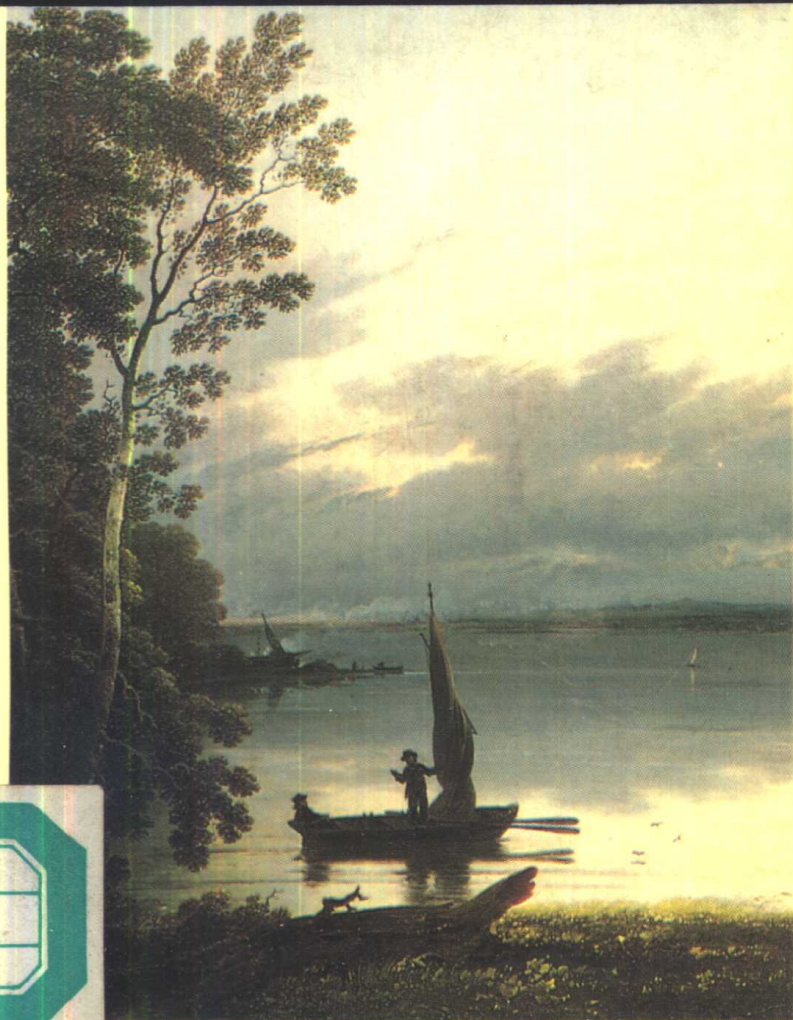


PENGUIN  CLASSICS

MARK TWAIN  

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THE ADVENTURES OF  
TOM SAWYER



MARK TWAIN

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*The Adventures of  
Tom Sawyer*

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

John Seelye



FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS



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## **The Adventures of Tom Sawyer**

### **汤姆·索亚历险记**

《汤姆·索亚历险记》是一部儿童历险小说，发表于1876年。故事主要写一个叫汤姆·索亚的小学生厌恶枯燥的课程、骗人的教义和死板庸俗的生活环境，因而追求传奇、冒险的生活。作者以幽默的笔触，通过对汤姆生活中一系列情节的描写，运用对比和夸张的手法，深刻讽刺了小市民的庸俗、保守、贪婪以及资产阶级道德和宗教的虚伪。小说的时代在美国南北战争前，写的是圣彼得堡小镇，但该镇在某种程度上可以说是当时美国社会的缩影。

作者马克·吐温是十九世纪后半期美国重要的批判现实主义作家，也是一位享有盛名的幽默、讽刺作家。他的作品思想内容丰富，并有独特的艺术风格。

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PENGUIN  CLASSICS

## THE ADVENTURES OF TOM SAWYER

Samuel Langhorne Clemens was born on November 30, 1835, in Florida, Missouri, about forty miles southwest of Hannibal, the Mississippi River town Clemens was to celebrate as Mark Twain. In 1853 he left home, earning a living as an itinerant typesetter, and four years later became an apprentice pilot on the Mississippi, a career cut short by the outbreak of the Civil War. For five years, as a prospector and a journalist, Clemens lived in Nevada and California. In February 1863 he first used the pseudonym "Mark Twain," as the signature to a humorous travel letter; and a trip to Europe and the Holy Land in 1867 became the basis of his first major book, *The Innocents Abroad* (1869). *Roughing It* (1872), his account of experiences in the West, was followed by a satirical novel, *the Gilded Age* (1873), *Sketches: New and Old* (1875), *Tom Sawyer* (1876), *A Tramp Abroad* (1880), *The Prince and the Pauper* (1882), *Life on the Mississippi* (1883), and his masterpiece, *Huckleberry Finn* (1885). Following the publication of *A Connecticut Yankee* (1889) and *Pudd'nhead Wilson* (1894), Twain was compelled by debts to move his family abroad. By 1900 he had completed a round-the-world lecture tour, and, his fortunes mended, he returned to America. He was as celebrated for his white suit and his mane of white hair as he was for his uncompromising stands against injustice and imperialism and for his invariably quoted comments on any subject under the sun. Samuel Clemens died on April 21, 1910.

