

外语教学与研究出版社



牛津大学出版社

经典世界文学名著丛书



# 汤姆·索耶历险记

THE ADVENTURES  
OF TOM SAWYER  
MARK TWAIN

415596

英语经典世界文学名著丛书

# 汤姆·索耶历险记

## THE ADVENTURES OF TOM SAWYER

*Mark Twain*

*With an Introduction by*

*Lee Clark Mitchell*

郭栖庆 评注

FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING & RESEARCH PRESS

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

外语教学与研究出版社·牛津大学出版社

(京)新登字 155 号

图书在版编目(CIP)数据

汤姆·索耶历险记 = THE ADVENTURES OF TOM SAWYER: 英语注释本/(美)马克·吐温 (Mark Twain) 著;郭栖庆注释. - 北京:外语教学与研究出版社, 1995.6  
(英语经典世界文学名著丛书)  
ISBN 7-5600-0711-2

I. 汤… II. ①马…②郭… III. 英语-长篇小说-课外读物 IV. H319.4:I

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字 (94) 第 01680 号

本书由牛津大学出版社授权出版, 限在中华人民共和国境内发行

This reprint has been authorized by Oxford University Press for sale in the People's Republic of China only and not for export therefrom

汤姆·索耶历险记

\* \* \*  
外语教学与研究出版社出版发行  
(北京西三环北路 19 号)  
华利国际合营印刷有限公司印刷  
新华书店总店北京发行所经销  
开本 736×960 1/32 11 印张  
1995 年 6 月第 1 版 1996 年 6 月第 2 次印刷  
印数: 10001—15000 册  
\* \* \*  
ISBN 7-5600-0711-2/H·442  
定价: 9.80 元

马克·吐温 (Mark Twain, 1835—1910) 是作者的笔名, 原名为塞缪尔·朗赫恩·克莱门斯 (Samuel Langhorne Clemens), 是美国杰出的现实主义作家。在 19 世纪美国现实主义文学运动中, 他与豪威尔斯 (William Dean Howells, 1837—1920) 及詹姆斯 (Henry James, 1843—1916) 并驾齐驱, 同为主将, 在三人中又最为引人注目。马克·吐温以其对美国文学发展的卓越贡献奠定了他在美国文学乃至世界文坛上的地位, 赢得了世人的尊敬和爱戴。是他把美国的民间幽默和严肃文学统一了起来, 是他使寻常百姓甚至粗俗之人变成了文学作品中的主人公, 也是他让方言土语甚至行话俚语登上了文学的大雅之堂。他的朋友豪威尔斯称他为“我们文学中的林肯”, 文学评论家门肯 (Mencken, 1880—1956) 则说他是“我们民族文学的真正开山祖师”。诺贝尔文学奖得主海明威和福克纳对马克·吐温也是推崇备至。据说, 海明威在世时每隔两年就要重读一遍《哈克贝里·费恩历险记》。他曾经说过, “全部现代美国文学都来自马克·吐温写的一本名叫《哈克贝里·费恩历险记》的书……它是我们所有的书中最好的一本书; 以前没有过, 迄今也没有这么好的。”福克纳也曾经说过: “马克·吐温是安德森的文学创作之父, 而安德森则是我们这一代人的文学创作之父。”足见马克·吐温对美国文学的发展贡献之大, 对后世作家的影响之深, 在文坛上的地位之尊。

马克·吐温于 1835 年 11 月 30 日生在密苏里州的佛罗里达村, 长在密西西比河畔的汉尼拔镇。这座小镇对马克·吐温的成长及其日后的文学创作有

着特殊的意义。《汤姆·索耶历险记》、《哈克贝里·费恩历险记》以及《密西西比河上》等作品中都有他对汉尼拔小镇生活和经历的回忆。马克·吐温的父亲是一位抱负不小但却总不得意的乡村律师和店主，在作者12岁时去世。由于家境贫寒，12岁的马克·吐温不得不辍学，帮助维持家计。他先在一家印刷厂当学徒，学习排字，1851年又去他哥哥奥莱恩办的报馆当了两年排字工人。1853年，马克·吐温离开家乡到外面去闯荡。他先后去过圣路易斯、纽约、费城及辛辛那提等地，靠给人家打短工排字为生。与此同时，他也写一些旅行见闻之类的幽默小品，在奥莱恩办的报纸上发表。

