The Adventures of Tom Sawyer

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF MARK TWAIN

Samuel Clemens spent his youth in Hannibal, Missouri, a small port town on the Mississippi. His father died when he was eleven, and he worked in the newspaper business from twelve onwards, first as a typesetter at *The Hannibal Journal*. After self-educating himself while working as a printer in New York, Philadelphia, Cincinnati, and St. Louis, he spent a decade working as a steamboat pilot on the Mississippi. He toured the territories of the American West for several years while building his reputation as a journalist. In 1865, the publication of his story "Jim Smiley and His Jumping Frog" brought him national recognition. He married Olivia Langdon in 1870, with whom he had three children, and the family lived mostly in Hartford, Connecticut. By the time of his death, he was prized internationally as a prolific chronicler of American culture with an ability to expose its ills and hypocrisies in lighthearted, satirical fictions and autobiographical texts.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

The novel is often seen as a less serious work than its sequel *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (1884)*, in novel which Tom plays a minor role but which has Tom's best friend Huck Finn as its central character and explores the complex social fabric of the pre-Civil War American South. Tom is also the hero of two later, minor novels by Twain: *Tom Sawyer Abroad* (1894) and *Tom Sawyer Neglected* (1896). He appears in Twain's unfinished works *Huck and Tom Among the Indians*, *Schoolhouse Hill*, and *Tom Sawyer's Conspiracy*.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*
- **When Written:** 1874-1875
- **Where Written:** Hartford, Connecticut
- **When Published:** 1876
- **Literary Period:** American Realism
- **Genre:** The novel is a hybrid of several genres, including satire, comedy, and folk narrative. It may be categorized as a picaresque novel because it's composed of a series of episodic adventures involving an impish child. As the story of Tom's moral development from boyhood into adulthood, it can also be described as a *bildungsroman*.
- **Setting:** The fictional village of St. Petersburg, which is based on Twain's boyhood home of Hannibal, Missouri
- **Climax:** Lost in MacDougal's Cave with Becky, Tom is searching the tunnels for a way out when he encounters Injun Joe, who runs away. (This is the major climax of the novel because Tom is its hero, but a secondary climax occurs at the same chronological time when Huck tells the Welchman that Injun Joe and the stranger are on their way to the widow Douglas's house to get violent revenge.)
- **Antagonist:** Injun Joe
- **Point of View:** The novel is narrated in the omniscient third person, though it is the voice of an adult with sympathetic insight into the struggles of boyhood.

EXTRA CREDIT

Illustrated text: The original publication of *Tom Sawyer* by the American Publishing Company included 160 illustrations by True Williams. It is believed that the publisher might have intended that the pictures bulk up the rather short manuscript.

Hit rock song: The Canadian group Rush wrote "Tom Sawyer" to celebrate Twain's character for his individualism and spirited determination.

PLOT SUMMARY

The novel centers on the mischievous orphan Tom Sawyer, who lives in the quaint **village** of St. Petersburg, Missouri under the care of his kind Aunt Polly along with his ill-natured brother Sid and angelic cousin Mary. As a collection of stories, the novel is loosely structured, but follows the arc of Tom's transformation from a rebellious boy who longs to escape authority to a responsible community member committed to respectability.

Tom's first adventure occurs as a result of him playing hooky, stealing snacks, sneaking in late, and various other misdeeds. As punishment, Aunt Polly tells him to whitewash her fence on a Saturday. Tom convinces his friends that whitewashing the fence is actually a privilege, and gets them to not only do the work for him but to pay him with various trinkets for the opportunity. On his way home he develops a crush on the new girl in town, Becky Thatcher.

The next day he heads to Sunday school, where he trades the trinkets he tricked his friends into giving him on Saturday in exchange for tickets they earned for memorizing scripture. With these tickets Tom earns an honorary Bible. His teacher knows that Tom is being dishonest, but rewards him to show off to Judge Thatcher, who is visiting that day. Judge Thatcher then tests Tom by asking him the names of Jesus's first two disciples and Tom responds incorrectly.

On the way to school Monday he runs into Huckleberry Finn and they agree to meet up in the graveyard at midnight to test a

cure for warts. Tom's late for school, and forced to sit with the girls as punishment. He uses this opportunity to profess his love to Becky. Over lunch Becky spurns his marriage proposal after learning he was recently engaged to Amy Lawrence.

That night, from a hidden spot in the graveyard, Tom and Huck watch a fight break out among the grave robbers Injun Joe, the drunkard Muff Potter, and Dr. Robinson. Injun Joe stabs the doctor, and then frames Muff for the crime. The boys are so scared of Injun Joe that they vow to never tell anyone.

Shattered by Becky's rejection, Tom decides to run away as a pirate, recruiting Joe Harper and Huck to join him. They sneak off to Jackson's Island, a small island near town in the Mississippi River. Tom secretly returns to St. Petersburg one night to eavesdrop on his family as they mourn him, think he's drowned. He returns with his friends to interrupt their funeral ceremony. When they do they are welcomed as heroes.

At school, Tom startles Becky as she is secretly peeking through their teacher Mr. Dobbins' anatomy book and she tears a page. Though she has continued to reject him, he tells Mr. Dobbins he tore the page, and is whipped, earning Becky's admiration.

Tom's conscience nags him as Muff's trial approaches. When it comes, he takes the stand as a surprise witness to clear Muff's name. Injun Joe escapes through a window, however.

Tom asks Huck to hunt for **treasure** with him. Their efforts lead them into a haunted house. They hide when they hear Injun Joe and a stranger there. The boys watch as the outlaws discover a treasure chest full of gold underneath the floor, which they take to hide at "Number Two."

Tom has Huck watch for the men at the Temperance Tavern, thinking room number two may be where the treasure is. Meanwhile he goes on a picnic with Becky at MacDougal's Cave. When Injun Joe and the stranger appear, Huck tracks them, overhearing their plan to get revenge on the widow Douglas. Huck goes to the Welchman to save the widow, and a posse of men scare off the outlaws but fail to capture them.

Tom and Becky are lost in **the cave**, fearing for their survival. Hunting for a way out, Tom encounters Injun Joe, who runs away. Eventually Tom finds an outlet and the children are welcomed home.

Tom realizes "Number Two" must be in MacDougal's Cave, where he and Huck find the treasure. The get to keep the gold and are now respected throughout St. Petersburg as wealthy, courageous young men. The widow Douglas takes Huck in to take care of him and civilize him. Miserable, Huck runs away. Tom finds him and promises to let Huck join his new gang on the condition that he return to the widow's house. Huck agrees.

CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Tom Sawyer – The novel's hero, Tom is a badly behaved orphan with an attention-getting streak and a heart of gold. He's a clever trickster, leading the boys of **the village** in various adventures, and a dreamer with grandiose visions for himself. His misdeeds are never malicious, and by the novel's end he proves himself capable of mature decision-making and empathy, with a commitment to being a responsible community member.

Huckleberry Finn – As the son of the town drunkard, Huck is virtually orphaned. He's looked down upon by the adults of St. Petersburg, but is deeply admired by the local boys for living as he wants to—not bathing, sleeping outdoors, smoking, never attending school. He bonds with Tom through their mutual superstitions. Like Tom, he matures morally over the course of the novel, though to different ends. While Tom becomes a responsible community member, Huck is more wary of society's hypocrisy and desires of independence from it.

Becky Thatcher – Tom develops a crush on Becky as the new blond in town, and the novel charts the development of their relationship into a mature affection for one another after much tit-for-tat pettiness. As the daughter of Judge Thatcher, Becky is a privileged girl, prissy and slightly spoiled—a worthy challenger to Tom when it comes to conniving to get her way.

Injun Joe – The novel's villain. Injun Joe is an anti-social adult, motivated by revenge and ruthless in exacting it. He brings both realism and romanticism to the novel. On the one hand his behavior forces Tom and his friends to confront injustice and criminality. On the other his fantastic escapes and discovery of **treasure** serve as plot devices that move the novel along as a page-turning adventure story. He is also half Native American, and has faced discrimination in society as a result. Even so, Twain's depiction of him is unsympathetic.

Joe Harper – Tom's best friend aside from Huck. He runs away with them to **the island** after Tom finds him upset one day at having been wrongfully accused by his mother of having stolen cream. As a conventional boy—the first one to miss home—Joe serves as a foil to the self-sufficient Huck.

Judge Thatcher – Becky's father and the county Judge, who is based in Constantinople. He is the most revered figure in **St. Petersburg**. He takes a fondness to Tom after he leads Becky out of **the cave**, hoping he'll become a lawyer, which indicates the fallibility of the lawman, who should be more wary of mischievous Tom.

Alfred Temple – Tom's classroom nemesis, Alfred is a refined, slightly effeminate new boy in town, who runs home from fighting with Tom to his mother's protection. His spiteful nature is revealed when, after Becky flirts with him to get Tom's

attention, he gets revenge by secretly spilling ink across Tom's spelling book so that Tom will be whipped.

The Welchman – Also known as Mr. Jones, he lives with his sons near the widow Douglas, and Huck turns to him to save the widow from Injun Joe's revenge. Though the Welchman is a capable hunter who succeeds in scaring off Injun Joe, he has a gossipy, sentimental side, and can't keep Huck's heroism secret.

Mr. Dobbins – The local teacher. Mr. Dobbins is a pompous disciplinarian with a vindictive nature. As a youth he dreamed of becoming a doctor, and keeps an anatomy book hidden in his desk. On Examination day, just before summer vacation, the schoolchildren get revenge upon him for his punishments by dropping a cat from the ceiling to swipe off his wig and reveal to their parents his bald head, painted gold while he was passed out drunk.

Mr. Walters – The superintendent of the Sunday school. Despite being a religious man, he is prone to vanity, and rewards Tom a Bible he hasn't rightfully earned for the sake of looking good in front of Judge Thatcher. Their shared underhandedness is revealed when Tom fails to correctly answer a basic Biblical question posed by Judge Thatcher.

Dr. Robinson – A compatriot of Injun Joe and Muff Potter. After he argues with the two of them and knocks out Muff Potter, Injun Joe stabs and kills Dr. Robinson and then frames the knocked-out Muff Potter for the murder. Tom and Huck witness these events, and the fact that they know Muff Potter is innocent sets in motion their conflict with Injun Joe.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Aunt Polly – Tom's strict but warm-hearted caretaker. A spinster, Aunt Polly dotes on Tom like a mother, sparing him her harshest punishments more often than not. Tom repeatedly outwits her, yet she has the compassion to forgive him repeatedly, desiring that he love her like a mother.

Sid – Tom's younger brother, Sid is mean-spirited and ungenerous towards Tom but is generally successful at brown-nosing his elders.

Cousin Mary – Older than Tom and Sid, she also lives at Aunt Polly's house, and is perfectly behaved and kind throughout.

Ben Rogers – Tom's friend, and the first one he convinces to paint Aunt Polly's fence.

Amy Lawrence – Tom's girlfriend before Becky.

Dr. Robinson – A grave robber along with Injun Joe and Muff Potter. Because the doctor snubbed him while begging years ago, Injun Joe suddenly murders him.

Muff Potter – The simple, drunk friend of Injun Joe who accompanies him to the graveyard only to be framed as Dr. Robinson's murderer. His sweet nature and gratitude to Tom and Huck for delivering presents to his jail cell eventually breaks down Tom's resolve to keep mum about Injun Joe's guilt.

The Stranger – Injun Joe's companion in the haunted house when they find **the treasure**. His body turns up drowned in the river after the Welchman chases them off the widow Douglas's property.

The widow Douglas – A wealthy, generous older woman who eventually takes Huck in after he saves her life by revealing Injun Joe's plan to get revenge on her for her deceased husband's having whipped him for vagrancy. As his guardian at the novel's end, she tries to civilize Huck.

Mrs. Sereny Harper – Joe Harper's mother, who mourns with Aunt Polly, Mary, and Sid when Tom, Joe, and Huck are thought to have drowned.

The sign-painters boy – His family boards Mr. Dobbins. For the schoolchildren's Examination day revenge, he paints the teacher's head gold in his sleep.

Mr. Sprague – The local reverend.

Jim – Aunt Polly's slave.

Lawyer Thatcher – The brother of Judge Thatcher.

Sheriff – The town sheriff.

Mrs. Thatcher – The wife of Judge Thatcher and the mother of Becky Thatcher.

Mrs. Harper – Joe Harper's mother.

Uncle Jake – A slave belonging to Ben Roger's family.

Susy Harper – Joe Harper's sister.

The minister – The church minister who gives the eulogy for Tom, Huck, and Joe when the town believes the boys are dead. The minister's speech paints the boys in such a positive light that all the townspeople feel they misjudged the boys when they were alive.

The sign-painter's boy – The son of the town sign-painter. Mr. Dobbins rents a room from his family. He helps Tom and the other boys pull a prank by painting Mr. Dobbins' bald head gold while Dobbins is asleep.

THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.

BOYHOOD REBELLION AND GROWING UP

Tom Sawyer is the embodiment of boyhood rebellion. He is always disappointing the adults who surround him, by breaking rules, fighting with other boys,

failing to perform his chores, fibbing, stealing sweet treats from his Aunt Polly's closet, and so on. Yet Twain's stories of Tom's misdeeds are humorous and affectionate, rather than judgmental moral lessons. Tom's shenanigans, in fact, often bring delight and even unpredictable insight into a situation, with the boys' interactions as a gang often satirically mirroring the behaviors of adults in society. Tom's rebellion earns him the admiration of the other boys in town, who misbehave to lesser degrees. Huckleberry Finn is the only boy who is wilder than Tom. With **the village** drunkard as his single parent, Huck lives an unsupervised life that is every other boy's dream: he never goes to school or church, he smokes, he wears whatever he wants, and he sleeps outdoors each night. Rebellion is a way for boys to bond, to the exclusion of a few well-behaved boys, such as Sid, and girls, who are more reserved than boys.

Breaking rules is considered unacceptable and anti-social for adults, and, accordingly, the murderer Injun Joe and drunkard Muff Potter are outcasts. Though Tom's mischievous nature is the source of the novel's many humorous anecdotes, the overall arc of the novel charts Tom's maturation into adulthood as he leaves behind his boyish ways to become a responsible member of society. Tom realizes that his actions can have serious consequences and he makes several moral, empathetic decisions over the second half of the novel, including testifying against Injun Joe and protecting Becky Thatcher from being whipped by their teacher. Additionally, Tom makes three journeys that involve his maturation. When he runs away with Joe Harper and Huck to Jackson's Island, he realizes that he misses the company of his family and society. In the several days he spends lost in **the cave** with Becky Thatcher, he develops an understanding of mature romantic love that involves caring for another, and that proves more fulfilling than simply courting girls for reasons of personal vanity. Finally, after Tom and Huck hunt down **the treasure**, Tom adopts the respect for wealth and status that the adults of St. Petersburg hold, and no longer disdains wearing suits and other respectable habits.

While Twain's novel catalogs Tom's progression towards adulthood, the author does not fully embrace the changes in attitudes this transition involves, as his portrayal of Huck exemplifies. Huck also matures considerably over the novel, and he performs the most heroic act of all in saving the widow Douglas's life. Yet Huck continues to avoid the proprieties of society—having manners and attending church, for example—even after he has gained the approval of St. Petersburg's citizens. He prefers to exist as an independent character on the fringe of society, avoiding the hypocrisies that Twain has satirized throughout the novel. At the novel's end, Huck and Tom represent different aspects of adulthood, but they continue to bond through their boyish fantasies, and this capacity for friendship is a characteristic of boyhood that Twain would have his adult readers see as true wisdom.

THE HYPOCRISY OF ADULT SOCIETY

The adults of quaint **St. Petersburg** see themselves as a law-abiding, church-going, family-based group that must police its children. The most respected figure in the novel is Judge Thatcher, who is in charge of administering the law. Virtually every villager shows up to church on Sunday, so that community is formed through an agreed upon set of moral values. The education of **the village's** children consists largely of learning to follow inflexible rules that are intended to protect these values. The adventures of Tom and his friends often reveal gaps in the adults' logic and inconsistencies in their behavior, with the adults saying one thing but acting otherwise. For example, Aunt Polly tries to force herself to consistently punish to Tom for his rule breaking. But she often compromises herself by administering a lesser punishment, such as tapping him on the head with her thimble when she had originally threatened to whip him with her switch. While Tom is often punished for being untrue to his word, Aunt Polly is not, but remains a moral authority. Twain uses the playful games and interactions of children to also humorously reflect hypocrisy on the broader scale of 19th-century American society and its religion, temperance movement, medical beliefs, and social snobbery. Aunt Polly's belief in "quack" medicines isn't that different from Tom's in black magic, for instance, but medical authorities support her superstitions. To take another example, when Tom briefly joins the Cadets of Temperance, he is motivated by the social status he'll gain in wearing a fancy sash rather than any conviction about the ills of substance abuse. Surely the adults involved in the temperance movement are similarly motivated.

