



THEATRE
DU
HERON



THE ADVENTURES OF

Tom Sawyer

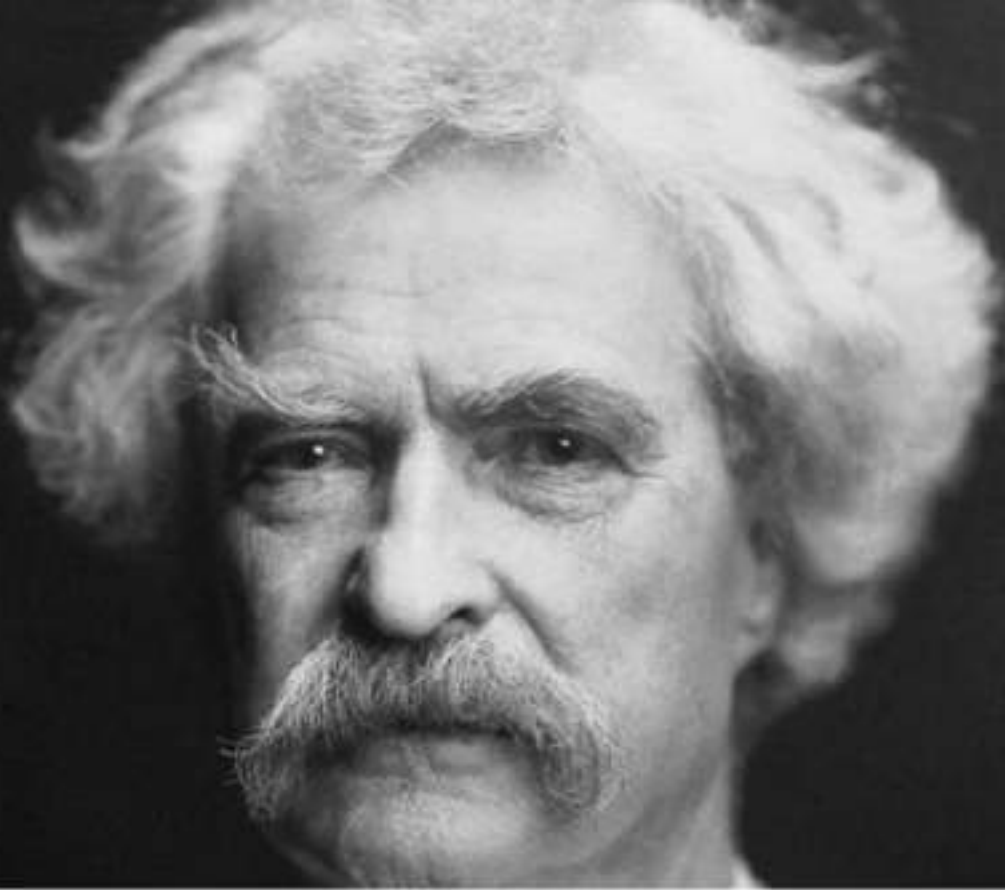
BY MARK TWAIN

Didactic Material

ADAPTED BY PAUL STEBBINGS
DIRECTED BY GASPARD LEGENDRE

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MARK TWAIN

30 November, 1835 - 21 April, 1910

Mark Twain was born in a village called Florida, in Missouri, the sixth child of seven children. His parents were John and Jane Clemens. They named him Samuel Langhorne Clemens. When he became a writer he changed his name to Mark Twain. The name belongs to the Mississippi river environment since it comes from a term used on steamboats to signal that the water is 12 feet deep. His mother, Jane, was a fun and caring lady, who loved to tell stories to her children. His father worked as a storekeeper, judge and lawyer but he did not make very much money even though he dreamed of being rich. He struggled to feed his family. The famous author was a very serious man and it is believed that Sam, otherwise known as Mark, never saw him laugh.

Twain grew up in Hannibal, on the Mississippi River. It was a very busy place to be. There were steam boats tooting their horns and circuses paying a visit. At the same time, Hannibal could be a violent place. When he was 10 years old he witnessed a slave die after a white overseer struck him with a piece of iron. Twain left school at the age of 12 to start working as a printer and occasionally he would write for a local newspaper. At 18, he headed east (Philadelphia/ New York) and started to write articles for several newspapers. At the age of 21, fulfilled a dream of becoming a pilot of a steamboat on the Mississippi.

