

# Contents

About the Author	6
About the Book	7
<b>FACT FILE</b> An American Icon	8
Characters	10
Before Reading	12
Chapter 1	17
Chapter 2	21
Chapter 3	24
Chapter 4	25
Chapter 5	28
Chapter 6	31
Chapter 7	38
Chapter 8	41
Chapter 9	46
Chapter 10	51
Chapter 11	55
Chapter 12	58
Chapter 13	62
Chapter 14	66
Chapter 15	71
Chapter 16	74
Chapter 17	77
Chapter 18	80
Chapter 19	82
Chapter 20	87
Chapter 21	89
After Reading	93

# AN AMERICAN ICON

*The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* is one of America's most famous and popular novels. It strongly contributed to making **Mark Twain** an iconic figure in the American popular imagination and one of the fathers of modern American literature. In *Tom Sawyer*, generations of American readers have discovered an idyllic time in their national past before industrialization, urbanization and immigration changed the face of America forever.

Mark Twain grew up in the years preceding the Civil War (1861-1865), and he experienced the rapid changes that were taking place in American society at that time. People felt confused and anxious and there was much unrest. In *Tom Sawyer*, Twain looks back towards the past and forwards to the future at the same time. On the one hand, he sets his novel in the community life of rural, pre-Civil War America, thereby offering his readers relief from the huge social changes happening around them. On the other hand, in Tom he creates an inventive and energetic character who is a symbol of the values needed to succeed in the competitive society that followed the war.

What qualities do you need to be successful in today's society?



Make a list with a friend.





## OVER TO YOU

As you read, find episodes where Twain makes fun of typical beliefs or values.

## DID YOU KNOW?

Tom Sawyer was originally written for adults, but Twain was persuaded by his wife and a friend that it was more suitable for children.

But despite his place in the American imagination, Twain was aware of the contradictions in the American dream of success and progress. Unlike other writers, however, he highlighted these contradictions using a wide range of comic techniques and made fun of the hypocrisy and oppression of his time. Twain's mixture of comedy and realism is central to the book's continuing success and is clear in those episodes in which the author makes fun of certain American beliefs and values while talking about topical issues of the time.

## GLOSSARY

- **anxious:** nervous
- **contradictions:** things that are also the opposite of what they seem
- **experienced:** personally saw and felt
- **huge:** very big
- **hypocrisy:** behavior that is the opposite of what it says
- **iconic:** (here) well known and easily recognized
- **idyllic:** very happy and peaceful
- **preceding:** before
- **relief:** feeling of happiness (after something bad)
- **topical:** of that time
- **unrest:** situation in which many people are angry
- **was aware:** (here) knew



THE ADVENTURES OF  
*Tom Sawyer*





Aunt Polly



Sidney



Joe Harper



Huckleberry Finn



Becky Thatcher



Widow Douglas



Muff Potter




Indian Joe

## BEFORE READING

- 1  Look at the picture below and discuss what you can see with a partner.



- 2 Look at the picture again. Write three sentences describing carefully the different things you can see. Do this by yourself, then compare your sentences with your partner's.
- 3  The story takes place in the 1870s. With a partner make a list of what things were like then and what they are like now.

THEN	NOW





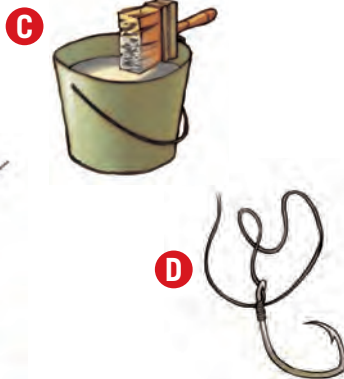
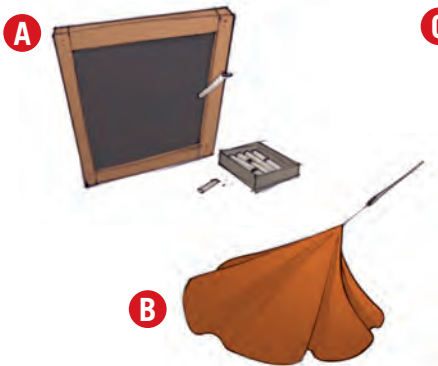
**4 Listen to the opening of the story and answer the questions:**

- a** Which two characters are talking? Tick (✓) below.
- Aunt Polly
  - Huck
  - Tom
  - Sid
- b** What do you find out about Tom's family?
- c** What is the difference between Tom and Sid?

**5 Listen to the opening of the story again and answer these questions:**

- a** Where was Tom when Aunt Polly was looking for him?
- b** What was he doing there?
- c** Why is Aunt Polly angry?
- d** What does she want to do to Tom?
- e** How does he escape?
- f** How does Aunt Polly feel about Tom's behaviour?

