to occur
provisions – supplies
purloined – stolen
rendezvous – arranged meeting
succumb – to give in
transpired – became known

1. Why does Joe Harper want to run away with Tom?

2. Describe Jackson's Island. Why is it attractive to the boys?

3. Why is being a pirate better than being a hermit?

4. Why are Joe and Tom troubled by their consciences? How do they resolve their problem?

5. Support the following statement: Huck is not troubled by a conscience about not attending school.