Then, in 1861, the Civil War Began. After briefly joining the "Marion Rangers", he went on his own adventure, heading to California to find silver or gold. He did not find his silver or gold but he got several jobs writing for newspapers as he had done when/since he was 12. He soon became recognised as a writer.

One day, at work, M. Twain saw a photograph of Olivia Langdon, known as Livy. The author fell in love with her at the sight of this photo, and she fell in love with him as soon as they met. Livy was the daughter of a rich Coal Merchant from New York. Her money and status represented much of what Twain desired in his life. She was loving and kind and supported him in everything thing he did. They got married in 1870 they had three sons and a daughter. Twain travelled all around the world in Africa, Europe and Asia writing articles for newspaper and writing his own books.

MAJOR WORKS



- *Roughing it*
- *The Innocents Abroad*
- *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*
- *Life on the Mississippi*
- *The Prince and the Pauper*
- *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*
- *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

! Huckleberry Finn was the first book published by The Charles L. Webster Company, a publishing company owned by Mark Twain.



MISSISSIPPI RIVER

The Mississippi river is a central element in Tom Sawyer. Tom and his friends use the river as as shelter to escape from their daily life but they discover soon that life on the river can be tricky, especially for three young boys on their own. The river incorporates both fascination and fear; this is exactly what you need in a book about young people. Also, the Mississippi river is considered as a big inspirational factor in the whole Mark Twain writing experience.

Let's get closer to the river and to the author exploring the setting of Tom Sawyer story!

INTRODUCTION TO THE RIVER

The Mississippi River is one of the world's biggest river. It is used as commercial waterway by humans and it is a crucial transition point for fishes and birds. There is a diverse ecosystem linked to the river and they both exist connecting the nature outside the river with the nature that can develop inside the river and around it.

Civilizations tend to grow closer to water sources and almost all civilizations benefited from water at their very beginning and in the process of establishing themselves. Native Americans had a strong relationship with the Mississippi river.

Today, the river is still very important for the economy of the upper Midwest and it still fascinates a lot of people. It is possible to experience the river in several ways. For example, The Great River Road attracts a lot of visitors. It is a famous road linking several states (Louisiana, Mississippi, Arkansas, Tennessee, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, Illinois, Missouri and Kentucky). If you follow this road you can explore several states while pursuing the way of the river and discovering several ecosystems linked to it. The Mississippi River is 3,778 long. Its headwater is a glacial lake in Minnesota: Lake Itasca.

If you are interested in reading more facts about the river please visit:

www.nps.gov/miss/riverfacts.htm

RIVERS IN LITERATURE

A river symbolizes a flow. Of life, of thoughts, of emotions, of events. Water is always associated with unpredictability but at the same times is also one of the most relaxing elements we can find in nature. It all depends. On where we are (Are we swimming? Are we on a boat? Are we looking at the river from a balcony?), on what we are writing (An action movie script? A poem about calmness?) but we can all agree on the fact that rivers are a strong source of inspiration. Just like water in general.

In *Tom Sawyer*, the river is a source of inspiration for characters as it was for the writer himself. It is the engine that moves the story from outside. Rivers offer reflection and they are crucial to characters in the plot. You can see your face reflected on a water surface. But this is not all. Through this, you can go deeper and behind. The symbolism of rivers is dissociated with the reflection act in a practical sense. In *Tom Sawyer*, the characters can have a deeper look at themselves when they get closer to the river. In fact, the boys are confronted to their fears when they live on the Mississippi. They discover their weakness and the first contrasts between Tom and his friend start on the river. In this story (and in a lot of other stories in literature) the river offers a deeper look at ourselves.



A MISSISSIPPI RIVER LANDING. CIRCA 1909 | PBS.ORG

THE PLAY: TOM SAWYER

THE ADVENTURES OF TOM SAWYER is one of the best-known novels written in the United States. It traces the fortunes of the roguish boy, Tom, his adventures, hopes, fantasies, romances and his harsh collision with a very adult world of greed and murder. The book is a thriller and a comedy, an exploration of youth and a rich picture of rural life in nineteenth century Mississippi. The novel is an ideal material for a stage adaptation as it is full of action and every scene is centred around one character: Tom Sawyer, perhaps the most engaging youth in American literature.

