

# The growth of tom sawyer



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Children as a whole have a propensity to rebel and cause mischief when they are younger, but this trait tends to disappear as they face challenges and begin to grow up. Mark Twain's classic novel from 1876, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, follows the title character through his many unusual exploits and displays his development into a more conscientious young man. This novel was partly written for the purpose of giving adults a look back at their youth, in an instructive manner; after all, Tom starts out as an immature boy, then begins to exhibit signs of entering adulthood as he faces increasingly challenging mental and physical circumstances. Although Twain initially establishes Tom as reckless and irresponsible, his development through his encounter at the graveyard and his experience on Jackson Island prove that children may behave immaturely but have a tendency to become more mature as they face hardships.

Tom's growth was first displayed through the calamity he witnessed at the graveyard and his decision to step forward for the purpose of proving Muff Potter's innocence. At first, Tom and Huck Finn essentially ignored the option of speaking out and saving Potter, because they "...wouldn't be alive two days if that got found out" (133) Both of these boys were originally too scared for their well-being to speak out against Injun Joe and tell the truth. However, as the story progresses, Tom Sawyer displays growth in maturity and decision-making and begins to seriously consider that option.

Additionally, Tom's fear of Injun Joe and for his life prevented him from speaking once on the stand, but "... the boy got ... his strength back, and managed to put enough of it into his voice to make part of the house hear..." (137). Tom's decision to make the moral choice and to put his life on the line

to save Muff Potter's was a noble one. This decision was mainly caused by the internal struggle he went through before Muff Potter's trial, proving that hardships are what mature children.

Moreover, after his rough encounter with Becky, Tom Sawyer impulsively makes the decision to leave with his friends Joe Harper and Huckleberry Finn to Jackson Island. In the beginning of their stay, Joe brings up the idea of going back to civilization, but "Tom withered him with derision... Mutiny was effectually laid to rest for the moment" (92). At first, he is too concerned with enjoying his freedom to realize how much pain he is causing his family. However, Tom changes his mind after giving the issue additional thought, and visits them for the purpose of putting their minds at ease. Not only that, but he later justified his actions to Aunt Polly, stating that he came back "... to tell you [Aunt Polly] not to be uneasy about us, because we hadn't got drowned" (117). His explanation is received well by his aunt, who is pleasantly shocked by his considerate thoughts, saying that this thoughtfulness would cover up a number of sins. The challenges he faced during his stay on the island and after he returned to civilization helped him develop his decision-making skills.

Tom explores a further adventure, with only Huckleberry Finn this time, gaining more valuable lessons as a result. Tom and Huck are trying to find buried treasures while acting as pirates near a haunted house, but cannot proceed due to their own beliefs that "sometimes witches [would] interfere [along with]...dead people [and]...ghosts...on an [unlucky] day,...Friday" (224, 227, 229). However, both of them are able to conquer their fears and move on with the adventure. Tom and Huck are no longer dependent

children anymore, but instead have transformed into brave teenagers, able to figure out the issues by themselves. During this adventure, Tom and Huck also ask each other what they are “ going to do with [their own] share [of money]” (222). Neither had understood the value of money until that very moment. Tom and Huck discover that they must be able to manage and be responsible with their money, which will benefit them in the future.

Through the challenging decisions that Tom Sawyer makes, Mark Twain proves that maturity occurs gradually, and that any difficulties faced along the way accelerate the child’s growth. He displays this conception multiple times throughout the novel, but there are a few instances in which this theme is exemplified most noticeably. Sawyer learns through his challenges during the ordeal involving Muff Potter and Injun Joe, and struggles to make the right decision. Additionally, he makes a considerate, thoughtful choice after his experiences on Jackson Island. Although at first Tom Sawyer makes immature decisions, he takes immense leaps in maturity throughout the novel, acquiring characteristics crucial to his future on the way.