

Reflections:

A Student Response Journal for...

*The Adventures
of Tom Sawyer*

by Mark Twain

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Chapter I

Tom Plays, Fights, and Hides

1. Tom's Aunt Polly, who is raising him, seems caring of Tom and strict with him at the same time. Describe a relationship you have had, or know of, that would fall into this category.
2. Tom tells Sid that he is going to "lick" him. He also picks a fight with a new boy who has come to St. Petersburg. Write a letter to a friend describing Tom and what thoughts you have about why he is in conflict with his aunt, Sid, and even a boy who is a stranger to him.

Chapter II

The Glorious Whitewasher

3. Scheming seems to come naturally to Tom, as can be seen in his manipulating of Ben and other boys to whitewash the fence while he does nothing. Relate a time from your own or another person's life when someone was being manipulated without even realizing it.
4. We read about Tom's thoughts that work is anything one has to do and play is something one is not obligated to do. Write a short paragraph telling what you think of this idea.

Chapter III

Busy at War and Love

5. When Aunt Polly compliments Tom for good behavior, she seems to lessen that compliment with a criticism afterwards. Why do you suppose Aunt Polly does this? Write a dialogue between her and Tom in which she apologizes for this.

Tom: Why do you always have to say something mean after you say something nice, Aunt Polly?

Aunt Polly:

6. Tom complains to Aunt Polly when she raps his knuckles that she did not treat Sid that way. Tom sees this dual standard as unfair, and it hurts him. Relate an experience of unfair treatment that you know about from real life or from something you have learned about from the media or something you read about in a book.

Chapter IV

Showing Off in Sunday School

7. Mary, Tom's older cousin, also lives in Aunt Polly's home. She treats Tom with care and patience as she helps him to get ready for Sunday School. He repays her kindness with snarling and griping. He complains that he is always being made to do what he doesn't want to do. Suppose that Mary is your friend and it bothered you that Tom is unappreciative of her help. Write a conversation you would have with Tom about being more considerate of Mary.

You: Tom, don't you think you should be less cross with Mary when she's trying to help you?

Tom:

The Adventures of Tom Sawyer

8. Showing off to gain attention is something with which most people have had some experience. The arrival of the socially important Thatcher family at the church service causes much showing off. Even Tom is doing it in his own sly way. Describe a memory of when you or someone you know tried to impress someone else.

Chapter V

The Pinchbug and His Prey

9. A comical happening during a serious occasion can sometimes cause embarrassment. This happened when Tom was attending church service. Relate an occasion when something funny happened at a serious time to you or someone you know, and you dared not laugh or smile.

Chapter VI

Tom Meets Becky

10. Tom tries to figure out some kind of sickness he could claim to avoid going to school. He convinces Sid, Aunt Polly, and even himself that he is in pain from a loose tooth. The pain is a lie, but when Aunt Polly removes the tooth, the pain becomes the truth. What is your reaction to someone who tells a lie to avoid something he or she does not want to do? Do you believe paybacks come to people who deserve them?
11. Huckleberry Finn is described as “a boy who was hated and dreaded by all the mothers in town.” How do you think Huck could reverse the negative feelings of the townspeople? How important do you feel it is that his father is the town drunk and that no one in authority seems able to exercise any control over him?

Response Journal

12. How do you react when your parents or guardians restrict who you may have as friends? Do you feel you are being unfairly treated? Do you think that those in charge of you just want to control you, or do you think they are looking out for you?

Chapter VII

Tick-Running and a Heartbreak

13. The description of Tom's feeling of boredom while sitting in a hot classroom is a familiar one to many students. Releasing the tick was a prank which Tom did to relieve his boredom. Relate a time you have felt bored and tell how you relieved the feeling.
14. Tom has a slip of the tongue in his conversation with Becky, which upsets her, and which he immediately regrets. After some crying because her feelings were hurt, Becky wants to make up with Tom, but he is gone. Write a letter which Becky might have sent to Tom to renew their relationship.

Chapter VIII

A Pirate Bold to Be

15. Tom imagines himself being a powerful pirate and Robin Hood, which he thinks is better even than being President of the United States. Relate a time when you have imagined being a person far removed from your real life. Who was the person? What qualities did he or she have that you admired? Would you still want to be that person?

Chapter IX

Tragedy in the Graveyard

16. Tom and Huck's nighttime escapade into the cemetery ends with the boys witnessing a horrible event. What do you think Tom and Huck could have done differently after finding themselves in that circumstance?
17. The activity of Dr. Robinson, Joe, and Muff Potter to steal a body was a wrong thing to do. But beyond that, it led up to a worse event, the murder of Dr. Robinson. What are your thoughts about how the murder of Dr. Robinson could have been avoided?

Chapter X

Dire Prophecy of the Howling Dog

18. Tom and Huck promise each other solemnly that they will never tell anything about seeing the killing of Dr. Robinson in the graveyard. Relate an occasion when you or someone you know made a promise, knowing that it might be difficult to keep.
19. Tom feels guilty about Aunt Polly's weeping after finding out that he had skipped school and snuck out during the night. In school "his heart broke" when he found that Becky had returned the andiron-knob because of his thoughtlessness. In a letter to a friend, explain your feelings about Tom's seeming inability to realize how his actions hurt people.
20. Tom does many things without considering their consequences. Do you know of anyone who doesn't care about the end result of what he or she does? Write a letter to that person stating how you feel about his or her lack of responsibility.