



Dear Teachers,

This is the perfect spring show - full of music, energy, and playfulness. By the end of the show your students will be all smiles. The music is toe tapping and students will easily relate to the mischievousness of Tom and his thirst for adventure. This classic story was written by Samuel Clemens, under the pen name of Mark Twain, and has been captivating audiences for 140 years.

Since the copyright has expired, the entire text of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* can be found online for free! This link contains the original text along with beautiful ink drawings <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/74/74-h/74-h.htm> Even though your students may not be ready to independently read *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, try reading aloud a chapter or two from the book in preparation for their theatre experience. For example, Chapter 2 *The Glorious Whitewasher* or Chapter 20, *Tom takes Becky's Punishment*. Both of these chapters are portrayed in the play.

Public performances of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* are Friday April 24th at 7:00pm, Saturday April 25th at 2:00pm and 7:00pm, and Sunday April 26th at 2:00pm. Reserved and general seating is available online.

Tuscaloosa Children's Theatre is offering a sensory-friendly performance on Saturday April 25th at 2:00pm. This performance is designed especially for individuals with autism spectrum disorders or sensory sensitivities. Our front of house staff will introduce characters in costume and interact with patrons prior to the show to explain costumes, facial expressions, and sounds to expect during the show. Staff will also demonstrate use of theatre lighting and dimming. We will provide quiet spaces for patrons if the show becomes too stimulating in the upstairs area of the theatre. We will also keep the house lights up slightly during this show so that patrons can easily move around when needed. All the modifications will be environmental rather than artistic so patrons can enjoy the same artistic product seen during other shows.

Tuscaloosa Children's Theatre and Theatre Tuscaloosa are once again partnering to offer Theatre Camp 2020! This year's camp will run Monday-Friday June 15-26, 2020, from 8am-noon, in the Sandra Hall Ray Fine Arts Center at Shelton State Community College. Tuition this year is \$300 and includes a camp t-shirt. Registration forms, a listing of classes, and the instructors can be found on our website www.tuscaloosachildrenstheatre.com. For details about classes by age group and instructors. go to <http://tuscaloosachildrenstheatre.net/classes>

Thanks again for your support of Tuscaloosa Children's Theatre and enjoy the show!

Minda Paxton

on behalf of the Tuscaloosa Children's Theatre Board

I. About the Author

Students may be more familiar with the author's pen name, Mark Twain, than his real name, Samuel Clemens. Samuel Clemens chose the pen name "Mark Twain" as a reflection of his years spent working on a riverboat. The term "mark twain" signified a depth of two fathoms (about 12 feet) which was considered a safe depth for riverboat passage. Students may associate the use of a pen name with another famous writer Theodor Geisel, who wrote under the pen name, Dr. Seuss.

Samuel Clemens spent his boyhood growing up in Hannibal, Missouri located along the banks of the Mississippi River in an area frequented by steamboat traffic. Most of the adventures he wrote about in the novel *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, Twain said really occurred, either to himself or his friends. Although fiction, students may find it fascinating that Tom's adventures were based on real life events and represent what life was like over 170 years ago.

Below are some of the famous quotes attributed to Mark Twain. Try posting some of these sayings in your classroom or place one on the board each day and ask students to explain the meaning.

"Twenty years from now, you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover."

"The man who does not read good books has no advantage over the man who can't read them."

"The lack of money is the root of all evil."

"It is better to keep your mouth shut and appear stupid than to open it and remove all doubt."

"When in doubt, tell the truth."

II. Background and Setting

The story is set in a Mississippi river town called St. Petersburg, Missouri in the 1840s. Though this story takes place over 170 years ago, students will easily relate to the struggles of school, friendship, romance, and prejudice. Through the eyes of Tom Sawyer students will realize that though much has changed in the world, human nature remains the same.

To help students connect with the setting of the story, remind them that Tuscaloosa is also a river town.

- Do they know the name of the river that runs through Tuscaloosa?
- Have they been to the riverbank and walked along the river walk?
- Have they seen the Tuscaloosa Belle riverboat?
- Show pictures of riverboats and tell students of the importance of riverboats for commerce, transportation, and how they contributed to the quality of life for people in the mid 1800s.
- Have students construct a raft out of twigs, pine needles, and string, then test their rafts in a tub of water to see if they float.

