

10

Lesson Ten

FOCUS: What Makes a Book Great?

Great stories articulate and explore the mysteries of our daily lives in the larger context of the human struggle. The writer's voice, style, and use of language inform the plot, characters, and themes. By creating opportunities to learn, imagine, and reflect, a great novel is a work of art that affects many generations of readers, changes lives, challenges assumptions, and breaks new ground.

Discussion Activities

Ask students to make a list of the characteristics of a great book. Write these on the board. What elevates a book to greatness? Then ask them to discuss, within groups, other books that include some of these characteristics. Do any of these books remind them of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*? Is this a great novel?

A great writer can be the voice of a generation. What kind of voice does Twain create in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*? Does this novel speak for more than one boy and his personal concerns? What does this voice tell us about the choices and responsibilities for a boy coming of age in mid-nineteenth-century America?

Writing Exercise

Ask students to write the back-cover copy for a new edition of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, explaining why a contemporary audience would find the novel an entertaining and rewarding reading experience.

Homework

Students will finish their essays and present their topics and arguments to the class.