Even if Twain is cutting in his dismissive attitude toward abstract social causes that involve hypocrisy, he sees it as an inevitable and condonable aspect of life in a community. Adults fail to follow through on their word regarding the several adventures Tom undertakes that involve his leaving **the village**. In running away to Jackson's Island, getting lost in **the cave**, and tracking down Injun Joe's **treasure**, Tom and his friends break serious rules, yet in each case the villagers welcome the children home again without punishing them. The adults can hardly be condemned for their hypocrisy in desiring the children's safety, which underscores Twain's belief in the ultimate goodness of community. The individual who does deserve punishment in the novel is the villain Injun Joe, whose desire for revenge against both Dr. Robinson and the widow Douglas reveal that he is incapable of forgiving others, or bending the rules as a hypocrite might. Hypocrisy is a complicated issue in Twain's depiction of St. Petersburg, for the flawed logic it involves is worth noting, but hypocrisy is ultimately a very human, even necessary flaw.

SUPERSTITION, FANTASY, AND ESCAPE

From the first moment of the novel, Tom is on the run, hiding out from Aunt Polly with stolen jam smeared across his face in her closet. In the face of constant scolding and ever-boring work, Tom repeatedly manages to escape. He plays **hooky** whenever possible, and leaves Aunt Polly's house typically to return only after his bedtime. He also metaphorically escapes from the boring routines and rules of daily life in **St. Petersburg** through fantasy, re-imagining the world to entertain himself. This might involve play-acting with other boys, or exaggerating his own achievements. He collects superstitious beliefs and tokens—typically everyday cast-off objects reinvented—with which to flavor his tall tales.

Tom draws from books he's read about Robin Hood, pirates, and other adventurers to imagine himself as the hero of a romantic tale and thereby view his everyday woes in a more glamorous light. His maturation over the course of the novel, however, largely involves his learning to differentiate this romantic world from reality. He begins to develop this ability when he runs away with Huck Finn and Joe Harper to Jackson Island, his first "real" physical escape from St. Petersburg. The boys create an alternate reality on **the island**, with new names and histories for each of them. Their island adventure reveals the fun to be had in escaping through rule-breaking, as the boys leave the strictures of society behind altogether, parading around naked and even abandoning their families by allowing them to believe they've drowned. They learn, however, that no escape is permanent, feeling homesick rather than courageous on the island. Only upon returning to the warm embrace of the villagers who thought them dead do the boys come to feel heroic. At the novel's end, Tom no longer feels the same longing to escape St. Petersburg, and even chastises Huck for running away from the widow Douglas's home, insisting that he return there if he want to join Tom's new gang. Tom has matured into an adult who, like the rest of his community, takes pride in his new wealth and status, and his clever ability to manipulate others will now serve him as he assumes a leadership position as an adult in St. Petersburg (as a lawyer, if Judge Thatcher has his way).

The adults of St. Petersburg are themselves susceptible to flights of fancy—consider the minister's extraordinary descriptions of the apocalypse in his church sermon. Twain's depiction of Tom's playful games are delightful to read over the course of the novel, and while he must gain a more realistic view of life as an adult, Twain suggests fantasy provides a way for people to handle the harshness of reality.

SHOWING OFF

Tom wishes at all times to be the center of attention, and is pained to share the spotlight with anyone. This desire motivates many of his actions, from picking fights with other boys, to conniving to win the honorary Bible at Sunday school, to winning Becky Thatcher's heart. At the novel's start he is frequently shortsighted in his maneuvers to gain the spotlight, which results in his ending up looking foolish, offering onlookers (and the reader) further entertainment. By its end, Tom's more mature self has become capable of greater sophistication, and he earns the spotlight through less clownish behavior. His final discovery of buried **treasure**, for example, makes him the envy of everyone in town, with many villagers even seeing him as a model for their own behavior as they set off to hunt for buried treasure in haunted houses. Notably, they want to be able to boast their wealth, just like him, so he is hardly alone in his vanity. At its worst, his showing off reveals a selfish strain in Tom's character. Yet Twain depicts the need for attention as just a minor vice, because it is based in a social instinct for connecting to others in the community. Even the teachers at the Sunday school yearn to be recognized as they try to impress Judge Thatcher when he visits their classroom. The only character who begrudges Tom his dramatic flair is Sid, who is mean-spirited and a loner.

SENTIMENTALITY AND REALISM

In writing about **the village** of **St. Petersburg**, Missouri, Twain was describing a contemporary Southern American village to his original readers. Rather than glamorizing his subject matter by writing about a more well-known location or glamorous characters, he aimed towards realism in describing the daily lives of average people living on the Mississippi River, people in whom his readers might recognize themselves. His preface explains that much of the book is based on his own experiences growing up, implying that little has been reinvented. Yet, even as he sets out to tell the stories of ordinary villagers with beliefs and values that represent those of many mid-nineteenth-century Americans, Twain adds embellishments to his depiction, playing up the quaintness of village life. A more realistic view of a community would stress, for example, unresolved injustices, the disparity between rich and poor, or the life of a slave in St. Petersburg (as Twain will do in another novel, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*). And there are elements of realism in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, for example Twain's descriptions of Huck's life as a homeless boy who is looked down upon by his elders. Even so, as a novel consisting of many short stories with happy endings, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* is largely a sentimental portrait of Mississippi **village** life, offering St. Petersburg as Twain would *like* to remember it. Twain does this purposefully to show the reader how building a community involves a sense of optimism. Twain structures the end of the book like a romantic tale, with Tom and Huck actually discovering **treasure** in a haunted house—a completely improbable plot twist. He implicates the reader in enjoying fanciful stories more than realistic ones.

SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.

THE VILLAGE

St. Petersburg typifies small-town America in the nineteenth century. Tom reaches maturity over the course of the novel in realizing that he must act as a responsible member of this community rather than rebelling against its conventions. While Twain depicts **the village** as an ultimately benevolent support system for its members, he also uses satire to point out the hypocrisies and weaknesses of its attitudes and institutions.

THE ISLAND

Tom, Huck, and Joe Harper escape to Jackson's Island to live as outlaws, leaving behind the rules and strictures of St. Petersburg society. Its physical isolation brings them all the freedom they could hope for. Yet Joe and Tom they find that they are not happy—they miss the social attachments and responsibilities to others that define their lives in **the village**.

THE TREASURE

Finding **treasure** is a fanciful notion appropriate to Tom's romantic boyhood imagination. Yet this unrealistic dream nonetheless comes true by the novel's end. Tom and Huck achieve maturity with the windfall of their treasure, which heralds the onset of their adulthood in the eyes of society, for they have achieved wealth and status.

THE CAVE

In the harrowing experience of surviving several days lost in MacDougal's Cave, Tom's proves his manhood. Like **the island**, **the cave** involves physical isolation from **the village** community. While Tom runs away to the island with dreams of personal glory as an outlaw, in the cave he acts wisely and resourcefully as Becky's male protector. Twain describes the experience in a realistic, unromantic style that speaks for the seriousness required of the adult behaviors Tom performs in rescuing Becky.

STORMS

Incidences of bad weather occur several times in the novel, each time signifying that Tom is in a particularly troubled psychological state. On Jackson's Island the homesick boys survive a **storm** that wreaks considerable damage on their ill-prepared campsite. When Becky is away for the summer and his friends are swept up in religious revivalism, a lonely Tom hides under his sheets during a **storm** that he imagines is meant to destroy him.

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Vintage Classics edition of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* published in 2010.

Chapter 1 Quotes

"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."

Related Characters: Aunt Polly (speaker), Tom Sawyer

Related Themes:

Page Number: 4

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, we're introduced to the relationship between Aunt Polly and Tom Sawyer. Polly is a strict parent to Tom Sawyer, but she's always reluctant to beat Tom, despite the commonness of corporal punishment in her world. Polly even quotes the Bible's famous defense of beating children (itself paraphrased): "spare the rod, spoil the child."

It's important to situate this passage in Twain's era. When Twain published his novel, the vast majority of families in the United States approved of corporal punishment. While Polly's refusal to beat Tom might seem generous and magnanimous by today's standards, it's possible that Twain intended Polly to seem ineffectual as a caregiver for Tom--she's too weak to give Tom the stern whipping he needs. In other words, the meaning of the passage has turned 180 degrees in the 140 years since *Tom Sawyer* first appeared. At the same time, it's important that Tom knows that the way to get out of punishment is to make his Aunt *laugh*--he's already learned that showing off and being entertaining is what gets him into trouble, but also what gets him out of it.

Chapter 2 Quotes

He had discovered a great law of human action, without knowing it—namely, that in order to make a man or a boy covet a thing, it is only necessary to make the thing difficult to attain. If he had been a great and wise philosopher, like the writer of this book, he would now have comprehended that Work consists of whatever a body is *obliged* to do and that Play consists of whatever a body is not obliged to do.

Related Characters: Tom Sawyer

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 16

Explanation and Analysis

In this famous scene, Tom Sawyer tricks his peers into helping him paint a white fence by pretending that painting the fence is an enjoyable activity. Tom even tricks his peers into *paying him* for the privilege of painting the fence (i.e., doing Tom's own job). As Twain points out, Tom has stumbled upon a great truth: humans are gullible, and often, the mere fact that other people desire something is enough to make a person feel the same desire.

Twain is a great satirist of human nature, and here he targets the small-minded people of Tom's community, who are so competitive with one another that they'll paint a fence for free. He also pokes fun at himself, calling himself a "great and wise philosopher" but also suggesting that he isn't as astute as Tom himself.

Chapter 3 Quotes

He wandered far from the accustomed haunts of boys, and sought desolate places that were in harmony with his spirit. A log raft in the river invited him, and he seated himself on its outer edge and contemplated the dreary vastness of the stream, wishing, the while, that he could only be drowned, all at once and unconsciously, without undergoing the uncomfortable routine devised by nature.

Related Characters: Tom Sawyer

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 22

Explanation and Analysis

Tom has stormed out of his house after Polly beats him. Polly mistakenly thinks that Tom has broken a dish--only to realize too later that it was actually Sid, Tom's brother, who broke it. Tom is furious when Polly refuses to admit her mistake, and so he runs away.

Twain depicts Tom's time alone as a parody of American rugged individualism. Tom thinks of himself as being noble and proud for escaping from Polly's house and into the "wilderness"--but of course, he's really just moping and feeling sorry for himself. Like so many children, he fantasizes about dying suddenly and making his caregivers weep for him. (The passage also foreshadows the scene later on, in which Tom will accidentally trick the townspeople into thinking that he's dead, allowing him to attend his own funeral.)

Chapter 5 Quotes

The minister made a grand and moving picture of the assembling together of the world's hosts at the millennium when the lion and the lamb should lie down together and a little child should lead them. But the pathos, the lesson, the moral of the great spectacle were lost upon the boy; he only thought of the conspicuousness of the principle character before the on-looking nations; his face lit with the thought, and he said to himself he wished he could be that child, if it was a tame lion.

Related Characters: Tom Sawyer, Mr. Sprague

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 38

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Tom attends church along with the rest of the townspeople. Although the preacher is preaching about the second coming of Christ, when the Bible says that "a little child shall lead them all," Tom misses the whole point of the story. The preacher is trying to show his congregation that when Christ comes to save mankind, previous rules society will be irrelevant, and the weak and the young will be blessed. But Tom doesn't understand any of this: he just fantasizes about being the proverbial "little child" and having everyone in the world look at him.

Tom is, in short, not a very good student of religion. Although many coming of age novels are about how young people use their educations to grow up and become wiser, more mature people, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* shows that Tom has little real grasp of formal education. At this early stage in the novel, Tom is just a silly boy who wants attention.

Chapter 6 Quotes

❝ Huckleberry was cordially hated and dreaded by all the mothers of the town, because he was idle, and lawless, and vulgar and bad—and because all their children admired him so, and delighted in his forbidden society, and wished they dared to be like him.

Related Characters: Huckleberry Finn

Related Themes:

Page Number: 44

Explanation and Analysis

In this chapter, we're introduced to Huckleberry Funn. Huck is similar to Tom--he likes mischief and is disobedient to adults. But Huck goes further than Tom in disobeying authorities--and doesn't really *have* any authorities in his life--to the point where everyone in the community treats him as a threat to their families' peace and order. Huck is a scapegoat for the town--whenever anything bad happens, Huck is to blame in some way.

Huck is also a potential role model for Tom. Tom is a young boy, and as we've seen, the various adults in the community are trying to teach him to grow into a mature man.Huck, in all his rough, mischievous glory, is the best role model Tom has at the moment.

Chapter 8 Quotes

❝ He would be a pirate! That was it! *Now* his future lay plain before him, and glowing with unimaginable splendor. How his name would fill the world, and make people shudder! How gloriously he would go plowing the dancing seas, in his long, low, black-hulled racer, the "Spirit of the Storm," with his grisly flag flying at the fore!

Related Characters: Tom Sawyer

Related Themes:

Page Number: 61

Explanation and Analysis

Tom is often punished for his bad behavior. But whenever he's been whipped or otherwise mistreated, he has a secret weapon--his imagination. Here, Tom fantasizes about escaping his town altogether in order to become a pirate. (One of the most amazing things about Twain's novel is how little children's fantasies have changed in the last 140 years.)

Tom's childish arrogance and machismo are apparent in this passage. It's not enough for Tom to be an adventurous pirate: everybody else in "the world" must *know* that Tom is a pirate. Tom's hubris is so great that he pictures himself traveling the world, making innocent people "shudder." Like plenty of young boys, Tom wants recognition from other people--specifically, he wants to scare and intimidate them into respecting him.

❝ The boys dressed themselves, hid their accoutrements, and went off grieving that there were no outlaws any more, and wondering what modern civilization could claim to have done to compensate for their loss. They said they would rather be outlaws a year in Sherwood Forest than President of the United States forever.

Related Themes:

Page Number: 65

Explanation and Analysis

In this parody of American rugged individualism, Tom and his friends fantasize about going off and forming a gang of bandits. Tom loves the idea of being able to live in the forests and rob the rich--much like one of his heroes, Robin Hood.

Although Twain's writing is comical, there's a serious cultural point being made here. Tom's desire to leave civilization behind and live in peace with nature is both recognizably childish and quintessentially American--one thinks of Thoreau going off to Walden; Johnny Appleseed traveling across the country; Bob Dylan migrating to New York, etc. There's a distinctly American tradition of adventure and discovery, and Tom both honors and parodies that tradition. (Twain's allusion to the President of the United States might be a clever joke--at the end of the day, Robin Hood was a charming thief, and perhaps that's how Twain--the author of *The Gilded Age*, a political satire--saw the presidents of his era, too.

Chapter 11 Quotes

❝ Injun Joe repeated his statement, just as calmly, a few minutes afterward on the inquest, under oath; and the boys, seeing that the lightnings were still withheld, were confirmed in their belief that Joe had sold himself to the devil. He was now become, to them, the most balefully interesting object they had ever looked upon, and they could not take their fascinated eyes from his face. They inwardly resolved to watch him, nights, when opportunity should offer, in the hope of getting a glimpse of his dread master.

Related Characters: Tom Sawyer, Huckleberry Finn, Injun Joe

Related Themes:

Page Number: 82

Explanation and Analysis

In this scene, Twain shows the trial of Injun Joe--a local man who murdered his partner, then framed another man, Muff Potter, for the crime. At the trial, Joe testifies that he saw Muff kill the man. Strangely, everyone seems to believe Joe without much question--Joe's confident attitude and calm demeanor fools the townspeople into trusting him. Tom and Huck Finn have witnessed Joe's crime: they know that it was Joe, not Muff, who committed the murder. The young boys are stunned that Joe can lie so easily, and get away with it.

The passage is an important milestone in the boys' coming-of-age. So far, Tom's life has been carefree and childish--he hasn't really had contact with people or events that could properly be called "adult." Now, Tom has witnessed a murder. Moreover, he sees a grown man lying under oath--something Tom has always been taught is a horrible sin (and he apparently thought Joe would be instantly struck by lightning for committing it). The irony is that in spite of Tom's reputation for rambunctiousness and dishonesty, he's really a pretty good, well-meaning child--as evidenced by his genuine shock when Joe lies under oath.

