Tom Sawyer, The Adventures of

Definition: Tom Sawyer, The Adventures of from The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide

Novel (1876) by US author Mark Twain. It describes the childhood escapades of Tom Sawyer and his friends Huckleberry Finn and Joe Harper in a small Mississippi community before the Civil War. It and its sequel The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (1885) are remarkable for their rejection of the high moral tone prevalent in 19th-century children's literature.

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Adventures of Tom Sawyer, The

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Twain, Mark

Summary Article: Tom Sawyer, The Adventures of
From The Cambridge Guide to Literature in English

A novel by Mark Twain, published in 1876. Tom is an intelligent and imaginative boy, who is nevertheless careless and mischievous. In one of the book's most famous episodes he is forced to whitewash the front-yard fence as a punishment for playing truant. He evades the task by pretending it is a great privilege, and then allowing other boys to take over from him - for a considerable price.

Tom lives in the respectable home of his Aunt Polly in the Mississippi River town of St Petersburg, Missouri. His preferred world, however, is the outdoor and parentless life of his friend Huck Finn. When Tom is rebuffed by his sweetheart, Becky Thatcher, he and Huck take to the diversion of playing pirates. By coincidence, they are in the graveyard on the night that Injun Joe murders the town doctor and frames the drunkard, Muff Potter, by placing the knife in his hands. Tom, Huck, and a third boy hide out on a river island in fear of the mestizo murderer, and are believed dead. They finally return to witness their own passionate eulogies, and with much uproar they are discovered in the funeral audience. Later Tom becomes a hero, when at the trial of Muff Potter he stands up and accuses the true murderer. Injun Joe rushes from the room and thus proves his own guilt. Subsequently Tom and Becky abandon a school picnic and get themselves lost for several days in the very cave where Injun Joe is hiding. They make good their escape, and Tom then returns to the cave with Huck. They find Injun Joe dead, and also find his buried treasure. The two boys return to town as heroic as ever, and the riches are divided between them. Their story is continued in The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (1884).

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