TNT approaches this story with the verve and dynamism that has made their work so popular across the globe. This is the fast and furious physical theatre, where comedy switches to gripping thriller and back again to romance. Tom Sawyer is not the only extraordinary character in this tale: there is the outcast lad Huckleberry Finn, the ever perplexed Aunt Polly – half mother-half teacher, the murder Bad'n Joe (rescued from the casual racism of the time in this version) and there is Becky: a girl wise beyond her years who falls for Tom while keeping her balance.



FRONT PIECE OF THE ADVENTURES OF TOM SAWYER. 1876 1ST EDITION.



THE CAST
(Season 2022/2023)



CHRISTIAN ANSTEE - Tom Sawyer

Christian is 27 years-old and was born in England. He studied World Performance at East 15 Acting School, and continued his training at Ecole Gaulier, Etampes, where he relearnt to play like a child, just like Tom Sawyer! Christian recently qualified as a Dramatherapist, using drama to benefit mental health. His work has taken him around the world, from France to the Mississippi.

CORALIE BASIAENS - Aunt Polly and Ensemble (Dec. 2022)

Coralie Bastiaens is originally from Belgium and trained in the US at the Stella Adler Conservatory. Her recent credits include Laurie in the European tour of "The Wave" with ADG Europe as well as David Fincher's "Mank" and HBO's "Insecure". She is also a writer, having written and produced the show "White Rose" at the Los Angeles Fringe festival, and a translator fluent in English, French, German and Spanish. She is delighted to be a part of this Tom Sawyer production.



GREGORY DEFLEUR - Bad'n Joe and Ensemble

Gregory Defleur is an American Actor based in Paris, France. After studying drama at the Cours Florent, he has worked in cinema, television and theater in France and internationally, in English, French and German. He played the lead role in the Agatha Christie-inspired murder mystery THE SIXTH SECRET, shot in Estonia in early 2022, and is currently playing a Nazi SS officer in a production of Vahe Katcha's LE REPAS DES FAUVES in Paris. He has acted in the French series THE HOOKUP PLAN on Netflix, and has a forthcoming part in the series THE NEW LOOK on Apple TV. His most critically acclaimed role, however, remains that of a bumbling clown, performing every night for his two loving sons.





JOE APPEL - Huckleberry Finn and Ensemble

Joe is a French-American actor currently in training at the famed and highly regarded Cours Simon in Paris. He obtained a degree in Politics from the University of Aberdeen in Scotland and then spent some time working and travelling until finally deciding in favor of fulfillment. Joe has found it in acting. He has since portrayed comical deadpan serial killers in the short film *LÂCHER PRISE* (Alsaclap) as well as troubled youths in the short film *LÈVE-TOI ET MARCHE* (Pierre Robbe and Antoine Liquier) and in Jean Anouilh's play *LA CULOTTE* (Gaëlle Meunier). Acting school has afforded him a wide range of characters to explore and this début tour sees Joe eager to share his Huck Finn with French youth!

CHARLOTTE O'REILLY - Becky and Ensemble

Charlotte is a Dublin born actor, choreographer, and theatre maker. As an actor Charlotte has performed in over 30 plays in venues including Smock Alley Theatre, The Gaiety Theatre, Farmleigh House and Dublin Castle. Wishing to develop herself as a theatre maker she went on to study physical theatre performance and creative practice on the professional two-year programme at L'École Internationale de Théâtre Jacques Lecoq, Paris. Since her graduation in July 2021, Charlotte has continued to train as a dancer with the Danse Création course at Les Plateaux Sauvages and Choreolab Europe in Association with Dance Ireland. As a theatre maker she is currently writing her first solo piece of physical theatre with the support of the Arts Council of Ireland which will debut in February. Charlotte also founded the theatre company Anatomie du Dimanche which is devising its first work. Charlotte's work melds text and physical theatre in an attempt to test the limits of each. Her studies at Lecoq have developed her love for movement, mime and physical theatre. This is something she is always eager to share with her students, collaborators and fellow artists.



**IMOGEN HUNTER - Aunt Polly and Ensemble (Nov. Dec. 2022)**

Born & raised in South West London, Imogen graduated from Drama Studio London in 2016 and has successfully worked in the industry for six years since, continuing to work with like-minded creatives in a variety of different fields, such as Theatre, Radio, puppetry and film. As well as acting, Imogen writes, directs, produces & has an adventure fuelled passion for travel.

