



STUDY GUIDE FOR

Tom Sawyer

As Adapted by
Kevin M Reese

TO THE PARENT/TEACHER

This guide has been provided to help children benefit the most from experiencing a live theatrical event. The activities described herein are only suggestions. Please feel free to pick and choose the things that will most benefit your children in the time you have available. It is our hope that the performance is not only entertaining, but is a valuable educational experience as well.

You will find that some of the activities contained in this guide are geared for younger, some for older children-- but there is something for everyone. Please feel free to reproduce and distribute any of the enclosed pages and activities for your personal use.

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A Note for the Producing Organization

How to use this Study/Activity Guide

In this age of political correctness and dwindling budgets, we have found that the more diverse a theatrical experience can be, the better. The Study/Activity Guide includes a collection of whole curriculum activities. If the administrators feel that the play not only meets the entertainment needs of the students, but also meets educational needs as well--you will find it easier to sell your houses.

1. Use parts of it, all of it, or none of it. Feel free to personalize this guide. However, **DO NOT INFRINGE ON THE COPYRIGHT**. In other words, don't change the authorship of anything provided you by KMR Scripts.
2. Feel free to add other activities, coloring pages, or lessons to this guide. This guide was produced to be handed out to all our producing organizations in a six-state region--small communities as well as major metropolitan areas. You may find that some of the activities are more or less appropriate than others. Feel free to modify them for the benefit of your class/community's needs.
3. Ideally, if going to a school, the guides should be distributed to the teachers of each class **AT LEAST** a week prior to their seeing the production. This will give the teachers time to prepare the students for the performance. They can read various versions of the story, go over the vocabulary words they'll come across during the performance, and go over the audience participation guidelines. The more prepared the students are when they sit down to view the show, the better their overall experience will be.
4. If you place a notice of the web site below somewhere in your program, your audiences will find a section that has some fun things that pertain to the show they have just seen. An especially nice part of the web site is marked for kids. It's a lot of fun and it gives your young audiences another safe place to surf on the net. The KMR Scripts web site can be found at:

www.kmrscripts.com

There you will find a plethora of information pertaining to your production. You will also find a link that enables your audience to send the playwright email via the Internet.

Theatre Etiquette

- 1> Attending a theatrical performance is a social event. Just as the way you act (and behave) in church or temple is different than the way you act on the playground, there is certain behavior that is appropriate in a live theatre. Discuss with your children the types of behavior that is appropriate when they are members of an audience.
- 2> Explain that they need to act differently when they're watching a live play than if they're watching a movie in a theatre. Live actors can hear the audience's laughter and applause as well as their talking to their neighbor or rustling papers. And their responses-- appropriate or not-- really do affect the actors' performance. The end line is: How would they want to be treated if THEY were up on the stage.
- 3> Audience Participation. Normally, audience members should never talk during the play--and especially not talk directly to the actors (it distracts other audience member and may even make the actors forget their lines). But the plays by KMR Scripts are unique in that we offer the audience special opportunities to participate in the production. They will probably not be asked to come on stage, but there are various times throughout the production where the actors will ask them questions or ask them to use their imaginations and pretend they are animals, trees, or people. At those times we encourage the audience to participate and/or answer them wholeheartedly (but not in an overly loud yell). Over the years, this has become one of the hallmarks of KMR Scripts productions.

Twain Trivia

- Samuel Clemens was born November 30, 1835, during the appearance of Halley's Comet, and died 75 years later, April 21, 1910, during the next appearance of the comet. He is buried in the family plot at Elmira, NY
- Most widely accepted explanation for his adopting a pen name in 1863: "Mark Twain" is a Mississippi River phrase meaning two fathoms deep. Twain loved life in the Mississippi.
- Another (unlikely, yet interesting) explanation for the pen name: "Twain" is an acronym for "Tools Without An Interesting Name."
- *Tom Sawyer* was first published in 1876. In 1884 he published the sequel (and what is widely considered his masterpiece), *Huckleberry Finn*.
- Toward the end of his life, doctors had cut down Clemens' daily allowance of twenty cigars and countless pipes to four cigars a day.
- It is a legend that he was vastly proud of his famous mop of white hair and used to spend great effort in getting it to just the proper stage of artistic disarray.
- He hated performing on the lecture circuits— but that was the only way he could make enough money to get himself out of his enormous debt.