John Seelye is Graduate Research Professor of American Literature at the University of Florida. He is the author of *The True Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, *Mark Twain in the Movies: A Meditation*, and *Prophetic Waters: The River in Early American Literature*.

## INTRODUCTION

Tom Sawyer is a name familiar to us as our own, part of our collective memory, his tale stored away like a remembered experience. If one of the pleasures in rereading *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is the discovery of new, sometimes startling dimensions—for Huck, as Lionel Trilling long ago observed, grows up as we grow, changes as we change—one of the joys of rereading Tom's *Adventures* is rediscovering things just as they were. Unlike Huck, Tom remains pretty much the boy we remembered, and critics are apt therefore to shrug him off as a lesser creation, an instance of arrested development. Yet it won't do to turn Tom Sawyer away with a shrug. Both boy and book exert a powerful hold upon the reader.

Louis Rubin, Jr., has said that the reputation of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* would be far greater had the author never finished its sequel, for the problem is not so much that Mark Twain went on to write a continuation, in which Tom plays a lesser and even a foolish role, but that the second book is superior to the first. A marvelous amphibian, *Huckleberry Finn* is a book that can be read and enjoyed by both adults and children, an accomplishment next to which *Tom Sawyer*, a book primarily intended for young readers, can only suffer by comparison. But it is unfair to judge the early novel by the standards of adult literature: Mark Twain himself declared to William Dean Howells that *Tom Sawyer* was "professedly and confessedly a boy's and girl's book," and toward that end he cut out certain parts that Howells found offensive. Thus, where in *Huckleberry Finn* Mark Twain told the story through Huck himself, achieving a lyric power that he was never again to match, the point of view in *Tom Sawyer* is that of an adult narrator, who at times can be caught talking condescendingly to the reader over his little hero's head. One such occasion is the episode in which Mark Twain describes



the process by which the "pirates" of Jackson's Island become homesick children. Yet we need only as adult readers to reach the Jackson's Island episode—the literal as well as the symbolic midpoint in the book—to acknowledge the power of the genius who is arranging the action.

At that point in the narrative, Tom Sawyer is literally in charge of the plot: a prankster from the start, by the middle of the book Tom has mounted a huge hoax, a scenario that will bring the residents of St. Petersburg to the threshold of tragedy only to yank them back into comic relief and laughter. Where Huck Finn seems to be a projection of something mysterious deeply hidden in Mark Twain's psyche, Tom Sawyer is clearly an active agent of the author. What is "prank" for Tom is craft for Mark Twain, both being consummate artists at playing upon the emotions of their audiences—which for Tom is the town, and for Twain, his reader.

If in the marvelously flexible voice of Huck Finn there is abstracted the eternal innocence that was the Romantics' notion of childhood, then in the actions of Tom Sawyer we have something akin to the Feast of Misrule, that medieval day of ritualistic mayhem over which children held sway. Tom seems to evince the kind of creatively destructive energy that we associate with poltergeists and juvenile delinquents. Yet, as in the Jackson's Island episode, he generally marshals his antisocial activities toward some perceived objective, in this instance an assertion of his real value in the hearts of the townspeople. Whether aping the lovesick Romeo, convincing his friends that no childhood game is as glorious as white-washing a fence, playing at Robin Hood on Cardiff Hill, or swindling his way to a prize Bible, Tom Sawyer is a showman, an autobiographical projection of a consummate master of lecture-platform histrionics. Though *Tom Sawyer* may lack the powerful psychological drama of *Huck Finn* (we never do gain any real insight into Tom's inner motivation), it shares with the other book a high degree of theatricality, and is in that regard much more tightly constructed than its picaresque

sequel. *Huck Finn* has great lyrical and dramatic power, but *Tom Sawyer* radiates a theatrical energy unmatched perhaps in the works of any of Mark Twain's contemporaries save Charles Dickens.