Chapter 12 Quotes

❝ She gathered together her quack periodicals and her quack medicines, and thus armed with death, went about on her pale horse, metaphorically speaking, with "hell following after." But she never suspected that she was not an agent of healing and the balm of Gilead in disguise, to the suffering neighbors.

Related Characters: Aunt Polly

Related Themes:

Page Number: 85

Explanation and Analysis

In this illuminating passage, Tom is racked with guilt at having witnessed Injun Joe's act of murder and remaining silent about it. Aunt Polly misinterprets Tom's behavior as indicative of his illness. Polly tries to feed Tom various medicines that she's bought at the local drugstore--medicines that clearly don't work at all. Polly deludes herself into believing that her medicine is incredibly effective, and that she herself is benevolent and charitable for inflicting it on others--she compares both the medicine and herself to the "balm of Gilead," a literal and metaphorical curative mentioned in the Bible.

The irony of the scene is that Tom's behavior seems vastly more mature and adult than Aunt Polly's. Tom has witnessed a real, serious event--the murder of a man. Aunt Polly, by contrast, seems strangely immature in the way she stubbornly insists on her medicine's effectiveness, despite all evidence to the contrary. In Twain's lifetime, there were thousands of pseudo-medicines like the one Polly buys. It was during Twain's era, after all, that the phrase "snake-oil salesman" entered the language--a reference to one of the most popular (and useless) quack-cures on the market.

The passage is important because it reminds us why Twain chose to write a book from a child's point of view in the first place. Tom may be a foolish kid, but he's immune to his town's foolish mob mentality, making him (at times) a rather insightful, lucid narrator.

Chapter 13 Quotes

❝ Tom's mind was made up, now. He was gloomy and desperate. He was a forsaken, friendless boy, he said; nobody loved him; when they found out what they had driven him to, perhaps they would be sorry; he had tried to do right and get along, but they would not let him; since nothing would do them but to be rid of him, let it be so; and let them blame *him* for the consequences—why shouldn't they? what right had the friendless to complain? Yes, they had forced him to it at last: he would lead a life of crime. There was no choice.

Related Characters: Tom Sawyer

Related Themes:

Page Number: 90

Explanation and Analysis

In this chapter, Tom finally "takes to the hills." He's been exasperated with his town for some time now--he can't stand his Aunt Polly, Sid, etc. Feel that he's without a better option, Tom decides to become a criminal, using his wiliness and strength to oppose his town.

The passage is written tongue-in-cheek, of course. Like so many frustrated kids, Tom has big ambitions, but doesn't really know anything about how to achieve them. And Twain makes it plain that Tom is just wallowing in his pain, instead of trying to do something to better himself. Notice the way that Twain uses the method of "indirect discourse" to convey Tom's thoughts without explicitly establishing that they *are* Tom's thoughts: for example, when Twain writes, "He was a forsaken, friendless boy," he's speaking as the narrator, but also illustrating what *Tom*thinks, not the truth--slipping in and out of his character's voice.

❝ They said their prayers inwardly, and lying down, since there was nobody there with authority to make them kneel and recite aloud; in truth they had a mind not to say them at all, but they were afraid to proceed to such lengths as that, lest they might call down a sudden and special thunderbolt from Heaven. Then at once they reached and hovered upon the imminent verge of sleep—but an intruder came, now, that would not "down." It was conscience. They began to feel a vague fear that they had been wrong to run away; and next they thought of the stolen meat, and then the real torture came.

Related Characters: Tom Sawyer, Huckleberry Finn, Joe Harper

Related Themes:

Page Number: 97

Explanation and Analysis

Here Twain conveys the silliness and childishness of Tom and Huck's mission to escape their town. Tom and Huck have snuck away from home, stealing some provisions in the process. At first they have lofty ambitions of being pirates and robbers--in general, being glamorous and refusing to play by society's rules. But before long, it becomes clear that Tom and Huck are still very much under the dominion of society's rules: they feel so guilty at having stolen food that they beg for God's forgiveness.

The passage is very funny (it only takes Tom and Huck a couple hours before they start to regret running away from home), but there's also a serious point here. As much as Tom dislikes schooling and Sunday services, he really has learned a lot from school and church--he's learned to pray to God and feel a sense of guilt when he does something wrong. Morality and conscience, he discovers, can't just be shrugged off, and a "life of crime" isn't all fun and games.

Chapter 16 Quotes

❝ Joe's pipe dropped from his nerveless fingers. Tom's followed. Both fountains were going furiously and both pumps bailing with might and main. Joe said feebly:
I've lost my knife. I reckon I better go and find it.
Tom said, with quivering lip and halting utterance:
I'll help you. You go over that way and I'll hunt around by the spring. No, you needn't come Huck—we can find it.

Related Characters: Tom Sawyer, Joe Harper (speaker), Huckleberry Finn

Related Themes:

Page Number: 115

Explanation and Analysis

Tom, Huck, and Joe--who've run away from home to live on an island--engage in some failed "male bonding." Huck, an experienced smoker, introduces his buddies to smoking tobacco out of a corn-cob pipe. Tom and Joe, who sense that being able to smoke a pipe is a sign of manhood and maturity, pretend to be enjoying their new hobby. But before long, both boys get sick to their stomachs--they've never smoked tobacco before. Instead of admitting that they need to go throw up, Tom and Joe pretend that they've lost a knife and are running off to look for it--they're so desperate to save face that they can't tell the obvious truth.

The passage is an amusing demonstration that Tom--in spite of his swagger and machismo--is a long way off from being a man. Like plenty of kids, he has fantasies of being a rugged, independent hero, and yet he can't quite pull off such fantasies. Nevertheless, Tom knows that he's *supposed* to enjoy smoking tobacco--he's seen enough real men doing so. Ironically, Tom learns that he's supposed to enjoy smoking before he actually learns how to smoke. Machismo--the code of strong, stoic male behavior--is a key part of his informal education.

Chapter 20 Quotes

Tom stood a moment, to gather his dismembered faculties; and when he stepped forward to go to his punishment the surprise, the gratitude, the adoration that shone upon him out of poor Becky's eyes seemed pay enough for a hundred floggings.

Related Characters: Tom Sawyer, Becky Thatcher

Related Themes:

Page Number: 140

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Tom takes a beating on behalf of his crush, Becky. Becky accidentally ripped a page from the schoolteacher's prized anatomy book--and instead of ratting Becky out, Tom claims that it was he who ripped the book. Tom is happy to take a beating from the schoolteacher, since he knows that his act has impressed Becky--she thinks he's really brave (or so Tom thinks, at least, in his exaggerated perception of her "adoration").

Tom is so used to being whipped for his misdeeds that he barely minds an extra whipping. More valuable to him than pain is the admiration of his peers, especially Becky. And while Tom doesn't seem to mind his beating, he also wants to save Becky from the shame of having to fess up to her crime in front of the class--he's observant and empathetic enough to want to help Becky save face.

Chapter 21 Quotes

There is no school in all our land where the young ladies do not feel obliged to close their compositions with a sermon; and you will find that the sermon of the most frivolous and least religious girl in the school is always the longest and the most relentlessly pious.

Related Themes:

Page Number: 143

Explanation and Analysis

In this (perhaps rather sexist) passage, Twain satirizes the flaws of young American girls. In every school in America, Twain recalls, there are girls who insist on delivering long, horribly-written sermons designed to demonstrate their knowledge and eloquence but which in fact reveal their foolishness and pretentiousness. Twain makes it clear that delivering such sermons for the class has nothing to do with a desire to be a good Christian--indeed, the least religious girls in class often deliver the longest sermons. Twain's point seems to be that sermons--supposedly a way for students to demonstrate their morality and knowledge--have become a way for girls to show off or hide their true feelings.

One could argue that Twain's account of girls' behavior in Sunday school is sexist--he demeans girls for their arrogance and self-centeredness while gently poking fun at boys for committing the same sin in different ways. The point isn't just that Twain makes fun of girls; it's that he makes fun of them but doesn't "let them off the hook" as he does with Tom and Huck.

The tittering rose higher and higher—the cat—was within six inches of the absorbed teachers head—down, down, a little lower, and she grabbed his wig with her desperate claws, clung to it and was snatched up into the garret in an instant with her trophy still in her possession! And how the light did blaze abroad from the master's bald pate—for the sign-painter's boy had *gilded* it!

Related Characters: Mr. Dobbins, The sign-painters boy

Related Themes:

Page Number: 147

Explanation and Analysis

Here the boys of the school get their revenge on their incompetent teacher, Mr. Dobbins. Earlier, Mr. Dobbins had been napping off a hangover, and during this time one of the schoolboys painted Dobbins's bald head bright gold. In the middle of their end-of-the-year examinations, the boys then arrange for a cat to rip off their teacher's wig, revealing his horrendously painted head.

The passage is a great example of where Twain's "loyalties" lie in depicting small-town American life. Twain makes plenty of fun of the young boys in his book, and yet at the end of the day he praises them for their ingenuity and imagination. Mr. Dobbins--in the novel, a fairly representative adult--is portrayed as lazy, drunk, and incompetent; he could never think of a prank as ingenious as the one the children pull on him. Perhaps there's a subtle metaphor in the image of a bald head painted gold: Mr. Dobbins pretends to be wise and scholarly in front of his children's parents, when in fact the students know full-well that he's just an ignorant guy. Like so many adults in Twain's

books, Dobbins is a fool pretending to be wise.

Chapter 22 Quotes

❝ The Cadets paraded in a style calculated to kill the late member with envy. Tom was a free boy again, however—there was something in that. He could drink and swear, now—but found to his surprise that he did not want to. The simple fact that he could, took the desire away, and the charm of it.

Related Characters: Tom Sawyer

Related Themes:

Page Number: 148

Explanation and Analysis

In this chapter, Tom tries to entertain himself by joining a gang of boys, the Cadets. The Cadets swear an oath not to swear or drink--and yet as soon as he's sworn such an oath, Tom becomes fascinated with the idea of drinking and swearing. Then, when he's left the Cadets forever, Tom finds that he's not the least bit interested in drinking or swearing. In short, Tom's interest in things is dependent on their being forbidden. In a classic demonstration of reverse psychology, he becomes fascinated with swearing because other people tell him that he's not allowed to do so.

Tom's behavior is pretty immature, but in many ways it's preferable to the behavior of his peers, and even the adults in the town. Tom tricks his friends into painting a fence by pretending to enjoy painting the fence; even Aunt Polly buys useless medicines because other people have done the same. Most of the people in Tom's life choose what to do by imitating the people around them. Tom takes exactly the opposite approach, doing whatever the people around him*don't* do.

❝ And that night there came on a terrific storm, with driving rain, awful claps of thunder and blinding sheets of lightning. He covered his head with the bedclothes and waited in a horror of suspense for his doom; for he had not the shadow of a doubt that all this hubbub was about him.

Related Characters: Tom Sawyer

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 150

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, a wave of religiousness sweeps through Tom's town. Everyone prays extra hard--the adults, the children, the teachers, etc. Tom refuses to pray, until a night when he catches measles. Late at night, Tom hears a great storm blowing outside, and he concludes that God is punishing him and trying to impel him to be a better Christian.

While Tom's behavior might seem a bit irrational (just because there's a storm doesn't mean that God is sending you a message), but he's behaving no less rationally than the average American adult living in a small town at the time. Just like many adults in America at the time, Tom interprets storms and natural disasters as signs from God. it's also worth noting that Tom is still a classic narcissist--when a storm blows, his first reaction is that God must be sending *him* a sign!

Chapter 23 Quotes

❝ "Often I says to myself, says I, 'I used to mend all the boys' kites and things, and show 'em where the good fishin' places was, and befriend 'em what I could, and now they've all forgot old Muff when he's in trouble; but Tom don't and Huck don't—*they* don't forget him,' says I, 'and I don't forget them.'"

Related Characters: Muff Potter (speaker), Tom Sawyer, Huckleberry Finn

Related Themes:

Page Number: 153

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Tom and Huck take care of the prisoner Muff Potter, who's been sent to jail for killing a man. Tom and Huck know that the real murder culprit is Injun Joe, not Muff Potter, and partly because of this, they keep Muff company during his time in prison, visiting him often and giving him food. Potter is extremely grateful to Tom and Huck for their kindness—he sobs about having always been gentle and kind to the boys in the town, and being grateful that Tom and Huck have returned the favor.

The scene can be interpreted either as sentimental or lightly satirical. Potter is glad to have friends in prison, but his claims of having always been a friend to the boys in the village sounds a little sappy for Twain—it's easy to imagine Potter, a drunk, having been less than gentle with Tom and

Huck in the past. More importantly, though, it would seem that Tom and Huck are only visiting Muff to soothe their own guilty consciences: instead of going to the authorities to clear Muff's name, they just visit him in private. In short, Tom and Huck are being kind, but not kind enough; at the end of the day, they're just trying to feel less guilty.

Chapter 24 Quotes

❝ As usual, the fickle, unreasoning world took Muff Potter to its bosom and fondled him as lavishly as it had abused him before. But that sort of conduct is to the world's credit; therefore it is not well to find fault with it.

Related Characters: Muff Potter

Related Themes: 

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 157

Explanation and Analysis

After Tom clears Muff Potter of murder charges, the townspeople drastically change their behavior toward Potter. Where before everyone treated Potter with contempt and hatred, they now greet him with kindness and hospitality. It's easy to criticize the townspeople for their hypocrisy and flightiness, Twain acknowledges. People are forever changing their opinions, and indeed, the townspeople often act like a mob, going along with the group's beliefs.

In spite of his insight into the hypocrisy of American townspeople, Twain refrains from finding fault with the townspeople's behavior in this case. As Twain explains, changing one's opinion overnight isn't the worst thing in the world. It's better to be totally fluid in one's thinking than it is to be totally rigid—at least when the townspeople are open to other opinions they can correct their mistakes and welcome Potter back into the community. Twain's remarks are characteristic of his worldview: he parodies American life, but has an undeniable affection for it, too.

Chapter 25 Quotes

❝ Huck was always willing to take a hand in any enterprise that offered entertainment and required no capital, for he had a troublesome superabundance of that sort of time which is *not* money.

Related Characters: Huckleberry Finn

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 159

Explanation and Analysis

In this chapter, Huck and Tom prepare to hunt for buried treasure. While it's Tom's idea to search, Huck is more than willing to go along with the plan: as Twain says here, Huck has untold amounts of free time, since he's just a kid, doesn't have responsible parents or guardians, and doesn't go to school or have a job.

Note the way Twain phrases his description of Huck: Huck has the *kind* of time that "is not money." In the minds of some people (for example, the adults in Tom and Huck's community), Huck's free time might suggest his potential for work, education, etc. In other words, for the adults in the town, free time is just an opportunity for more work (and therefore more money). For Huck, however, free time is its own reward. Huck feels no desire to do anything other than enjoy his leisure--he's just moving from day to day with no thoughts for the future. One could criticize Huck for being lazy, but that's precisely Twain's point: Huck is a happy, carefree boy who simply doesn't measure time as adults do.

Chapter 27 Quotes

❝ Then it occurred to him that the great adventure itself must be a dream! There was one very strong argument in favor of this idea—namely, that the quantity of coin he had seen was too vast to be real.

Related Characters: Tom Sawyer

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 175

Explanation and Analysis

In this scene, Tom has discovered the existence of a great treasure--he and Huck witnessed Injun Joe and his followers with a chest of coins. While Tom is dazzled by the spectacle of so much wealth, he finds it almost impossible to believe that the treasure is real: in his mind, it makes more sense that the treasure is "just a dream."

Notice the irony here. After two hundred pages of daydreaming about pirates, war, adventures, kidnapping,

and other fantastic things, Tom finally discovers something extraordinary: and he can't believe it's real! For all his talk about wanting to have exciting adventures, Tom is essentially a home body: he's most comfortable in the confines of his small community. Perhaps the more subtle implication of this passage is that Tom wishes he could return to his old life--a life in which he didn't have to concern himself with money or real danger of any kind.

Chapter 31 Quotes

Tom got down on his knees and felt below, and then as far around the corner as he could reach with his hands conveniently; he made an effort to stretch yet a little further to the right, and at that moment, not twenty yards away, a human hand, holding a candle, appeared from behind a rock! Tom lifted up a glorious shout, and instantly that hand was followed by the body it belonged to—Injun Joe's! Tom was paralyzed ; he could not move. He was instantly gratified, the next moment, to see the "Spaniard" take to his heels and get himself out of sight.

Related Characters: Tom Sawyer, Injun Joe

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 208

Explanation and Analysis

In this strange scene, Tom--who's trapped in the cave--crosses paths with Injun Joe, who's hiding out in the cave as well. Tom is terrified when he sees Joe, since he assumes Joe will want to get his revenge on Tom for ratting him out to the authorities. And yet Injun Joe doesn't try to attack Tom at all--he just runs away into the darkness.

