

The Adventures of Tom Sawyer



Adapted from the novel by Mark Twain

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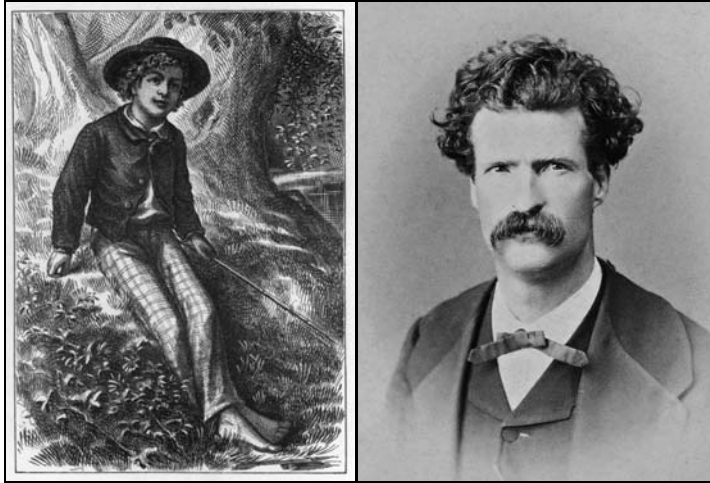
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P.O. Box 1401
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The Adventures of Tom Sawyer

CLASSIC. Adapted from the novel by Mark Twain. Tom Sawyer, a mischievous boy, lives with his Aunt Polly in a Mississippi River town and spends most of his time getting in and out of trouble. After playing hooky from school, Aunt Polly makes Tom whitewash the fence as punishment, but Tom cleverly persuades his friends to do the work for him. Tom also convinces Becky Thatcher, the new girl in town, to get “engaged” to him and seal it with a kiss. But their engagement doesn’t last long after Becky discovers Tom was once “engaged” to her friend Amy Lawrence. Looking for adventure, Tom and Huckleberry Finn run away to become pirates, but when they discover the townspeople think they have drowned, they make guest appearances at their own funerals. However, Tom and Huckleberry Finn discover the dark side of their town when they go to the graveyard one night and witness the murder of Dr. Robinson. When they find out Muff Potter has been framed for the murder, they must decide whether to risk their lives to save his. All the wit, charm, and humor of the novel is preserved in this enchanting comedy that is suitable for all ages.

Performance Time: Approximately 90-120 minutes.



Left: Tom Sawyer frontispiece from *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, 1876.

Right: Mark Twain, 1867.

About the Story

Author and humorist Samuel Langhorne Clemens (1835-1910) is best known for his two novels, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876) and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885). Clemens adopted the pen name, Mark Twain, which is a measure of depth in steamboat navigation. Twain was born in Florida, MO, and was the sixth of seven children. His family moved to Hannibal, MO, a port town on the Mississippi River, when he was four years old. Twain worked as a riverboat pilot, a miner, and a journalist. His first successful published work was his 1865 short story, "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County." The character of Tom Sawyer is featured in three other novels by Twain: *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, *Tom Sawyer Abroad*, and *Tom Sawyer, Detective*.

Characters

(15 M, 12 F, 2 flexible, opt. extras)

(Doubling possible.)

TOM SAWYER: Mischievous, imaginative boy who lives with his Aunt Polly because his mother died; male.

MARY: Tom's sweet, well-behaved cousin; female.

SID SAWYER: Tom's half-brother who enjoys getting Tom into trouble; male.

AUNT POLLY: Tom's kindhearted aunt and guardian who tries to keep him in line; female.

WIDOW DOUGLAS: Aunt Polly's kindhearted neighbor who becomes a substitute mother for Huckleberry Finn; female.

HUCKLEBERRY FINN: Tom's best friend, who is always ready for an adventure; the son of the town drunk, he doesn't attend school or church and lives on the margins of society; male.

JOE: Violent, revengeful outcast who hangs around with Muff Potter; wears ragged clothing; male.

MUFF POTTER: Kindhearted town drunk and outcast; wears ragged clothes and boots; male.

DR. ROBINSON: Respected local doctor who hires Joe and Muff Potter to dig up a grave so that he can use the corpse for medical research; male.

JUDGE THATCHER: Respected county judge who is new to town; male.

