The Adventures Of Tom Sawyer: Character Analysis

When we are first introduced to Tom Sawyer, via his good friend Huck Finn, we learn of his conservative nature near immediately. Tom suggests they tie a slave to a tree, “for fun,” (p. 6) and while we can assume that this is common behavior for young men of his time, Huck is a far different story. Later, when approached with the idea of freeing Jim, the aforementioned slave, Tom Sawyer agrees to go along with his dear friend’s plan, but not solely out of believing it is the noble thing to do, instead because he knows it will require an adventurous spirit. This shows us just how stubborn and ignorant the young boy is. Followed by a group of bored, but adventurous, children, Tom repeatedly mentions how he wants to start a gang of boys. We can assume he longs to start trouble with this group of young men, I came to this conclusion after studying his other behavior. He often ropes others into his mischievous plans by stating that they will join in, rather than asking them. This shows just how authoritative he is, even from the very beginning of the story when he suggest they begin the gang by stating, “Now, we’ll start this band of robbers and call it Tom Sawyer’s Gang. Everybody that wants to join has got to take an oath, and write his name in blood,” (p. 7) suggesting that the others show their utmost loyalty to him by taking a blood oath. We see just how inspiring Tom’s bravery is on the other children when Huck convinces himself to continue onward with his plan by thinking of how Tom would handle the situation. Huck states that, “Tom Sawyer wouldn’t back out now, and so I won’t either.” (p. 70)

We see this again near the climax of the story when Tom changes the plan mid-action. Huck questions his decision and Tom responds with, “but it’s the plan now,” (p. 238) suggesting that his idea is superior to the original plan. The first time we see a major change in Tom is when he is reading the list of scrawlings they had written, deciding which one to engrave on the wall. The writings were heartfelt and tear-jerking, clear when we see that, “Tom’s voice trembled whilst he was reading them, and he most broke down,” (p. 261) suggesting that Sawyer was nearly moved to tears by the pain written in these words.

We see that he is not as ignorant and unkind as previously thought, he is just a kid growing up in a time when being unkind and brash is the only thing taught to these young men. Tom Sawyer is not an unkind young man. He was raised in a time when masculinity and brashness were key characteristics that made a well-rounded man. Trying his best to balance being a child and growing into the shoes of a man must have been a hard task to handle. In summary, Tom Sawyer is a stubborn, but adventurous, young man with a conservative mind- one shaped by the household we can assume he grew up within. He has loyalty to his friend, but remains strong-willed and mischievous.