Journal Responses for *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*

Chapter I

What are your first impressions of Tom Sawyer as you meet him in chapter 1? Use at least three adjectives or descriptive phrases that apply to Tom in your journal response. Use evidence from the chapter to support your impressions. Is Tom a person of character? Explain your thinking.

Chapter II

Reflection: In your own words, explain what Tom realizes about human nature from the whitewashing incident. Tom says, “In order to make a man or a boy covet a thing, it is only necessary to make things difficult to attain.” He then goes on to discuss the differences between work and play. What does he say? What does this mean? How do you distinguish between work and play in your life?

What are your thoughts about Tom now?

Chapter III

Tom completely dismisses his current girlfriend, Amy Lawrence, for the new girl who catches his eye. He doesn’t know the difference between his stomach and his heart. Explain this idea in your own words. Give some examples of his actions in chapters I, II, & III that show Tom is driven and controlled by hunger, not compassion, love and other traits associated with the heart. Can you compare being controlled by hunger to being childish?

Chapter IV

A. The theme of “showing off” emerges in this chapter. Who “shows off”? What does this human tendency say about the adults in the story? What does it say about the children in the story? How does this chapter reveal the social hierarchy of St. Petersburg?

B. How does the tale of David and Goliath relate to this chapter? Who is the giant who falls? Who is the David figure?
Chapter V

As he is counting the pages of the sermon, and the rest of the congregation is nodding off with boredom, Tom wishes he was the child leading the lamb and the lion, kind of like a Jesus figure. Then he pulls out his pinch bug to play with, only to set in motion the distraction of the dog going after the bug. In a way, is Tom a type of savior, saving the congregation from the boring sermon? What are your thoughts?

Why did Twain include this chapter? Does it serve any purpose to understanding Tom or any other elements in the novel? Explain.

Chapter VI Reflection

Meeting Huck Finn, we are led to believe that Huck is lucky to be free of school, church, parents, proper dress, and a home. He’s the envy of all the boys. But there is a dark side to all of this. The entire town forbids its boys to play with Huck. He is left neglected and uncared for. What kind of society does this to a child? Does this say anything about the St. Petersburg society?

What do you think of Tom’s maneuvering with Becky? Isn't he the crafty one?

Chapter VII Reflection

In Chapter VII, Tom and Becky play a little game of confessing their love, despite not really knowing each other and having little in common. It’s ultimately a disaster. What might Twain be saying about matters of the heart and the tricky business of navigating the differences between boys and girls, as well as men and women? Could you imagine the same kind of drama that Tom and Becky created happening today? How would this play out in Rosemont and West Linn society?

Chapter VIII Reflection

Faced with difficulty, Tom runs to the forest. Here he avoids dealing with the smallest problems by turning to childish escapism. He decides to be a pirate, and he pretends to be Robin Hood with Joe Harper. What do you think should happen to push Tom to grow out of this stage and begin transforming?

Can you make a list of Tom’s fortunes so far? Can you also list his “misfortunes” so far?
Chapter VI, Chapter VII, and Chapter VIII – Short Answer Questions

After reading and writing your reflections for each chapter, answer these questions.

1. Describe Huck using 3 quotes from the book.
2. Draw a diagram of the game that Tom and Joe play with the tick.
3. What mistake does Tom make with Becky?
4. After the fight with Becky, Tom first dreams of ___________.
5. Then he thinks he might be a ___________, a ____________, or a ___________.
6. He finally decides to become a ____________, because...(explain)
7. Why won't Tom "fall" (die) when he and Joe are "sword-fighting"?
8. Tom can’t memorize bible verses, but he has memorized every part of Robin Hood. This is an example of ________________ in Twain’s writing.
9. Give three or more examples of superstitions in these three chapters.
10. Why does Tom keep twisting up the reasoning and outcomes of his acts of superstition?

Chapter IX Reflection

What is the significance of the graveyard chapter? How might this chapter play a significant role in the rest of the novel? How might this chapter lead to growth and change for Tom? Can you compare this chapter to any part in the Transformation Tales?

Chapter X Reflection Prompts

1. If you were with Tom and Huck, would you join their blood oath to never tell? Or would you persuade them to go to the authorities? Why? Can you understand their fear of Injun Joe? How is he so powerful?