MRS. THATCHER: Judge Thatcher's wife and Becky's mother; female.

BECKY THATCHER: Judge Thatcher's pretty daughter who Tom convinces to be his "fiancée"; has blonde hair; female.

MISS WALTERS: Schoolteacher; female.

REVEREND SPRAGUE: Church minister; male.

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY: Attorney prosecuting Muff Potter for Dr. Robinson's murder; flexible.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY: Attorney defending Muff Potter;
flexible.

SUSAN HARPER: Becky Thatcher's friend; female.

JOE HARPER, JR.: Tom Sawyer's close friend; male.

MRS. HARPER: Susan and Joe Jr.'s mother; female.

GRACIE MILLER: Becky Thatcher's friend; female.

JOHNNY MILLER: Tom Sawyer's friend; male.

MRS. MILLER: Gracie and Johnny's mother; female.

AMY LAWRENCE: Becky's friend and Tom's first "fiancée";
female.

MR. LAWRENCE: Amy's father; male.

SALLY ROGERS: Becky Thatcher's friend; female.

BEN ROGERS: Tom Sawyer's friend; male.

MR. ROGERS: Sally and Ben's father; male.

BILLY FISHER: Tom Sawyer's friend; male.

WILLIE MUFFERSON: Tom's friend; male.

EXTRAS (Opt.): As Townspeople.

Setting

St. Petersburg, Missouri, 1844.

Set

The sets can be as simple or elaborate as your budget allows. Different locales are represented by using various set pieces that can be moved on and off quickly. These set pieces include a pivoting fence unit (extremely faded on one side, freshly painted on the other); a wooden barrel; several old tombstones; a representation of a jail cell with a window; and several stalagmites and stalactites for McDougal's Cave. Some benches and a lectern are needed for the church and courthouse. Scenic backdrops may be used, or the play can be played in front of neutral curtains.

Synopsis of Scenes

ACT I

Intermission (opt.)

ACT II

Props

Fishing pole (handmade)	Sheet or blanket
Stuffed cat on a string	Makeshift pirate hat
2 Jars homemade jam	2 Corncob pipes
Small rock	Campfire
Section of high board fence in need of whitewash (portable)	Socks
Paint brush	Needle, thread
Bucket of whitewash	Fish (fake)
Apple	2 Tree branches
Barrel	Rolled-up yellowed piece of paper
Brass colored doorknob	Benches for Congregation
Eye patch	Lectern
Stuffed rat on a string	Representation of a jail cell with a small window (portable)
3 Marbles	Chains to bind hands, feet
Mouth harp	Treasure map
Piece of blue glass	Quilting blocks
4 Pieces of orange peel	Trays of food
2 Pieces of chalk	Checkers
Bibles	Horseshoes
9 Yellow tickets	Jump rope
9 Red tickets	Watermelon
10 Blue tickets	Guitar or banjo
Several old, weathered tombstones (portable)	Pan of peach cobbler
Small wheelbarrow	Pitcher of lemonade
2 Shovels	Calico dress, for Becky
Rope	Plate with food and dessert
Lantern	Candle
Knife (plastic for safety)	Large rock
Pine scrap	Wooden box

Special Effects

Sounds of summer (e.g. water lapping, insects, frogs)	Distant footsteps
Rock skipping across the water	Footsteps approaching
Church bells tolling	Woodpecker
midnight	Deep, sullen boom
Soft wind blowing	Church bells ringing
Hoot owl	Clang of horseshoe ringer
Twig snapping	2 Glowing candles
	Faint sound of dripping water
	2 Glowing lanterns

*“He was not the model boy of the village.
He knew the model boy very well, though—
and loathed him.”*

—from The Adventures of Tom Sawyer

ACT I

(AT RISE: St. Petersburg, Missouri, late spring, Friday morning. The sounds of early summer like frogs, insects, water lapping are heard. Tom Sawyer is sitting on the bank of a river, fishing. A few moments of pastoral tranquility. Note: When Tom directly addresses the audience, all other characters onstage freeze for the duration of the monologues.)

