

*Penguin Popular Classics*

THE ADVENTURES  
OF HUCKLEBERRY FINN

MARK TWAIN



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MARK TWAIN (1835-1910). American man of letters and novelist, he is best remembered for his keen social observation and as the creator of the immortal Huck Finn.

Mark Twain was born Samuel Langhorne Clemens in Missouri in November 1835. His family settled in Hannibal, a small township on the Mississippi, where he lived until he was eighteen. After his father's death in 1847 Clemens left school to become a printer's apprentice, working on the *Missouri Courier*. From 1853 he travelled widely as a journeyman printer in the East and Middle West, but gave this up in 1857 in favour of becoming a steamboat pilot after a trip down the Mississippi. After eighteen months' apprenticeship he became a licensed pilot, a profession he loved 'better than any I have followed since'. His time on the river proved a rich source of inspiration for his later writing, for while he was there he met 'all the different type of human nature that are to be found in fiction, biography or history'. The outbreak of the Civil War in 1861 brought an end to all river traffic and Clemens went on to spend time as an army volunteer, a gold prospector in Nevada, a timber prospector and a journalist before finally beginning his literary career. He first adopted the pseudonym 'Mark Twain' (a boating term meaning two fathoms) in 1863, as the signature to a humorous travel letter. His first major book, *The Innocents Abroad*, based on his travels in Europe and the Holy Lands, appeared in 1869. In 1870 he married Olivia Langdon and settled the following year in Connecticut, where he lived for seventeen years as a successful and popular writer. It was during this time that he wrote many of his best books: *Roughing It*, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, *Life on the Mississippi*, a superbly evocative memoir, and his masterpiece, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. He combined his writing with a great deal of travelling and some of his most humorous work can be

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found among his accounts of his trips. For many years he was a partner in a printing and publishing firm but a heavy investment in an unperfected typesetting machine drove him to bankruptcy in 1894. In order to try and redress his finances he set out on a world-wide lecture tour, but while he was abroad his beloved daughter Suzy died. His later writing reflects these disasters with its increasing irony and bitterness. Remaining a celebrated figure until his death in 1910, he was noted as much for his customary white suit and mane of white hair as for his uncompromising stands against injustice and imperialism.

*The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885) was originally written as a companion to the earlier *Tom Sawyer*. Written over a period of seven years, it has been highly praised ever since it appeared – one of its critics, Ernest Hemingway, believed that ‘all modern American literature comes from one book by Mark Twain called *Huckleberry Finn* . . . There was nothing before. There has been nothing as good since.’

Readers may also find the following books of interest: H. G. Baetzhold, *Mark Twain and John Bull: The British Connection* (1970); W. M. Gibson, *The Art of Mark Twain* (1976); Justin Kaplan, *Mr Clemens and Mark Twain* (1966); E. Hudson Long, *Mark Twain Handbook* (1957); Henry Nash Smith, *Mark Twain: The Development of a Writer* (1962); and Mark Twain, *Life on the Mississippi* (1883; reissued 1986).

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## NOTICE

PERSONS attempting to find a motive in this narrative will be prosecuted; persons attempting to find a moral in it will be banished; persons attempting to find a plot in it will be shot.

BY ORDER OF THE AUTHOR

*per*

G. G., CHIEF OF ORDNANCE

## EXPLANATORY

**I**N this book a number of dialects are used, to wit: the Missouri Negro dialect; the extremest form of the backwoods South-Western dialect; the ordinary 'Pike-County' dialect; and four modified varieties of this last. The shadings have not been done in a haphazard fashion, or by guess-work; but painstakingly, and with the trustworthy guidance and support of personal familiarity with these several forms of speech.

I make this explanation for the reason that without it many readers would suppose that all these characters were trying to talk alike and not succeeding.

THE AUTHOR



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CHAPTER I: *Civilizing Huck – Moses and the ‘Bulrushers’ –  
Miss Watson – Tom Sawyer waits*

YOU don't know about me, without you have read a book by the name of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, but that ain't no matter. That book was made by Mr Mark Twain, and he told the truth, mainly. There was things which he stretched, but mainly he told the truth. That is nothing. I never seen anybody but lied, one time or another, without it was Aunt Polly, or the widow, or maybe Mary. Aunt Polly – Tom's Aunt Polly, she is – and Mary, and the Widow Douglas, is all told about in that book – which is mostly a true book; with some stretchers, as I said before.