Why doesn't Joe try to hurt Tom? Perhaps Joe just didn't recognize him, and heard a shout and automatically fled. Or perhaps he isn't really as angry with Tom as Tom had assumed: even if Tom and Huck are the reason that Joe has had to flee the town, Joe might not blame the two young children for his fate. Moreover, Joe's behavior suggests that he's more concerned for his own survival in the cave than in getting revenge. As intimidating as Joe might seem to Tom, both Joe and Tom are trapped in the same predicament: they're imprisoned in the same cave. The implication of this passage is that Joe--and by extension, the whole adult world--isn't as capable and powerful as Tom had assumed: young or adult, male or female, everyone gets scared in a cave.

Chapter 33 Quotes

Injun Joe lay stretched upon the ground, dead, with his face close to the crack of the door, as if his longing eyes had been fixed, to the latest moment, upon the light and the cheer of the free world outside. Tom was touched, for he knew by his own experience how this wretch had suffered.

Related Characters: Tom Sawyer, Injun Joe

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 213

Explanation and Analysis

At the end of the novel, Tom discovers that Injun Joe has died in the cave where Tom himself was trapped. Unlike Tom, Joe hasn't been able to find a way out of his prison: he's been forced to live on bats and try in vain to carve his way to freedom.

The passage is significant for a number of reasons. First, notice that Joe--the strong, rugged adult--has died in the same cave that Tom survived. Tom is beginning to realize that being an adult isn't all it's cracked up to be: adults can still come to harm, and in the most gruesome ways.

The passage also represents one of the first times in the novel that Tom shows real sympathy for another person. Tom knows first-hand how frightening getting trapped in a cave can be, so even though he fears and hates Joe, he's naturally sympathetic to Joe's horrible fate. Tom seems to have gained some maturity after all over the course of the book: he's learned to respect other people and sympathize with their pain.

Chapter 35 Quotes

Wherever Tom and Huck appeared they were courted, admired, stared at. The boys were not able to remember that their remarks had possessed weight before; but now their sayings were treasured and repeated; everything they did seemed somehow to be regarded as remarkable; they had evidently lost the power of doing and saying commonplace things; moreover, their past history was raked up and discovered to bear marks of conspicuous originality.

Related Characters: Tom Sawyer, Huckleberry Finn

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 226-227

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Tom and Huck discover that their new windfall of gold has changed the way they live. They find that everyone takes them more seriously now: despite the fact that they're behaving more or less the same way they always did, the townspeople put up with their pranks, and even find reasons to praise them. As Twain makes crystal-clear, the townspeople are only toadying up to Huck and Tom because the boys have become fabulously wealthy. Just as before, the people in Tom's community can change their opinions in half a second, particularly if there's money involved. They have no real principles--they change their beliefs often to "get with the times."

"Lookyhere, Tom, being rich ain't what it's cracked up to be. It's just worry and worry, and sweat and sweat, and a-wishing you was dead all the time. Now these clothes suit me, and this bar'l suits me, and I ain't ever going to shake 'em any more."

Related Characters: Tom Sawyer, Huckleberry Finn

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 229

Explanation and Analysis

In the final chapter of the book, Tom and Huck have become "rich" by discovering a great treasure. Although they're now "taken care of" for the rest of their lives, they don't really feel any different. Indeed, Huck tells Tom that wealth is overrated: the only real consequence of having a lot of money is worrying about your money all the time.

Not for the first time in the novel, Huck's pronouncement is both naïve and insightful. Huck is too young to conceive of all the things money can achieve (Huck's creator, Mark Twain, was always investing in get-rich-quick schemes, nearly all of which failed to make him any money). And yet Huck has a point, hackneyed though that point may be: money doesn't necessarily buy happiness.

Throughout the novel, Twain has showed us how Tom and Huck have found great happiness by using their imaginations and treating life as a great adventure. At the end of the novel, Tom and Huck gain some financial independence—one of the hallmarks of adulthood—and yet they're mostly unimpressed with the adulthood. One could argue that Tom Sawyer is an anti-coming-of-age novel. Tom and Huck learn some lessons along the way, but they could hardly be mistaken for mature young men—and maybe, Twain suggests, that's a good thing.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

PREFACE

Twain explains that the novel's characters are based on people he knew "growing up thirty or forty years ago." The superstitions they hold are also based on those of the author's boyhood friends and the slaves they knew.

By claiming the story is based on his own life, Twain asserts that the depiction of the town is realistic, and thus his satire of it is a satire of the real world.

While the novel is intended for young readers, Twain hopes that adults will enjoy it, as it will remind them of they once thought, spoke, and acted.

There are lessons to be learned from the perspectives and insights of children.

CHAPTER 1

At home, Aunt Polly searches for Tom and finds him hiding in the closet with jam smeared around his mouth. She is about to whip him for stealing it, when he tricks her into looking the other way so that he can escape. Aunt Polly laughs, admitting to herself that he'll play hooky for the rest of the day. As she hates to hit him, she decides to punish him by making him work the following day, a Saturday. There's nothing Tom hates more than work.

The opening scene establishes Tom as a rebellious orphan who has fallen into the care of his kind and good-natured Aunt Polly. As an adult representative of authority, Aunt Polly feels she must punish Tom for his inappropriate behavior and shape him into a good citizen. Yet, Tom is a charming boy, and she recognizes that his tricks and ruses are winning skills in the world, making her reluctant to punish him as fully as she might.

Tom returns home and saws firewood with Jim. Rather than doing his share of the work, Tom mostly tells stories. Sid finishes early with his task of picking up chips.

Tom's storytelling ability allows him to avoid doing any real work. Sid lacks his brother's sociability. His good behavior makes him unpopular with boys while winning over adults. Accordingly, he is assigned a less taxing but more feminine chore than Tom.

Over dinner Aunt Polly tries to trick Tom into revealing that he played hooky to go swimming. He outwits her, but Sid points out Tom's dishonesty by noting that his collar has black thread stitches, rather than the white thread stitches Polly sewed it with—indicating that Tom changed his clothes to go swimming.

To catch Tom in his deceptions, Aunt Polly uses her own deceptive methods. In doing so she fails to set a good example for Tom. And, anyway, he proves to be the more skillful deceiver..

Tom quickly gets over his annoyance at having been caught out, and heads out to wander, whistling a birdsong. He encounters a well-dressed new boy (later revealed to be Alfred Temple), and begins to taunt him. They fight, with Tom winning. Alfred walks away crying. Once Tom's back is turned, Alfred throws a stone that hits Tom squarely between the shoulders. Tom angrily chases the boy home, then stands outside his house jeering until Alfred's mother shoos him away.

Tom and the other boy's fighting is shown as ridiculous, with no point but the assertion of dominance. Yet their conflict is not so different from those between adults, whose competitive behaviors are typically less physically violent, but are still driven by the same desires to fit in and also rise above one another.

Aunt Polly catches Tom crawling into his bedroom window late that night. She is dismayed to see his clothes, filthy from the fight, and resolves to make him work even harder on Saturday.

Once again, Aunt Polly uses deviousness to catch deviousness. Tom is punished for his deviousness, but Aunt Polly's tactics show that it is a helpful skill in the adult world..

CHAPTER 2

Saturday is a beautiful day, but Tom is stuck painting Aunt Polly's fence. He's even jealous of Jim's chore of going to fetch water, which would at least give him the chance to talk to others at the well. Tom tries to convince Jim to trade tasks, but Jim says Aunt Polly has already told him not to let Tom leave the fence. Jim resists Tom's offer of a white marble in exchange for painting some of the fence, but gives in when Tom promises to show him his sore toe. Aunt Polly immediately arrives and forces Jim away with a smack from her shoe.

Tom always wants what he does not have, even seeing the chores of others as preferable to his. In trying to get what he wants, Tom doesn't worry about how he might get Jim into trouble. Yet Tom isn't mean-spirited towards Jim, however, while Aunt Polly is. She hits Jim in her frustration with both Tom and Jim. Her harshness towards Jim makes clear the cruelty endured by blacks in St. Petersburg.

Tom continues whitewashing the fence when along comes Ben Rogers, eating an apple and playing at running an imaginary steamboat. Tom pretends to be wholly absorbed in his task. When Ben teases him about having to work, Tom contends that whitewashing is a privilege, and one that Aunt Polly would only trust to him. Ben begs Tom to let him try, which Tom does, but only after Ben agrees to hand over the rest of his apple to Tom.

Play-acting is another shared activity of boyhood that Tom engages in with his friends. While friends with most of the boys, Tom is also more clever than them. He realizes that he's not alone in wanting what he does not have, and manages to make his difficult chore look like a privilege to Ben Rogers.

Tom plays this trick on other boys for the rest of the day. He amasses all sorts of treasure—a dead rat on a string, marbles, a chalk fragment, and more—and gets the boys to do so much work for him that the fence has three coats by quitting time. He feels delighted, rich, and optimistic about the world.

Tom does not share his newfound wisdom as a moral lesson to Ben, and instead uses it to further exploit his other friends. Tom has discovered the useful business model of many a wealthy adult: make others work for you in exchange for invented notions of wealth and privilege.

CHAPTER 3

Tom returns home to ask permission to go out and play. Aunt Polly goes to inspect the fence. Overwhelmed with pride at the well-painted fence, she gives Tom an apple. He steals a donut, as well, and throws some dirt at Sid on his way out.

Aunt Polly's pride in Tom should have inspired him to further good behavior, but he finds more reward in bullying Sid. He also doesn't worry about disappointing her should she discover his theft. Tom's experience of the world is shortsighted. Only his enjoyment of the moment motivates him.

On his way to the public square to play at being soldiers with his friends, Tom notices a new girl in town. She instantly wins his heart (though he has recently promised it to Amy Lawrence). He begins strutting around and showing off to catch her attention. She eventually retreats indoors, but not before throwing a pansy over the fence at him. Tom hangs around her house till nightfall in hopes that she is watching.

Once more Tom wants what isn't his, and devalues what is. Because Tom lives in the present moment, he doesn't consider how Amy's feelings will be hurt. Adult romantic relationships are built on long-term commitments. All the same, Tom's dabbling in romance shows his acceptance of some aspects of conventional adult life he looks forward to, such as marriage.

At home during dinner, Aunt Polly scolds Tom for throwing dirt at Sid earlier, and for stealing sugar at the table. He complains that Sid is allowed to take sugar. When Aunt Polly steps out of the room, Sid accidentally knocks over the sugar bowl. Aunt Polly returns and strikes Tom for breaking the bowl, though she soon realizes that it wasn't Tom who broke it. Even so, she refuses to admit her mistake, and Tom imagines how sorry she'd be if anything happened to him. As Mary enters the house in good spirits after a trip to the country, Tom sullenly leaves.

Though adults expect children to always follow their strict rules, Aunt Polly's different treatment and expectations of Sid and Tom reveal how inconsistent adult behavior can be. Aunt Polly further reveals her hypocrisy in not apologizing to Tom for falsely accusing him of breaking the bowl. Tom's only relief from Aunt Polly's unfair judgment comes in his leaving the house, and he does so every chance he can get.

Still holding onto her pansy, Tom heads back to his crush's house. When a maid suddenly opens a window to throw out wastewater, Tom gets drenched. He returns home in a mood so angry that Sid doesn't even dare tease him for being wet. Tom goes to sleep without bothering to say his prayers.

To cheer himself up, Tom goes seeking attention. When things continue to not go his way, he reacts by breaking more rules and refusing to pray before bed. Tom's sense of self-importance is so great that it verges on entitlement at times, so that he overreacts to minor setbacks.

CHAPTER 4

Aunt Polly begins Sunday with household prayer. Sid memorized his lines of scripture the day before. Tom still needs to learn his. He chooses a portion of the Sermon on the Mount, since its lines are the shortest he can find. Mary helps him, but he's hopeless. Only after she promises a present does he improve, earning himself a "Barlow" knife.

Though the Bible is the source of morality in the town, Tom is more interested in adventure. Because he could use the knife in his imaginative games, it is a reward that gets him to learn scripture. Neither pleasing his family nor entering heaven weigh as heavily on his mind.

Mary helps Tom wash up so he is ready for Sunday school, to his distress. Sid and Mary love Sunday school. Tom hates it.

Tom is uninterested in being clean, presentable, or upstanding, as the adults are. He just wants to be free to do as he wants..

Before entering Sunday school, Tom takes out several of the treasures he got from his friends for letting them whitewash the fence and trades them to his classmates in exchange for tickets that students can only earn by reciting from memory passages of the Bible. Once a student earns enough of the tickets, they can get an honorary Bible. Tom is not accomplished at learning scripture, but he craves glory.

Tom fails to respect the Bible competition as a symbol of piety and good behavior, instead seeing it simply as a means of achieving superiority over his classmates. His thinking does make some sense: why should a material object signify that a student, through memorization, understands the moral depth of the Bible's lessons?

Mr. Walters lectures the children, who don't pay attention, whispering and teasing one another. Lawyer Thatcher arrives along with the dignified Judge Thatcher, his wife, and his daughter – Tom's crush. The children and their instructors are in awe of the judge.

Judge Thatcher is a man of the highest stature in the eyes of St. Petersburg's residents, as a legal authority and wealthy family man. The distinctions between adult and child behavior disappear as everyone in the classroom shows off for him.

To everyone's surprise, Tom produces enough tickets for a Bible. He gets to sit with the Judge, becoming the envy of his peers, who know he conned his way to the prize. Mr. Walters knows Tom has been somehow devious, but rewards Tom without question.

Mr. Walters, like Tom, is willing to take a short cut to earning the favor of Judge Thatcher. Mr. Walters' underhanded behavior reveals to the children that the social hierarchy of the adult world is as prone to manipulation as their own.

Looking on, Amy Lawrence is moved from pride to anger, as she realizes she is no longer the object of Tom's affections.

As Tom breaks Amy's heart, she grows up a little, learning an adult disappointment.

Judge Thatcher congratulates Tom in front of everyone. But when he asks Tom to name Jesus's first disciples, Tom answers: "David and Goliath!"

Tom's error shames both him and Mr. Walters. Tom's fantasy of being the most envied boy in Sunday school is wrecked. Tom's embarrassment is endearingly comic, however, because he's just a boy. Mr. Walter's professional embarrassment is more serious. Though widespread, selfish behavior is not considered an acceptable value amongst adults, while boys recognize it as a fact of life.

CHAPTER 5

All the townspeople assemble in the church for Sunday service, from the town beauty to the "Model Boy". Reverend Sprague begins offering prayers for virtually all the world's citizens.

Sunday is a sacred day for all of St. Petersburg, when the entire village goes to church to convene as a community of shared values. In their gathering, Twain spotlights the stereotypical characters that make up small-town America.

It is the same sermon Mr. Sprague offers every week. Tom loses interest and becomes absorbed in the behavior of a resting fly. He yearns to catch it, but doesn't dare to for fear that interrupting the prayers will damn him. When the reverend finally says Amen, Tom instantly grasps the fly. Aunt Polly makes him let it go.

Even though Tom isn't interested in learning the Bible, he believes in the worst stories he has heard of hell. Furthermore, his sense of self-importance is so heightened that he fears he might be considered the greatest of sinners for even a minor sin.

The reverend sermonizes about the apocalypse. Tom wishes he could be its hero, braving "limitless fire and brimstone". Any moral lessons are lost on him, however.

For Tom, even hell is a more exciting and enviable place to be than his present situation. He likes the dramatic imagery of the Bible but doesn't thoughtfully pursue its moral lessons, like most religious folk, Twain suggests.

Tom decides to pull out one of his treasures: a black beetle he keeps in a box. It lands in the aisle, where a stray poodle finds it. The beetle bites the poodle, which barks loudly and jumps into its owner's lap and then gets thrown it out the window. Tom is not alone in his delight—his fellow churchgoers laugh, too.

Tom can only remain well behaved for so long. The results of his mischief prove the same could be true of adults. In their shared delight at the antics of the beetle and the dog, a sense of community is created amongst all the villagers, ironically fulfilling their expectations of a church service.

Tom heads home in good spirits having discovered that variety can occur at church. He is mildly annoyed at having lost his beetle.

Tom's chief joy is avoiding the routine, and he feels a huge accomplishment in having shaken up the predictable course of a Sunday church service. Even so, he'll always be left wanting something outside his grasp. This insatiable appetite goes hand-in-hand with his youthful desire to avoid the routine.

CHAPTER 6

On Monday morning, Tom dreads going to school. He considers what might convince Aunt Polly to let him stay home. He decides to go with his sore toe.