Arts & Crafts

1. **MAKE A MAP.** Have the students draw a map of Twain's fictional St. Petersburg, Missouri. Have it include: Aunt Polly's house as well as the houses of Becky Thatcher, Huck Finn, Joe Harper, Widow Douglas and the Welshman. Show the cave entrance— and the exit Tom discovered that rescued him and Becky. Show the graveyard, the haunted house and Jackson's Island (where the boys set up camp). They may also show rivers, forests, cities, etc.
2. **STORY QUILT.** Tell students they will each get to make a square for the paper patchwork quilt. Hang a piece of dark colored butcher paper (3' X 6') on the wall. Have each student design a square about a part of the story on a piece of art paper (10" X 10 "). Cut the edges of the squares with pinking shears before pasting them onto the quilt.
3. **CLASS PLAY.** Using our production as a guide, have the class come up with their own version of *Tom Sawyer*. Write the script, cast and rehearse the play and perform it for another class.
4. **DRAW A PICTURE.** Draw a picture of their favorite character or event in the play. Display it on the wall or bulletin board. Or, send it to us with a class letter. The actors LOVE to receive mail from their audiences. PLEASE make sure the **teacher's name and complete address** are included in the packet with the student letters.

[ADDRESS HERE]

Language Arts

BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE:

- 1> **Vocabulary.** Here are some of the words and phrases the students will encounter during the performance:

Providence	whitewash	Temperance	bankrupt	vagrant	blood oath
play hooky	forsaken	Oh, pshaw!	waif	notoriety	swagger
indifferent	give a thrash	willow switch	obliged	jeer	enterprise
dilapidated	stalwart	dastardly deed	thwarted	scouring	sheath

- 2> Read the story to the class. Discuss what the story means--what lessons can be learned from it. Share the history of the story with them. If time is available, let them watch one of the film versions of the story.
- 3> Compare and contrast the version(s) saw on film with the play and the novel. Explain why there may be more than one version of a particular story. Explain the limitations in telling a story on stage, in film and in a novel.
- 4> Have your class make up their own version of *Tom Sawyer*. Most likely they will use parts from the film version, parts from the play or parts from the novel. They may write it down or have a student act as class transcriber. Illustrations by the class will add a lot to the final product.
- 5> Vernacular - Twain was a master of writing in the vernacular of the times. He wrote the same way people talked back then. Have your students write a short story in vernacular. Stress that it is important that the vernacular be authentic-- but also that the reader be able to understand what the characters are meaning.
- 6> Grammar. The use of grammatical choices by a character is one of the most valuable tools an author has to reveal information such as education and social status. You'll notice that Aunt Polly and Huck use very poor grammar while Alfred and Becky do not. Why did Twain do this? Usually the less education a character has, the poorer their grammar. Do you notice this in your everyday dealings with people today? Is grammar a very good way to judge a person's intelligence? Why or why not?
- 7> Setting. Explain that the setting of a story is where it takes place. How many different settings do the students remember from the book or movie? Because of the physical limitations, a stage version of the story will have fewer settings. Why is that? Have the students guess what settings the stage version will use and which ones would be difficult to use "in real life." .
- 8> Pen Names. Mark Twain's real name was Samuel Langhorne Clemens. He authored his books using the pen name of Mark Twain. He spent his early adult years as a steam boat captain on the Mississippi River and the cry "mark twain" signified the second mark on a measuring stick used to check the depth of a river. "Mark Twain" means safe waters. Since many of Clemens' first stories were about life around the Mississippi River, it was a perfect pen name. Choose a pen name for yourself and explain why it is perfect for you.