TOM: *(To audience.)* Shhhh...quiet, now. Gotta let the fish come to you, 'stead o' the other way around. No hurry, see? Ain't goin' to school today anyways. Summer's comin' on. How am I sposed to sit there in that danged ol' schoolhouse, a-wastin' the day away, when there are ants marchin' and woodpeckers callin', hoppers jumpin' and worms crawlin'? T'aint natural now. School don't matter much to a river in the summertime. Name's Tom. Tom Sawyer from St. Petersburg, Missouri, right here smack on the banks o' the Mississippi. Well, name's Thomas, really, but nobody never calls me that, 'cept adults maybe, when they're mad 'bout somethin'.

AUNT POLLY: *(Offstage, calls.)* Tom?

TOM: *(To audience.)* Like my Aunt Polly. Seems like she's mad at me more often than not.

(Aunt Polly enters and doesn't see Tom.)

AUNT POLLY: *(Calls.)* Thomas Sawyer!

TOM: *(To audience.)* See what I mean? Aunt Polly's all right. She loves me, I guess. And deep down, I spose I love her, too, though I don't talk about it much.

AUNT POLLY: Now what's wrong with that boy, I wonder? *(Calls.)* Tom! *(Stamps her foot and exits.)*

TOM: *(To audience.)* Sometimes, it gits mighty sorrowful livin' with Aunt Polly, though she did take me in after Ma died. Cousin Mary lives with us, too. And she's nice enough,

mostly. Leastways, nicer'n my half-brother, Sid, one o' the lowliest creatures God ever set down in St. Petersburg, an otherwise good enough place for any boy to grow up, I reckon. (*Sound of a rock skipping across the water is heard. Thinks he's caught a fish. To audience.*) Hold on, now! It's a biggun' for sure! (*Huckleberry Finn saunters in, laughing. He is carrying a "dead" cat on a string. Note: Use a stuffed cat on a string.*) Huckleberry Finn!

HUCK: Huckleberry Finn yourself, and see how you like it.

TOM: Now, Huck, why'd you have to go and scare my fish off?

HUCK: Didn't do no such thing, Tom. Anyway, t'wasn't your fish no how. Belongs to the river.

TOM: (*Noticing cat.*) What's that, y'got?

HUCK: Dead cat.

TOM: Lemme see him, Huck. (*Examines cat.*) My, he's pretty stiff. Where'd y'git 'im?

HUCK: Bought him off'n Ben Rogers.

TOM: Whaddya give?

HUCK: A bladder I got at the slaughterhouse.

TOM: Say...what is dead cats good for, Huck?

HUCK: Good for?! Cure warts with.

TOM: (*Surprised.*) No! Is that so? How d'ya cure 'em with dead cats?

HUCK: Why, ya take your cat and go and get in the graveyard long about midnight when somebody that was wicked has been buried. And when it's midnight, a devil will come—or maybe two or three—but ya can't see 'em. You kin only hear somethin' like the wind or maybe hear 'em talk. Now when they're takin' that fella away, ya heave your cat after 'em and say, "Devil follow corpse, cat follow devil, warts follow cat, I'm done with ye!" That'll fetch any wart.

TOM: Sounds right. Y'ever try it, Huck?

HUCK: No, but old Mother Hopkins told me.

TOM: Well, I reckon it's so then, 'cuz they say she's a witch.

HUCK: Say! Why, Tom, I *know* she is. She witched Pap. He says so his own self. He come along one day, and he sees she was a-witchin' him, so he took up a rock, and if she hadn't dodged, he'd a got her. Well, that very night he rolled off'n a shed where he was a-layin' drunk and broke his arm!

TOM: Why, that's awful. How did he know she was a-witchin him?

HUCK: Pap can tell easy. Pap says when they keep lookin' at ya right stiddy, they're a-witchin' ya. 'Specially if they mumble. 'Cuz when they mumble, they're sayin' the Lord's Prayer backwards.

TOM: Say, Hucky, when you gonna try the cat?

HUCK: Sunday night. They're hangin' ol' Hoss Williams right after church and they'll bury'im that night. But devils don't slosh around much of a Sunday, I don't reckon. So they wait'll midnight and then it's Monday.

TOM: I never thought o' that. That's so. Lemme go with you.

HUCK: 'Course, if you ain't afeard.

TOM: Afeard? 'Tain't likely. Will you meow?