Now the way that the book winds up, is this: Tom and me found the money that the robbers hid in the cave, and it made us rich. We got six thousand dollars apiece – all gold. It was an awful sight of money when it was piled up. Well, Judge Thatcher, he took it and put it out at interest, and it fetched us a dollar a day apiece, all the year round – more than a body could tell what to do with. The Widow Douglas, she took me for her son, and allowed she would sivilize me; but it was rough living in the house all the time, considering how dismal regular and decent the widow was in all her ways; and so when I couldn't stand it no longer, I lit out. I got into my old rags and my sugar-hogshead again, and was free and satisfied. But Tom Sawyer he hunted me up and said he was going to start a band of robbers, and I might join if I would go back to the widow and be respectable. So I went back.

The widow she cried over me, and called me a poor lost lamb, and she called me a lot of other names, too, but she never meant no harm by it. She put me in them new clothes again, and I couldn't do nothing but sweat and sweat, and feel all cramped up. Well, then, the old thing commenced again. The widow rung a bell for supper, and you had to come to time. When you got to the table you couldn't go right to eating, but you had to wait for the widow to tuck down her head and grumble a little over the victuals, though there warn't really anything the matter with them. That is, nothing only

everything was cooked by itself. In a barrel of odds and ends it is different; things get mixed up, and the juice kind of swaps around, and the things go better.

After supper she got out her book and learned me about Moses and the Bulrushers; and I was in a sweat to find out all about him; but by-and-by she let it out that Moses had been dead a considerable long time; so then I didn't care no more about him; because I don't take no stock in dead people.

Pretty soon I wanted to smoke, and asked the widow to let me. But she wouldn't. She said it was a mean practice and wasn't clean, and I must try to not do it any more. That is just the way with some people. They get down on a thing when they don't know nothing about it. Here she was a-bothering about Moses, which was no kin to her, and no use to anybody, being gone, you see, yet finding a power of fault with me for doing a thing that had some good in it. And she took snuff too; of course, that was all right, because she done it herself.

Her sister, Miss Watson, a tolerable slim old maid, with goggles on, had just come to live with her, and took a set at me now, with a spelling-book. She worked me middling hard for about an hour, and then the widow made her ease up. I couldn't stood it much longer. Then for an hour it was deadly dull, and I was fidgety. Miss Watson would say, 'Don't put your feet up there, Huckleberry'; and, 'don't scrunch up like that, Huckleberry - set up straight'; and pretty soon she would say, 'Don't gap and stretch like that, Huckleberry - why don't you try to behave?' Then she told me all about the bad place, and I said I wished I was there. She got mad, then, but I didn't mean no harm. All I wanted was to go somewheres; all I wanted was a change, I warn't particular. She said it was wicked to say what I said; said she wouldn't say it for the whole world; *she* was going to live so as to go to the good place. Well, I couldn't see no advantage in going where she was going, so I made up my mind I wouldn't try for it. But I never said so, because it would only make trouble, and wouldn't do no good.

Now she had got a start, and she went on and told me all about the good place. She said all a body would have to do there was to go around all day long with a harp and sing for

ever and ever. So I didn't think much of it. But I never said so. I asked her if she reckoned Tom Sawyer would go there, and she said, not by a considerable sight. I was glad about that, because I wanted him and me to be together.

Miss Watson she kept pecking at me, and it got tiresome and lonesome. By-and-by they fetched the niggers in and had prayers, and then everybody was off to bed. I went up to my room with a piece of candle and put it on the table. Then I set down in a chair by the window and tried to think of something cheerful, but it warn't no use. I felt so lonesome I most wished I was dead. The stars was shining, and the leaves rustled in the woods ever so mournful; and I heard an owl, away off, who-whooping about somebody that was dead, and a whippowill and a dog crying about somebody that was going to die; and the wind was trying to whisper something to me and I couldn't make out what it was, and so it made the cold shivers run over me. Then away out in the woods I heard that kind of a sound that a ghost makes when it wants to tell about something that's on its mind and can't make itself understood, and so can't rest easy in its grave and has to go about that way every night grieving. I got so downhearted and scared, I did wish I had some company. Pretty soon a spider went crawling up my shoulder, and I flipped it off and it lit in the candle; and before I could budge it was all shrivelled up. I didn't need anybody to tell me that that was an awful bad sign and would fetch me some bad luck, so I was scared and most shook the clothes off of me. I got up and turned around in my tracks three times and crossed my breast every time; and then I tied up a little lock of my hair with a thread to keep witches away. But I hadn't no confidence. You do that when you've lost a horse-shoe that you've found, instead of nailing it up over the door, but I hadn't ever heard anybody say it was any way to keep off bad luck when you'd killed a spider.