1856年，马克·吐温计划去南美碰碰运气。在乘船顺密西西比河南下时拜老舵手贺拉斯·毕克斯比为师，18个月後他便在密西西比河上做了一名舵手，实现了儿时的愿望。1861年，美国内战爆发，水路交通断绝、航务萧条，他只好离开轮船。在南北战争中，他曾被编入南军，两个星期后部队哗变，他乘机逃跑。同年，奥莱恩被林肯总统派到西部的内华达州任政府秘书，马克·吐温随同前往，期望通过经营木材和银矿致富，但均以失败告终，于是转而以写文章为生。他先在内华达的弗吉尼亚城当《事业报》记者，后来又去旧金山当《晨报》记者，开始写通讯报道、旅行见闻和幽默小品。1863年，他开始使用“马克·吐温”这个笔名。这个词是密西西比河上水手们的行话，“Twain”的意思是指水深“两呎”，也就是12英尺。这是水手们熟知的“安全水域”。听到“Mark Twain”的喊声，水手们就知道轮船可以安全通行。

1865年，马克·吐温在纽约一家报纸上发表了幽默故事《卡拉韦拉斯县著名的跳蛙》（*The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County*），根据他在旧金山矿区听到的一个传说改写，风行一时，使他闻名全国，被人称为“内华达州荒唐的幽默家”。同年，马克·吐温又频繁地穿梭于旧金山与檀香山之间，随游船采访。采访报道以幽默书信的形式发表。1866年到

1868年间,他作为特约记者乘“费城号”游船随一批美国旅游者到欧洲和中东旅行。他写的报道于1869年辑成《傻子国外旅行记》(*Innocent Abroad*)出版。此书既嘲笑了欧洲的封建残余,也讽刺了富有的美国旅游者的庸俗无知。这是马克·吐温的第一本书,文字简炼、风趣,很快便成为畅销书。

1870年,马克·吐温和纽约州一个资本家的女儿奥利维亚·兰登结婚。他们的结合对马克·吐温日后的文学创作是妨碍还是帮助,评论界历来众说不一。婚后他们移居康涅狄格州的哈特福德。当时,豪威尔斯任《大西洋月刊》的主编,很欣赏马克·吐温的才华,约他为该刊物撰文。从此开始了他和豪威尔斯长达40年的交往和友情,也开始了他文学创作的高峰期。1872年,马克·吐温的《艰苦岁月》(*Roughing It*)出版,这是反映作者本人19世纪60年代初期西行经历的一部自传体小说,记载了一些奇闻轶事,描绘了一幅多层次、多侧面的西部边疆风情画。1873年,他同记者兼散文学家查·沃纳(Charles Dudley Warner, 1829—1900)合写的《镀金时代》(*The Gilded Age*)出版,这是他的第一部长篇小说。它讽刺了当时美国社会及政治的腐败,用“镀金时代”一词形象地揭示了美国内战后表面辉煌而实质败坏的社会特征。1875年,马克·吐温在《大西洋月刊》上连载了七篇文章,回忆早年在密西西比河上做舵手的生活,后汇集成《密西西比河上的往事》(*Old Times on the Mississippi*)。8年后,他又把这本书扩充成为《密西西比河上》(*Life on the Mississippi*, 1883)。

1876年,马克·吐温的长篇小说《汤姆·索耶历险记》(*The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*)出版。小说以密西西比河某小镇为背景,描写了主人公汤姆·索耶和他的小伙伴们厌倦枯燥、刻板的生活,追求新奇、冒险的故事。书中不少情节是作者童年时代的亲身经历,对儿童自由活泼的心灵的描写细致入微、生动风趣,令少年读者倍感亲切,也令成年读者回味无穷。

