

Tom brown's schooldays essay

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Tom Brown's Schooldays Originally published in 1857, Thomas Hughes', Tom Brown's Schooldays, is a semi-biographical novel based on Hughes' experiences as a school boy. Tom Brown's Schooldays has been adapted to film as well. The following is a discussion of the issues found in Tom Brown's Schooldays. The primary theme of the story and this paper is that Tom Brown has many experiences, both physical and emotional, that adds to his character as a person and determines who he is as an adult. The first few chapters of Tom Brown's Schooldays deal with Tom's early years. Tom resided in the Vale of White Horse, a government district in Oxfordshire, England.

Hughes' describes White Horse Hill as " it stands right up above all the rest, nine hundred feet above the sea, and the boldest, bravest shape for a chalk hill that you ever saw" (p. ____). Chapter one reveals the attitudes of Victorian England towards class and society in general.

The first few chapters of the book also revealed a comparison of Saxon and Norman influence. This time period was marked by the rule of Queen Victoria; who ruled from 1837 to 1901 (Swisher et al. 2000).

During Queen Victoria's rule, the British were very prosperous due to overseas involvement and industrial growth in England. Due to the positive economy, the middle class became well educated. During this period however, there was a split among the classes, the poor were extremely poor while the rest of society enjoyed life's finest. Slums began to develop in London especially, where landlords turned large homes into apartments and flats that were not kept up and quickly became overcrowded. The wealthy

enjoyed gambling, theater, art, opera and much more. Many children were put to work during the Victorian era, in factories and as chimney sweeps (Daniels 2003).

The conditions of the poor were in such extreme opposition to the wealthy and this created great tension between the two classes, which Hughes' describes in Tom Brown's Schooldays. Hughes' describes the attitude of the society during the mid-1800s. To society, the poor were irresponsible, they wasted money on drinking and gambling and God made them poor and gave them their lot in life for a reason and it should not be interfered with (Daniels 2003). Tom came from a well-to-do family and they were not blind to the plights of lower society. This can be seen in Tom's upbringing. Tom's family has servants and Tom, himself, has a nurse named Charity Lamb. Although the family used servants, they were very good to their workers and demanded that Tom respect them. This respect taught Tom that people were people regardless of societal status.

Although Tom comes from a well-to-do family his parents instill important morals and values in him. His village has both upper and lower class citizens, which as previously discussed was very separated. the lower class were looked at as less than desirable and treated poorly by upper classes. Tom and his family however had good relationships with their " lower class" servants. Although these men and women were nannies, farmhands, etc, Tom had close relationships with all of them; which was fostered and supported by his family. Tome, therefore, learned the importance of integrity and loyalty from an early age. Tom was not influenced by a persons economic or social status; he looked for the good in people.

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This was an important element to his personality and the type of person he becomes as a grown man. Tom's upbringing gives the reader insight into his motives; for example, he stands up to Flashman the bully and he protect others who are being bullied; especially those who have little. The beginning of the book portrays Tom in a state of innocence, in a place that is much more peaceful than his school experience further on in the book. Tom was an innocent, if not a bit head strong, child. When Tom is supposed to be in bed, for example, he gives Charity a fight; Hughes' writes; " Charity and Tom were pitted against one another. Physical power was as yet on the side of Charity, but she hadn't a chance with him wherever headwork was wanted" (___).

Tom Brown attended several schools; public school, private school and once an epidemic of fever broke out Tom was sent to Rugby School. Tom made many acquaintances at the Rugby School. It is here that Tom meets Harry " Scud" East. The two boys become victims of Flashman, a ruthless bully. Flashman becomes more and more ruthless in his bullying. At one point, in the first half of the book, Tom stands up to Flashman when the bully tries to take his sweepstake ticket for the horse race. The bully purposely burns Tom in front of a fire.

Flashman is eventually defeated by Tom and Harry with the help of an older kid. This is when Tom's attitude and behavior changes dramatically (On a side note Flashman's character has been used in a series of novels in the late 1960s written by George MacDonald Fraser who fleshed out the original Flashman character as a Brigadier- General named Sir Harry Paget Flashman [Ramsay 2003]). Tom comes from a tough family, full of fight and passion.