Theatre Credits: Detective (Atrocities at Arkham, Broken Word Productions), Phoebe/ Touchstone (As You Like It, Menagerie of the Lost & Found), Aunt Polly (The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, TNT/ADG Productions), Natalya (The Proposal, Broken Word Productions), Libby tucker (I Ought to be in Pictures, Vanguard Productions), Billy/Ensemble (The Lurking Fear, Broken Word Productions), Prince Charming/Fairy Godmother (Sleeping Beauty, Outside the Box Productions), Jessica (The Merchant of Venice, Bowlercrab Theatre), Sally Anderson (A Christmas Carol the Musical, The Lost Theatre Company).

WRITER'S NOTES

The script was adapted by **PAUL STEBBINGS**

Adapting novels for the stage is something I have been privileged to do for several decades. From *OLIVER TWIST* in 1994 through to *NOTE DAME DE PARIS* and *CROOKED LETTER* (both in our current repertoire) it has been both a challenge and a pleasure. It is impossible to satisfy the purist who wishes for a dramatisation that only a Netflix series can satisfy. But theatre has advantages, the form alerts the audience to the necessary transition from page to stage which film fails to do. The successful adaptation dramatises not the narrative but the essence of novel and uses episodes and characters as tools to reveal that essence.



In our *TOM SAWYER*, I have tried to cover the essential scenes of this magical book and to do so with its key characters. I have taken some liberties, but only to concentrate the action. For example I have ignored the new character of the widow and had Joe and the Spaniard plot the death of the Judge who is after all their sworn enemy. I have also had Joe fall to his dooming the cave rather than be slowly starved to death, surely a more theatrical fate.

Notably, I, the director (**Gaspard Legendre**) and the composer (**John Kenny**) were all agreed that the book suffers from casual racism in its portrayal of "Injun Joe", whose crimes are attributed to his "half breed blood". It was easy to drop the "injun" from the character of Joe. The story is enhanced in our view, and we do not have to present unchallenged the lazy racial slurs of a distant age. Instead we are able to concentrate on all that is marvellous in this great book, to rescue it from pointless debate that is not central to the story. As artists (and that includes our cast) we feel comfortable with this simple edit. Surely we can agree that Evil and violence is not a racial characteristic inherent in any man?

To those who say that we tackled the *MERCHANT OF VENICE*, I would answer that Shakespeare explores Anti-Semitism in his troubling play, carefully balancing the prejudice with his humanity and Shylock fails to achieve any evil. Not so Twain in *TOM SAWYER*. Besides just as this article is supposed to be about adapting the novel and has been hijacked by a discussion of "Injun Joe", so the production would become distorted by questions of race when this is an adventure story of the highest standard and should be allowed to thrill us without raising issues it cannot resolve (and may well offend).

Finally, much of our audience will be students and we have a special responsibility to discourage the racism which is sadly on the rise across the troubled continent where we perform.

For those who wish for a deeper elaboration of the problems of the novel when not edited as we have done, we recommend the native American scholar Deb Reese's detailed response: <https://americanindiansinchildrensliterature.blogspot.com/2011/01/american-indian-perspective-on-changing.html>

Adapting prose for the stage is an art form as old as Aeschylus and Shakespeare. We hope our audience and those who appreciate Mark Twain as much as we do forgive or at least indulge our choices, choices that we hope allow the spirit of Mark Twain to shine through and dramatise the essence of this: one of the greatest stories for young people ever penned.



BOOK COVERS FOR THE ADVENTURES OF TOM SAWYER, DIFFERENT EDITIONS

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

The play was directed by GASPARD LEGENDRE

It has been a lot of fun re-imagining this adventure novel written by Mark Twain!

The five actors that make up this ensemble tell this children's tale in a very cinematic way, whilst maintaining a theatrical experience...

The characters address the audience members directly, creating and maintaining a connection with them throughout. We use movement to embody the characters at different stages of life, social status and their relationships within this 1840s micro-society in the fictional Saint Petersburg, Missouri, right-side of the Mississippi river. The actors play both children and adults within the story. Despite this being a children's novel, the characters are intense, have depth and are extremely complex. 'School days' create a timeline in the piece: every day, Alfred goes to school, accompanied by his father. We see his relationship with another boy and with Tom... The actual school is never represented on stage, but we know this is the place Tom constantly avoids, preferring to pursue more exciting adventures...

