

Lesson: Communication Arts, K-1st Grade
Topic: Story Interpretation



Tom Sawyer Puppet Theatre

Introduction

Students will draw and create stick puppets that represent the characters in *Tom Sawyer*. Students will use the puppets to recreate the story in their own words.

Learning Outcomes

Ohio Learning Outcomes

Provide own interpretation of story using information from the text.

National Learning Outcomes

Students read a wide range of literature from many periods, in many genres, to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g. philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience.

Materials

- Tongue depressors,
- Poster board cut into 3X5 rectangles
- Glue
- Markers or crayons
- Desks with cloth hanging over from the edge to create a puppet theater.

Vocabulary

- Traits
 - ✓ Physical
 - ✓ Character
- Paraphrase

Lesson

Orientation Activity

1. On the board, list the names of the characters in Tom Sawyer.
2. Ask students to come up with words to describe each character.
3. Make a T Chart for each character. Example:

Tom	
Physical Traits	Character Traits

4. List physical and character traits for each character.

Learning Activity

1. Explain to students that they are going to recreate a scene of *Tom Sawyer* in groups and present their scene in sequence to the class.
2. Assign groups and characters according to the amount of students needed for each scene (see Handout A).
3. Students should think about the descriptions of their characters as listed on the board.
4. Students will use the poster board, markers, or crayons to draw a puppet picture of their character. Then glue the poster board to a tongue depressor creating a handle for the puppet.
5. Students who finish early could use the extra poster board to create background scenery.
6. Students should practice the scene in their groups.
7. Review the elements of a good presentation, such as speaking clearly and using a loud voice.

Note: A description of the events in each scene is provided on Handout A. Students are going to be paraphrasing the characters, that is, making up their own dialogue for the scene, but keeping the events and sequence of the story intact.

8. Arrange students around the puppet theater desk.. Discuss the listening skills possessed by an audience that displays respect to the entertainers. Students in the opening scene present first. Ask, "Who's next?" to see if students can figure out the sequence on their own.
9. All students present their scenes to the audience.

Evaluation and Follow-Up

Assessment Tools and Methods

- Questions for discussion (Handout B)
- Use included presentation rubric to assess group and individual work.

Interdisciplinary Connections

Computers

Students could create their puppets on the computer using a drawing program. The drawings could be printed out and glued to the poster board.

Social Studies

Use books or the Internet to help students come up with ideas for the scenery that include physical and human features that are found in a river town.



Tom Sawyer Puppet Theater

Handout A - Scene Summaries and Assignments

Scene 1 - 3 Characters

- ✓ Mark Twain
- ✓ Tom Sawyer
- ✓ Aunt Polly

Summary - At a picnic by the river, Aunt Polly is angry at Tom Sawyer for the trouble that he got in the day before with his friend, Huck Finn. Aunt Polly tells Tom that he has to whitewash her fence.

Scene 2 - 5 Characters

- ✓ Tom Sawyer
- ✓ Sid
- ✓ Willie
- ✓ Alfred
- ✓ Becky Thatcher
- ✓ Huck Finn

Summary - Sid, Willie, and Alfred come by Aunt Polly's house and ask if Tom wants to go swimming. Tom says he can't swim because he has to paint the fence. The boys tease Tom because he can't go and have fun. Tom gets an idea! He acts like he'd rather paint 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 paint brush to the three boys and sneaks away. Tom sees Becky Thatcher and she smiles at him, but Huck scares her away.

Scene 3 - 5 Characters

- ✓ Tom Sawyer
- ✓ Huckleberry Finn
- ✓ River Joe
- ✓ Muff Potter
- ✓ Dr. Robinson

Summary - Huck finds a dead cat and the boys decide to take it to the cemetery for a proper burial. Tom gets spooked in the graveyard. River Joe is 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 kills Dr. Robinson. Muff Potter wakes up with the knife in his hands. River Joe tells Muff Potter that he killed Dr. Robinson. River Joe promised 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
- ✓ 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
- ✓ River Joe

Summary - Becky and Tom get lost in McDougal's Cave. As they are about to turn for home, they find the buried treasure! River Joe spots them. Tom kicks River Joe in the shin and they run away. They see Huck Finn and tell him what happened about the treasure and River Joe. Becky goes back to town and Tom and Huck hide from River Joe.

Scene 6 - 4 Characters

Tom Sawyer
Huck Finn
Aunt Polly
Sheriff/Reverend Sprague

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

Scene 7 6 Characters

- ✓ Tom Sawyer
- ✓ Huck Finn
- ✓ Reverend Sprague
- ✓ Aunt Polly
- ✓ Widow Douglas
- ✓ 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 double-crossed Muff Potter and killed Dr. Robinson himself. River Joe is taken to jail and Tom and Huck go home.

Tom Sawyer Puppet Theater
Handout B - Questions for Discussion



1. Some students created the same characters, yet they look different. Why? Why don't they look exactly the same?
2. The Reverend Sprague described several things that Tom and Huck did that got them in trouble. Do you think they are troublemakers or are they just harmless kids?
3. Why did the townspeople believe River Joe when he said that Muff Potter committed the murder, even after he admitted that he was grave robbing?

Tom Sawyer Puppet Theater Project Rubric



Student Name:	Beginning	Secure	Outstanding
The student offered words to describe the characters during discussion.			
The student drew a picture that exemplified the character(s).			
The student paraphrased the dialogue from the play.			
The student presented their dialogue clearly and loudly.			
The student cooperated with group members.			

Comments:
