



Literary Skills

Chapters 1-4 Characterization

■ Analyzing Aunt Polly and Tom

Mark Twain is known for the masterful way he creates realistic, convincing characters. Like many authors, Twain uses various methods to characterize or reveal a character's personality. These methods can be broken down into four categories:

- what the author states directly about the character
- what the character says or does
- what other characters say about the character
- how other characters act toward the character

Directions

Look at the Character Analysis Charts on the next page. There you'll find listed three of Aunt Polly's traits and three of Tom's traits, as revealed by the passages below.

As you read the passages, watch for evidence that demonstrates the traits listed on the chart. Fill out the charts when you finish reading by quoting a section of the passages that reveals each trait.

Then determine how the author revealed each character trait. Choose one of the four characterization methods listed above and write it on the chart.

Passages

"Hang the boy, can't I never learn anything? Ain't he played me tricks enough like that for me to be looking out for him by this time? But old fools is the biggest fools there is. Can't learn an old dog new tricks, as the saying is. But my goodness, he never plays them alike, two days and how is a body to know what's coming? He 'pears to know just how long he can torment me before I get my dander up, and he knows if he can make out to put me off for a minute or make me laugh, it's all down again and I can't hit him a lick. I ain't doing my duty by that boy and that's the Lord's truth, goodness knows. Spare the rod and spile the child, as the Good Book says. I'm a-laying up sin and suffering for us both, I know. He's full of the Old Scratch, but laws-a-me! he's my own dead sister's boy, poor thing, and I ain't got the heart to lash him somehow. Every time I let him off, my conscience does hurt me so, and every time I hit him my old heart most breaks. Well-a-well, man that is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble, as the Scripture says, and I reckon it's so."

While Tom was eating his supper, and stealing sugar as opportunity offered, Aunt Polly asked him questions that were full of guile, and very deep—for she wanted to trap him into

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damaging revelations. Like many other simple-hearted souls, it was her pet vanity to believe she was endowed with a talent for dark and mysterious diplomacy, and she loved to contemplate her most transparent devices as marvels of low cunning.

Character Analysis Chart: Aunt Polly

Character trait	Evidence	How trait is revealed
<i>Example:</i> religious	"as the Good Book says"	what the character says
1. loving		
2. fretful		
3. vain		

Character Analysis Chart: Tom

Character trait	Evidence	How trait is revealed
1. mischievous		
2. clever		
3. charming		