Like Dickens, Samuel Langhorne Clemens lived a life approximating melodrama. Fortunate to have escaped the childhood miseries that provided the basis for *Oliver Twist* and *David Copperfield*, young Sam Clemens grew up in a river town on the Mississippi that often reflected the turbulent spirit of the frontier. His boyhood was a relatively happy period, but life in Hannibal, Missouri, was not an uninterrupted idyll: Sam occasionally witnessed episodes of violence, and the unrealistic ambitions of his father, John Clemens—gently satirized as Squire Hawkins in *The Gilded Age*—resulted in a degree of financial uncertainty and psychological instability. John Clemens died when Sam was only twelve, making it necessary for the boy to go to work for his older brother, Orion, as a printer. Typesetting was a craft that provided an outlet for Sam's earliest creative efforts but one that he considered insufficient for his ambitious and restless psyche. Seeking, as he tells us, a glorious future in South America, at that time a platform for all kinds of imperialistic adventures, Sam Clemens settled for the more modest but still grand stage provided by the wheelhouse of a Mississippi riverboat, an experience that he recorded—with some elaboration—in "Old Times on the Mississippi." By his own account, a river pilot in the 1850s was the cynosure of all eyes along the great Mississippi, and in later years Mark Twain—who took his pen name from the leadsman's cry for "safe water"—would look back on his riverboat career as the happiest period of his life.

The Civil War put an end to the Golden Age of Piloting, and after a brief and unfortunate venture with a Confederate guerrilla band (parodied in "The History of a Campaign That Failed"), Clemens headed west with Orion (who had been appointed secretary to the governor of the Territory of Ne-

vada) in hopes of striking it rich in the silver-mine bonanza. His disillusioning experience eventually provided the basis for *Roughing It* (1872), and resulted in his signing with the *Virginia City Enterprise* as a reporter, a position that permitted considerable creative license and provided the kind of personal freedom and male camaraderie that Clemens associated with his days as a river pilot. Choosing his celebrated pen name, he associated it with several journalistic hoaxes that brought him a degree of notoriety and nearly placed him at the business end of a dueling pistol. Circumstances and career opportunity took him to San Francisco, where his literary fame increased, thanks largely to a talented bullfrog named "Daniel Webster" ("The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County"), the star of a story that was widely reprinted in the East. Seeking a more exotic locale, Clemens traveled to Hawaii, and then signed aboard the transatlantic cruise that became the basis for his first book, *The Innocents Abroad* (1869), which placed him on the highly visible (and popular) stage he held for the rest of his life. But first Mark Twain had to be content with the lecture platform, delivering comic and highly successful performances that demonstrated his mastery over audiences but that he felt were personally demeaning.

The publication of *Innocents Abroad* changed all that. Sam Clemens's rise to fortune and high social place was assisted by his marriage in 1870 to Olivia ("Livy") Langdon, daughter of a wealthy coal magnate in Elmira, New York. With help from his father-in-law, Mark Twain once again associated himself with newspaper work—now as an editor-publisher—in Buffalo, but the newlyweds soon moved to Hartford, Connecticut, where Clemens would thenceforth devote his talents to the writing of books. He chose Hartford because it was a convenient location, halfway between the publishing centers of Boston and New York. Not only did Hartford have its own respectable literary establishment, but the Clemens home became a stopping-off place for writers en route from one

city to the other. The Clemenses entertained lavishly in a flamboyantly executed mansion (often compared to a Mississippi riverboat) built with the profits from Mark Twain's writings, and there they raised three daughters, having lost a son in infancy, the only dark disruption of an otherwise happy existence.

With his fellow writer and Hartford neighbor Charles Dudley Warner, Mark Twain co-authored his first extended work of fiction, *The Gilded Age* (1873), shortly followed by the book by which—after *Huckleberry Finn*—he is best known, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876). Though Mark Twain would regularly return to the genre that first made him famous, travel writing, he is known today for his fiction, the best of which is, like his other great work, based on the experiences he had before coming to Connecticut. And yet, theatrical as that early life was, the drama did not end with his arrival in Hartford. By 1890, Mark Twain had become perhaps the most beloved author in America, displacing those venerable Fireside figures Longfellow and Whittier. But with old age—and the famous white hair and white suit—came something other than good grayness, an infernal dimension symbolized by his eternally present cigar or pipe.

