

The adventures of tom sawyer hypocrisy in society



**ASSIGN
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Society's hypocrisy and the transition into social maturity are exhibited in Mark Twain's novel *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. The novel follows the childhood escapades of Tom Sawyer and his friend Huck Finn, as well as their gradual transition into maturity.

The story begins with Sawyer running from his aunt and getting in trouble for having a fight when he should have been at school. He falls in love with a girl named Becky Thatcher, but they break up very quickly after Sawyer says he's been in love with someone else before. He spends time with his friend Huckleberry Finn during the night, and they witness Injun Joe, a half Native American, kill Dr Robinson while grave-robbing. Injun Joe blames another member of their party, Muff Potter, for the murder, but both Sawyer and Finn witnessed it and tell what happens at Potter's trial.

Both Sawyer and Finn later find out Injun Joe hid a box of money and go searching for it. When Tom Sawyer goes on a picnic with Becky, Finn follows Joe and discovers he's going to beat someone. Joe runs away before Finn can get help or tell anyone. During Tom and Becky's picnic, they both get stuck in a cave and find Injun Joe is stuck too. They escape, the cave is sealed and Joe dies from starvation. Both Sawyer and Finn realize that Joe left the box money in the cave. They recover it and split the money between them.

The story is set in the 1840s in a fictional town by the Mississippi River called St Petersburg. There are two main characters in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*: Tom Sawyer himself, as well as Huckleberry Finn, one of his friends. Sawyer is the central protagonist in this novel, and is first seen escaping punishment from his aunt, Polly. He does so twice in the opening chapters,

and is punished with whitewashing aunt Polly's fence. He avoids the punishment by convincing another boy, Ben Rogers, to whitewash the fence for him by telling him a boy doesn't get a chance to whitewash a fence every day (23). These actions characterize Sawyer as a manipulative, mischievous boy who would rather play than work. Huckleberry Finn, the son of the town drunk, is also much like Sawyer, in that they both have a strong sense of adventure and do not adhere to the rules their society has set for them.

The theme expressed in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* is society's hypocritical nature. Although Tom Sawyer and his friends are breaking the rules of society by harassing others, skipping their classes and randomly sneaking out at night to play, the way they do so is structured much like the society itself. This is because Tom Sawyer uses rules that define how one should act during their play, such as how to be a pirate. Sawyer and his friends are avid believers in superstition, as well as convention, and this mirrors the way St Petersburg views religion and other practices, such as church and school.

The second theme of the novel is the transition from childhood to social maturity. Throughout *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, Sawyer undergoes many changes from when he is first introduced in the beginning of the novel. In the beginning, Tom Sawyer is more concerned with himself, getting out of responsibility and causing a ruckus. As the novel progresses, Sawyer begins to become more selfless. This is shown when he takes the blame for Becky in the middle of the story. His newfound selflessness is also evident when he testifies in Potter's trial, stating that Injun Joe murdered Dr Robinson.

As I read *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, I was fascinated by the way Sawyer was able to make Ben Rogers whitewash the fence for him. He presented it in such a way that Rogers believed the work was a fun privilege. Literary scholars Dan Ariely, George Loewenstein and Drazen Prelec conducted a study related to this unusual phenomenon:

Tom's law challenges the intuition that whether a familiar activity or experience is pleasant or unpleasant is a self-evident matter at least to the person participating in that activity. . . do individuals have a pre-existing sense of whether an experience is good or bad?(1)

Just after reading this segment of the novel, I did not believe this sort of persuasion was possible, but after reading this article I was surprised. It appears that it is possible to be persuaded to perform a task by making the experience seem rewarding, as Tom Sawyer did with Ben Rogers.

Overall, I enjoyed reading *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. The first few chapters progressed slowly, but I believe that the exposition was needed in order to set up Sawyer's character development. I particularly enjoyed the time Sawyer spent with Huckleberry Finn on Jackson's island, as well as the ending when Sawyer and Finn look for the treasure.

The Adventures of Tom Sawyer is a classic. Although many elements can be used to date the novel, many of its events could happen today in a similar fashion. The novel also portrays a realistic image of childhood's wonders, as well as its ups and downs. Additionally, the novel also provides an accurate portrayal of the 1840s in America, as the author based the events on many

of his own experiences in childhood. Overall, the novel's themes will be relevant for many generations to come.