Though Monday always begins a new school week, Tom always tried a way to avoid this routine.

Tom's moaning awakens Sid, who rushes find Aunt Polly. Tom complains: "O, auntie, my sore toe's mortified!" Aunt Polly sees through his act, and can't help but laugh.

Tom exaggerates his pain, and uses the wrong word to do so, making Aunt Polly to laugh. The interaction embodies their affection for one another, and though she should scold him, his ridiculousness entertains her.

Tom tells her that his toe really had been hurting—even more than his tooth. She declares that the tooth should be removed. Tom is terrified, protesting that the tooth doesn't hurt after all, and that he'll go to school. Aunt Polly proceeds to tie one end of a string to his bed-post and the other to his tooth. When she lunges at him with a flaming coal, he jumps away, and the string yanks out his tooth.

If Tom had simply admitted that he was faking, rather than using his tooth as an excuse, he might have avoided the extreme pain of having it pulled. Aunt Polly's efficiency at removing the tooth show how formidable and capable a woman she is, and Tom is lucky to have her looking after him. He's also lucky she doesn't punish him with as severe floggings as she might.

On the way to school Tom shows his schoolmates his newfound spitting abilities thanks to the gap from his missing tooth.

Tom manages to turn most any set-back into an opportunity to gain glory. Though adults consider it a grotesque act, spitting is acclaimed by boys.

Tom runs into Huckleberry Finn, who shows him a dead cat he says can be used to cure warts. Tom argues that spunk-water, the puddle that forms on a tree stump, is better. They agree to meet up at midnight to test the cat method.

As another orphaned boy, Huck is Tom's counterpart in St. Petersburg. Huck does not have Aunt Polly or any other caretaker, however, leaving him free to play hooky, sleep outdoors, smoke, avoid bathing, and generally live as he pleases. This makes him, in a different way than Tom, the envy of every other boy in the village. While Huck's extreme rebellion often draws out Tom's competitive streak, as with their vying for expertise in curing warts, their deep friendship is founded in their love for make-believe, including all things superstitious.

Tom arrives late to school and his teacher, Mr. Dobbins, reprimands him. When Tom notices that his crush is now a classmate, he proudly declares: "I STOPPED TO TALK WITH HUCKLEBERRY FINN!" The teacher and students are shocked. Tom is spanked him and forced to sit with the girls.

Because he avoids socialization, Huck is highly esteemed amongst boys. They are forbidden to play with him, for he is a pariah associated with his drunkard father in the eyes of the adults in the village. Tom isn't mature enough to stand up for Huck against this unfair discrimination. Rather, he drops Huck's name to show off, knowing that the surest way to get the most attention imaginable is to behave as badly as possible.

Tom uses his seat to make contact with Becky. Though at first she frowns at him, she eventually accepts both a peach and a drawing, and tells him her name. He writes "I love you" on his slate, but their flirtation his interrupted by Mr. Dobbins. Tom goes to his original seat, elated.

If Tom can't physically escape the boredom of the classroom, he can at least indulge in romantic fantasies to ignore the master's presence. His ideas of love are overblown and unrealistic, for he hardly knows Becky.

CHAPTER 7

Bored, Tom releases a tick he has captured on his desk. He lets Joe Harper, seated next to him, play along in a game with the tick. Tom can't resist cheating. The boys bicker, attracting the master's attention, who slaps them both on the back.

Tom devises yet another distraction to avoid what his adult supervisor would have him do. Even though the game he invents requires no skill, he is still competitive about winning it.

When the students are let off at noon, Tom arranges with Becky to meet back at the school room. There they flirt further, and after Tom helps Becky draw a picture, he asks her to be engaged to him.

Tom's ideas about courtship are based on what he has read in books. He lacks the insight to realize that his courtship should be prolonged, lest he too quickly fall for another girl. After all, he only just recently fell for Amy Lawrence. Twain's depiction of Tom's wayward heart offers lighthearted satire of adults who too quickly fall in love.

To confirm their engagement, Becky says she loves Tom. They kiss. Afterwards, Tom explains more about faithfulness, accidentally spilling his former engagement to Amy. Becky is upset to learn that Tom has loved another. To stop her crying, Tom offers her "his chiefest jewel, a brass knob from the top of an andiron." She throws it down on the floor.

Tom fails to recognize his own selfish behavior, and can't understand what he sees as Becky's irrational response. He still expects her to be so in love with him that she would want one of his treasures, a glorified doorknob. Becky's extreme reaction to Tom's stupid behavior is again satirical, with Twain presenting a stereotypical view of women as hysterically jealous.

Tom storms off, not returning to school after lunch, leaving Becky heartbroken.

Rather than face further disappointment, Tom leaves the scene. His behavior does not appear nearly as gallant as his imagination would have it.

CHAPTER 8

Having run off into the woods, Tom fantasizes about what it would be like to "die *temporarily*." He soon grows less depressed, imagining his exploits as various heroes, from an Indian to a pirate, after he runs away from **St. Petersburg**.

While Tom yearns to escape from his mistakes, he still can't let go of his desire to be foremost in the minds of the people he leaves behind. His pride in himself always restores his spirits.

He begins preparing for to run away, first digging for a box he hid under a log. He's upset to find only one marble in it, because he had thought that by burying the box the single marble would multiply into many more. He follows up with rituals involving a doodle-bug and more marbles.

Rather than accept that magic doesn't exist, Tom simply keeps inventing new tricks that might work. Magic can always come to his aid, for it can never really be disproved. In this way, it does in fact have quite curative effects over the spirit. Yet, for Tom to mature he must start to learn from his experiences, which requires leaving his superstitions behind.

When Joe Harper arrives, Tom declares the woods to be "Sherwood Forrest." They play at sword-fighting, then take on almost every role from Robin Hood as various characters are killed off. Heading home, they agree they'd rather be outlaws than Presidents.

The rules of the boys' fantasy world are not strict like those of the adult world. In their world they can be and do whatever they want. The romantic tale of Robin Hood appeals to Tom, as its improbable twists and turns echo his perception of the world. Tom's ability to remember the intricacies of the plot of Robin Hood, with all its characters and quotations, reveal that he is much more intelligent than his failures in the classroom would suggest.

CHAPTER 9

At 9:30, his appointed bedtime, Tom drifts off to sleep. Outside his window, Huck meows—their secret call. It takes full-blown howling to wake Tom.

Tom had promised Huck not to fall asleep before he came. Even though he shares a spirit of companionship among other boys, Tom can't be bothered to obey anyone.

They head to the graveyard with Huck's dead cat, spooked by the idea of ghosts.

The boys go to the graveyard because it's the most dreadful place they can think of. A large part of the hold their superstitious beliefs have over them is that they are so thrilling.

As they play in the graveyard, they notice three approaching figures, and hide. The figures turn out to be Dr. Robinson, Injun Joe, and Muff Potter. The hiding boys look on as the three begin grave-digging.

The three men are breaking the law in digging up the graves of the dead. Though Tom and Huck were originally afraid of encountering ghosts, real criminals are far more scary.

The three men argue after Injun Joe demands more payment from Dr. Robinson for the corpse they've dug up. He wants revenge for the doctor's insulting him when he begged for food five years earlier. A fight breaks out. Muff takes Injun Joe's side. Dr. Robinson knocks Muff out with a gravestone. Injun Joe stabs Dr. Robinson with Muff's dropped knife.

Up until the murder, the novel largely describes the fanciful games of Tom and his friends. The murder signifies that a harsher reality has set in. These men are not the heroic figures that Tom and Joe imagined outlaws to be in the woods earlier that day. They are petty, backstabbing, and drunken. Notably, Injun Joe, the "half-breed," is the truly evil character in the group, suggesting racial prejudice on Twain's part against Native Americans.

Injun Joe plants Muff's knife on the body of Dr. Robinson, then steals Robinson's valuables. When Muff regains consciousness, Injun Joe says Muff killed Dr. Robinson. Muff blames his drunkenness. Injun Joe promises he won't turn him in, and Muff runs away, forgetting his knife.

The boys look on as the behaviors of adults who lie to one another and drink too much take on real consequences. Though Tom has fantasized about fighting as an outlaw and even the tragedy of his own death, witnessing an actual stabbing reveals the event to be disturbing and inglorious.

CHAPTER 10

Terrified, Tom and Huck flee the graveyard. They stop at an abandoned cottage. They agree not to tell what they've seen for fear Injun Joe will kill them. They sign a pledge of secrecy in blood and bury it.

Though they've just seen a horrific act of lying, the boys decide they'll continue lying. They have their own good in mind, rather than Muff Potter's, or the villagers', for that matter.

The sound of movement frightens the boys. It turns out to be a dog. As they are interpreting this omen, they notice the sound of snoring. The source is Muff Potter. Sighting the dog by Muff's body, they conjecture more about its significance, arguing over whether it means Muff is a "goner" as they head home.

The boys might have told Muff of about Injun Joe's treachery, but they distract themselves with their superstitious beliefs. They should act responsibly to deal with the serious new reality they are faced with, but instead they retreat into their romantic world, believing that another magical event, or the will of God, will intervene to save Muff.

The next morning, Tom wonders why he has been allowed to sleep in. Over breakfast, his family is solemn. Afterwards Aunt Polly pulls him aside, and Tom learns that Sid betrayed him. She weeps that Tom disobeyed her by sneaking out. She's so overwhelmed with disappointment that she doesn't bother whipping him.

Aunt Polly once again fails to follow the rules of punishment she has laid out to Tom, even as she punishes him for breaking rules. Her grief is real, however, and Tom is sensitive to its seriousness in a new way that suggests he has been changed by the murder he witnessed the previous night.

Tom heads to school, forlorn at having distressed Aunt Polly. His grief is worsened when he finds his brass andiron knob on his desk, returned by Becky.

The evidence of how he has hurt others depresses Tom, revealing that he is growing up a little.

CHAPTER 11

News of the murder speeds through town. The children are given the rest of the day off. The Sheriff orders a search for Muff Potter after Muff's knife is found at the scene.

Though Tom's bad behavior never earns him a free pass from school, oddly enough, Injun Joe's does.

Tom heads to the crime scene. When Muff arrives, the crowd surrounds him. He swears he's innocent, but Injun Joe twice says he witnessed Muff murder Dr. Robinson. Injun Joe even helps carry the body away. Tom and Huck are stunned, and grow even more afraid of him.

Injun Joe's lies are so thorough that he doesn't betray guilt even when handling the body of his victim. Is Injun Joe like an adult version of Tom, who also tells repeated lies, often without remorse? The answer lies in the seriousness of the sins being committed, perhaps, which suggests that the world of good and bad is not black and white, but nuanced.

His conscience plagued by his knowledge of Muff's innocence and Injun Joe's guilt, Tom sleeps fitfully and doesn't enjoy playing. He only feels better when he drops off presents to Muff through his jail cell window.

While Tom is usually able to quickly put his misdeeds behind him, his conscience will not let him rest about allowing Muff to go to trial for murder.

Despite the fact that his presence at the scene of the murder implicates Injun Joe in the crime of grave-robbing, Injun Joe does not confess to it during his eye-witness account, and the villagers allow him to go without prosecution.

The villagers know that Injun Joe has committed a crime. Like Tom and Huck, they don't pursue the matter because they are afraid of his violent nature.

CHAPTER 12

Tom's preoccupation with the murder is replaced by worry about Becky's absence from school. When he learns she's ill, he fears she'll die.

Tom's sense of self-importance as a romantic hero overwhelms his ability to realistically see his crush's illness. In essence, he pities himself more than her.

An expert in "quack" home remedies, Aunt Polly tries to treat Tom's depression with a series of treatments, from cold showers to plasters.

Aunt Polly's faith in medicine is as unrealistic as Tom's belief in black magic.

Tom remains despondent, so she gives him an awful-tasting painkiller. Tom avoids it by requesting it so frequently that she gives him the bottle to self-administer his doses.

Tom's disobedience saves him from the unnecessary medicine that his Aunt unreasonably forces on him. He once again reverses the power balance, showing how he understand the rules of human behavior and inconsistencies of adults better than she does in comprehending that, like a child, she won't want to do what's expected of her.

Tom gives some of the medicine to the cat, which goes berserk. When Aunt Polly asks Tom what happened, he lies, then confesses. She hits him but then Tom explains how awful the medicine tastes. She then says that Tom doesn't have to take it.

Though he only meant to have fun, Tom's mischief harms the cat. However, it also shows Aunt Polly that she was more worried more about the cat's health than Tom's.

Tom arrives early to school. When Becky arrives, he plays at "doing all the heroic things he can conceive of" to get her attention. She tells him to stop "showing off". He's heartbroken.

Tom's romantic play-acting no longer interests Becky. She has outgrown it. Tom, however, continues to follow his romantic ideal even after her rejection, now acting dramatically heartbroken.

CHAPTER 13

Feeling misunderstood, Tom begins to cry. Joe Harper comes along, upset because his mother accused him of stealing cream. Tom convinces Joe to run away with him. They track down Huck and agree to meet that night to head to Jackson's Island.

Feeling they have no place in a cruel and punishing world of adults, they boys plan a more lasting escape than an afternoon's several hours of play. Tom's idea of running away as a slighted lover rings of a tale of romantic heroism that he might have read about in a book.

At midnight, "Tom Sawyer the Black Avenger of the Spanish Main", "Huck Finn the Red-Handed", and "Joe Harper the Terror of the Seas" meet up with food and other provisions they've stolen from home, and set off to Jackson Island on their raft, which they pretend is a sailing ship.

Tom and Joe are intent on breaking the law like outcasts from society, starting with being out after midnight and stealing food and other tools of survival, like cooking equipment. For Huck these are not unusual acts. They are his way of life,

On **the island** they set a campfire, cook dinner, and decide to sleep in the open air, like "outlaws". Joe had originally wanted to be a hermit, but Tom insists on being pirates.

Tom is always competitive. Even with his friends, he vies to be the chief decision-maker by proving himself the cleverest at knowing all types of outcasts.

As they fall asleep, Tom and Joe feel guilty about having stolen provisions from home. The secretly say their prayers to ask God's forgiveness.

Tom and Joe each realize that taking food from home was stealing, not just "hooking." This is the first time in the novel in which Tom tries to atone for one of his sins by acting as an adult might, in this case by praying. Fearful at being away from home, he turns to superstition—which is how Twain views religious rituals—to right an act of wrongdoing. He and Joe are not really so rebellious, evidently, and long to be accepted as upright society members some day. Huck doesn't worry about the stolen goods, just as he doesn't want to someday be another dutiful adult of St. Petersburg society.

CHAPTER 14

Tom wakes before the others. He makes predictions about what is going to happen in the future based on the various behaviors of the bugs and animals he observes around him.

Tom reassures himself through his superstitions when the untamed wilderness might otherwise scare him.

Joe and Huck wake, feeling wonderful. No one cares that the raft has drifted away.

Rather than see themselves as stranded, the boys re-envision their situation through their imaginations, deciding they have heroically escaped.

They fish for breakfast and continue to explore **the island**. Pangs of homesickness set in as the day wears on. Even Huck misses **the village**.

Because the boys aren't real homicidal outlaws like Injun Joe, they can't help but feel an attachment to the society they've left. Huck's longing to be back in St. Petersburg suggest that attachment to a community is natural, and that there is no real escape from it.


Hearing cannons, they run to the river to see the ferry and boats traveling by, searching. They realize that the people of the town think that they have drowned and are searching the river for their bodies. They are excited and delighted to be so missed.

The boys' excitement about the attention their disappearance is receiving shows their selfish childishness but also how much they care about how much their society, the village, cares about them..



Once the others are asleep, Tom gathers up some of his treasures and sets out for the river.

In setting out alone in the unknown darkness, Tom naively believes his good luck charms will protect him.

CHAPTER 15

Tom swims out into the river and secretly holds on to the ferry, thereby hitching a ride back to the village.

Tom feels a constant restlessness, needing to escape even from the island.

Aunt Polly, Mary, Sid, and Mrs. Harper are reminiscing about their Tom and Joe when Tom sneaks into Aunt Polly's house to eavesdrop. They remember how the boys weren't *that* bad. When Sid says Tom could have behaved better, he's scolded. Tom is moved to tears, but dares not run out to hug Aunt Polly.

Tom has often self-pityingly imagined about how sorry his family would be if he should die, and now he's seeing his fantasy come true. While Tom is selfish in not preventing further distress, he also proves wise, for it is true that people are often appreciated more after their deaths than when alive. Sid holds onto a more realistic view of Tom as a devious prankster, and he is scolded for being uncharitable for doing so. Sid may be speaking honestly, but his viewpoint is anti-social.