2. Tom’s childish world is crashing down. He’s seen the harsh reality of murder in the world, Aunt Polly has given up on him, and Becky gave him back his andiron knob. Do you think Tom is ready to take steps to become a better person? Or will he run from these troubles like he runs from the rest? Is there some way Tom can make all of this misfortune into fortune, like he’s managed to do with the small misfortunes of his past? Ultimately, is Tom poised to begin changing from childhood to maturity?
Chapter XI Reflection Prompts
Instructions: Select **two** of the prompts to respond to in your journal.

1. Note the irony Twain creates as the crowd becomes aghast over Muff Potter returning to the crime when the real murderer is standing in the crowd along with them. What do you notice about the “mob mentality” of making Muff guilty before any real examination of the evidence is made? What is Twain saying about human nature and “mob mentality”? Can Muff get a fair trial?

2. No member of the town will confront Injun Joe with the grave robbing charges because he’s such a powerfully feared character. Can you blame Tom and Huck for not telling what they know?

3. Aren’t you amazed at how Injun Joe can just walk the streets and set such fear in others that he can exist outside of society and above the law? What would it be like inside his head? What do people think when they see him? What does he think when he sees other people?

4. A man’s life is at stake. Will the smuggling of “small comforts” to Muff ease Tom’s guilty conscience when Muff is hanged? Reflect on Tom’s actions to ease his own conscience.

Chapter XII Reflection Prompts

1. Aunt Polly comes marching to rescue Tom from his melancholy with all sorts of “quack medicines” gathered from her “quack periodicals” that contradicted recommendations from previous months in each new edition. What connections can you make between Aunt Polly’s remedies and the superstitious remedies and solutions the boys discuss? Is there any real science going on here?

2. Tom goes from joyful to crestfallen when Becky returns to school. Does Tom seem to be developing a mature sense self-awareness when he feels so hurt by Becky’s observation that he is “always showing off!”(92) What do you think? Has suffering pushed Tom to grow?
Chapter XIII Reflection Prompts

1. There he goes again. Tom’s running from responsibility. Tom’s not just running from Aunt Polly or playing hooky in the forest. Tom has run off with a man’s life at stake. Has Tom gone too far?

2. While Tom and Joe are busy noting that the other boys would be jealous of them for living this new life where you “don’t have to get up, mornings, and you don’t have to go to school, and wash, and all that blame foolishness”(97), they ignore the fact that this is how Huck lives, except without all the food they brought along. Huck says he’s “suited” for this life, and he “don’t want nothing better’n this”(97). What’s play for Tom and Joe is reality for Huck. Are they being realistic about the hardship of this life? Or are they just romanticizing something that is really about suffering? How do you think Huck feels?

3. As the boys try to sleep, their consciences start to bother them. Is there a difference between “hooking” candy and stealing a ham? Do you see the irony in their decision that as pirates they will not again “be sullied with the crime of stealing” (99)?

Chapter XIV

Tom awakes to an “Eden-like” location, getting measured for “a new suit of clothes” that he hopes will be a pirate outfit. The boys strip and play in the water, bathing themselves. They catch fish with ease and feed themselves without having to labor. What sort of assessment can you make about Tom’s transformation stage?

Chapter XV

Notice how Tom had always wondered what would become of people in St. Petersburg if he “could only die temporarily” (64), and now he gets to hear just what Aunt Polly and Mrs. Harper have to say. How do you think this will affect Tom? Will he grow from their conversation? Or does he just become worse as a person? When he returns to the boys, does it cement his dark character flaws?

Chapter XVI

Tom explains his plan to the boys, and they decide to stay on the island. Twain doesn’t let the reader know the plan. What’s Twain doing to you as a reader?

Why is acquiring the ability to smoke so attractive to Tom and Joe? Is there anything like this in your world?
Chapter XVII

Tom returns to relish in what is clearly “false glory”. He’s done nothing, no work or suffering, to earn the admiration or attention he receives. What does it tell us when Tom so relishes in false glory?

What about Muff Potter?

XVIII

Tom is showing off and basking in all his false glory. How do you feel about a person like Tom? Is someone so full of himself headed for a fall?

Who are the real victims of Tom and Becky’s relationship battle? How would it feel to be Amy Lawrence and Alfred Temple?

XIX

Tom sees his actions as “mean and shabby now.” Write about how this shows a dynamic shift in Tom’s ability to see himself and his actions. Is he developing a conscience? Transforming into a mature individual? Is he seeing his own reflection without distortion?