HUCK: Yes, and you meow back, if you git a chance. (*Starts taking off his shirt.*) Last time, you kept me a-meowing around till ol' man Hays went t' throwin' rocks at me and near hit me oncet.

TOM: I couldn't meow that night because Auntie was watchin' me, but I'll meow this time. Say, what you doin', Hucky?

HUCK: Goin' swimmin'. What else? Fine day for a swim now. C'mon and join me, Tom.

TOM: Well, I reckon the fish'd rather we swim with 'em than hook 'em through the mouth, anyway. 'Sides, I reckon Aunt Polly'll find out someways I skipped school again. Might as well reap the reward before the punishment sets in.

(Tom takes off his shirt. Lights cross fade to another area of the stage, where Widow Douglas has just delivered two jars of homemade jam to Aunt Polly.)

AUNT POLLY: We do love your homemade cherry jam so, Widow Douglas.

WIDOW DOUGLAS: Well, good. Nice crop this year.

AUNT POLLY: Now the trick is to keep 'em hidden from Tom.

WIDOW DOUGLAS: Oh, bless him. I'm glad he enjoys it.

AUNT POLLY: He surely does. But I bet Sid and Mary'd like t' enjoy it, too, if they'd ever git the chance. I'll hide 'em on the top cupboard shelf in the back. He'll never know they're up there.

WIDOW DOUGLAS: Well, I got more at home. Put up 30 quarts this year. And the peach'll be ready in a couple o' months.

AUNT POLLY: Don't I know it. Everybody in town looks forward to the Widow's peach cobbler at your big summer picnic.

(Sid enters excitedly, followed by Mary.)

SID: Aunt Polly! Aunt Polly! Teacher gave a note to Mary about Tom!

AUNT POLLY: My goodness! You kids home from school already? I ain't even got biscuits made yet.

WIDOW DOUGLAS: Hello, Sid. Hello, Mary.

MARY: Hello, Widow Douglas. How's your rheumatism this afternoon?

WIDOW DOUGLAS: Oh, I get around, Mary. Bless you, child, for askin'.

SID: Mary's got a note about Tom!

AUNT POLLY: Well, now. Why didn't Miss Walters jes' give the note to Tom? Wait. Don't tell me. That boy went and played hooky again, didn't he?

MARY: He wasn't at school all day, Aunt Polly.

AUNT POLLY: That Tom! Whippins don't seem to faze him at all.

SID: You need to beat him harder, Aunt Polly, so he'll remember next time.

AUNT POLLY: Spare the rod, and spoil the child, as the Good Book says. Well, let's see the note, Mary. *(Mary hands the note to Aunt Polly, who reads it aloud.)* "Dear Aunt Polly, I regret to inform you that Thomas Sawyer was absent from school once again. We are fast approaching the end of the term. Examination day is two weeks hence, and it is my responsibility to report that Thomas is ill-prepared for this most important occurrence. Sincerely, Miss Walters."

SID: He played hooky again, Aunt Polly!

AUNT POLLY: *(Reads.)* "Should he miss any more school, or should he fail any of his examinations, Thomas will be forced to begin anew next school term."

MARY: Oh, Tom...

AUNT POLLY: Hang the boy! Can't I never learn nothin'? Old fools is the biggest fools there is. Can't learn an old dog new tricks, as the sayin' goes.

SID: What are you gonna do, Aunt Polly?

AUNT POLLY: What can I do? I'll just be obliged t'make him work tomorrow t'punish him.

SID: Yeah!

AUNT POLLY: It's mighty hard t'make him work Satiddays when all the boys is havin' holiday, but he hates work more'n he hates anything else. Sid, run on down to the river now and fetch Tom back here. I know that's where he went. Prob'ly with that scalawag Huck Finn. He'll eat his supper and then spend the rest o'the night in his room. *(Delighted, Sid exits.)* Mary, take this jam the Widow brought and put it in the cupboard, up high in the back so's Tom can't find it.

MARY: Yes, ma'am. *(Exits.)*

WIDOW DOUGLAS: Tom spends a lot o'time with that Huckleberry Finn, don't he?

AUNT POLLY: Sad t'say, yes, he does. And every day I see more 'n more o' that vagrant rubbin' off on Tom.

[END OF FREEVIEW]