The mourners recount how the villagers believe that the boys went for a swim, perhaps, and drowned. They disappeared on Tuesday. If they don't show up by Sunday they will be presumed drowned.

The villagers' reaction to the boys disappearance is extreme, for they assume the worst after only a day has passed. They should know better, given the boys' constant rebellion, but even adults are prone to self-indulgent romantic views of themselves as sufferers.


Tom sticks around to hear Aunt Polly's troubled murmuring as she falls asleep. He considers leaving his sycamore scroll at her bedside, but decides against it. He leaves her with a kiss as she sleeps.

Tom's tender kiss is sincere indication that he feels for his aunt—so much so that he almost acts responsibly. As the scroll's importance is not revealed, the significance of Tom's taking it with him creates a mystery.

He borrows a boat from the ferry landing to reach **the island**. After napping on the shore, he heads to camp at dawn, where Joe and Huck are arguing over whether he deserted them. They celebrate Tom's embellished stories of the night's adventures over a bacon breakfast.

Tom does not portray the sadness of the scene at Aunt Polly's house, but rather its melodrama, emphasizing their importance in St. Petersburg. To speak with emotional maturity about how moved he was at the scene would break the rules of the boys' esteem of bad behavior.

CHAPTER 16

Tom, Huck, and Joe fill their days with all the fun they can imagine: hunting for turtle eggs to cook for breakfast, swimming, running around naked. By Friday they're homesick.

Though they've run away from home and imagine themselves to be independent men, the boys' yearning for home shows them to be still immature. They are learning the hard way that adult independence is less fun than its depiction in books for boys.

Tom wants to stay on **the island** because he has a secret he can't yet share. When Joe insists on leaving, Tom taunts him about missing his mother, but Joe sets off, and Huck follows him. Abandoned, Tom decides to share his secret. The secret does indeed convince them to stay.

Tom insists on being boss amongst the three, bullying Joe rather than sympathizing with his homesickness. Tom's tendency to boss around his peers establishes him as the authority amongst the boys. As their society mirrors adult society, Tom's tricks of withholding information to manipulate others suggest that for all the reasons he gets punished as a boy, he will one day be a leader among men.

After dinner, Tom suggests he and Joe learn to smoke from Huck, who proceeds to make pipes from some corncobs. Tom and Joe take to tobacco quickly, and begin bragging about how their schoolmates will be jealous. It is not long before both feel sick, and disappear into the woods to relieve themselves. At dinner, both Tom and Joe decline to smoke more.

The boys want to smoke to prove their manhood. Yet they get so caught up in imagining how they'll show off that they fail to restrain themselves and learn the hard way that overindulgence in forbidden substances leads to embarrassing, disgusting loss of control. Once again, the conditions of adult behavior prove less forgiving than those of boyhood.

Joe wakes at midnight, feeling something weird is in the air, and tells the others. A terrible **storm** breaks out. Their camp is ruined and the sycamore that had sheltered theirs bed is split in two by lightning. They make breakfast, recounting their bravery the night before. Homesick feelings stirring in them again.

A great storm is an event that pirates would often brave. Faced with a real one, the three boys prove to be scared and ill-prepared. At its end they are drenched and lucky to have escaped unharmed.

Tom distracts them from their sadness by declaring that they'll be Indians now, hunting Englishmen. The Indians share a peace pipe. Though Tom and Joe are nervous to smoke again, they are fine.

Tom and Joe have learned to smoke in moderation, and now manage to enjoy this activity as adults might. In the end, it is not so bad acting like an adult, but it is definitely substantially different and less grand than they had imagined it to be.

CHAPTER 17

In **St. Petersburg**, the townspeople prepare for the funeral to mourn Tom, Joe, and Huck. Their schoolmates tell fond stories about the boys, each one of them trying to tell the story that captures the boys best. Becky regrets that she returned the brass andiron that Tom had given to her. On Sunday, the whole town gathers at the church. The minister recounts stories of the three boys, depicting them as charming, lovely young men. Meanwhile, those listening to his sermon reflect on how harshly they had misjudged the boys when they were alive.

While genuine, the children's sadness takes on a competitive dimension, with each trying to outdo the other in their stories about Tom and Joe. The same is true of the adults in their communal display of grief. Tom's wildest dreams of being recognized and admired in death have come true. And yet the depictions of the boys are ridiculously sentimental and false, allowing Twain to mock the prospect of anyone trying to publicly display so personal an emotion as grief.

The proceedings are interrupted when Tom, Joe, and Huck walk into the church, which was the secret plan that Tom had told to the other two boys back on the island. Tom and Joe's families sweep the two of them up in their joy at finding them alive, while Huck is ignored. Tom interrupts Aunt Polly's gushing to insist that Huck also be embraced. She does so.

While their grief over Tom and Joe might show the kindness and magnanimous nature of the villagers, their neglect of Huck reveals their coldheartedness towards a poverty-stricken child. This may explain why Huck, unlike Tom, never has an interest in showing off: he has never felt the reward of warm feelings from his neighbors.

The minister commands everyone to join him in a triumphant song. Tom, the envy of all his schoolmates, enjoys his "proudest moment".

In church of all places, the boys go unpunished for deceiving everyone.

CHAPTER 18

Now that Tom has returned, Aunt Polly continues to dote on him the following Monday at breakfast. Though she doesn't punish him as she usually would for his normal misbehavior, she does wonder aloud why he couldn't have sent her some sign he was okay, like Sid would have.

Aunt Polly chides Tom for not having paid her special attention, overlooking his greater sin of having allowed everyone to believe he was dead. While Aunt Polly's coddling betrays her moral weakness, it also highlights the love she feels for Tom.

Uncomfortable at Aunt Polly's nagging, Tom says he dreamt of her while away. He then recalls his "dream," describing exactly what he witnessed when he eavesdropped at Aunt Polly's Wednesday night. Tom then embellishes his story, saying that in the dream he left a piece of sycamore bark at Aunt Polly's bedside, which read: "We ain't dead—we are only off being pirates." Sid is scolded when he questions Tom's uncannily accurate account.

Tom tells another lie to get more attention. Aunt Polly, unlike Sid, is willing to believe him. In doing so, she indulges in a supernatural belief—that Tom might have a sixth sense. While Tom and Aunt Polly behave wrongly in telling lies and believing in supernatural powers, their relationship is loving, which attests to their good character. Sid is truthful but ungenerous, and therefore dislikable.

Tom enjoys the admiration of all the villagers. Thinking themselves "distinguished," he and Joe smoke in front of other children. Tom decides he doesn't need Becky. Instead, "He would live for glory."

Tom's selfish behavior in allowing the village to believe him dead has been unduly rewarded, and he grows more full of himself. He expresses his self-importance by aping the behavior of "distinguished," or respected, adults, specifically men who smoke to display their affluence. If Tom's actions are pompous, so are theirs.

At school, seeing Tom again for the first time since his disappearance, Becky shows off to get Tom's attention. He displays no interest, talking to Amy Lawrence instead. Becky announces she will host a picnic. Everyone begs for an invitation, except Tom and Amy. Becky runs off to cry.

Becky's efforts to catch Tom's eye mirror Tom's earlier attempts to catch hers. He reacts coldly, as she previously did to him.

Becky eventually returns to the schoolyard and sits down to read with Alfred Temple. Tom is overcome by jealousy and leaves Amy to head home. With Tom gone, Becky finds Alfred dull and tells him to go away.

Becky turns Tom's latest trick—hanging out with Amy—back against him by paying attention to Alfred. Both Tom and Becky behave like brats in playing with the feelings of Amy and Alfred just to torment one another.

Furious at how he's been treated, Albert seeks revenge against Tom. Alone in the schoolhouse, he spills ink inside of Tom's spelling book.

Alfred's act is more mean-spirited than any that Tom has committed.

Becky sees Alfred's wrongdoing through the window. She decides to win Tom back by telling him what Alfred has done, then changes her mind and decides to let Tom get whipped because he ignored her.

Becky behaves as badly towards Tom as she believes he would towards her. Becky was much more attractive when she was falling for Tom's romantic tales.

CHAPTER 19

Feeling sad about the events at school, Tom returns home for lunch, only to be confronted by a weeping Aunt Polly, who reveals that she has learned from Mrs. Harper that Tom's dream wasn't real. Joe had told his mother a more complete account of the boys' time away, including Tom's trip back into town to see Aunt Polly.

Tom's long spell of lying without punishment has ended, but the punishment he receives in new. Rather than getting a slap, he is faced with the sight of Aunt Polly's heartfelt tears and the realization that he has truly hurt her.

Tom is dismayed that Aunt Polly thinks he took her grief lightly. He swears that he did write the message on the bark, but didn't leave it because he couldn't resist attending his own funeral.

Upset at having so hurt his aunt's feelings, Tom behaves maturely. He doesn't tell another lie to get himself out of trouble—his usual tactic to avoid trouble.

Cheered up, Aunt Polly sends Tom back to school. When he's gone, she fights the urge to check whether the bark is still in his jacket pocket—proving he was telling the truth—because she knows she'll likely be disappointed. Finally, she gives in and checks the pocket. The bark is inside, and she exclaims: "I could forgive the boy if he'd committed a million sins!"

Aunt Polly should take Tom at his word, but she selfishly craves actual confirmation of his feelings of love her, so she sneaks into his pockets. When she learns he has been truthful, she admits she'll keep bending the rules for him. Aunt Polly, like Tom and Becky, is prone to poor judgment in her very human desire to feel her affection for another is confirmed.

CHAPTER 20

Tom, now happy, walks back to school. On the way, he runs into Becky and apologizes for his behavior to her earlier. But she refuses to speak to him and they part angrily. Tom thinks that if Becky were a boy he would "trounce" her. For her part, Becky looks forward to seeing Tom get punished for the ink in spelling book.

Tom's apology to Becky shows that he's already trying to act more adult after his recent experience with Aunt Polly. Becky's retaliation at Tom is so like a boy's in spirit, though, that he can only imagine treating her like one by fighting her physically.

When Becky enters the schoolroom it is empty, and she notices that Mr. Dobbins has left the key in the desk where he keeps a mysterious book that he reads every day. Unable to resist, she opens the desk to discover an anatomy book inside. Just then, Tom comes into the room. Startled, she slams shut the book and accidentally tears a page as she does so.

Becky continues to misbehave, invading Mr. Dobbins' privacy. Mr. Dobbins, on the other hand, is also acting immaturely, as the book he hides in his desk is either a medical book that allows him to indulge in his fantasy of being a doctor or a pornographic book (as the naive Becky might easily mistake a pornographic book as an anatomy book).

Becky throws a tantrum, and blames Tom for making her read the book. He marvels at how girly she is in fearing punishment for her actions. He doesn't console her, but says he also won't tell on her and predicts that her own guilt will give her away.

Though Becky has been misbehaving as a boy might, she still acts like a girl in fearing punishment rather than appreciating it as a sign of bravery.

The lesson begins. Tom notices how troubled Becky looks. For her part, she is torn about whether to turn Alfred Temple in for spilling the ink on Tom's book. Ultimately she says nothing, and when the mess in Tom's book is discovered she lets him get whipped. Tom takes the punishment without complain, and thinks that he may in fact have been the one who spilled the ink.

Tom so rarely worries about punishment that he doesn't even keep track of his own misdeeds. He is proud to take a punishment, for it gets him attention. This implies that he commits wrongs out of vanity rather than malice, making him essentially a social being, unlike Sid, for example.

As the children study, Mr. Dobbins goes to read his mysterious book. Discovering the tear, he demands to know who the perpetrator is. Wanting to protect Becky both from the pain and the shame of getting punished, Tom takes the blame. He receives a flogging and two hours of detention, but Becky is moved by his bravery.

Tom truly acts as a brave hero who saves his lady. And his action is more than just showing off. It shows true caring and maturity. He shows empathy in understanding that getting punished would deeply shame Becky, and so he takes her punishment as his own.

CHAPTER 21

As the year progresses and examination day and the end of the school year approaches, Mr. Dobbins grows even more harsh in an effort to drive his students to better test performance, inflicting punishment after punishment on his students. The boys hate the way Mr. Dobbins terrorizes them, and plot revenge. They enlist the sign-painter's boy, from whose family Mr. Dobbins rents a room.

Mr. Dobbins harshness is a product of his desire to build up his reputation by pushing his students to better performance. Like Tom, he desires the admiration of the crowd. Unlike Tom, he is willing to hurt others to try to get what he wants.

On "Examination Evening", the schoolchildren dress up to present themselves before Mr. Dobbins and the audience that has come to watch them. Mr. Dobbins sits on a raised platform, with his blackboard behind him and the children surrounding him. The onlookers fill the rest of the schoolhouse.

Mr. Dobbin's positions himself as if he is sitting on a throne as he tries to make himself look powerful. Just as the boys show off to each other, Mr. Dobbin's is showing off to the town.

The evening begins with the children giving individual presentations by reciting famous speeches or passages of texts. Tom performs "Give me liberty or give me death," starting off with gusto. But he gets stage-fright halfway through and can't finish. Mr. Dobbins grimaces at him and shoos him from the stage.

Tom's stage-fright may indicate that he is gaining a self-awareness that makes him more modest about his place in the eyes of others. Mr. Dobbins cruelly shames him for his poor performance. Mr. Dobbins is still only concerned with his own reputation as a teachers, rather than his students' worthy, if imperfect, efforts.

The most anticipated event of the evening is the reading of essays on morality by the young ladies of the school. The girls have written essays on subjects such as "Friendship", "The Advantages of Culture", and "Filial Love." Twain, as the narrator, points out that these essays are terribly written and completely unoriginal, and that the naughtiest girls had the most longwinded sermons. Twain offers excerpts of particularly bad pieces which were highly praised, including the essays "Is this, then, Life?" and "A Vision", which the mayor awards first prize.

The young ladies' essays present an idealized view of the world and themselves, far from actual reality. Their overly flowery language and bad writing reveal the ludicrous inaccuracy of this vision. All the same, they are rewarded by their superiors for their insightfulness. Twain's depiction of the young ladies is dismissive to an arguably sexist degree, for while the imaginative flights of boys are endearing, those of girls are foolish and idiotic.

Mr. Dobbins begins to draw a map of America on his blackboard, for a final geography quiz. He is a disaster at drawing, and as he struggles to correct his map, a cat suddenly drops down from a string tied to the ceiling. It latches onto Mr. Dobbins's wig and pulls it off, revealing that his bald head had been painted gold. The sign-painter's boy had painted it the night before while Mr. Dobbins was sleeping off a hangover. The boys of the class have their revenge. Examination evening comes to a chaotic end, and summer vacation begins.

The boys are victoria in the end, and Mr. Dobbins is justly punished for treating the boys so harshly in his attempt to look good before their parents. His "golden dome", or crown, is a physical mockery of his acting like a tyrannical ruler over his students.

CHAPTER 22

Tom joins a youth group called the Cadets of Temperance because he admires their outfits, which include a red sash. To join the group he promises never to drink, chew tobacco, or swear, which makes him want to do all three.

Tom joins the cadets not because he believes in their moral stand but because he likes how being a part of the group makes him look. While, for Tom, this is literal -- he likes their outfits -- many adults also join groups for the public esteem being a member of those groups provides.

After less than two days as a member of the group, Tome decides that he will remain as a Cadet until the ailing Judge Frazer passes away. But not long after the judge recovers, and Tom quits anyway. Then the judge dies. Tom vows never to trust such a man again, because the Cadets got to march in his funeral, looking great.

Tom cares more about getting to look good while marching in the funeral than about the fact that a man has died. Though he is maturing, Tom is still just a kid and does not understand the gravity of death.

Once he has quit the cadets, Tom ceases to interested in drinking, smoking, or swearing. In fact, he finds that he's bored without school to go to.

Though Tom always wants to escape from school when it's in session, during vacation he misses the social atmosphere of school, and the opportunities it gives him for getting attention.

He also misses Becky, who is with her parents in Constantinople.

Tom feels a sincere attachment to Becky..

Soon after, Tom gets the measles. He is bedridden for two miserable weeks. On the day he is finally fully recovered, he heads out of the house hoping to misbehave. However, he discovers that a religious revival has hit the town, including his friends. All of his friends, even Huck, are now preoccupied with the bible and its teachings. Tom feels lonely.

Tom's illness leaves him in solitude, which is the worst form of torture for him. Through the "religious revival," Twain satirizes the integrity of religious devotion, portraying it as a fad that can pass through a town..

That night a terrible **storm** rages. Tome hides under his sheets, convinced that God has created the storm with the sole purpose of destroying him.

