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**SUPERSTITION IN TOM SAWYER**

In the *Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, Mark Twain uses superstition to create conflict in the story.

In the beginning of the story, Twain uses Tom and Huck’s beliefs in superstition to create conflict. Tom and Huck believe in getting rid of warts by doing some crazy things. This night, the boys are going to the graveyard to bury a dead cat. After they did this, three devils would come and take the cat and their warts. Right after they bury the cat, Muff Potter, Dr. Robinson, and Injun Joe show up. The boys hide because they think they are the three devils. “All at once the doctor flung himself free… and in the same instant the half-breed saw his chance and drove the knife to the hilt in the young man’s breast” (97). As Muff and Joe were digging up a grave for the doctor and Injun Joe turned on him. Injun Joe stabbed the doctor because he didn’t give him food one night when he was starving. Tom and Huck saw this entire event. The boys were frightened. They swore secrecy among the two that they shall never tell a soul. This forced the boys to hide away the big secret and had to just swallow everything they wanted to say about it. This ended up causing the most trouble for Tom. A while afterwards, he told many people and Injun Joe was in the audience and Tom was scared he would be killed for telling. Tom and Huck’s beliefs forced them to be in this problem for the rest of the book.

In the middle of the story, Twain uses Aunt Polly’s beliefs in superstition to create conflict. As Tom finally comes back from the island after a week and explains to Aunt Polly what had happened of Wednesday night. Tom had gone back to tell her that he wasn’t dead but he told her like it was actually a dream he had. “Well, you’ve done enough. Here I go over to Sereny Harper, like an old softy, expecting I’m going to make her believe all that rubbish about that dream… and make such a fool of myself and never say a word” (182). Later that same day, she told a boy’s mother who was on the island with Tom and she told what had actually happened. Aunt Polly was overly upset because she had believed everything that Tom had said about it being a dream. She believed that there was an angel over his head as he slept. Aunt Polly could not believe that Tom had lied to her about the whole thing. Aunt Polly was so upset with Tom; she would not believe him when he told the truth. Aunt Polly’s belief in Tom’s story, led to a few problems between Tom and her.

Later in the story, Twain uses Tom and Huck’s beliefs in superstition again to create conflict. At this point in the book, Tom and Huck are looking for treasure. They are just about to start digging for the treasure when Huck realized it was a Friday so they could not dig. The boys decided to search a haunted house. During the search, Injun Joe and another man walked in so they had to hide. “He reached his hand in and drew it out —‘Man, it’s money!’… The two men examined the handful of coins. They were gold. The boys above were as excited as themselves, and as delighted” (237). The two men were there for the same thing; treasure. Injun Joe had just happened to find it first. Tom and Huck believed that the treasure should have been theirs, not the Injun’s. The two boys spent days following the men to try to find the stolen treasure. Not being able to dig on that Friday caused Tom and Huck to be in a little more trouble than they usually were.