《汤姆·索耶历险记》出版后不久,马克·吐温便开始了《哈

克贝里·费恩历险记》(*Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*)的创作,历时8年,于1884年在英国出版,1885年在美国出版。小说出版后在社会上引起了很大的反响,得到国内外评论界及读者的极大好评,美国小说家海明威称之为现代美国文学的源泉。诗人托·艾略特(T. S. Eliot, 1888—1965)则认为这部小说在英美两国开创了新文风,是“英语的新发现。”他还认为哈克的形象是永恒的,可以和奥德修斯、浮士德、堂吉珂德、唐璜以及哈姆雷特等著名文学形象比肩。在这部小说中,马克·吐温使用了好几种美国南方的方言,还使用了黑人口语,这在当时是个大胆的创新,使小说的文字清新有力,对后世文学创作影响极大。因此,伯纳·萧(Bernard Shaw, 1856—1950)又称马克·吐温为英语的语言大师。与此同时,这部小说也受到了社会舆论的强烈批评,有的甚至说这本书是百分之百的垃圾,粗俗不堪,因而不断遭到查禁。他们还特别指责小说主人公哈克贝里·费恩的形象,认为他不值得效法。然而,在《哈克贝里·费恩历险记》出版至今的100多年里,它对真实、善良、自由的追求和描写,它那自然而富有诗意的风格和极富感染力的幽默吸引了世界上千千万万不同年龄和文化层次的读者,经久不衰,1982年还被《纽约时报》誉为“最伟大的美国小说之一”。这部世界名著也使马克·吐温名垂青史。

在创作《哈克贝里·费恩历险记》的同时,马克·吐温于1882年出版了长篇小说《王子与贫儿》(*The Prince and the Pauper*),通过戏剧性的情节讽刺、抨击了古英国的封建王朝。1889年,他的《亚瑟王朝廷上的康涅狄格州美国人》(*A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*)出版,小说幻想一个19世纪的美国人倒退到6世纪的英国去生活;赞扬了美国人的聪明机智和民主进步,嘲笑了英国贵族王公的愚昧无知。这部小说构思巧妙,描写也生动有趣,然而却不太受读者欢迎。

1894年,马克·吐温写了《傻瓜威尔逊》(*The Tragedy of Pudd'nhead Wilson*),描写黑奴罗克西为了使自己只有1/32黑

人血统的儿子将来不被主人卖掉,将他和主人的儿子在摇篮里对调。结果奴隶的儿子成了染上种种恶习的阔少,主人的儿子成了奴隶;批判了“白人优越论”,鞭挞了可恶的奴隶制。在这部书中,读者感到更多的是作者对社会的抨击,而不是幽默。在此前后的一段时间里,马克·吐温的家庭连遭不幸:自己的健康状况大不如前,妻子久病不愈,两个女儿一病一亡,投资排字机试制工程失败,经营的出版公司亏损倒闭。为了偿还债务,他外出旅行讲学,访问了非洲、欧洲、亚洲和澳洲等地。1897年出版的《赤道旅行记》(*Following the Equator*)就记载了他在世界各地讲学的一些经历,讽刺并谴责了帝国主义对殖民地人民的压迫。

1900年,他的中篇小说《败坏了哈德莱堡的人》(*The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg*)出版。小说展现了人们在金钱面前的种种丑态,尖刻地嘲讽了美国社会的虚伪和贪财的风气。

1900年10月,在旅居欧洲几年之后,马克·吐温和他的全家回到美国,受到热烈欢迎,成为文艺界的领袖,被视为几乎是无所不知的圣贤。荣誉也接踵而来,耶鲁大学、密苏里大学及牛津大学先后授予他名誉学位。马克·吐温回国后积极参加反对帝国主义的活动,发表谈话,作演讲,谴责帝国主义的侵略行径,揭露海外传教士活动的伪善。他著名的反帝政论有《给坐在黑暗中的人》(*To the Person Sitting in the Darkness*, 1901)以及《战争祈祷》(*War Prayer*, 1904—1905)等。他也曾对中国的义和团运动表示了极大的同情,希望中国人把外国人都赶出去。

1906年,他开始口授《自传》(*Autobiography*),于1924年出版。马克·吐温在其人生的最后阶段,越来越表现出对人类的悲观失望情绪,认为人类已堕落,不可救药,使用了“该死的人类”这样的字眼。他写了《神秘的来客》(*The Mysterious Stranger*, 1916)及《地球来信》(*Letters from the Earth*, 1962),但他觉得这些作品对人类的谴责过于尖刻,只能在他死后发



表。马克·吐温的一生正好经历了美国社会从资本主义自由竞争到垄断的发展阶段,他从最初的轻松幽默到最后的悲观尖刻的变化反映了他对资本主义民主社会和人的认识过程。

马克·吐温于 1910 年 4 月 21 日病逝,葬于他夫人的家乡——纽约州的埃尔迈拉。身后为世界文学宝库留下了无价的遗产。

《汤姆·索耶历险记》是《哈克贝里·费恩历险记》的姊妹篇。故事发生在19世纪30—40年代美国的密西西比河畔。

主人公汤姆·索耶的母亲去世，和弟弟锡德随波莉姨妈住在密苏里州的河畔小镇圣彼得斯堡。汤姆聪明伶俐、富于想象、玩皮淘气、乐于冒险；他不安于小镇那种刻板沉闷的生活环境，不喜欢听催眠般的牧师布道，也讨厌虚假的社交礼节；他厌恶死读书，常常逃学，在课堂上捣乱，在教室里搞恶作剧……