I set down again, a-shaking all over, and got out my pipe for a smoke; for the house was all as still as death, now, and so the widow wouldn't know. Well, after a long time I heard the clock away off in the town go boom – boom – boom – twelve licks – and all still again – stiller than ever. Pretty soon I heard a twig snap, down in the dark amongst the trees – something

was a-stirring. I set still and listened. Directly I could just barely hear a 'me-yow! me-yow!' down there. That was good! Says I, 'me-yow! me-yow!' as soft as I could, and then I put out the light and scrambled out of the window on to the shed. Then I slipped down to the ground and crawled in amongst the trees, and sure enough there was Tom Sawyer waiting for me.

## CHAPTER 2 : *The Boys escape Jim – Jim! – Tom Sawyer's Gang – Deep-laid Plans*

WE went tip-toeing along a path amongst the trees back towards the end of the widow's garden, stooping down so as the branches wouldn't scrape our heads. When we was passing the kitchen I fell over a root and made a noise. We scrouched down and laid still. Miss Watson's big nigger, named Jim, was setting in the kitchen door; we could see him pretty clear, because there was a light behind him. He got up and stretched his neck out about a minute, listening. Then he says:

'Who dah?'

He listened some more; then he come tip-toeing down and stood right between us; we could a touched him, nearly. Well, likely it was minutes and minutes that there warn't a sound, and we all there so close together. There was a place on my ankle that got to itching; but I dasn't scratch it; and then my ear begun to itch; and next my back, right between my shoulders. Seemed like I'd die if I couldn't scratch. Well, I've noticed that thing plenty of times since. If you are with the quality, or at a funeral, or trying to go to sleep when you ain't sleepy – if you are anywheres where it won't do for you to scratch, why you will itch all over in upwards of a thousand places. Pretty soon Jim says:

'Say – who is you? Whar is you? Dog my cats ef I didn' hear sumf'n. Well, I knows what I's gwyne to do. I's gwyne to set down here and listen tell I hears it agin.'

So he set down on the ground betwixt me and Tom. He leaned his back up against a tree, and stretched his legs out



till one of them most touched one of mine. My nose begun to itch. It itched till the tears come into my eyes. But I dasn't scratch. Then it begun to itch on the inside. Next I got to itching underneath. I didn't know how I was going to set still. This miserableness went on as much as six or seven minutes; but it seemed a sight longer than that. I was itching in eleven different places now. I reckoned I couldn't stand it more'n a minute longer, but I set my teeth hard and got ready to try. Just then Jim begun to breathe heavy; next he begun to snore – and then I was pretty soon comfortable again.

Tom he made a sign to me – kind of a little noise with his mouth – and we went creeping away on our hands and knees. When we was ten foot off, Tom whispered to me and wanted to tie Jim to the tree for fun; but I said no; he might wake and make a disturbance, and then they'd find out I warn't in. Then Tom said he hadn't got candles enough, and he would slip in the kitchen and get some more. I didn't want him to try. I said Jim might wake up and come. But Tom wanted to resk it; so we slid in there and got three candles, and Tom laid five cents on the table for pay. Then we got out, and I was in a sweat to get away; but nothing would do Tom but he must crawl to where Jim was, on his hands and knees, and play something on him. I waited, and it seemed a good while, everything was so still and lonesome.

As soon as Tom was back, we cut along the path, around the garden fence, and by and by fetched up on the steep top of the hill the other side of the house. Tom said he slipped Jim's hat off of his head and hung it on a limb right over him, and Jim stirred a little, but he didn't wake. Afterwards Jim said the witches bewitched him and put him in a trance, and rode him all over the State, and then set him under the trees again and hung his hat on a limb to show who done it. And next time Jim told it he said they rode him down to New Orleans; and after that, every time he told it he spread it more and more, till by and by he said they rode him all over the world, and tired him most to death, and his back was all over saddle-boils. Jim was monstrous proud about it, and he got so he wouldn't hardly notice the other niggers. Niggers would come miles to hear Jim tell about it, and he was more looked