Tom proves as susceptible as his peers to speedy religious conversion, as he sees the storm as evidence that God is reaching out to him.

Tom suffers a relapse of the measles the next day, and is bedridden for another three weeks. He recovers to find his friends have each also "suffered a relapse." They are back to misbehaving.

Twain draws a parallel between Tom's measles and the religious revival. Both are things that change and affect a person, but eventually pass on by.

CHAPTER 23

The village begins to stir with excitement as Muff Potters' trial approaches. However, Tom's conscience nags at him for not clearing Muff's name.

Despite all of Tom's dreams of being a hero, he is too scared to do the right thing..

He approaches Huck to make sure that Huck hasn't told anyone what they saw. Huck responds that Injun Joe would have killed them already if he had. They discuss how Muff doesn't deserve the terrible things being said about him, for he's only a kind old drunk.

Huck's struggle with his conscience is similar to Tom's, but they reassure themselves with the cowardly logic that they'll be murdered too if they speak out against Injun Joe. They fail to act like the brave heroes they often imagine themselves to be.

To console themselves, they do what they can to comfort Muff, sneaking tobacco and matches through the window grate of Muff's cell. Muff praises them for their virtue in remembering how he used to fix their kites and show them where to fish. He warns them never to drink alcohol. Finally, he begs to touch their hands and faces through the grate. They head home overwhelmed with guilt.

Though the boys do bring Muff comfort they do so for selfish reasons: to soothe their own consciences. So when Muff thanks them, they don't feel good because they know, deep down, that they aren't actually helping Muff in the way that they would if they were truly brave and good.

On the day that the verdict is to be delivered, the whole village assembles at the courthouse to listen to the final witnesses testify against Muff. They are shocked when Muff's lawyer does not call Muff himself to the stand and chooses not to cross-examine any of the witnesses. The audience assumes the defense lawyer is not making a proper effort.

The villagers have been gossiping for months about Muff's villainy, but they condemn his lawyer for not making an effort to clear his name. Even if they don't act properly, they still expect others to do so. This is the same irony the boys so often face in being scolded by their imperfect elders.

Muff's lawyer finally does speak, saying that he takes back Muff's initial guilty plea. In the shocked courthouse, he calls Tom to the stand. Shyly at first, but then more clearly as he goes on, Tom recounts how he saw Injun Joe stab Dr. Robinson.

Tom has made the right moral decision, and, unlike on Examination Night when he couldn't stand the glare of the crowd's attention, now, truly acting as the hero he has always wanted to be, he is unfazed.

At the climax of Tom's story, Injun Joe leaps out the window and escapes.

Twain's chapter about Tom's taking on an adult's responsibility ends with a wholly unrealistic dramatic escape, much like one Tom would concoct while playing with other boys. The novel could have ended with Tom saving Muff's life and thus becoming an adult, but the heart of the novel is ultimately in enjoying tales of boyhood mischief and adventure..

CHAPTER 24

Tom is celebrated by the town as a hero. Muff Potter is embraced for having been wrongly maligned.

Muff is still a criminal, a drunkard and grave robber, but the villagers now ignore that.

During the nights after the trial, Tom is plagued by fear that Injun Joe, whose whereabouts are unknown, will come trying to kill him. Huck is also scared and depressed, because he doesn't know whether Injun Joe has figured out that he too was present in the graveyard that night.

Huck has not followed Tom in maturely fulfilling his moral responsibility to society (perhaps because society has not given Huck much reason to respect it), and Huck continues to prioritize his own interests.

A detective is brought out to St. Petersburg all the way from St. Louis, but even he can't manage to find Injun Joe.

Tom must face the consequences of his serious actions, and can't escape as he might have in one of his imaginary heroic tales.

CHAPTER 25

One day, Tom gets the urge to go hunt for buried treasure. He recruits Huck to help him, who agrees. Tome then explains to Huck that in order to discover treasure they must first find a treasure map by digging around haunted old houses and dead trees. Huck expresses dismay at all of the hard work involved, but Tom responds that great rewards can only be earned through hard word, and convinces Huck to persevere with promises of enormous wealth.

Tom's ideas about how to find buried treasure are ridiculous, and yet at the same time he has begun to express adult ideals such as the belief that hard work is the only way to earn rewards. This combination of absurd superstition with adult ideals does two things: it shows how silly the accepted adult ideals really are, but also shows that, while remaining a kid, Tom is embracing the beliefs of his community.

They set to work digging under a dead tree on the hill by Still-House branch. As they dig, they imagine what they might do with the treasure. Huck would have pie and soda every day and go to as many circuses as possible, spending the money quickly to avoid his father's getting near it. Tom says he would buy a drum, a sword, a necktie, and a puppy, and get married.

In his desire to get married, Tom shows his attachment an idea associated with the stability of adult life. Huck is more attached to his boyhood ideals, and can't relate to Tom's desire to build a family because his own is so dysfunctional.

Huck insists that wives bring unhappiness, and that by getting married Tom will be abandoning him. Tom promises Huck that he can live with Tom and his wife, though Tom keeps his crush on Becky a secret.

Not mentioning Becky suggests that Tom is beginning to break from his boyhood community. Huck's disillusionment with marriage that while Huck is also growing up he does not accept the town's ideals or social norms.

They continue digging, with no success. Eventually Tom realizes the problem is that they need to dig at midnight, under the shadow of a dead tree limb. They plan to meet again that night.

When experience contradicts what Tom desires, he rewrites the rules of his fantasy world. He lacks a realistic sense of the world, which would bring a quick end to his fun.

After nightfall, they start digging, again with no success. Huck is scared that witches and ghosts might be watching. Tom suggests they dig in yet another place: the haunted house. They agree to dig there the following morning, when Tom says the ghosts will be away.

Tom's ideals and sense of romantic adventure make him willing to do things that the more realistic Huck is not. In other words, in many ways, it is Tom's lack of realism that makes Tom such a powerful leader.

CHAPTER 26

As they set out for the haunted house the following morning, Huck notes that it's Friday and that he dreamed about rats the night before. Both are bad omens, and Tom decides they had better not dig that day and Huck agrees to follow Tom's lead. They play Robin Hood instead.

Huck is more independent than Tom and has more experience of real life because of his tough upbringing, but Huck is in awe of Tom's knowledge of books (not knowing how incorrect Tom's "knowledge" often is) and therefore follows Tom's lead.

On Saturday morning they have no success digging at their first dead tree. They head to the haunted house. Inside, the building is covered in cobwebs and falling apart. They are scared at first, but become more confident as time passes and decide to explore upstairs. While they look around upstairs, they hear some mysterious noises below. They peek through the floorboards and see two men. One is the deaf and dumb Spaniard who recently arrived in town and the other is a stranger. They are shocked when the Spaniard speaks, and even more shocked when they realize it is Injun Joe's voice!

The reappearance of Injun Joe gives the novel a trajectory to follow in its final chapters. Until now, its structure has followed a series of short stories that serve almost as moral lessons. Injun Joe's escape introduced a real, as opposed to imagined, danger to the boys, and tracking him down to prevent further brutality will be the novel's resolution. Twain turns his novel into an exciting tale of pursuit and capture, much like one Tom would enjoy reading.

Injun Joe wants the stranger to join him in a "dangerous job." They plan to leave their hide-out here at the haunted house, and complain to each other that they would have left earlier but that Tom and Huck's hanging around nearby held them back the day before. After lunch, the two men take a nap.

The stranger is never developed as a character, nor is his connection to Injun Joe fully explained. He is only a plot device, and Injun Joe remains an isolated, anti-social character, presumably incapable of friendship.

Once the men are asleep, Tom insists on leaving. Huck is terrified of waking the men. When Tom decides to leave and stands up to go, the floorboards squeak and he changes his plan and stays put.

In their past adventures, the boys faced dangers of their own imagining. Now, as they move into adultholod, they face real violent harm from a villain.

The men awaken and discuss what to do with the 600 dollars in silver coins that they have on them. It's a heavy load, so they decide to hide it in the house for now. The boys are ecstatic at the prospect of taking this fortune.

In all of Tom and Huck's previous adventures, superstitious tokens and other junk assumed the status of treasure to them. In coveting the silver coins, the boys desire something of actual value in the adult world.

As Injun Joe digs a hole to bury the money, his knife strikes something hard under the floor. The men grab a pick and shovel the boys had left downstairs and start digging. They uncover a wooden box full of several thousand dollars in gold coins. They presume "Murrel's gang" left it there long ago.

Even as the dangers and rewards Tom and Huck are faced with take on adult significance, Twain continues to make his story even more fantastic, with hugely improbable events occurring.

The stranger thinks that finding this **treasure** means they don't have to do the "dangerous job." Injun Joe insists that they will do it, that they'll get revenge, and afterwards head to Texas.

Tom and Huck fear that Injun Joe's revenge is on them. The notion of revenge is a common trope of the romantic tales Tom loves, so Twain continues to shape his story through formulaic plot devices.

Injun Joe initially plans to hide the treasure in the house for now, but then it occurs to him that the presence of the pick and shovel in the house, which had fresh dirt on them, means that others have recently visited the house. He decides instead to take the treasure to his den at "Number Two—under the cross".

"Number Two—under the cross" echoes the language of a mystery novel or drama, rather than the plain speak that the robbers would likely use at a time like this. Twain is able to keep the reader engaged through such unrealistic plot-devices, just as Tom might engage his playmates.

Injun Joe is about to head upstairs to look for the tools' owners there, but the stranger convinces him that it's unlikely anyone is there and that they're better off using the remaining hours of daylight to organize themselves for leaving after dark. Once they've gone, Tom and Huck leave as well, furious with themselves for having left their equipment out. They wonder, too, if Injun Joe's revenge is aimed at them. Huck points out that he is probably plotting revenge against just Tom.

Being a realist, Huck fails to console Tom, who would like to hear about how he'll escape Injun Joe by some fantastic stroke of luck. Twain's descriptions of the boys' final adventure with Injun Joe moves back and forth between realism and sentimentality. Twain also offers constant reminders of how the real world is encroaching on Tom's perception. His path towards maturity is bittersweet.

CHAPTER 27

Tom's dreams ceaselessly about **the treasure**. The sum of money involved is so enormous that he thinks and hopes to himself that maybe the entire thing was just a dream.

The desire for wealth is so all-consuming for Tom that he basically wishes it had been a dream. He wants to return to being a boy unconcerned with money.

The next morning, Tom asks if Huck remembers what Tom does about the **treasure**. Huck does indeed, and is ruminating on how foolish they were to have left their equipment out.

Huck takes a more practical angle about the money, seeing it as a means by which he might live as he wants to—with an adult's independence.

Tom suggests they still have a chance to claim the **treasure** if they figure out where Number Two is. He thinks the name may stand for the number of a guest room in a local tavern. He goes to check, not bringing Huck because he doesn't want to be seen with him in public. At a seedier tavern the owner's son says that room No. 2 is always locked, though sometimes it's visited at night. Last night its light was on.

While Tom previously bragged in school about hanging out with Huck to show off as a rebel, as he begins to embrace the social norms of his town he forsakes this friendship. Becoming an adult also means leaving behind the culture, and wisdom, of boyhood.

Tom and Huck decide to gather as many keys as they can find to try opening No. 2. Tom orders Huck to follow the Spaniard around if he sees him. Huck is fearful, but Tom reminds him the **treasure** is incentive.

In their adult hierarchy, Tom is Huck's boss, using his cleverness to plan what they'll do, while Huck performs the basic tasks that Tom charges him with. He manipulates Huck like a boss promising his worker pay. Huck defers to Tom largely because he lacks education, a class issue important to adults.

CHAPTER 28

Tom and Huck hide out by the tavern, watching for visitors to No. 2. No one comes by. They head home planning to try the keys that night if it gets dark enough. But it is too clear out that night, and the same holds true for the next several nights. Finally, Thursday proves to be a stormy night, and the boys set out.

The boy's blame their delay in acting on the weather, but perhaps they are simply reluctant to move forward in this serious adventure. Twain's novel displays ambivalence about the benefits of moving into adulthood, for it involves responsibility and far less freedom to engage in fantasy.

While Huck stands guard in the tavern's alleyway, Tom goes to try the keys. He is gone for what feels like an eternity to Huck, then arrives back insisting they run like lightning. They stop only when they reach an abandoned slaughterhouse at the edge of town.

Excitement and mystery is injected back into Twain's tale as the boys race away to escape.

Tom tells Huck that the door wasn't locked. When he opened it, he almost tripped over Injun Joe, who lay passed out on the floor beside a tin cup and a bottle, with more bottles nearby. Since No. 2 is in a "Temperance Tavern"—a tavern that doesn't serve alcohol—Tom concludes that this room must be haunted by whisky. When Huck asks Tom why he didn't steal **the treasure** given that Injun Joe was passed out, Tom's grows defensive and asserts that Huck wouldn't have dared either.

Temperance Tavern is a sham–it is secretly a place where men can go to drink alcohol. Along with Mr. Dobbins' secret drunkenness and the boastful showmanship of the supposedly saintly Cadets of Temperance, Temperance Tavern as a secret drinking hole highlights the hypocrisy of St. Petersburg's residents. Tom also proves to be someone who acts differently than he says he will, as Huck points out. Tom does not act like the courageous hero of the story, a fact that makes Tom defensive.

They decide that Huck will watch the tavern every night to see when Injun leaves. When he does, he will fetch Tom, who will go to No. 2. to take the treasure.

Huck is proving more capable than Tom, nightly braving the danger of being found by Injun Joe..

Tom asks Huck where he's going to sleep that night. Huck says he's headed to Ben Rogers's hayloft. Ben and his slave Uncle Jake let him stay there. He eats with the slave, who shares his food with him, but Huck asks Tom not to tell anyone.

Huck speaks plainly about the social stratification of St. Petersburg. While he displays prejudice against blacks, he is able to recognize their humanity and kindness, suggesting that the maturity he's gaining is different from the kind Tom is growing into.


CHAPTER 29

Tom is delighted on Friday morning to learn that Becky has returned to town. That same day they get together with their friends and play, and Becky convinces her mother to let her have a picnic the following day. A ferry is chartered for the occasion, chaperoned by older girls. And it is arranged that Becky will spend the night at Susy Harper's should they return from the picnic late.

Tom and Becky reunite and act like a more mature couple, leaving their petty squabbles behind them. To further prove their independence, they plan the picnic as an event with no adult chaperones.

On the way to the ferry Tom convinces Becky that after the picnic they should go to the widow Douglas's instead of the Harpers' because the widow will have ice cream. Becky is reluctant to disobey her mother, but eventually agrees to Tom's plan. Tom, meanwhile, feels a bit guilty that he won't be at home to listen for Huck's call, but tells himself that nothing will happen at the tavern that night. He doesn't tell Huck about the picnic.

Tom does not prove as capable of adult thoughtfulness as his fidelity to Becky suggests: he convinces Becky to lie and also abandons Huck in the job they planned together. He is regressing back to his selfish ways, and his treatment of Huck echoes how he ignored Amy Lawrence when Becky stole his attention.


The ferry carries the children three miles south of St. Petersburg, where they go ashore to play. After lunch, they decide to explore MacDougal's Cave, which is full of tunnels, and do so together as a group. Then the ferry returns them to **St. Petersburg**.

MacDougal's Cave's mysterious tunnels are straight out of one of Tom's fantasies. The children are either brave or foolish in venturing into it, though their decision to stick together as a group is wise and reflects Twain's theme of safety through community.


Watching from the tavern, Huck sees the ferry arrive, but is unaware of who it carries. He wonders whether the long hours spying are worth it, but just then two men exit the tavern carrying **the treasure** box. Huck makes a quick decision that there's no point in alerting Tom about what's happened if the treasure box isn't in the room. He decides to follow the men himself.

When Huck makes the quick decision to follow the two men himself he gives up his reliance on Tom to tell him what to do and takes on a new level of responsibility.


As Huck sneaks behind the men onto the Widow Douglas's land, the men suddenly stop, and Huck sees that they are indeed Injun Joe and the stranger. Injun Joe expresses his frustration at seeing lights on in the widow's house, as the lights suggest that she is hosting company. He speaks bitterly of how her deceased husband publicly "horsewhipped" him for vagrancy, and says he'll get revenge by mutilating the widow's face and tying her to her bed to bleed to death.

Injun Joe's desired revenge turns out to be directed at the widow Douglas, not Tom and Huck. His grudge is reprehensible, particularly because the widow Douglas presumably had no influence on her husband's actions. Throughout the novel, forgiveness has been held up as a great virtue. It is one that Injun Joe lacks.