周末到了，别的孩子都在尽情地玩耍，而汤姆却因逃学而被姨妈罚干活——粉刷栅栏。他装出一副专心致志的样子，“一丝不苟”地刷着栅栏，不时地后退一步，好像一位艺术大师在欣赏自己的艺术杰作。孩子们被他吸引住了，争着要替他干活。汤姆显得很“勉强”，孩子们就用自己心爱的小玩意换取粉刷栅栏的“特权”。结果栅栏被粉刷了三遍，小伙伴们的“家当”也都装进了汤姆的口袋！他还懂得了——一个道理：难得的东西就是人们想要得到的东西。

在学校里，汤姆和同班同学贝基“订婚”，却又不留神说出自己曾和另一个女孩有过一段“恋情”。贝基生气不理汤姆，汤姆也赌气离她而去，跑到树林里去当“绿林好汉罗宾汉”。

当天夜里，汤姆和小伙伴哈克一同去墓地，试验扔死猫治痼疾的“偏方”，却亲眼目睹了镇上人掘坟挖尸又杀人栽脏的可怕一幕：镇上的年轻医生鲁滨逊让印第安·乔和莫夫·波特掘开坟墓，抬出死尸。波特要求医生再给五块钱，乔也附和。医生却不肯，说已经给过了。乔说五年前医生的父亲曾无故送他

坐牢，此时要报复。医生先下手为强，一拳将乔打倒在地。这时波特为了给乔出气而和医生扭打在一起。印第安·乔看准时机一刀结果了医生的性命，然后把刀放在了已被医生击昏的波特手中，造成了波特杀人的假象。为了防止泄密而招之灾祸，两个孩子赌咒发誓决不把他们所目睹的真情泄露出去。

汤姆回到学校后想和贝基和好却未能如愿，一气之下又和哈克及乔·哈珀跑到杰克逊岛当“海盗”去了。汤姆是“黑衣大盗”，乔是“海上霸王”，哈克则是“血手大盗”。他们在野外露宿，野餐，在河里游泳、戏闹，其乐无穷。镇上的人都以为他们失踪了，四处寻找，还放炮炸河，试图使“死尸”浮上来，寻找无果便断定他们必死无疑。而他们却陶醉在胜利的喜悦之中……

夜深人静，待乔和哈克熟睡之后，汤姆悄悄地离开了小岛，溜回家中。家里人正在为他们的失踪而伤心落泪，尤其是汤姆的姨妈更是悲痛万分。他本想给姨妈留个纸条说明情况，然而转念一想又打消了这个念头。

村里人正在为几个失踪的孩子举行葬礼。当人们想到自己以前只看到他们的缺点而看不到他们的优点时感到十分内疚，觉得自己对不起三个“死去”的孩子，真该挨鞭打！然而就在这时，三个“死孩子”却昂首挺胸地向他们走来。原来他们一直在教堂的边楼里藏着……这就是汤姆的绝妙主意！

贝基在慌忙之中撕坏了老师的书，老师气极，一一查问，看来贝基已是在劫难逃。在这关键时刻，汤姆勇敢地站了起来，替贝基承担了责任，受到了老师的严厉责打。然而，贝基那对他既感激又崇敬的目光使汤姆觉得十分“过瘾”，那目光可以抵偿一百次鞭打！

对波特的审讯马上就要结束了，波特即将被送上断头台。又是一个关键的时刻，汤姆又一次挺身而出。他宣誓作证，揭露了印第安·乔杀人栽脏的事实真相，挽救了可怜的莫夫·波特。

汤姆和哈克到镇上那所闹鬼的房子里去寻宝，意外地发现了在逃的印第安·乔及其同伙。同时也发现了他们藏在那里的650块银币及他们新发现的上千块金币。两个孩子欣喜若狂，觉得金银可以到手了。然而他们留在房子里的锹和镐却引起了两个强盗的怀疑，他们决定转移赃物。汤姆和哈克开始了对他们的跟踪和监视。