Minimal multi-purpose items of set create different environments throughout the play, sparking the imagination of the audience in visualising scenes. Set changes are danced: the actors-characters take joy in creating new spaces and bringing the audience members with them into these different representations within Mark Twain's novel. Twice, the characters imagine a scene, and through different techniques, we physically see what is being imagined by the character. This happens when the three boys on the island imagine how the towns inhabitants would react to their absence, and at the end of the play when Polly visits the judges house: this house is unbuilt in front of us, taken away by the wind... At the first blackout in the play, things change and we watch the action... sideways... This portrayal reminds the audience of the theatricality whilst still representing the scenes of the story intensely, but in a new way.

Each element of the set is highly symbolic in the life of Tom Sawyer: the main structure, a raked stage built like a slide could represent how Tom is diving into life, the permanent unbalance in his adventures, and will represent in turns, the roof of Aunt Polly's house, the island, the stairs of the haunted house and the cave...



Benches represent of law and obligation: at Polly's house or in the church, it's never Tom's choice to sit on them. They also represent Mr Williams' grave. Fences are painted by Tom at the beginning - how will this child, who only dreams of freedom and adventures, paint these symbols of laws and order. Fences define spaces Tom shall not trespass... but at the beginning, he will just jump them. A door will add more context to the different scenes, the way characters enter and exit different places helping the audience members follow the story. It is also a symbol of the now and the future - before and after entering new places - and will represent Mr Williams' coffin. The children are discussing death to frighten each other but soon they will face the murder and maybe realise that life always ends...



COSTUME SKETCHES FOR THE PLAY

The other children and adults in the story walk in a set way, in squares, respecting abstract rules and law of real spaces, spaces created by the Government in this micro-society, never trespassing the fences... Apart from Bad'n'Joe who will act more on instinct, driven by smell and breaking the window in the trial scene... Is this reference used again in the iconic scene of Milos Forman's *ONE FLEW OVER A CUCKOO'S NEST*? Cancelling the racist idea of him being an Injun in the original text (please see the writer's note), we work on how instinctive the character could be, driven by his different senses and with a different relationship to death.

Huck surprises the audience in the way he appears each time: he appears in places and ways we don't expect. He breaks the spaces as he is a free spirit. This freedom is one of the reasons why Tom admires him... He becomes the leader at the end of the show, for the last adventure, a direct wink to Mark Twain's second novel and to what could be written at the end of a movie : «to be continued».

Even if the story seems simple at first sight, the main themes are ones adults will often face and the play is relatable anyone, of any age. These universal themes speak to all ages and translate across time and continents...



MAIN THEMES OF THE NOVEL

In the novel *THE ADVENTURES OF TOM SAWYER*, Twain captures what his own childhood was like on the Mississippi and addresses themes that were important within his own life.

These themes include:



SOCIETY



THE VALUE OF FAMILY



ADVENTURE



CHILDHOOD



DESIRE FOR MONEY



VIOLENCE



FREEDOM



FRIENDSHIPS

FREEDOM AND PURITY OF CHILDHOOD

The definition of "childhood" is literally "the time when you are a child". And this time also needs to be respected as Tom Sawyer seems to tell us all along the play. He stands for his right to be a child. In fact, Tom faces a lot from the very beginning. He lives with his aunt - a typical structured family is missing to look over his shoulder. (The audience clearly sees that he needs to take care of the house?). He is a child who starts to have responsibilities as adults do. He needs to escape the fear of growing up and this is the reason why he needs his imagination and his adventurous world.

The setting of the story is a quite common city near the Mississippi River. Mark Twain himself experienced a childhood with the same surroundings. What makes Tom Sawyer special is the adventurous courage he has, he stands for his right to be a child with a vivid open-minded imagery in a closed-minded society.

He is also fascinated by adulthood and he is willing to prove he can have responsibility and lead others with the innocent lack of concern that distinguishes young people. However, his love for Becky is true and even if experienced in a very youthful way he proves - at the end of the play - that his feelings for her are real, he can love just like adults love - or maybe even more.

Tom Sawyer upsets a lot of adults including his aunt, who is his only family. He is full of affection for his Aunt even if he rebels all the time causing a lot of issues in their fragile relationship. Clashing with people who love you the most is typical in the process of growing up and at the end of the play Tom shows a lot of gratitude for his aunt. He appreciates to have a family which is clearly showed when his Aunt decided to adopt Huckleberry Finn. The author treats the theme of teenagers growing into early adulthood with a delicate sense of morality which clearly belongs to young people.