After the Performance

- 1> Write a letter to the actors. Have the class write to the Company, their favorite actor, or to their favorite character. Use the handy scroll page located elsewhere in this guide. The actors love to receive mail from the audience. AND--they will send a reply to your class (not individual students). Last season the Company received over 5000 letters and drawings. PLEASE make sure the **teacher's name and complete address** are included in the packet with the student letters. You'll find our complete address (and email) in the Arts & Crafts section of the study guide.
- 2> Write a letter or send an email to man who adapted the story for the stage, the playwright, Kevin M Reese. He can be reached through: KMR Scripts, PO Box 189, Webster City, IA 50595-0189. You may email him at: kevin@kmrscripts.com
- 3> Discuss the version of the story. Have the class discuss how the version they saw on stage was different from the film or from other versions you have read. Why was it different? Was the message of the play different from the message of the story or film? This may lead to the exploration of "stage conventions"--why some things have to be adapted differently to be performed on a stage.
- 4> Have the students write a review of the play. What were their favorite parts? Their least favorite? Did anything happen that they didn't understand or seemed confusing? Did they like the music or did it "get in the way of the story?" What did they think of the costumes and scenery? Help them understand that their opinions are most certainly valid but will most likely differ from that of others (and that is OK). Being able to objectively discuss their opinions and others' is definitely a skill that will benefit them the rest of their lives.
- 5> Possible themes for papers or oral reports:
 - ▶ What was your favorite character in the story? Why?
 - ▶ If you were Tom, would you have followed Injun Joe looking for his treasure?
 - ▶ If you could live during another time in history, which would it be? Why?
 - ▶ What would you do if you woke up tomorrow and you were in 1850 St. Petersburg
 - ▶ How might Tom's fate be different had he not been so Superstitious?
 - ▶ What was so special about Huck Finn that everybody wanted to be just like him?
 - ▶ Which version did you like better— the stage or one of the film versions? Explain why.
 - ▶ Are children today more apt to be accountable for their actions or have a "victim mentality?"
 - ▶ What is the relationship between "superstitions" and "imagination?"
 - ▶ Who has the greater influence on the social development of a child? Parents? School? Peers? Society?
- 6> **ALCOHOL ABUSE.** The abuse of alcohol by Muff Potter and Injun Joe led to a lot of problems for the characters. How would the story have been different without the use of alcohol? What other way could the same events happen to Tom and his friends? What else could Twain have used to be the ruination of the villains?
- 7> **IMAGINATION.** Mark Twain must have had an unbelievable imagination to invent the stories about Tom and Huck (granted, the stories were based on his childhood– but he added a LOT to his history). Why are our imaginations important? How do we use our imaginations in every-day life? What kinds of jobs or activities depend heavily on our imaginations? What kinds of jobs seem to not require much imagination? Do you know anyone who seems to have lost their imaginations?

Social Studies/Geography

- A. Superstitions. There are many examples of superstitions in the story. Have your students give examples of some of the superstitions they can find there. How many of these superstitions are still around today? What are some of the students' superstitions?
- B. Have the students identify the flag of Missouri. How does it differ from that of other states of the U.S.? Missouri is known as the "Show-Me State." What does that mean?
- C. Using the map they made of St. Petersburg in the Arts & Craft section of this Study Guide, have the students mark the compass points on one of the upper corners. Have them answer the following questions based on their own particular map (or, you may certainly make a large map for the class to follow along), using North, South, East, or West:
- ▶ The Mississippi River is _____ of the cave.
 - ▶ Tom and Huck traveled _____ to first come across Injun Joe at the graveyard.
 - ▶ Aunt Polly's house is _____ of the cave entrance.
 - ▶ Widow Douglas lives _____ of town.
 - ▶ The Welshman lives _____ of the Widow Douglas.
- D. **The Tom Sawyer Approach.** There have been clinical research into the practice of "getting others to do the work without letting them know they're doing the work." The power of persuasion is not new— but it is perhaps best illustrated in *Tom Sawyer*. Have your students give examples they've seen in their lives— both successful and unsuccessful.
- E. **SAFE SURFING ON THE INTERNET.**
1. Encourage your students to use the Internet as a great place for learning.
 2. Help make Internet surfing a family affair. Parents should know where children are on the Internet. Children should know and abide by the rules set down by parents as to what areas are appropriate.
 3. Chatting is fun, make sure it is SAFE. Use the same rules for Internet chat that you use for talking to strangers on the sidewalk. Be friendly but cautious. Guard your anonymity.
 4. Don't be afraid to use software that blocks objectionable material and sites on the Net. Use it. One wrong turn or misspelled search word can end a child in an inappropriate area.
 5. Teach students "netiquette": the proper language and decorum of the Internet community.
 6. Teach them to come to you with any questions or problems they encounter on the Internet.
 7. Parents should screen email written and/or received by their minor children.