哈克发现了印第安·乔和他的同伙，独自尾随跟踪至道格拉斯寡妇的家门口。原来，道格拉斯的丈夫也曾把乔送进监狱，现在他要报复，要毁她的容，破她的相。哈克及时报信，救了道格拉斯太太，自己却一病不起。

与此同时，汤姆和贝基等同学去郊游，在山洞中迷路达三天三夜之久。蜡烛用光了，食物也吃尽了，贝基彻底绝望了。汤姆在黑暗中继续四处摸索，终于找到了洞口。同时也发现了印第安·乔的踪迹。

汤姆和贝基生还后，贝基的父亲让人把山洞的大门用钢板包了起来，还上了三道锁，以防孩子们再入山洞迷路，却也把印第安·乔活活地锁在了里面！当人们打开山洞的大门时，发现印第安·乔已饿死在洞口，游人昔日扔掉的蜡烛头被他吃光了，他还吃了蝙蝠！

汤姆和哈克再次入洞，找到了印第安·乔及其同伙藏匿在洞中的赃物——1200块金币，二人平分，各得600，大人们拿去替他们放利。他们每人每天可得一元利息。

撒切尔法官要送汤姆上军校或进法学院。道格拉斯太太收养了哈克，让他接受正统的教育，训练他养成文明的习惯。

哈克无法忍受文明生活的束缚，逃了出来。汤姆以吸收哈克加入自己的强盗帮为条件使哈克又暂时回到了“文明社会”……

## *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

## INTRODUCTION

WHEN Samuel Clemens married Olivia Langdon on 4 February 1870, he stood at the midpoint of his life, with an established reputation as popular humorist, lecturer, and author. The prospect of further success fuelled his expectations of supporting 'Livy' in the affluent style she had become accustomed to as the daughter of a wealthy merchant. Yet Clemens, as ever, harboured doubts. His rough-hewn Western background as printer's devil, steamboat pilot, journalist, and Nevada silver miner posed a rude contrast to the refined society into which he was marrying—a contrast whose significance for his literary future prompted him to mull over his past. Only a few days after his wedding, he wrote a letter to his closest boyhood friend, Will Bowen, admitting: 'The fountains of my great deep are broken up & I have rained reminiscences for four & twenty hours.'<sup>1</sup> Then in one interminable sentence, he spewed out a list of vignettes recalled from their childhood together in Hannibal, Missouri—of the 'town drunkard', Jimmy Finn, who slept in a vat; of playing Robin Hood 'in the woods on Holliday's Hill'; of the day when the whole town feared he had drowned; and over a dozen other experiences which, transformed, would find their way into *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*.

A few months later, feeling again the tug of memory, Clemens indulged recollections of Hannibal more elaborately in 'A Boy's Manuscript'—a fragment written in dramatic form that contains, once again, the germs of characters and situations to be recast in his first novel. Charles A. Norton has argued that Clemens felt at the time of his marriage 'abnormally sensitive' about his family's early poverty and needed to redeem himself in his in-laws' eyes by inventing an 'acceptable past'.<sup>2</sup> That need drew him for the first time to what Henry

<sup>1</sup> Cited by Charles A. Norton, *Writing Tom Sawyer: The Adventures of a Classic* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 1983), 49.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 59.

## INTRODUCTION

Nash Smith termed the 'Matter of Hannibal', the biographical source of so many other narrative explorations undertaken by Clemens in his persona as Mark Twain. For the first time as well, he was prompted to venture a long work of fiction, moving beyond the tall tales, short stories, and epistolary travel accounts that had won him considerable renown, in order to craft a more sustained, more complex narrative structure. It is important, in other words, to recognize how misleading was the prefatory claim to *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*: that most of the events had 'really occurred'. For not only was much of the point of this fictive invention to divorce Mark Twain from an embarrassing past, it represented a turn in his career towards more deliberately artful narratives.

