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## MARK TWAIN'S 'THE ADVENTURES OF TOM SAWYER' AND 'THE ADVENTURES OF HUCKELBERRY FINN': A CRITICAL STUDY

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**Abstract :**

*While Tom represents boyhood and teenage rebel spirit, an eventual arc can be seen in his character. As he gains new experiences like falling in love, validation from a mentor he respects, fair treatment from elders for good actions, running away from home, witnessing his own funeral and so on and so forth, we see him bloom into a responsible young adult while still being able to preserve his childlike mischief and innocence. Huck's character sees a different type of evolution. Huck and Tom are both young, wild and free spirits. They bow before no one and seek thrill through adventures. Although Huck chooses his own path to the very end.*

*The Adventures of Tom Sawyer' and 'The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn' are both novels by Mark Twain that reflect the conflicted feelings of Americans in the post-Civil War era. Tom Sawyer is a nostalgic portrait of childhood, while Huckleberry Finn explores the evils of slavery and the need to rebel against one's community.*

**Keywords** - free spirit, evils of society, discrimination, free will, authority

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Mark Twain's 'The Adventures of Tom Sawyer' holds a special place in American literature. Never out of print since its original publication in 1876 and equally beloved by both children and adults, it is one of the most widely read American novels ever published. (1) 'The adventures of Tom Sawyer' is based on its author Mark Twain's experiences of growing up in the town of St. Petersburg, Missouri. 'The adventures of Huckleberry' Finn is also a book series following the life of Huckleberry Finn, a friend of Tom Sawyer who lived in the same town as Tom. Both are similar yet distinctive in their own ways. Initially, Tom is shown as a devious child who loves to challenge authority. It's one of the fundamental elements of his character. He's still a pure soul at heart, but extremely mischievous and loves to cause trouble and make as much nuisance as possible. Mark twain beautifully capture his evolution from a devious, menacing child to a mature and responsible member of his community, often pairing him up with his close friend huck making an interesting comparison as to how quite similar circumstances affect the personalities of the young boys- making a striking contrast given into account their similar nature, different pasts and distinctive personalities.

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of slavery and the need to rebel against one's community.” (2)

The beginning of Tom Sawyer's stories highlights his mischievous deeds- they begin with the narration of a hilarious incident. Tom's an orphan who lives with his aunt Polly, who often gives him beatings when he causes trouble and pretends to spite him to enforce discipline in his unregulated life, but deep inside cares for him with all her heart and loves her late sister's son to death and treats him like her own son. One fine Sunday morning, Polly asks Tom to whitewash the fence, something Tom is naturally displeased with because he wants to go play with his friend. Tom, being a rather intelligent fellow, whose genius often goes unnoticed- comes up with a brilliant plan to outsource this task which is bound to lead the readers to laughter. Once Tom's friends come to invite him to play outside, they discover that Tom is whitewashing his aunt's fence. He rejects their offer to come down the river and play and pretends and claims to be having much more fun while whitewashing the fence. His friends, after being convinced by his acting that whitewashing the fence looks like fun, quite literally beg him to let them help him. Now Tom has all the help he needs and can get the job done quicker, but he decides to take it a step further by telling his friends that he won't let them help him as it is of no gain to him. His friends take no time to pay him with toys, trinkets and fruits to let them whitewash the fence as he sits down and enjoys his payment- payment for a job that he didn't even wish to do to begin with. This portrays how Tom, who might now have been the brightest in academics, is still a very intelligent boy and because of his mischievous deeds his intelligence often goes unnoticed.

Another such incident occurs when one fine morning Tom loses his will to go to school and pretends to be sick. He claims that he is sick, has a fever and that his tooth is hurting and hence he is unable to attend school. Aunt Polly, knowing full well that her nephew is lying, can't help but laugh at Tom's innocence even though he has committed an act which would usually get him thrashed. This shows how much she loves her nephew but has to act tough in order to ensure that he has a good upbringing and a bright future- even though her ways of enforcing this principle might be questionable sometimes. This, I feel, is where we can see a distinction between the characters of Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn. Huckleberry Finn is a darker, more rebellious, more unhinged and more irresponsible version of Tom. Huck doesn't have a mother; he's raised by his father who is a drunkard who doesn't really care about him. Huck lives every child's dream- his father never cares about where he is or what he does, he smokes in his free time, wears whatever he wants, no matter how shabby, he never attends school and he loves to waste his time. He is almost an elevated version of Tom but comes with his own set of personality traits. Tom has a safe space with a loving family and people who care about him, believe in him and want him to succeed. Tom might not believe so because he is a naive child who is yet to attain the maturity to understand the reasoning behind the unfair treatment he received from his foster parents and elders. Hence, he might believe that he and huck are the same. But Huck truly doesn't have anyone in this world- if that isn't sad enough, on top of that he has the negative influence of having to grow up with an abusive alcoholic father, an influence which can be seen in his borderline violent activities and indulgence in substance abuse from time to time.

‘Tom Sawyer’ is episodic and open-ended, as much a series of loosely connected short

stories as a novel. Tom plays hooky from school, and, condemned to spend Saturday whitewashing a fence as punishment, tricks his friends into doing it. He wins a prize at Sunday school, not by memorizing Scripture but by trading for the tickets issued to children who did memorize it. He plays pirates and robbers, then gets a taste of the real thing when he sees the outlaw Injun Joe committing a murder. (3)

While Tom represents boyhood and teenage rebel spirit, an eventual arc can be seen in his character. As he gains new experiences like falling in love, validation from a mentor he respects, fair treatment from elders for good actions, running away from home, witnessing his own funeral and so on and so forth, we see him bloom into a responsible young adult while still being able to preserve his childlike mischief and innocence. Huck's character sees a different type of evolution. Huck and Tom are both young, wild and free spirits. They bow before no one and seek thrill through adventures. Although Huck chooses his own path to the very end. At first, all children in their village are not allowed by their parents to interact with huck. Everyone dislikes him based off the fact that he doesn't attend school, dresses shabbily, curses, steals, causes trouble and smokes. Of course, this doesn't stop the kids from interacting with him and befriending him; and of course- huck being the rebel he is, always pretends to not care about any of this despite having knowledge of it all. But the readers can tell that somewhere in his heart he does get affected by this unfairness. He never shows his frustration with society- maybe because he's a mere child and can't comprehend it or maybe he does get affected by it but never succeeds at fruitfully expressing it because of his upbringing and past experiences. The misjudgement and discrimination he undergoes often might break the reader's hearts. Despite being a respected member of society who is finally accepted and 'rehabilitated', he chooses to walk his own path and make his own waves. Unlike tom, he decides to stay the same- not participate in church activities or any other town affairs, he still chooses to steer clear of people and even though he becomes a much calmer individual, he too doesn't lose touch with his devious, mischievous self. "Tom Sawyer is the American prototype of the good bad boy. Unlike his friend Huck Finn, a genuine outcast, he is always into mischief but never in real trouble. He is a member of society and shares its values--at the end of the novel, he will not let Huck be a member of his robber gang until Huck agrees to live a respectable life with the Widow Douglas.

Tom Sawyer is all innocent nostalgia, a rhapsodic memory piece. Told from an adult's point of view, it is weakest where Twain intrudes and moralizes. At its best, it lacks the seriousness--the constant underlying awareness of the dark side of life--of Huckleberry Finn, its famous sequel. As an unpretentious boyhood idyll, it is unsurpassed. (4)

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