**6 Look at these pairs of things which are important in the story, and match them to the pictures.**



- 1**  needle and thread
- 3**  hook and line

- 2**  paint and brush
- 4**  slate and chalk





## Chapter 1



'Tom!' No answer.

'Tom!'

No answer.

'What's that boy doing? Tom!'

The old lady went to the door and looked out at the garden.

No Tom.

'Tom!'

There was a noise behind her. She turned just in time to catch Tom by his belt and stop him.

'What were you doing in that cupboard?'

'Nothing.'

'Nothing! Look at your hands and your mouth. What is that?'

'I don't know, Aunt.'

'Well, I know. It's jam. I've told you forty times that I'll beat you if you don't leave that jam alone. Give me that stick.'

'Look behind you, Aunt!'

She turned round quickly and lifted up her skirt, and the boy ran away.

His Aunt Polly stood surprised, and then laughed.

'What a boy! I really don't know what to do. I should beat him when he does wrong. But he's my dead sister's boy, and I don't like to hit him.'

Tom didn't go to school that afternoon. He went swimming and

### GLOSSARY

- **belt:** 
- **catch:** hold in your hands

- **jam:** fruit boiled with sugar and then put on bread and cakes

had a very good time. He got back just in time to help cut the next day's wood. Tom's younger half-brother • Sid was helping, too. Sid was a quiet boy and no trouble •.

While Tom was eating his supper, Aunt Polly asked:

'Was it very hot in school?'

'Yes, Aunt.'

'Didn't you want to go swimming, Tom?'

'No, Aunt, not very much.'

She felt Tom's shirt, and she was surprised to find it dry.

'We poured water on our heads to keep cool •,' he said.

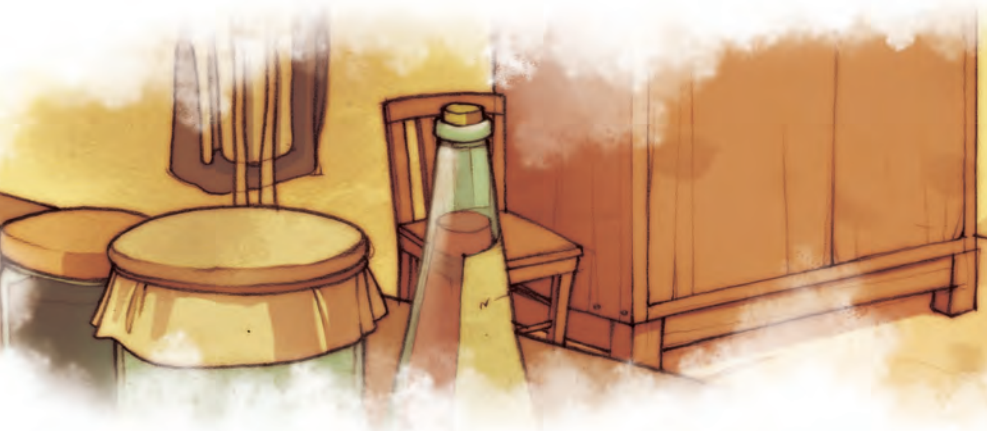
Aunt Polly looked closely and saw that his hair was wet. Then she remembered something else.

'Did you have to undo your collar • where I sewed • it to your shirt?'

Tom showed her that the collar was still in place.

'Oh! I was sure you didn't go to school and you went swimming instead. But this time you were good, Tom.'

But Sidney said:



## GLOSSARY

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- **beat:** hit
- **collar:** part of a shirt around the neck
- **cool:** slightly cold
- **half-brother:** when one of the parents is the same

- **no trouble:** (here) good; he caused no problems
- **sewed:** attached with needle and thread



'I'm sure you sewed his collar with white thread, but it's black.'

'Yes, I did sew it with white! Tom!'

But Tom did not wait for the rest. As he ran out of the door, he said:

'Sid, I'll beat you for that.'

Later Tom examined the two needles he kept in his jacket pocket. One needle had white thread and the other had black thread.