Mark Twain began writing *Tom Sawyer* no later than February 1873, scrawling a rough outline at the top of the opening page that promised to take his young hero well into adulthood. With only a vague initial idea about where his imagination would lead (a routine state for Twain in the early stages of composition), he worked steadily and completed 118 manuscript pages by May before returning to *The Gilded Age*, the novel he was co-authoring with Charles Dudley Warner. Twain, Livy, and their daughter Susy then sailed to England for a round of lectures and sight-seeing which prevented his return to *Tom Sawyer* until the following February. Writing through the summer of 1874 in Elmira, New York, he finished about five hundred pages before discovering he had 'pumped myself dry'. So, in September, he 'knocked off, and went to playing billiards for a change'.<sup>3</sup> Returning again to the novel soon after moving to Hartford, Connecticut, he continued writing through 5 July 1875, when he proudly announced to William Dean Howells that he had 'finished the story & didn't take the chap beyond boyhood'. Whatever notable uncertainties he harboured over the conventional narrative voice ('I perhaps made a mistake', he admitted, 'in not writing it in the first

<sup>3</sup> Cited in Justin Kaplan, *Mr. Clemens and Mark Twain: A Biography* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1967), 179.

person'), he was adamant about the genre of his first novel: 'It is *not* a boy's book, at all. It will only be read by adults. It is only written for adults.'<sup>4</sup>

The first adult other than Livy to read the novel, however, forcefully disagreed: Howells argued instead for marketing the book as 'a boy's story', and offered suggestions for revision that included dropping a final chapter depicting Huck Finn's life with the Widow Watson. After hemming and hawing, Twain dryly concurred: 'Mrs. Clemens decides with you that the book should issue as a book for boys, pure and simple—and so do I. It is surely that correct idea.'<sup>5</sup> Correct or not, this marketing decision had little effect on the novel's reception. For despite Twain's hopes to have the book appear in early spring, his American publisher, Elisha Bliss, was unable to produce copies until December 1876. Among other things, the result was that Howells's enthusiastic May review appeared far too early to be of much help. And Twain's increasing disappointment in the novel's delay was confirmed in its unexceptional American sales: barely 13,000 copies bought in the first two months, and only 10,000 more purchased through the rest of the year. If the actual numbers are hardly as bad as Twain believed them to be, it is true that American critics largely ignored the book, leaving him ever after with the feeling that the novel was a relative failure.

That perception of failure none the less did little to alter Mark Twain's ambitions. Like other strong artists keen for approval yet faced with popular disfavour, he put his reception behind him as he began to grasp innovative possibilities in the materials newly unearthed. Even before the end of *Tom Sawyer*, we can discern a turn from its conventional narrative ploys towards the singular first-person sequel conceived the following year: *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. In the process of writing

<sup>4</sup> *Mark Twain-Howells Letters: The Correspondence of Samuel L. Clemens and William D. Howells, 1872-1910*, ed. Henry Nash Smith and William M. Gibson (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1960), 91.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* 62.



## INTRODUCTION

his first novel, Twain had already sensed a way to master his streak of writerly exhibitionism—a way to control the skewed attitudes and fiercely incompatible energies that generated so much of his narrative power. Sensing mastery, of course, is far from the same as achieving it, and no one would confuse the accomplished style of *Huckleberry Finn* with that of its predecessor. Yet, curiously, it is *Tom Sawyer* that lays claim to being America's most popular novel, which raises the question of why readers continue to respond to the book as they do. What is it about Twain's conflicted voices in the novel—his peculiar blend of lyric and sardonic modes, his mix of elevated diction and vernacular expressions—that continues to elicit such an enthusiastic response? What, in short, does the novel suggest about an America that has made it one of its favourite texts?

Despite disappointing sales on first appearance, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* has remained continuously in print ever since—translated into countless languages, abridged in versions from Reader's Digest to comic books, reproduced in plays, musicals, movies, and assorted dramatic adaptations. Long before Twain's death, it had surpassed all his other books in total sales, and catapulted the diminutive figure of Tom Sawyer into a firm position as national icon. Recently, an American bicentennial stamp depicted Tom in front of a whitewashed fence; commemorative plates and pictures reveal him carrot-topped and barefooted, in chequered shirt and overalls, outwitting his kind, primly bespectacled Aunt Polly—all to the glorification of life in small-town America. How could Mark Twain's nostalgic reminiscence of ante-bellum years in Hannibal, Missouri have produced a set of characters and scenes that have become so firmly fixed in America's cultural imagination—of boys whitewashing a fence, disrupting school, attending their own funeral?

Certainly, the novel is winsomely comic, confirming Twain's skill as popular entertainer. And in the vein of contemporary Southwestern humorists, the most uproarious scenes match his earlier tendency (in 'The Celebrated Jumping Frog of