

Mark Twain's *Tom Sawyer*

Chapter by Chapter Questions

Introduction

The Adventures of Tom Sawyer could be read as a child's adventure story, or it could be read as radical literature written by a man who once called himself a revolutionary.

Young Tom is raised in a home without an adult that loves him. Aunt Poly is incapable of love because she believes in corporal punishment and in forcing children to attend churches and schools that bore children to death, do not provide them with love, and teach them none of the skills they need to live in harmony with Nature. In fact, Poly's Christian religion has utterly confused her conscience and actually torments her with contradictory feelings of guilty.

Tom is desperately looking for love, but, not even knowing what real love is, he only uses various tricks to win attention instead of love.

More obviously, Tom is looking for wealth. He is obsessed with money and treasures that represent money. Even his desire to be a pirate is based on the foolish belief that pirates are both famous and wealthy. They might be both famous and wealthy, but the novel reveals that wealthy people like Aunt Poly, who owns a slave, are not happy.

The novel also reveals that instead of teaching children about reality, American culture steeps children in silly legends – both secular and religious ones. As a result, Tom understands nothing about the fate of the dispossessed and oppressed indigenous people and African slaves living in his country. In fact, Tom has no sympathy for Injun Joe.

Comprehension Questions

1. In complete sentences, explain how Tom tricked his Aunt, but later failed to trick his Aunt, and later tricked the children.
2. Discuss why you feel sorry, or sympathy, for Tom Sawyer. If you don't, just pretend.
3. In complete sentences, discuss three ways Tom tried to impress the girl, Becky Thatcher.
- 3.5 Why do you think Huckleberry Fin is so popular? Do you envy him? Why or why not?
4. The boys use a stick to control the tick (bug). Explain how the master treats the boys like bugs. Tom said the bug belonged to him. What else does he want to have?
Why does Tom want to become a pirate?
5. Discuss the oath made by Huckleberry and Tom.
Describe what happened in the cemetery.
6. Why does Tom shiver and lose sleep?

Tom is a drug addict. Explain.
Aunty Polly is a fool. Explain.

7. Joe and Tom have some things in common. Explain.
Why do the three boys like being pirates?
Why does Tom run home?
8. What two things show that Tom has strong feelings?
9. Guess Tom's secret. When you figure out what it is, tell me what you think.
10. Auntie is angry that Tom lied. But isn't it her fault that he lied? Explain.
11. Explain "gilded" as it's used in this chapter. What was gilded and by whom.
Tom gets the measles and the rest of the town gets _____. Why does it bother Tom?
12. Explain how Tom risks his life.
13. What's the amazing coincidence? Discuss the boys and the criminals.
14. Find the words "their adventure" on top of page 141. Is it an adventure? Try to describe what Tom and Huck are doing in your own words.
What is a "Temperance Tavern"? Research and/or use clues in the story to guess the answer.
15. Why does Injun Joe want revenge and against who?
Why doesn't Huck tell anyone about the god?
16. Becky finally does a kindness to Tom. Explain.
Discuss a coincidence that involves Tom and Injun Joe (the "Spaniard").
17. What little white lie did Tom tell?
Did Tom really need to share the treasure with Huck? Why and why not?
18. Huck is rich now, but nothing has changed. Explain.
Will Tom be happy with Judge Thatcher's plan for him? Explain.