

# Tom sawyer representing the tradition and romanticism of walter scott in twain's ...

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The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn is a picaresque novel about a boy who travels down the Mississippi River with his Aunt's escaped slave, Jim. Before he leaves on his journey, Huck encounters an old friend, Tom Sawyer. Tom forms a gang based off of practices that other convicts and robbers have utilized in the past. As the novel progresses, Huck develops and displays a progressive viewpoint which is similar to Emerson's Transcendental philosophy. Tom displays a traditional viewpoint that is similar to the viewpoint in Sir Walter Scott's works. Tom and Huck have conflicting viewpoints when "rescuing" Jim from the Silas family because they are caught up in the dichotomy of traditional ways versus progressive ways. In The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, Twain uses Tom Sawyer to represent Scott's romanticism and tradition, and Huckleberry Finn to represent Emerson's progressive viewpoint, and through these two characters, Twain proves that neither viewpoint is plausible in society.

Mark Twain uses Tom Sawyer as a symbol of Walter Scott's romanticized novels in the Adventures of Huckleberry Finn. In the novel, Twain purposefully names the ferry that the convicts are on after Sir Walter Scott. Sir Walter Scott is known for romanticizing topics such as war and tradition in his works, and is also known for having a large influence in the South. When Twain was asked about Sir Walter Scott, he said that he "made every gentleman in the South a Major or a Colonel, or a General or a Judge," and that without him the "South would be fully a generation further advanced than it is" (Twain vs. Scott Handout). Twain realizes that romanticism and tradition have held society back from progressing because it has made people want to experience the same feelings as the characters in Scott's

works. When Twain first alludes to making every man a general, he means that they have read Scott's books about a romanticized view of war and want to experience it for themselves. This is just like Tom wanting to experience the plans that convicts have experienced and recreating it even though it is romanticized in books. Twain alludes to Scott through Tom Sawyer during the rescue of Jim and during the creation of Tom Sawyer's Gang. Twain sets the stage by having Tom Sawyer create a gang that follows everything that other convicts have done. Tom's reasons for the decisions he makes is because he has "[read] it in the books; and so of course that's what [he] [has] to do"(19). Tom is shown to be naive just like the Southerners who believed Walter Scott's novels when he uses the word ransomed incorrectly and can only guess when he is asked about the definition. Twain is also showing the gullibility of the Southern people, and how they perceive fiction novels to be applicable to real life situations. After a long hiatus, Tom returns to help rescue Jim. At first, the two boys begin to brainstorm about a way to get Jim out of the cabin. Tom thinks that a more difficult plan than Huck's is necessary because no escape that he has read about has been easy. Tom states that Huck's plan to rescue Jim " makes it so rotten difficult to get up a difficult plan"(249). A difficult plan means that risks will be taken and may turn out either in their favor or not. Tom's only reason for his difficult plan is because " it's the right way- and it's the regular way"(255). Tom may be doing it the " regular way," but he is holding himself back from progressing by following the romanticized plans of escape of all the other convicts. All of the books that Tom has read romanticize the difficult plans, and they always work out because they are fiction, and of course Tom believes them all. Tom

is once again relying on traditional ways which ultimately leads to a difficult plan. Walter Scott is being satirized because this sounds exactly like what he did to the South: held them back from progressing through romanticizing events. As the novel concludes, Jim, Huck and Tom are escaping from an angry mob and after they escape, Tom had been shot in the calf of his leg. The mob is following them because Tom thinks that he can outrun them just like all prisoners outrun authorities. After being shot, Tom is “ the gladdest of all” which is a ridiculous reaction to having a bullet in your leg (286). Twain uses this final escape to solidify that, through Tom, Scott’s ways of romanticism do not work. Even though Tom has been shot, he is still present and his attitude is not changed, and Twain is making a statement that no matter what happens to tradition, it will still be present because people feel obliged to follow it and not because it is plausible in society.

Just as Twain used Tom to relate to tradition, Twain uses Huck to relate to progressive actions that Ralph Waldo Emerson writes about in his essay, Nature. Emerson poses the rhetorical question: “ why should we not have a poetry and philosophy of insight and not of tradition?”(Emerson, Nature). He goes on to argue that instead of allowing the past to infiltrate the present, individuals must work to allow our society to progress. Emerson acknowledges the dichotomy of tradition versus progression just as Mark Twain does. Through Huck, Twain displays Emerson’s progressive viewpoint throughout the novel. When Huck says, “ All right, then, I’ll go to hell,” and then tears up the letter, he is completely contradicting what society has tried to instill on him to be incorrect (225). He rips up a letter that will tell Miss

Watson where Jim is and will allow her to retrieve him for a reward. By sending this letter, Huck would be conforming to society because it was thought of as a sin to not tell the owner of a runaway slave that they had in fact run away. By ripping the paper and accepting his fate, Huck displays Emerson's philosophy. Another instance where Huck contradicts society is throughout the rescue of Jim. By being friends with and agreeing to help rescue Jim, a runaway slave, Huck is not agreeing or displaying what society views as morally correct. While rescuing Jim, Tom is persistent about doing things the regular way and Huck is persistent on rescuing Jim faster and easier. Huck tries on multiple occasions to give an easier alternative to Tom's elaborate and difficult plans. However, each time Huck tries, it seems as though Tom always seems to override Huck's plan with his own. Huck's idea is to use "them old crippled picks" to dig Jim out with (254). However, Tom says that they use "a couple of case knives" to dig a hole to get Jim out. Even though Huck's plan is obviously more efficient, they begin to use case knives to dig because Tom's "regular way" of doing things overrides Huck's progressive thinking. Huck ultimately comes to the conclusion that he is going to "do [whatever] [comes] handiest at the time"(102). Huck completely disconnects himself from the individual, thus allowing society to influence him. He realizes that his individual ways will not work in a world in which society is superior so he decides to just do whatever is handiest at the time. By Huck realizing this, he is not following society nor is he aligning himself with Emerson's philosophy which shows that neither is plausible in society.

In the novel, *Into the Wild*, Chris McCandless felt trapped by all of the conforms of society and wanted to escape it. He made a decision to go into the wilderness of Alaska in hopes of escaping conformity and tradition. He realizes that he in fact cannot escape society completely and ends up falling victim to death. Chris exemplifies how society is necessary and requires a middle ground between complete conformity and complete individuality. Chris's situation directly relates to how Tom is a complete conformist and Huck is represents the progressive individual and how neither of them work. Both Twain and John Krakauer both acknowledge and prove that neither extreme is plausible in society. Twain uses this moment to show that tradition will overrule progressive thinking when the decision is made, therefore Emerson's philosophy is not plausible in society, either. Since both extremes have been proven to not be plausible in society, the individual must navigate the terrain by doing whatever "comes handiest at the time."