



# Tom Sawyer in Space

## Introduction

### Objective:

Students will examine how the story, *Tom Sawyer*, is altered due to setting changes. Students will learn that a change in the setting of a story impacts the mood, the tone, and ultimately, the characters in a story.

### Academic Content Standards:

- ❖ National Council of Teachers of English and International Reading Association Standards for English Language Arts: #3.
  - *Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate and appreciate text.*
- ❖ Ohio Academic Content Standards for Language Arts: #5 Reading Application: Literary Text Standard
  - *Students demonstrate their comprehension by describing and discussing the elements of literature (e.g., setting, character and plot), analyzing the author's use of language (e.g., word choice and figurative language), comparing and contrasting texts, inferring theme and meaning and responding to text in critical and creative ways.*
    - Benchmark B

## Getting Started

### Materials:

- Handout A
- Classroom stage area, group work area.

### Vocabulary:

- Mood
- Tone
- Setting
- Characterization

### Technology:

Use authoring and presentation software to create storyboards that include characters and events. On the bottom of each slide, students write explanations for directions for lighting, camera angles, music or background scenery for dramatic skits.

Web Links:

[http://library.thinkquest.org/21722/Script\\_to\\_Idea.html](http://library.thinkquest.org/21722/Script_to_Idea.html)

## Lesson

### Orientation Activity:

Brainstorm ideas with students for how the play, *Tom Sawyer*, would read if the setting was in Outer Space? Question prompt: How would the tone (the author's manner of expression) and the mood (the feeling of the environment) change? Ask students to describe the tone of the play (lighthearted during comedic scenes, tense during the scenes with River Joe and the murder). Discuss with the whole class how the author's style and choice of setting affects the understanding of the story.

### Learning Activity:

Students form small groups and pick a scene from the play to perform as a skit. Each group will decide the setting for use in their skit; a setting different from that of the original chosen by the author, Mark Twain. Examples may include Outer Space, the future, the old West, or the present day. (*Handout A* includes a list of characters and scene summaries that can be used as a springboard for ideas for the students.) The students present their skits to the class. After performance of the skit, students will explain how their choice in setting affected the tone and mood of the skit, and the story as a whole. Guiding questions for dialogue prompt include: Would the characters act in the same way? Would the same events occur as in the original story? One student in each group will serve as the public speaker for their group to lead this discussion with the class.

### **Evaluation and Follow-Up**

#### Assessment Tools and Methods:

Questioning prompts. Upon completion of each group skit, ask the students the following questions.

- How would you compare the similarities and differences of the group skit to the original play?
- Did any of the characters in the skit act differently from those in the original play? How? Why?
- How would you describe the tone of the skit?
- How would you describe the mood of the skit?
- How are the mood and tone different from the original, or did both stay the same?

#### Interdisciplinary Connections:

Language Arts: Students write an alternative version of *Tom Sawyer*, using a new setting other than the original.

Music: Compare the meaning of mood and tone in writing to mood and tone in music. Question prompt: How does music set the tone and mood when used in a story or play?



## **Handout A**

### **Scene Summaries and Assignments**

#### Scene 1

3 Characters: Mark Twain, Tom Sawyer, Aunt Polly

Summary: By the river at a picnic, Aunt Polly is angry with Tom Sawyer for the trouble he and his friend, Huck Finn, were in the day before. Aunt Polly tells Tom that he has to whitewash her fence as punishment.

#### Scene 2

5 Characters: Tom Sawyer, Sid, Willie, Alfred, Becky Thatcher and Huck Finn.

Summary: Sid, Willie, and Alfred come by Aunt Polly's house and ask if Tom wants to go swimming. Tom says he cannot go swimming, as he has to whitewash the fence. The boys tease Tom because he cannot go and have fun. Tom gets an idea! He acts like he would rather whitewash the fence than go swimming any day. Suddenly, the boys want to help. Sid, Willie and Alfred fight over who gets to paint. Tom hands over the paintbrush to the three boys and sneaks away. Tom sees Becky Thatcher and she smiles at him, but Huck Finn scares Becky away.

#### Scene 3

5 Characters: Tom Sawyer, Huckleberry Finn, River Joe, Muff Potter, and Dr. Robinson

Summary: Huck finds a dead cat. He and Tom decide to take it to the cemetery for a proper burial. Tom gets spooked in the graveyard. Huck and Tom overhear River Joe telling Muff Potter to dig up a grave so he can rob it. Muff Potter is drunk and tries to leave to go back to town. River Joe hits him and knocks him out. River Joe then asks Dr. Robinson which grave has the buried treasure. Dr. Robinson tells River Joe that the buried treasure is not in the graveyard, but in McDougal's Cave. River Joe, angered, kills Dr. Robinson. Muff Potter wakes up with the knife in his hands and believes that he killed Dr. Robinson. River Joe confirms Muff Potter's belief. River Joe promises not to tell anyone and they leave the graveyard. Tom and Huck yell for help and River Joe hears them.

#### Scene 4:

5 Characters: Tom Sawyer, Becky Thatcher, River Joe, Muff Potter, Huck Finn, and crowd

Summary: Tom and Becky go to McDougal's Cave to find the buried treasure. All the townspeople are talking about the murder in the graveyard last night. River Joe blames Muff Potter for the murder. Officials take Muff Potter to jail. Huck Finn cries out to tell the truth, but no one hears him, except River Joe. He runs after Huck, but is unable to catch him.

#### Scene 5

4 Characters: Becky Thatcher, Tom Sawyer, Huck Finn, and River Joe

Summary: Becky and Tom get lost in McDougal's Cave. They recover their way and seek to go home. On the way, Becky and Tom find the buried treasure. River Joe spots them. Tom kicks River Joe in the shin, and he and Becky run away. They see Huck Finn and tell him what happened regarding the treasure and River Joe. Becky goes back to town, and Tom and Huck hide from River Joe.

### Scene 6

4 Characters: Becky Thatcher, Tom Sawyer, Aunt Polly, the Sheriff and Reverend Sprague

Summary: Tom and Huck decide to take a raft to Jackson's Island to hide for a couple of days. They pretend to be pirates on the raft. A steamboat is shooting off its cannons to declare that someone has drowned. They see Aunt Polly crying and Reverend Sprague saying a prayer. Tom and Huck realize that the others believe it is they that have drowned. Tom feels bad for Aunt Polly, and he and Huck decide to take the raft back the next day.

### Scene 7

6 Characters: Tom Sawyer, Huck Finn, Becky Thatcher, Reverend Sprague, Aunt Polly, Widow Douglas, and River Joe

Summary: The boys return to town and realize that their own funeral is occurring at the graveyard. Aunt Polly and the Widow Douglas cry behind two closed coffins. Reverend Sprague starts to give a talk that helps everyone remember the two boys. Tom and Huck listen to the sermon for a while and then they yell out to the crowd to let them know that they are alive. Tom and Huck show the townspeople their treasure. River Joe claims that the treasure belongs to him. Tom tells the townspeople that River Joe killed Dr. Robinson and double-crossed Muff Potter. River Joe is taken to jail and Tom and Huck go home.