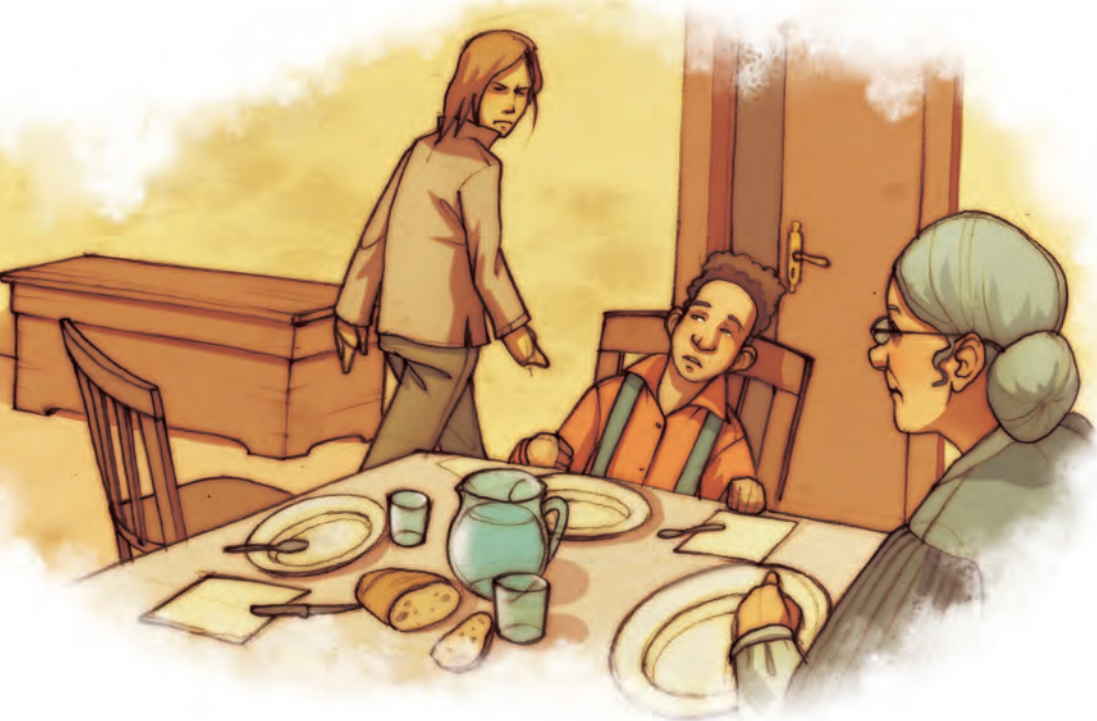
'Why can't she use one colour?' said Tom.

## TOM'S AFTERNOON

What did Tom do?

What does Aunt Polly think he did?

How does she discover the truth?





Tom was walking down the street when he met a new boy just a little larger than himself. Strangers were interesting in the village of St Petersburg. He was wearing city clothes, and Tom didn't like that. It made him feel poor. The two boys looked at each other and circled•, face to face and eye to eye. Finally Tom said:

‘What’s your name.’

‘It’s none of your business•.’

In an instant they were rolling around• on the ground, fighting like cats. Soon Tom was sitting on top of the new boy, hitting him with his fists•. At last, the stranger said ‘enough’. Tom let him stand up, and said:

‘That’ll teach you. Be careful next time.’

He got home quite late that night. When he climbed in• through the window his aunt was waiting for him. When she saw the state• of his clothes, she decided to make his Saturday holiday from school into a day of hard work.



## GLOSSARY

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- **circled:** walked around in a circle
- **climbed in:** went up and into something
- **fists:** closed hands (when you hit someone)
- **none of your business:** not information for you
- **rolling around:** turning on the ground
- **state:** condition (here, they were dirty)

## AFTER READING VOCABULARY

**1 Use five of the words in the box to complete the sentences.**

collar    shade    whisper    feed  
deal    cobweb    spot    footprint

- a** To ..... means to say something in a low voice.
- b** A ..... is the part of a shirt around the neck.
- c** If you ..... a person or an animal, it means you give them food.
- d** If you are in the ....., it means you are out of the sun.
- e** A ..... means that there are spiders about.

**2 Complete the word formation table below.**

ADJECTIVE	NOUN
<i>SAD</i>	<i>SADNESS</i>
.....	SWEAT
WOUNDED	.....
.....	ENGAGEMENT
AMAZING	.....
.....	THREAT
HOMESICK	.....
.....	SILENCE
LAZY	.....

**3 Make sentences with a partner with the words you find in Exercise 2.**

### **K** A2 Key English Test Reading and Writing Part 4

**1** Read the sentences and choose the best word (A, B, or C) for each space.

- a** Indian Joe was there, as hard-faced as .....  
**A** ever                      **B** usually                      **C** never
- b** 'I really don't know what to do with that boy. I should beat him when he ..... wrong.'  
**A** goes                      **B** does                      **C** gets
- c** Tom was afraid the free boys would make fun ..... him for having to work.  
**A** of                      **B** with                      **C** for
- d** Tom played with Huck every time he ..... a chance.  
**A** has                      **B** gets                      **C** got
- e** 'We must keep quiet. Indian Joe will kill us if we say .....  
**A** all                      **B** anything                      **C** everything
- f** They decided to sleep outside, because that was what criminals .....  
**A** were                      **B** did                      **C** said
- g** There was a small raft there ..... they intended to take.  
**A** who                      **B** what                      **C** which
- h** He ran ..... the way to the beach at the end of the island.  
**A** up                      **B** through                      **C** all