THE ADVENTURES OF TOM SAWYER
Sample Pages

Mark Twain

Bygone Era Press

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Softcover ISBN 9781923276062

Hardcover ISBN 9781923276079

Book Cover by Neralea Dell

1st edition 2024

A catalogue record for this book is available from the National Library of Australia

To
My Wife
This Book
Is
Affectionately Dedicated.

About the author

Mark Twain, born Samuel Langhorne Clemens in 1835, was an American author and humourist, widely regarded as one of the greatest writers in American literature. Born in Florida, Missouri, he grew up in Hannibal, which later served as inspiration for many of his works. He is best known for his novels "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer" and "Adventures of Huckleberry Finn," which explore themes of race, identity, and morality in pre-Civil War America. Twain's witty and satirical writing style, along with his keen observations of society, solidified his legacy as both a literary pioneer and a social critic.

The characters of Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn were developed from his own childhood experiences and observations of life along the Mississippi River. Tom Sawyer, inspired by Twain's own mischievous nature as a boy, represents adventure and youthful imagination, while Huck Finn embodies a more pragmatic and rebellious spirit, reflecting Twain's views on society and morality. The settings, themes, and events in both novels are rooted in the realities of Twain's youth in Missouri, featuring the river life and the social dynamics of the time, ultimately creating two of American literature's most enduring and beloved characters.

He was not only a prolific writer but also a notable public figure and lecturer, often using his platform to comment on social issues, including racism, imperialism, and human folly. Twain had a diverse career, including roles as a riverboat pilot on the Mississippi River, a gold prospector, and even a newspaper editor. His writing is characterised by its use of vernacular speech and its deep understanding of human nature. In addition to his famous novels, he wrote

essays, short stories, and travel books, and he remains celebrated for his humour and critical insights into American life.

Through his writings and public speeches, Twain articulated his complex and often critical view of society. He was a keen observer of social issues such as racism, inequality, and human hypocrisy, often using satire and humour to expose the flaws and absurdities of society. His works, including "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn" and "The Gilded Age," reflect his disdain for social injustices and the moral failures he saw around him, particularly regarding slavery and imperialism. Twain believed that society was plagued by greed, corruption, and a lack of genuine humanity, and he often called for social reform and greater empathy among individuals. While he appreciated some aspects of human nature, his overarching perspective was one of skepticism and critical awareness.

Mark Twain faced several significant difficulties throughout his life, including financial troubles, personal losses, and health issues. After experiencing initial success, he invested heavily in a typesetting machine that ultimately failed, leading to considerable debt. Additionally, he faced personal tragedies, including the deaths of his wife, Olivia, and three of his children, which profoundly affected him and his writing. Twain also struggled with bouts of depression and health problems later in life. Despite these challenges, he continued to write and lecture, using his experiences to inform his work and criticism of society.

Twain passed away of a heart attack at the age of 74, on April 21, 1910, in Redding, Connecticut. His death came shortly after the passing of Halley's Comet, which he famously predicted would coincide with his own demise; he remarked that he came into the world with the comet in 1835 and expected to leave with it. His death marked the end of a prolific literary career and a life filled with notable achievements and personal challenges.

Neralea Dell

Preface

Most of the adventures recorded in this book really occurred; one or two were experiences of my own, the rest those of boys who were schoolmates of mine. Huck Finn is drawn from life; Tom Sawyer also, but not from an individual—he is a combination of the characteristics of three boys whom I knew, and therefore belongs to the composite order of architecture.

The odd superstitions touched upon were all prevalent among children and slaves in the West at the period of this story—that is to say, thirty or forty years ago.

Although my book is intended mainly for the entertainment of boys and girls, I hope it will not be shunned by men and women on that account, for part of my plan has been to try to pleasantly remind adults of what they once were themselves, and of how they felt and thought and talked, and what queer enterprises they sometimes engaged in.

THE AUTHOR.

HARTFORD, 1876.

Chapter One

"Tom!"

No answer.

"TOM!"

No answer.

"What's gone with that boy, I wonder? You TOM!"

No answer.

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

"Well, I lay if I get hold of you I'll—"

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

"I never did see the beat of that boy!"

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

"Y-o-u-u TOM!"

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

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

"Nothing."

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

"I don't know, aunt."

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

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

"My! Look behind you, aunt!"

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

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

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

this evening,[1] and I'll just be obleeged to make him work, tomorrow, to punish him. It's mighty hard to make him work Saturdays, when all the boys is having holiday, but he hates work more than he hates anything else, and I've got to do some of my duty by him, or I'll be the ruination of the child."

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

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

"Tom, it was middling warm in school, warn't it?"

"Yes'm."

"Powerful warm, warn't it?"

"Yes'm."

"Didn't you want to go in a-swimming, Tom?"

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

"No'm—well, not very much."

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

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

"Some of us pumped on our heads—mine's damp yet. See?"

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

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

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

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

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

But Sidney said:

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

"Why, I did sew it with white! Tom!"

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

"Siddy, I'll lick you for that."

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

"She'd never noticed if it hadn't been for Sid. Confound it! sometimes she sews it with white, and sometimes she sews it with black. I wish to gee-miny she'd stick to one or t'other—I can't keep the run of 'em. But I bet you I'll lam Sid for that. I'll learn him!"

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

Within two minutes, or even less, he had forgotten all his troubles. Not because his troubles were one whit less heavy and bitter to him than a man's are to a man, but because a new and powerful interest bore them down and drove

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1. Southwestern for "afternoon"

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