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## CHILDREN'S CLASSIC UPDATE - III

### Revisiting Legendary Children's Literature

Shuchi Kalra

**T**here is a huge treasure trove lying hidden far apart from the glitz of 'Harry Potter' and the 'Goosebumps' - available to all who care to look. Help your child explore the

joy and richness of ever-green classics that never go out of style - and ALWAYS strike a chord with junior readers. Look for an excuse to gift your child one of these all-time hit literary gems.

**THE ADVENTURES OF TOM SAWYER**  
(1876)

**Author: Mark Twain (Samuel Langhorne Clemens)**

Tom Sawyer is one of the very few literary classics that qualifies as a complete 'masala' book - and delicious

masala at that. Tom is what every young boy wants to be - free-spirited, adventurous, moral and street-smart. Packed with adventure, humour, fun, crime, love, social commentary and values, this entertaining and endearing story has won readers' hearts for over a century.





#### THE PLOT

Set in the South American town of Missouri by the river Mississippi, the story describes the adventures of twelve-year-old orphan Tom Sawyer and his roguish friends,

Huckleberry Finn and Joe Harper. Tom is driven by curiosity and manages to land in messes even when he does not intend to. Mischievous, helpful, troublesome and kind all at once, Tom lives with Aunt Polly - who is frustrated by his wild ways and makes futile attempts to tame him.

His lack of interest in school contrasts starkly with his extraordinary intelligence, love of reading and a talent for mouthing dialogues from plays. He also falls in love with a beautiful new girl in his class - Becky Thatcher (typically, he gifts her a doorknob as a token of his affection and has a tiff with her soon after.)

The story takes a dramatic turn when during one of their midnight escapades, Tom and Huck witness Injun Joe murdering a certain Doctor Robinson. The scared boys give the town folks to believe that they are dead and run away to hide on a secluded island. However, guilt, boredom and hunger soon bring them back. After a series of amazing events, Tom and Becky get lost in a maze of caves and come face-to-face with surprise.

Will Tom win back his lady-love? Will he find the courage to expose the real murderer? What lurks in those caves?

The fast-paced and exciting plot makes 'The Adventures of Tom Sawyer' absolutely enthralling for young readers.

#### WHY YOUR KIDS WILL LOVE IT

Kids can easily identify with Tom, who hates school, church and Mondays and prefers fishing and collecting frogs to a boring math class. Along with deliciously tense events like murder and crime, the book abounds with hilarious situations. The narrative is racy and dramatic, and the characters are delightful.

Explanatory notes reveal the historical significance of some scenes and define words and phrases that are no longer in use. The book is best understood and enjoyed by teens and young adults. Parental guidance is advised to sensitise young readers to the history of slavery and racial discrimination.

#### WHY YOU WILL LOVE IT

Reading 'The Adventures of Tom Sawyer' reminds us of our own childhood's secret longing for adventure and heroism, as well as the excitement and folly of youth. There truly is a 'Tom' in each of us. Though touted as children's literature, the themes and language in this book are anything but. The situations and settings are by far the best portrayal of life as it was in the early nineteenth century. The fact that the novel is part of academic curricula ranging from the fifth standard to the postgraduate level is ample proof of its literary value. While you are at it, try grabbing a copy of the 1938 movie by the same title.

#### Also In The Series

If you liked Mark Twain's 'The Adventures of Tom Sawyer', you will surely love the sequel 'The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn'.

## THE CHILDREN'S OMNIBUS (1995)

**Author: Ruskin Bond**

Nostalgia, charm, underplayed humour and quiet wisdom are some of the hallmarks of Ruskin Bond's works. He seldom fails to delight children and adults alike with the childlike innocence of his tales and his effortless talent for storytelling. His stories transcend all geographical and age boundaries, while still maintaining an aura of the years gone by.

### WHAT IT IS ABOUT

'Children's Omnibus' is a superbly illustrated book with an enchanting collection of evergreen stories like 'Grandfather's Private Zoo', 'Angry River', 'The Blue Umbrella' and many more. 'Ghost Trouble' and 'Cricket for the Crocodile' remain enduring children's favourites.

Each story is skilfully crafted and painted with vibrant hues of nature and love. Most of the tales are set against the serene backdrop of the hills and reflect rustic life, while stories like 'Road to the Bazaar' portray small-town India to perfection. This master storyteller does not resort to the supernatural or fantastical to entice his young audience; rather, he bewitches them with sheer simplicity and carefree charm. Conflicts between traditional and modern, urban life versus rural values, personal beliefs, man's relationship with nature and conservation of the environment and wildlife are recurring themes.

### WHY YOUR KIDS WILL LOVE IT

'Children's Omnibus' celebrates the spirit of childhood at its most vibrant - each story is set in a world of its own, much like the effervescent imagination of a child. There are scenic, tranquil

children, amusing neighbours and communicating animals. Any young reader will derive immense joy in curling up with this book on a lazy holiday - and it is the perfect bedtime read for young school-going children.

### WHY YOU WILL LOVE IT

Despite his British background, Ruskin Bond does not present India from a Western perspective. Every tale is Indian to the core, and the cultural hues vividly shine through. The simplicity and innocence of small-town India provide subtle humour and allow us to relive our own childhoods.

Each character is thoughtfully etched and juxtaposed against a larger social scenario to effectively drive home a message. The stories gently persuade readers to connect with their natural surroundings and create a deep awareness of the environment. For people who love light, yet meaningful reading, 'Children's Omnibus' is the perfect choice.

### Also by Ruskin Bond:

- The Best of Ruskin Bond
- Binya's Blue Umbrella
- Collected Fiction
- Indian Railway Stories
- Tales and Legends from India
- Ruskin Bond's Treasury of Stories for Children

**Shuchi Kalra** is a professional academic and creative writer, web content developer and a contributing writer for leading national and international magazines, websites and portals. Shuchi is currently working on her own short-story anthology.



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