It is also important to underline that the purity of childhood is linked to a bravery that does not seem to belong to adults. Tom Sawyer is not afraid, he is ready to risk and tell the truth because he can not stand to see an innocent man in prison. Surely naïve, but absolutely honest.

Finally, through other characters we see different aspects of childhood. Tom's friends decide to go home and stop living as pirates. They still have this freedom; they do not really commit to life choices yet. It is like they are playing a game and they stop since they can. Clearly, adulthood has tough strings and the whole play is a celebration of youthful freedom and enthusiastic imagery.

HYPOCRISY AND CONTRADICTIONS OF ADULTHOOD

Who can be defined as a hypocrite person? Is the society surrounding Tom Sawyer hypocritical? Being hypocritical means pretending to be a good person and have moral beliefs that you do not really have. Twain's writing has always exposed hypocrisy of social institutions and he always underlined the dishonesty of society. We will analyse too examples of hypocrisy and contradictions in the adult society of Tom Sawyer world. Many more can be found reading the book.

A well-behaved society, a community close to the Christian values - we see the whole population attend services on Sundays - ignores a young boy abused by his father: Huckleberry Finn. Worse than that, this "perfect" society tends to distance its members from this "challenging" character. This perfect example of contradiction can be found in our modern societies too. It can be found in our daily life, in our ability to talk about giving bread to the less fortunate and to our inability to translate words into actions because we are too often scared, busy or simply not interested in being the people we claim to be. Of course, this is not a general condition and the play shows that Aunt Polly is finally eager to adopt Huckleberry Finn displaying a wonderful example of how frightening events can change a society.

Another example can be found in the capacity this society shows to condemn an innocent man for a murder he did not commit. It simply seemed "easier", for everyone, to condemn him over the real murder. This is because appearances can fool a society that only wants to look at the surface. The most vulnerable elements, the weak ones are the easy target of the well-behaved, hypocritical people who can attend a service about humanity on Sunday and can destroy someone life on Monday. This topic is very actual - the play teaches us to dig deeper, to consider not only what we think and what we see but also what we do not know as a possibility for something or someone to have a different meaning.



















- 2 Link each character to the adjectives which correspond to her/his identity. The same adjective can be associated with more than one character.