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The family believes in the family bond and the "blood is thicker than water" (___). The Brown's are a family that let failure roll off their backs and look to a brighter day. The second half of Tom Brown's Schooldays, Tom is given the care of a boy named George Arthur by the school headmaster, Dr.

Thomas Arnold. Tom's new responsibility gives him a new sense of purpose. After getting in a fight to protect Arthur, Arthur comes down with a near-deadly fever; giving the two boys an unbreakable bond. The two boys turn into young men who live responsible, safe lives.

While not a very active character, the headmaster, Dr. Arnold, has an important place in Tom Brown's Schooldays. The headmaster gives Tom the push he needs to become a responsible young man, He does this by giving him the responsibility over Arthur.

Hughes' describes Tom's family as a responsible, if not tough at times, and passionate family. The story of Tom's development into a man could not have been believable without the history of the young man's family. The reader uses Tom's background to understand his motives and to see how well the young man progresses through adolescence to become a man. By the end of the story the reader can see that the young man has become a productive and passionate man of society. The theme of the story therefore, is the development of boys into men and the importance of friendship.

Together, Tom and Arthur provide each other with important values and morals; adding to the fibers of manhood. Arthur contributes the morals and idealism of Christian faith and Tom contributes his social skills, and fighting spirit. Thomas Hughes was passionate about the character, Tom Brown, is a <https://assignbuster.com/tom-browns-schooldays-essay/>

partial reflection of himself and as such, Tom Brown has true realism to the reader. When asked about the character, Hughes responds that although Tom was somewhat savage at times he was a good boy with a big heart. Tom was especially fond of the headmaster. Hughes stated that Tom had; this quality above all others which moved such boys as our hero, who had nothing whatever remarkable about him except excess of boyishness — by which I mean animal life in its fullest measure, good nature and honest impulses, hatred of injustice and meanness, and thoughtlessness enough to sink a three-decker [i. e., a warship with three rows of guns and not a novel].

And so . . . he hardly ever left the chapel on Sunday evenings without a serious resolve to stand by and follow the Doctor, and a feeling that it was only cowardice (the incarnation of all other sins in such a boy's mind) which hindered him from doing so with all his heart (Landlow, p. 1, 2006).; T he teamwork demanded during Rugby gave Tom the basis for bonding and connection with others.

Although he had this type of bonding in his childhood to his servants, he now had peers that depended on him and vice versa. Tom's experience of being a " Rugby boy" was a proud experience; one which added to his list of experiences that led to him becoming a gentleman. Tom felt both awe and pride when he first took in Rugby school.

He was awed by the large gray building and the chapel and the headmasters residence. It was then that Tom began to feel " proud of being a Rugby boy, as he passed the school gates, with the oriel window above, and saw the boys standing there, looking as if the town belonged to them, and nodding in

a familiar manner to the coachman, as if any one of them would be quite equal to getting on the box, and working the team down street as well as he" (____). There was a sense of belonging and familiarity to the experience. Tom witnessed the behaviors of the other boys and it was then that he realized he wanted to fit it; to be one of them.

While Tom Brown's Schooldays was written in 1857, it has relevance today. Adolescents is a time of questions and fears of new friends and rivals. It is the meshing of these experiences that creates who we are as adults.

That is what Hughes' was depicting in his story. The story can be considered semi-autobiographical, in that many of the feelings and experiences of Hughes was depicted in Tom Brown's Schooldays. This story was a human story, one that readers can relate to and for this reason, Hughes was very successful in his mission to demonstrate the process of becoming an adult. The reader watched Tom grow up in this story, the reader sympathizes and understands his plights.

Tom Brown's Schooldays, is a classic that will remain so because it tells the story everyone knows - growing up. Works Cited Daniels, Barbara. 2003. Poverty and Families in the Victorian Era. Hidden Lives Revealed. <http://www.hiddenlives.org.uk/articles/poverty.html> Landlow, George, P. Thomas Arnold in Tom Brown's School Days. Brown University. 2006. <http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/hughes/tarnold.html> Ramsay, Allan, Flashman and the Victorian social conscience. Contemporary Review, June. 2003.

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