Caught up in the speculative mania of the age—not much different from the bonanza mentality he recorded in *Roughing It*—Clemens had invested his literary earnings unwisely, and by 1894, he was bankrupt, forced to rebuild his fortune by taking once more to the lecture circuit, which he loathed but which had served him so well during his first rise to literary fame. Clemens regained his wealth, but the shock of the experience left its mark, and after the death of his favorite daughter, Suzie, at a time when the Clemenses were traveling in Europe, he and his wife could not bring themselves to return to the Hartford house. Following a long period of illness, his wife also died, leaving the man who to most people was the waggish Mark Twain to live out the remaining years of his life a lonely, bitter, even paranoiac wanderer. The

buoyant good humor of his earliest books was replaced by the cynical, sardonic manner of his last works, most of which are incomplete fragments. His final home, "Stormfield," which he built in Redding, Connecticut, was never more than a halfway house on the path to the grave. Another daughter, Jean, plagued for years by epilepsy, died in 1909, and Clemens followed soon after, to be survived by only one child, Clara, from whom he had long been estranged. Mark Twain's last years have justly been depicted by Hamlin Hill as an American version of *King Lear*.

And yet, as Justin Kaplan has demonstrated, the tragic last act of Sam Clemens's life was no sudden eruption of cruel fate. Kaplan distinguishes between "Mark Twain," the public man of letters—the beloved funmaker—and "S.L.C.," the private citizen, tormented by insecurity, driven to self-destructive acts, obsessed with making money, convinced he was surrounded by conspiratorial business rivals. Even his daughters, on whom he lavished so much attention, and his adored wife seem to have regarded him with something less than unreserved affection. As a theatrical figure, the public man Mark Twain is associated with the comic stage, starring in a series of picaresque travel narratives based on his own adventures, while the drama of his private life increasingly tended toward the inexorable decline of tragedy. Certainly, a careful reading of Mark Twain's nonfiction reveals something of the private man—xenophobia in *Innocents Abroad*, lust for wealth in *Roughing It*, nostalgia for a simpler rural past (mixed with a commitment to an industrialized, mechanized future) in *Life on the Mississippi*—but it is in his fiction that we can get even closer to the impulses that gave such driving energy to a deeply divided man.

Like Dickens, once again, Mark Twain derived his literary art from the world of the theater, and if Huck Finn is a picaro, he is also a kind of traveling actor who, as he drifts with Jim down the great river, becomes involved in one set piece after another, which often approximate melodrama—most partic-

ularly when the two fall in with those bonafide (if atrocious) actors, the King and the Duke. Still, the episodic structure of *Huckleberry Finn* disallows a strict dramatic "reading," while the book to which it provides a sequel, *Tom Sawyer*, is so theatrical in form and mood than an apocryphal tradition exists that it was once framed as an actual play. If in *Huckleberry Finn* Mark Twain reveals to a careful reader the anxieties that troubled his psyche, erupting as episodes of violence with interludes of idyllic freedom, the whole shadowed by the uncertain fate awaiting not only Huck and Jim but the action of the book itself, so *Tom Sawyer*, in its very tightness, its high degree of authorial control, can be regarded as an antithetical but nonetheless revealing exercise. It is one of the most "literary" of Mark Twain's works, informed to the point of plagiarism by the novels of other writers. Yet, as Leslie Fiedler has observed, it is a subversive book, and enlists the works of others in order to undercut the conventions those earlier stories established.

Let us begin with the dramatic form of Mark Twain's greatest contribution to children's literature. Where most of his works, fiction or otherwise, are "travel books," whose narratives cover a considerable amount of geographical territory, the adventures of Tom Sawyer take place in or near the town of St. Petersburg, and all of the hero's excursions, whether to Jackson's Island or McDougal's Cave, eventually end with his return home. As a result, the action of *Tom Sawyer* has the conventional limits of a stage play, even to a loose observance of the classical unities, including not only place but time, for the story is limited to the late spring and (mostly) the summer of one year in Tom's life. The cast of characters is limited as well, and no new "actors" are introduced after what amounts to the climax of the first "act," the graveyard episode (Chapter 9). In contrast to the rambling, improvisational shape of *Huckleberry Finn*, Mark Twain's first celebration of boyhood's free spirit is one of his most carefully controlled (and contrived) fictions, thanks to the same dra-

matic organization that warrants the use of melodramatic conventions, both unified action and melodrama resulting in considerable narrative power.

The theatrical aspect of the book is apparent in the opening pages, wherein Aunt Polly delivers a dramatic monologue as from a stage. At a critical point Tom is dragged out of a closet, and by a clever boy's stratagem he escapes punishment. This first scene ends when Tom streaks over the backyard fence with the agility of a small animal—an action that has the visual effectiveness of a stage device—and he will be seen performing this trick several times in succeeding chapters, ending with his flashing vault over Judge Thatcher's fence, escaping the consequences of having thrown a rock through a window. This repetitious action is pure theater—albeit of the vaudevillian stage—and serves to identify Tom with both mischief and precipitous escape, much as the fence itself will serve as the centerpiece in perhaps the most famous scene in the book—the whitewashing episode—where it figures as a symbol of the societal demands against which Tom is in perpetual rebellion while providing a demonstration of his abilities to contravene those demands by means of trickery.\* The fence, thenceforth, will disappear as a stage prop, having demonstrated the extent to which Tom can perform within the arena in which he appears.