TOM SAWYER

AUNT POLLY

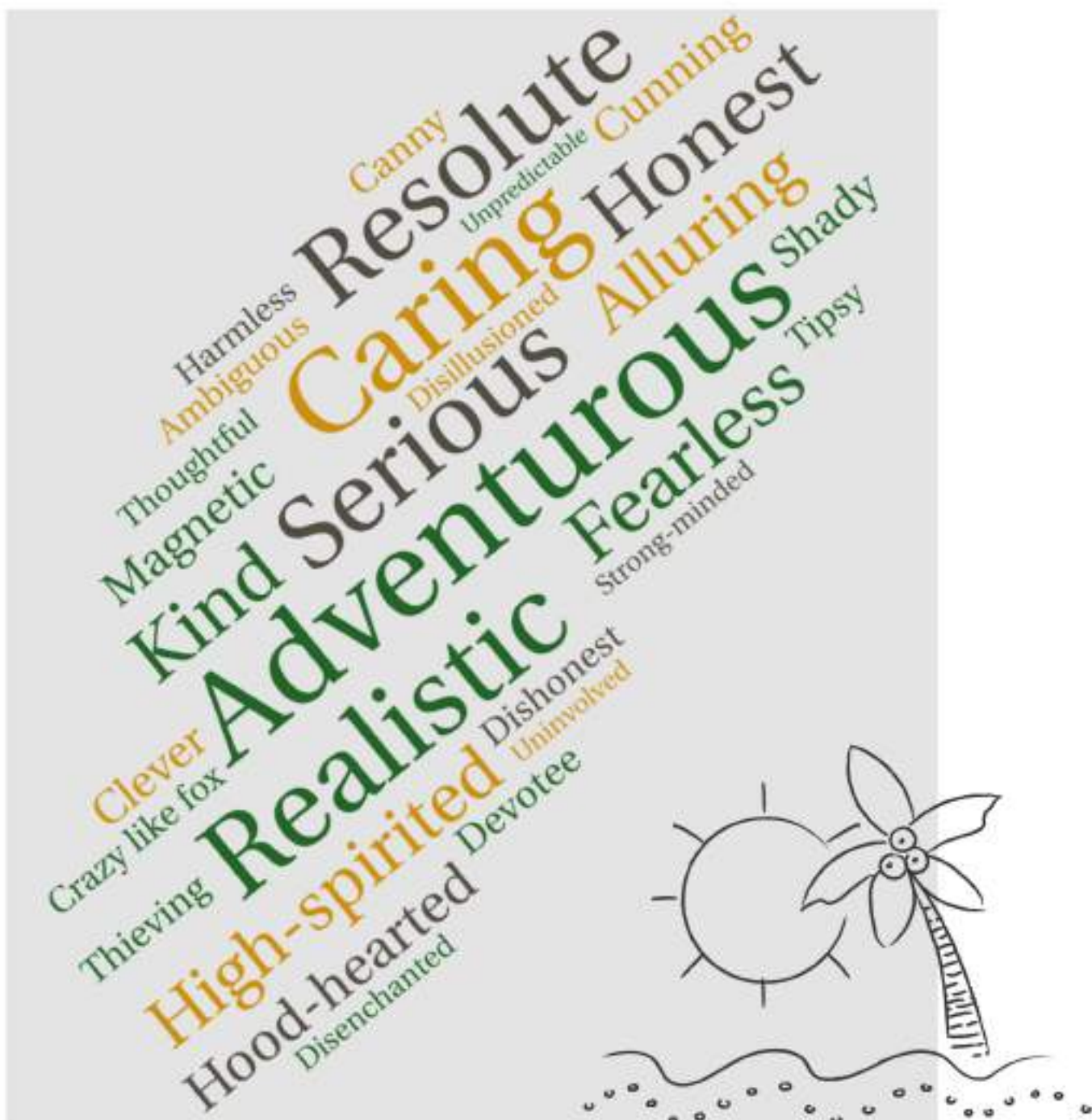
BECKY THATCHER

HUCKLEBERRY FINN

BAD'N JOE

JOE HARPER

MUFF POTTER



3 Who said these lines?! Identify the characters by what they have said.

1. "My jam, my raspberry jam! I told you forty times if you touch my jam you get the stick! Hand me the whip stick!"

2. "Get away from here! This is my territory!"

3. "It was all on account of the whiskey and the excitement, I reckon. I never used a weepen in my life before."

4. "I asked the Preacher. No man or boy can be engaged to two girls at the same time."

5. "Not many folk been to their own funeral."

6. "A fiancée, that's a type of French cake?"

7. "Huck, meet me at the Ghost House at midnight. We go to dig up the Gold!"



4 Read this summary about the play **TOM SAWYER** and answer the multiple-choice questions.

Tom Sawyer is 12 years old and lives with his Aunt Polly, in St. Petersburg, a small town along the Mississippi River. Because Tom went to school and made his clothes dirty in a fight, he gets punished and he had to whitewash the fence. Because he does not want to do this, he tells some boys what a "pleasure" it is to do the work. His plan works and the boys and girls even pay him for this.

As the story goes on, Tom falls in love with Becky Thatcher, the Judge's daughter. One night, Tom goes with Huckleberry Finn, the town drunk's son, to the graveyard to bury a dead cat. When they arrive there at midnight, they see Bad'n Joe murdering Dr. Robinson. The murderer blames his drunken companion Muff Potter for committing the crime and in addition to that, Injun Joe's accomplice gets arrested the next day. Because Tom and Huck are afraid of him, they swear not to tell anybody about what they have seen.

Some days later, Tom, Huck and their friend Joe Harper run away to an uninhabited island on the Mississippi. They want to become pirates there. The boys are having a great time there and do not care about their families and friends. But there is a big storm on the island and the three boys decide to get back home.

Then the trial of Bad'n Joe happens. At this moment, Tom feels guilty for not telling the truth. So he tells that Bad'n Joe is the real murderer. After this, Muff Potter comes free and Bad'n Joe flees through a window. Now, Tom is afraid that Joe could kill him.

Sometime later, Tom and Huck want to get some gold. They see Joe and a spaniard in the "haunted house". Tom and Becky go on a picnic to a cave. They are followed by Joe who tries to kill them but falls and dies.

The same day, Huck follows the spaniard who goes to the Judge's house to kill him. Huck is faster and the Judge kills the Spaniard. He adopts Huck Finn.

Finally, Tom and Huck go to search the treasure.



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