

# ***The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* by Mark Twain**

(Published by Hartford, Conn. American Publishing Co.) 1875

Approved for use in Communication Arts, Grade 7

## **Summary**

This novel is a nostalgic look at childhood in Missouri during the pre-Civil War era. The main character, Tom Sawyer, learns about friendship, a youth's yearning for independence, and society's treatment of outsiders. Famous scenes include the whitewashing episode where Tom tricks his friends into doing his work. Later, he and his best friend, the outcast Huckleberry Finn, witness a murder, and Tom must deal with issues of honesty and responsibility. Tom falls in love with the new girl, Becky Thatcher, and eventually saves her when they become lost in a cave. The four sub-plots (Tom and Becky, murder in the graveyard, the boys' running away to Jackson Island, and the search for buried treasure), provide the reader with great insight into this time of American history. Although Tom is irreverent toward societal institutions at times, he learns his lessons. He and Aunt Polly come to terms about Tom's place in society, and Tom even convinces Huck Finn to attempt to join the community as a ward of the Widow Douglas.

## **Connection to the Curriculum**

Twain skillfully uses the background of growing-up-America to correlate with Tom growing up. The setting of this novel also ties into the course work for 8<sup>th</sup> grade American History which concentrates on the 1800's. It gives students an opportunity to examine a classic text and the vernacular employed by Twain. Students have the opportunity to examine the style of a regional author.

## **Standards**

### **Course Objectives (Benchmarks)**

**Reading:** 1.4- The students comprehend a variety of texts.

**Literature:** 2.1- The students use literary concepts to interpret and respond to text.

### **Possible Skills Taught (Indicators)**

#### **Reading:**

1.3.8- The student identifies and determines the meaning of figurative language including similes, metaphors, analogies, hyperbole, onomatopoeia, personification, and idioms.

1.4.15- The student uses information from the text to make inferences and draw conclusions.

1.4.17- The student compares and contrasts varying aspects (e.g., characters' traits and motives, themes, problem-solution, cause-effect relationships, ideas and concepts, procedures, viewpoints) in one or more appropriate-level texts.

1.4.21- The student explains the relationship between elements of an author's style in a text (e.g., word choice, sentence structure) and his or her purpose for writing the text.

#### **Literature:**

2.1.1- The student describes different aspects of characters (e.g., their physical traits, personality traits, feelings, actions, motives) and analyzes how major characters are developed (through their thoughts, words, speech patterns, actions) and how they change over time.

2.1.2- The student identifies and describes the setting (e.g., environment, time of day or year, historical period, situation, place) and analyzes connections between setting and other story elements (e.g., character, plot).

2.1.3- The student identifies major and minor elements of the plot (conflict, crisis/turning moment, climax, resolution, rising action, falling action, subplots, parallel episodes) and explains how these elements relate to another.

2.1.4- The student recognizes aspects of theme (moral, lesson, meaning, message, author's ideas about the subject) and recurring themes across works (e.g., bravery, loneliness, loyalty, friendship).

2.1.5- The student identifies the use of literary devices (foreshadowing, flashback, figurative language, imagery, symbolism) in a text and how the author uses such devices to help establish tone and mood.

## **A Note on the Text**

(The best way to evaluate and understand a novel is to personally read the book in its entirety.)

*This text includes authentic dialect (including the "n" word). The racial epithets were meant to be part of the authentic pre-Civil War era dialect. Twain defended his lack of racial prejudice inside and outside of texts, and readers find out that the moral lessons in this book and its sequel, Huckleberry Finn, include an emotional look at the evils of racism. There is mention of villains and violence, capital punishment, and alcoholism. Tom's immaturity is resolved, for the most part, by the book's conclusion.*

## **Additional Unit Design Connections**

Coming soon:

To be completed during future curriculum development activities