III. Synopsis of the Play and Character List

Tom is a mischievous 12-year old boy who lives with his Aunt Polly, his half-brother Sid Sawyer, and cousin, Mary. Tom's thirst for adventure finds him playing "hooky" from school, swimming in the river, exploring caves and graveyards, and leading the life of pirate on his own island in the middle of the Mississippi River.

One of the most memorable scenes is when his white-washing the fence as a punishment turns into a profitable venture as he charges his friends for the "privilege" of doing his work. Another unforgettable moment is when Tom decides to show up at his own funeral.

These lighthearted moments are interspersed with serious encounters such as murder (Tom and Huck witness the murder of Dr. Robinson), theft (they oversee a discovery of buried gold) and violence (Huck protects the Widow Douglas from being attacked).

Character List and Description:

Tom Sawyer - a mischievous boy with an active imagination. Despite his mischief, Tom has a good heart and a strong moral conscience

Aunt Polly - Tom's aunt and guardian; a simple, kindhearted woman who struggles to balance her love for her nephew with her duty to discipline him.

Huckleberry Finn - son of the town drunk, shunned by respectable society and adored by the local boys, who envy his freedom.

Becky Thatcher - Judge Thatcher's pretty, yellow-haired daughter who stirs Tom's lively romantic sensibility.

Joe Harper - Tom's "bosom friend" and frequent playmate

Sid - Tom's half-brother, an outwardly goody-goody who enjoys getting Tom into trouble

Injun Joe - A violent, villainous man who commits murder, becomes a robber, and plans to harm the Widow Douglas.

Muff Potter - A hapless drunk and friend of Injun Joe.

Dr. Robinson - A respected local physician with a dark side.

Mr. Sprague - The minister of the town church.

The Widow Douglas - kindhearted, pious woman whom the children recognize as a friend.

Judge Thatcher - Becky's father, the county judge who inspires the respect of all in the town

Amy Lawrence - Tom's former love interest; Tom abandons Amy when Becky Thatcher comes to town.

Ben Rogers - One of Tom's friends, whom Tom persuades to whitewash Aunt Polly's fence.

Alfred Temple - A well-dressed new boy in town. Alfred gets caught in the crossfire of Tom and Becky's love games, as Becky pretends to like him in order to make Tom jealous.

Mr. Dobbins - The schoolmaster, a slightly sad character. Denied his ambition to be a medical doctor, he has become a heavy drinker and the butt of schoolboy pranks.

IV. Vocabulary

Hubbub-confusion, excited fuss, noisy

Corpse-a dead body

Wily- meaning sly

Repentant-sorry, apologetic

Skiff-a small, light rowboat

Spectacles- eyeglasses

Tedious-boring

Whitewash-lime suspended in water and mixed with glue; used like paint to whiten surfaces

Threadbare-poor, worn out

Windfall-unexpected gain

Bona fide-performed in good faith; genuine; authentic

V. After the show...Questions for Debriefing Your Students

- How was school different in the 1840s compared to today?
- What kind of rules did students have to follow in this time period and how are they alike/different from the rules you have to follow?
- Do you think Tom Sawyer had too much freedom or too much discipline? Why?
- What kind of activities, games, chores did children have in the 1840s?
- Would you have liked to have been a young person during this time? Why or why not?
- Do you think Tom Sawyer was someone you would have admired or someone you would have avoided? Why?

- What was your favorite scene? favorite song? favorite character? in the show.

VI. History of the Bama Theatre and Theatre Behavior

The Bama Theatre was built in 1937 as part of the New Deal works projects started by Franklin Delano Roosevelt. The theatre was built as a reproduction of Davanzati Palace courtyard in Florence, Italy. Point out to your students the orchestra and balcony sections of the theatre. They are decorated as a Spanish courtyard. The ceiling of the theatre displays a large mural of the sky and has twinkling stars. The theatre was renovated in 1976 for live theatrical use and is operated by Arts Council of Tuscaloosa. The Bama Theatre is on the list of U.S. National Register of Historic Places.

- Students need to remain in their seats throughout the show. (The seats at the Bama are “spring seats” and make creaking sounds every time the seat is raised or lowered.)
- Encourage students to clap politely but avoid squealing, yelling, or calling out to their friends in the show
- Please encourage students to avoid talking during the show as this is distracting to the actors and the other audience members.

Resources:

<http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/tomsawyer/characters.html>

<http://www.cmgtw.com/historic/twain/about/bio.htm>

<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/74/74-h/74-h.htm>