XX

Has Tom earned Becky’s adoration? Is he a better person? Is he really “noble”?

XXI

Why does Twain spend an entire chapter making fun of the teacher and the students’ presentations? Is he critiquing a larger part of society or an element of American culture? What would you tell Twain to critique in today’s society if he were alive?

XXII

During summer vacation, Tom becomes a member of the Cadets of Temperance because of their flashy uniforms. Can this be linked to any other happenings in the novel? Are these the new clothes he was hoping for? What does this say about how Tom is driven hunger wise? Does he want with his heart or his stomach?

After setting down his diary, attending a minstrel show, getting bored with a senator, attending a one day circus, and eventually forgetting the phrenologist and mesmerizer that visit St. Petersburg, Tom is left bored and dreary. What is Twain pointing out by showing us this chapter? Can you link Tom’s feelings during summer vacation with your own?
Muff’s trial has finally arrived. Up until now, Tom has been bringing small offerings of food and tobacco to Muff’s cell in order to make himself “feel better” about keeping mum. Throughout the trial, Muff’s lawyer stays calm through all jabs at his client. We find out later that Tom already told Muff’s lawyer all that had happened at the graveyard. He then proceeds to tell the entire court of what really happened. What does this say about Tom’s maturity, as he knows what Injun Joe could do to him? What do you think urged him to tell the truth in spite of the danger?

Tom doesn’t drag Huck in with him. What does that say about Tom and his ability to think of others? What forces are pushing Tom to do the right thing and become more mature? Is he getting positive glory now? Is it worth the risk?

Huck’s confidence in oaths has been completely destroyed by Tom’s actions. Up until Tom spoke to Muff’s lawyer, Huck had complete faith in promises and oaths. But now that he can’t rely on a promise, what happens to Huck in terms of transformation? Does he grow stronger from this experience or get beaten back into childhood?

When the boys are discussing what would become of their shares of the “treasure”, Huck talks about regular meals of pie and soda, while Tom tells of red neckties and marriage money (symbols of “insider” status). What does this say about Huck and Tom’s current stage of transformation from child to adult? What does this exchange say about each boy’s life experience?

Tom and Huck discover that their “gold” lies with Injun Joe. What can we say about this on a figurative level? What role will Injun Joe play in Tom’s transformation? Up to this point, how has Injun Joe been an agent of change for Tom? How might Injun Joe become a greater agent of change for Tom as the story continues? Can you make any predictions?

Tom’s scheme, to find out if Injun Joe is living in a room they are calling Number Two, seems to be tempting fate. He and Huck escaped from Joe’s revenge threat once, and now they seem willing to endanger themselves again, just to find gold. Is the gold worth it? What does this gold represent? Why are they so motivated? What advice would you give them about trying to take the gold away from Injun Joe?
Most of this chapter is about Tom nearly tripping over a passed out Injun Joe and the irony of the Temperance Tavern being filled with liquor. However, there is a subtle part about Uncle Jake, a slave who actually feeds a hungry Huck. What are your thoughts about how Uncle Jake, a person who has nothing, feeds Huck, while the rest of society rejects Huck?

Things get confusing in this chapter. Tom and Becky go on a pic-nic party where they end up exploring the cave together. Huck, on the other hand, winds up tailing Injun Joe and "t’other" to the Widow Douglas’s place. We find out the true extent of the town's injustice toward Injun Joe. Not only was he arrested for vagrancy, he was horsewhipped. Horsewhipped! For nothing more than asking for any spare food.

Injun Joe is going to take his revenge on society by cutting up the face of one of St. Petersburg’s most prominent members.

Do you see any “figurative” or “symbolic” significance to Injun Joe's plans?

Do you sympathize with Injun Joe’s anger with society? Is he justified in his feelings of anger and hatred? How does Injun Joe represent the twisted result of society’s own racist flaws?

Huck's heroic act leads to his acceptance through the doors of society, or does it? Do you believe society will really embrace Huck? What changes will he have to make? What challenges do you think he'll face?

Tom is showing his maturity as he takes responsibility for the care of another person. Explain how Tom shows his maturity as he navigates the cave and cares for Becky. What examples show his maturity and his shift from consumer to conservative producer?

Why is Tom's escape from the cave significant on a figurative level?

Reflect on the significance of the cave door, Injun Joe, and Injun Joe's Bowie Knife. Is Injun Joe a bad person? How is he a reflection of what is bad in the St. Petersburg society?