Much else that follows is likewise the stuff of theater, whether the comedy of grade-school graduation ceremonies or the sentimental set piece of Muff Potter's pathetic praise of his loyal little "friends." Most notable, perhaps, is Tom's series of invented, self-starred dramas, most of which embody the spirit of misrule. Though the action is set in the summertime

\*That the boards of the fence are arranged horizontally, not vertically (as popular iconography often figures them), assists in promoting the imagery of repression while explaining Tom's amazing scaling ability. Designed as a repressive barrier, the fence is actually a ladder!

world, the charmed zone of Vacation, as a childhood arena Tom's playground more often than not features the kind of impromptu "games" we now associate with Halloween. As revealed in the loving complaint by Aunt Polly that opens the book, what Tom produces by way of entertainment is mostly mischief, not a little of which involves supernatural machinery. Up on Cardiff Hill, the "Delectable Land" that is free of village repression, Tom playacts at being Robin Hood, the prototypical outlaw, but many of his most important subsequent actions take place against a gothic backdrop: the Graveyard that becomes a Haunted House that opens into a Haunted Cave. As a consequence, the Halloween aspect of the book, often associated with boyish superstitions or mischievous pranks, can be seen as a connection between the bonafide world of real children and much more serious—and highly "literary"—business. Thus Tom and Huck are in search of a "remedy" for warts when they stumble into the grave-robbing episode and subsequent murder which will lead to the often unrealistic and melodramatic action that follows.

We shall return to the Halloween element—and melodrama—presently, but first it is important to place *Tom Sawyer* in its contemporary literary context. For if Tom is something of an actor-manager, much of what he manages to enact was, by 1875, a matter of convention. As mischief-maker, as "bad boy," he had been preceded in American fiction by a number of youthful pranksters, the grand original of which seems to have been Ike Partington—the invention of a Yankee humorist, B. P. Shillaber—whose tormented aunt, "Mrs. Partington," was a comic favorite of the 1850s and a predecessor to Tom's Aunt Polly. Mark Twain's debt to Shillaber has long been acknowledged, as has the resemblance (even to first name) between Tom Sawyer and Tom Bailey of T. B. Aldrich's *The Story of a Bad Boy* (1870). Aldrich's Tom lives in the harbor town of "Rivermouth" (Portsmouth, New Hampshire), which like St. Petersburg provides a village backdrop



to a series of episodic pranks. Like Mark Twain's Tom, Bailey is a boy whose "badness" is mostly a matter of misdirected energies and inventiveness, a tradition dating all the way back to Ben Franklin's account of his own boyhood in his *Autobiography*. Yet, unlike Ben Franklin, both "Toms" can be seen as avatars of misrule, boys whose mischief calls into question the conformist rigidity of village norms.

Mark Twain makes a subtle point when he shows that Tom Sawyer, who even under duress cannot commit the simplest bit of sacred Scripture to memory, has easily memorized the adventures of Robin Hood so he can "play by the book." Within the village confines, whether in schoolroom, church, or parlor, he constantly resists playing by the rules of society—that is left to such "good" boys as Sid, Willie Mufferson, and Alfred Temple—and he is not much of a student in school. But out in the forest, on the island, or, eventually, in the cave, Tom excels in everything he does, inventing his own games derived from his favorite books—which do not include the Bible. *His* scripture is the story of Robin Hood and like romances, much as his religion is associated with the greenwood, his liturgy with superstitions. There is something here of primal, archetypal oppositions, associating Tom with outlawry and paganism, the Town with rigid, Protestant-ethic conformity. And yet the chief of Tom's pranks, like his Jackson Island scheme, may disturb the tranquillity of the town but they also result in elevating the "bad" boy to the role—if only temporary—of village hero.

Again, the boys of Aldrich and Mark Twain are not really "bad," merely fun-loving, their pranks expressing the healthy subversiveness of boyhood. Both Twain and Aldrich were writing against the traditional "Good Boy/Bad Boy" dichotomy of Victorian children's literature, which had assisted for a century in the enforcement of society's repressive—if well-intentioned—norms. Begun by Thomas Day's popular and much imitated *Sandford and Merton* (1783–89), which in its day was a radical pedagogical innovation inspired by Rous-