

Mark Twain's Message Regarding Indigenous People

Injun Joe represents the Native American people. Discuss how Injun Joe's life as portrayed in the novel reflects their lives in America. You might also discuss the ironic fact that Injun Joe's life looks a bit like Tom's life.

Injun Joe is a man who represents the Native American people in the Adventures of Tom Sawyer. The word "Injun" had meant "Indian" to some many people in the past, and perhaps even in the present. He was first mentioned in the book when Tom and Huckleberry Finn were out late one night at a graveyard attempting to bury a cat. At first, **judging from how** Huckleberry talks about him and his cruel actions, Joe seems like a terrible person. However, there is an interesting and unjust story behind his life.

Before the European and French founded the land that Tom and the people in his area live in, it was the Native Americans, or Indians that lived there first. Furthermore, these people cared about the land that they lived in very much and were kind, spiritual, and innocent human beings. While explaining why he was demanding more money from the doctor, Injun Joe mentioned that when he was younger, he begged for food at Dr. Robinson's father's kitchen. Considering Joe was probably a starving young boy, the very least Robinson's father could have done was give him some food. Unfortunately, his father drove him out and put him in jail for being a vagrant. For people like Robinson's father to treat the people who lived there before them the way that he did is frustrating and unfair. Therefore, Joe promised that he would get revenge on Robinson. He demanded more money from him **for digging** out the body as well as for **threatening** to hurt him. Quick to act, Robinson struck Joe first but was killed by him after Joe had recovered from the hit. Clearly not wanting to go to jail for a second time, Joe blamed the murder on Muff Potter by putting the murder weapon in his hand while he was knocked unconscious by the doctor.

Native Americans were not only treated the way that Injun Joe was treated in the past, but some are treated even worse than him nowadays. For instance, although their own land was taken away from them, little education for children is offered, and barely any clean water is given. All of these problems will result in extremely poor health, unemployment, and unhappiness. Some police officers are arresting Indigenous and Native Americans for foolish reasons, while others even kill. Additionally, and there are countless missing women of this community gone from their families, most likely abducted or murdered. This is an issue that is infuriating and must be solved. Of course, many children don't know about this. Tom, for example, didn't understand this and believed that Injun Joe was entirely guilty.

Injun Joe and Tom are two similar characters in different circumstances. Firstly, Tom doesn't receive much love from his aunt, school teachers, and sometimes his friends. Joe on the other hand, doesn't receive love at all because he doesn't know a lot of people, and even if he did, his reputation and looks wouldn't be barriers. Secondly, they are both clever. Tom managed to relax in the shade while the boys he tricked into whitewashing the fence finished his tedious chore. In a more serious but similar case, Joe put the weapon he used to kill Dr. Robinson in Muff Potter's hand, and blamed it on him. When Potter woke up, Joe also played a convincing part. Lastly, the way that Tom and Injun Joe are treated is ironically similar. Joe was begging for food and was punished for it. Similarly, Tom is punished for stealing sugar. However, Joe is Native American whereas Tom isn't. It's strange that Native Americans and children like Tom were treated similarly. This indicates that the problem isn't only racial; it's universal. Only white adult men and sometimes women lived fairly.

In conclusion, Native Americans like Injun Joe should not be treated the way they are being treated. People need to understand their pain and fight for their rights as well as give them back the land they have always taken care of. In addition, it's amusing and unfortunate that Tom and Injun Joe were treated in similar ways, and the adults had most of the privilege. However, Tom still had rights to education, while Joe was jailed as a vagrant.

Teacher's Note: What was done to American Indians is now being done to everyone. Good literature is becoming more relevant, not less.