

Tom finds happiness



This text is taken from the children's classic *The Water Babies*, which was first published in 1863. At that time, many poor children, like Tom in this story, did not go to school but had to work instead. Often the work was very hard and they were paid very little money.



Ten-year-old Tom, a chimney sweep, has run away. At last, he finds himself in a river. His grown-up pursuers think him drowned, but they are wrong. He is now a water baby ...

Tom was now amphibious; and what is better still, he was clean. For the first time in his life, he felt how comfortable it was to have nothing on him but himself. But he only enjoyed it: he did not know it, or think about it.

He did not remember having ever been dirty. Indeed, he did not remember any of his old troubles – being tired, or hungry, or beaten, or sent up dark chimneys. Since that sweet sleep, he had forgotten all about his master, and Harthover Place, and the little white girl and, in a word, all that had happened to him when he lived before; and what was best of all, he had forgotten all the bad words which he had learned from Grimes and the rude boys who had once been his playmates.

Tom was very happy in the water. He had been sadly overworked in the land-world; and so now, to make up for that, he had nothing but holidays in the water-world for a long, long time to come. He had nothing to do now but enjoy himself, and look at all the pretty things which are to be seen in the cool clear water-world, where the sun is never too hot, and the frost is never too cold.