Horrified, especially because the widow has been one of the few people in town to be kind to him, Huck runs to the Welchman's house. The Welchman is reluctant to let him in, given Huck's reputation, but eventually does. Huck tells what he has learned, asking that the Welchman never identify him as the source of the information. The Welchman and his two sons arm themselves and head to the widow's. Huck hears gunshots and a cry. He runs back to St. Petersburg.

Huck proves himself a hero, surpassing Tom as the bravest, or most mature, boy in the village. He braved imminent danger in tracking Injun Joe, and saved another villager's life despite the constant prejudice he has felt from the villagers. He also surpasses Tom in heroism for not expecting, or even wanting, credit and admiration for his good deed.

CHAPTER 30

The next morning Huck goes to the Welchman's house to find out what happened. He is welcomed warmly. The Welchman describes how he and his sons almost had the outlaws, but then the Welchman sneezed, alerting the outlaws to their approach. A chase followed, with the outlaws firing shots. No one was harmed. The lawmen were alerted to the situation, and search parties continue to hunt for the outlaws that morning.

Huck follows up on the events of the night before, showing his genuine investment in the well-being of the widow Douglas. The novel continues to jump between being a practically-oriented tale of growing up and a sensationalistic adventure, full of strange twists like badly-timed sneezes.

Huck describes the appearance of the outlaws without revealing that the Spaniard is Injun Joe, from whom he still fears retribution. The Welchman presses him to be fully honest, and he reveals the Spaniard's true identity, without mentioning **the treasure**. The Welchman is shocked, then realizes it makes sense, for the violent plan Huck described would only be performed, the Welchman thinks, by an "Injun".

Huck has developed an ability to act judiciously, weighing the pros and cons of how his behavior might affect others and acting accordingly. He doesn't mention the treasure because its whereabouts don't pose an imminent danger to anyone. Though the Welchman is now accepting of Huck, he remains prejudiced against Native Americans. That said, Twain is also, arguably, prejudiced against Native Americans, as Injun Joe is the only purely unsympathetic character in the novel.

The Welchman describes how he and his sons found a bundle the outlaws had been carrying. Huck blurts out "Of WHAT?", fearing the bundle contained the treasure. In fact, the Welchman reveals that it contained burglar's tools. However, the Welchman wonders what Huck worried was in the bundle. Huck fibs: "Sunday-school books, maybe."

Huck is wise enough to know that the goodness of adults can be inconsistent, and that if word of the treasure got out the adults would likely snatch it away from him and Tom..

Visitor, including the widow Douglas, arrive to ask the Welchman about the chase. Huck hides. The visitors are all extremely curious about the Welchman's secret helper, but the Welchman keeps Huck's secret.

Huck prefers to stay out of the spotlight, being a pragmatist and knowing that being noticed generally only gets him into more trouble. He is noble, as well, in his modesty, which sharply contrasts with Tom's showmanship.

At church that morning, Mrs. Thatcher learns that Becky did not stay the night at the Harpers, while Aunt Polly is also distressed because she doesn't know where Tom is. The other children confess that the pair may well still be in **the cave**.

Despite his previous acts of maturity, Tom is not as firm as Huck in entering into adulthood, and falls back into the frivolities of youth easily. His infatuation with Becky led him to stray from the group with her, once again prioritizing his own interests and acting unwisely as a result.

A search party of two hundred people from the town sets out for the cave and its environs. Traces of Becky and Tom are found near the cave, including graffiti of the words "Becky & Tom" as well as Becky's ribbon.

Throughout the novel, the villagers unite in the face of misfortune. However, coupled with their sincere unity in times of crisis is a love of gossip—a common small-town vice.

Huck catches a fever at the Welchman's. The widow Douglas tends to him. He's not told of Tom's disappearance. When he asks about what has been going on at the Temperance Tavern, he learns that the villagers' were scandalized at the discovery that liquor was on the premises. Huck is delighted when he hears nothing about the treasure being discovered.

Twain once again resorts to an awkward plot device to maintain control over his story. Huck has proven himself a hero, suggesting that the novel can soon resolve itself. Tom and Becky need to first be accounted for, though, so Huck will remain sick off-stage for the time being. His illness has no other significance in the story.

CHAPTER 31

The novel skips back in time to Saturday afternoon in order to tell the story of what happened to Tom and Becky. They're playing in **the cave** along with their friends. They split off to explore a more distant part of the cave together, and lose track of how far they've gone. They panic when they realize they can't find their way back because at some point Tom forgot to keep leaving smoke marks on the walls.

Tom thinks of himself as a family man and protector of Becky, but becomes so wrapped up in their imaginative play that he forgets the practical task of leaving smoke marks so that they can find their way back. He may be growing up, but he's not responsible yet.

Becky breaks down crying. Tom hugs and comforts her. His consoling works best when he blames the fiasco on his own incompetence. They wander again. Tom blows out Becky's candle in order to save it for later, and she admires him for his good sense. She naps a while, dreaming of a beautiful land. Waking, she assumes it might have been a vision of their future in heaven.

Tom does prove mature enough to accept responsibility for his actions. Yet in doing so, he and Becky continue with their fanciful play-acting, mimicking the male and female roles depicted in sentimental romantic novels that portray men as strong and powerful and women as weak and emotional.

They find a spring and drink some water. When Becky complains of hunger, Tom pulls out the only food they have, their "wedding cake" from the picnic. They dine in the light of their final candle. They realize that Becky's mother will not have noticed her missing, because she wasn't supposed to come home that night, which means there will be a delay in sending out search parties.

Tom and Becky had fantasized that the picnic marked the occasion of their wedding day. Their romantic fantasy is rudely interrupted by the realization that their parents will be significantly delayed in searching for them, which means they're in much greater danger than they had thought.

What must be days go by. Thinking he hears human noises, Tom leaves the spring, using the kite string he keeps in his pocket to track his route as he goes to look for others. When he sees a human hand resting on a rock, he cries out in joy. The hand turns out to be Injun Joe's, who flees at seeing Tom. Tom assumes Injun Joe didn't recognize him, for he would have killed him.

Injun Joe's reaction to Tom suggests that he may be less consumed with desire to get revenge on Tom than Tom had thought. Tom is surprised by Injun Joe's retreat, but Injun Joe may simply be more concerned with his own survival, for he is in the cave alone.

Becky is faint with fear and hunger. Tom doesn't tell her about seeing Injun Joe. Thinking a week may well have gone by, Tom continues to explore the passageways in hopes of being found. At this point, however, the starving pair expect to die.

Twain depicts Tom and Becky as acting tenderly and generously towards one another in the cave. Should they die, their deaths would indeed be tragic, for they have shown themselves to be good and loving souls.

CHAPTER 32

By Tuesday the villagers are mourning Tom and Becky. But by nightfall there is jubilation, because the children are found.

As when Tom, Joe, and Huck returned from Jackson's Island, the adults don't punish the children for having erred, showing that they value community above all.

At the Thatchers' house, Tom tells of their time in **the cave**, adding self-aggrandizing embellishments. He explains how he finally found a way out when he saw daylight ahead of him through an outlet that led to the Mississippi River, where some men in a skiff found them.

Tom proved himself capable in practical situations, an aspect of his maturity that was previously lacking. His moral journey into manhood is virtually complete. His boasting, while silly, seems endearing rather than a serious flaw.

Becky is bedridden from the excitement. Tom recovers quickly, and wants to visit Huck, who is still sick. The widow Douglas forbids Tom from describing his time in the cave until Huck is stronger. From Huck, Tom learns of the wild night on the widow's property and that the body of the stranger turned up in the river—presumably he drowned while trying to escape.

The death of Injun Joe's companion confirms Joe's status as a complete outsider. Tom and Huck may have sought escape throughout the novel, but they have consistently valued one another's friendship, even as they have grown more independent. True isolation is equated with villainy.

On his way to visit Huck several days later, Tom stops at Becky's, where Judge Thatcher tells him the entrance to the cave has been blocked to prevent more exploring. Tom is aghast and blurts out that Injun Joe is inside the cave.

Injun Joe's death would have been a convenience for Tom, releasing him from the fear of revenge. Yet Tom has come to understand the gravity of death from his time in the cave, and acts to save Injun Joe's life without hesitation.

CHAPTER 33

Judge Thatcher, Tom, and several boatloads of men immediately head to **the cave's** entrance. Removing its barrier, they find Injun Joe's dead body. Tom realizes he's relieved to no longer fear being murdered.

Tom thinks of his own welfare only after considering Injun Joe's safety. His judgment has developed significantly since earlier in the novel, when it took him several weeks to stand up for Muff Potter for fear of being harmed by Injun Joe.

Injun Joe's broken bowie knife lies beside him, with evidence of how he carved away futilely at the cave's exit, ate bats, and gathered water from dripping stalagmites in his final days.

Injun Joe's death also proves a valuable moral lesson for boys: outlaws will not escape in the end, and their attempts to evade justice will bring their doom.

Injun Joe is buried outside the cave, with a crowd gathering for his funeral, feeling it's as significant an event as his hanging for killing five villagers would have been. Sympathetic women petition the Governor to pardon him in death.

Twain chides the naivety of the women in the village who believe Injun Joe should be pardoned, mocking how they fail to comprehend real criminality. They seem to be petitioning only to prove their own saintliness.

Huck and Tom finally catch up on all that they've been up to in each other's absence. Huck had assumed Tom made it into No. 2 at Temperance Tavern to find whiskey rather than **treasure**. Tom explains this never happened, instantly realizing that "Number Two" must be the cave! They gather provisions and head to the cave to find the treasure.

Huck and Tom reunite as two young men who have proven their mettle. They set out again for an adventure that sounds like something out of a romantic tale that is as improbable as their becoming pirates earlier in the book. Yet they know the treasure is real.

Tom leads Huck to the outlet he found. He brags that they'll form a new band of robbers with Joe Harper and Ben Rogers called "Tom Sawyer's Gang", and hide women they're holding for ransom in the cave. Huck thinks it sounds even better than pirating.

Tom and Huck have not lost their imaginations even as they have become more responsible members of the community. As Twain noted in his preface, the boys should serve as examples to adult readers of traits from childhood that shouldn't be lost.

Tom shows Huck around the cave, leading him to a wall with a cross made from smoke on it, reminding Huck that Injun Joe said the treasure was beneath a cross. They hunt around, but find no treasure. Tom looks under a large rock, and underneath finds a natural chasm, which the boys climb into to find the treasure box, an empty powder keg, a few guns, moccasins, and other random stuff.

Tom proves that he has learned from his mistakes last time in the cave, diligently keeping track of their path and successfully leading them to the treasure. He is the capable hero of this final adventure..

Knowing the treasure box might be too heavy to carry, Tom brought along bags to help carry it out. After they have packed up the treasure and are ready to leave, Huck suggests they take the guns. Tom says they're best left there for their gang's use. He plans to have orgies there, though he admits he doesn't know what orgies are, just that robbers have them.

Tom continues to enjoy the wild fantasies which he knows about only through reading books. As his comment about not actually know what orgies are indicates, though, Tom is now able to distinguish between reality and fantasy, and indulges in the latter only for his and Huck's entertainment.

Back in town, they find a wagon to cart the treasure to a hiding place in the widow Douglas's woodshed. When they stop to rest in front of the Welchman's house, he finds them there, and tells them they must come up to the widow's house, where they're expected. Huck is suspicious of being punished for something, and says: "Mr Jones, *we* haven't been doing nothing." They all head to the widow's, with the Welchman pulling the wagon.

Once again Tom is welcomed back into the village after a dangerous escapade. This time, however, he is not returning as a lost boy. He and Huck have pulled their adventure off with adult planning and ability. Tom falls easily into the villagers' company, but Huck has learned from experience not to expect their welcome. Their differing reactions to the Welchman predicts how they will occupy different positions in the village as adults.

At the widow's, much of **the village** is assembled, in their Sunday best. The widow tells Tom and Joe to and put on the two new suits upstairs, which the Welchman and the widow bought for Huck.

The boys' esteemed status is manifest in the clothes they are told to wear. Whereas no boy wants to even wear shoes, Tom and Huck are now expected to wear suits. Their inner psychological development is thus acknowledged by their public.

CHAPTER 34

Huck tells Tom he needs to escape the intimidating crowd. Tom assures him all will be fine.

Tom once admired Huck for his freedom from adult rules. Tom now enjoys wealth and status in the eyes of his fellow villagers, and values these benefits more.

Sid joins them, scolding Tom for having dirtied his clothes. When Tom asks Sid what the party downstairs is for, Sid tells him the widow is honoring the Welchman for pursuing the robbers. Sid also divulges that the Welchman plans to announce a secret that he already spilled to Aunt Polly—how Huck tracked the robbers. Sid says many already know the secret. Tom tells him he's a terrible blabbermouth for probably having spread the secret himself.

While the rest of the villagers embrace the boys and recognize that their virtues outweigh their mischief, Sid continues to harbor only petty resentments toward them. Sid lacks the attributes of boyhood that Twain promotes, such as friendship and loyalty. He knows how to appear good, but doesn't have the generosity to actually be good.

After a grand dinner, the Welchman offers a speech, extolling Huck for his heroism in saving the widow Douglas. She speaks about Huck's great integrity. Huck has never felt more uncomfortable. The widow announces she will be taking Huck in, to nurture and educate him. Knowing how miserable Huck must feel, Tom cries: "Huck don't need it. He's rich!"

The town's generosity is well-intentioned, but Huck is a realist, and uncomfortable with accepting such praise when he knows how fickle human nature can be. He prefers self-reliance to being looked after by the widow. Tom doesn't reject the ideals of society as Huck does, and now sees money as the means of independence.

No one knows what to make of Tom's words, till he pulls in the wagonload of **treasure**. The coins are counted, and amount to $12,000, to be split evenly between Tom and Huck.

Tom and Huck have completed yet another heroic act, this time one holding monetary value. The possession of money, like the suits, is a material marker of their entrance into adulthood.

CHAPTER 35

Tom and Huck are heroes. The villagers listen closely to their every word, and people start searching haunted houses all over town for **treasure**.

Twain points out another weakness of small town folk: not thinking for themselves. The villagers adopt Tom and Huck's irrational beliefs now that they are esteemed men of the village.

Both the widow Douglas and Aunt Polly invest the boys' money. The boys are entitled to an allowance of a dollar each weekday and every other Sunday.

Money now has a hold over the boys' lives. It accrues interest on schedule as routinely as the school week starts each Monday. Tom enjoys his new wealth, though, suggesting that routines no longer bother him so much.

Judge Thatcher thinks highly of Tom for having rescued Becky from **the cave**. Becky has even told him about how Tom took her punishment at school. Judge Thatcher believes Tom's admirable character makes him fit to be a lawyer.

Judge Thatcher is a man valued for his ethical insight. Yet, like the rest of the villagers, he chooses to overlook the grave danger Tom placed his daughter in, as well as his constant fibbing. That the judge is preparing Tom for a legal career suggests that Tom's charming mischief will continue to serve him better than perfect behavior might.

Huck is deeply unhappy in the widow's care, as she teaches him manners and takes him to church. After three weeks he runs away. Tom finds him in an empty hogshead behind the abandoned slaughterhouse. Huck explains that since being rich involves so much worrying, he'd rather Tom take his share of the treasure. Tom insists that Huck has to join society.

Huck is reluctant to conform to adult standards of behavior that make little sense to him. Tom, on the other hand, will likely become another adult guilty of daily, if harmless hypocrisies. Twain does not weigh in favor of either character, instead using their examples to depict different models of adulthood.

When Huck complains that the treasure interrupted their plans to be robbers, Tom tells him they can still have a gang. But Huck has to return to living with the widow, for Tom's gang can't have any disrespectable characters. Huck agrees. They plan to meet up at midnight for an initiation involving swearing on a coffin signed in blood.

There's a sadness to the two friend's divergence on how to grow up, but they bond in the end by engaging once more in their old, fantastical games. The two won't see eye to eye on all matters, but Huck agrees to Tom's plan because he prioritizes the value of friendship, indicating that some of the wisdom of boyhood will prevail in their future lives.

CONCLUSION

Twain explains that the book must end here, for soon it will be the story of a man rather than a boy. If it were a book about adults, it would have to end with a marriage.

Twain's reluctance to continue the story to describe the boys' adult lives offers a bittersweet note. It is imperative for boys to grow up into men who comprehend their responsibilities in the world, but their lives will be less fun to describe.


Twain explains that his characters are still alive and doing well. He says that he won't reveal any more details about their lives at present, but he might want to write about them again some day.

Twain sets up the possibility of a sequel, Adventures of Huckleberry Finn.

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