

Lesson Plan – *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*

Concept: Diction & Point of View

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Suggested Grade Level: Middle School, or High School

Time Frame: One to four class periods (depending on student).

Objectives:

- Students will rewrite a passage from *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and changing its diction.
- Students will demonstrate understanding of point of view by changing the effect of a passage from *The Adventure of Tom Sawyer*.
- Students will demonstrate understanding of the effects of diction and point of view by sharing and discussing the decisions they made in their rewrites of the passage.

State Standards: New York

- Students will read, write, listen, and speak for literary response and expression.
- Students will read, write, listen, and speak for critical analysis and evaluation.

Assessment/Evaluation: The diction students choose for their rewrites should be consistent and coherent to create their intended points of view. Teacher will evaluate this by reading their rewrites and listening to them as they present their rewrites to the class.

Language/Vocabulary: Most high school students should already be familiar with diction and point of view; however, a short summary may prove helpful.

Materials:

- Copies of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*
- A copy for each student of the attached handout.
- Pictures of visual interpretations of Huck Finn, and photographs of homeless and/or neglected children. These pictures will be used to help demonstrate the power of point of view and diction.

Technology Support: The teacher will need some way to project the pictures of list above.

Related Twain Quotes/Other Readings: This lesson can be applied to any of the characters in Mark Twain's writings that have vivid yet concrete character descriptions. Pap may be a good candidate.

Lesson Plan Format –

A. Introduction: Initiate a discussion that demonstrates how different people will interpret a situation or even a person differently. Have students share examples of disagreements they've had or witnessed where each person wasn't necessarily right or wrong, but their points of view or interpretations were just *different*. Then discuss the quotes on the top of the handout in part B below. Use these quotes to have a discussion on diction and author's purpose.

B. Lesson: See the student handout titled “Diction & Point of View”

C. Closure: Students share their rewrites and discuss their diction. The teacher should engage them in discussion, making comments and offering compliments and suggestions. Also, the teacher should guide them to see the subtle nuances of meaning that exist between one student piece and the other.

Scheduled Use of Time:

Time	Teacher Activity/Questions to be asked	Student Activity
10 min.	Review terms: diction & POV.	Listen and respond
10 min.	Conduct introduction described above. Utilize pictures during this discussion.	Listen and respond
10 min.	Read and discuss handout supplied above. Be sure all students clearly understand the directions.	Listen, read, & respond.
Remainder of class (and any number of extra days the students need)	Students do their rewrites of the passage. It is important that you monitor their work to be sure that they are both on task and doing the task correctly. If a group is doing something particularly well, it may be a good idea to use their rewrite as a model for those groups that are struggling.	Discuss with partners and collaborative writing.
One class period	Have students share their completed rewrites. Be sure to offer commentary and compliments for that they’ve truly done well.	Read, speaking, and listening.

Strategies/accommodations to support students with exceptionalities: Students with reading disabilities would benefit from hearing the piece read aloud, which the teacher may want to consider doing even if there are no LD students in his or her class.

Other Resources: Below are some pictures you can use to demonstrate the difference created by point of view. The first few pictures are of homeless American children. The last picture is a happy Huck Finn.

Diction & Point of View

The right word may be effective, but no word was ever as effective as a rightly timed pause.

--Mark Twain

“The difference between the right word and the almost right word is the difference between lightning and a lightning bug.”

--Mark Twain

In pairs, read the following description of Huckleberry Finn as told in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. You will notice that Tom and the other boys in St. Petersburg admire Huck for his freedom or lack of societal constraints; he can smoke, swear, wear what he wants, play hooky, fish and lounge all day. However, if today’s society were to see someone in Huck’s exact situation, we would be horrified. Our hearts would break for the malnourished, unwashed, and neglected young boy. Pap would be thrown in jail for abuse and neglect, and Huck would be immediately placed in state foster care. Our response to a boy like Huck demonstrates how important point of view is—a young boy finds Huck fascinating, while an adult finds him sad and pathetic. Imagine if there was a young boy from your neighborhood who lived in a shed or a garage. Would we vie to be his playmate? Would we call the police? Would we envy his lifestyle? Would we call child protective services?

Your goal: In pairs, rewrite the following passage that would suggest the point of view from someone who finds Huck’s situation sad, tragic, and even horrifying. One way to do this would be to pretend you are a child social worker. Several things you will need to attend to:

- 1. Keep each sentence grammatically similar to the original.**
- 2. Where Twain uses a simile, you should use a simile.**
- 3. You are allowed to omit no more than three sentences. The only reason to omit any sentences is for purposes of coherence and consistency.**

Rationale: By transforming the following passage you will be changing the diction (word choice), and by changing the diction you will find that the piece takes on a new point of view. This transformation will ensure that the audience has a different experience than the one Mark Twain originally intended. After this transformation, you should be aware of the effect that is created, and be more aware of the deliberate choices that authors make in writing.

Description of Huckleberry Finn

Shortly Tom came upon the juvenile pariah of the village, Huckleberry Finn, son of the town drunkard. Huckleberry was cordially hated and dreaded by all the mothers of the town, because he was idle and lawless and vulgar and bad -- and because all their children admired him so, and delighted in his forbidden society, and wished they dared to be like him. Tom was like the rest of the respectable boys, in that he envied Huckleberry his gaudy outcast condition, and was under strict orders not to play with him. So he played with him every time he got a chance. Huckleberry was always dressed in the cast-off clothes of full-grown men, and they were in perennial bloom and fluttering with rags. His hat was a vast ruin with a wide crescent lopped out of its brim; his coat, when he wore one, hung nearly to his heels and had the rearward buttons far down the back; but one suspender supported his trousers; the seat of the trousers bagged low and contained nothing, the fringed legs dragged in the dirt when not rolled up.

Huckleberry came and went, at his own free will. He slept on doorsteps in fine weather and in empty hogsheads in wet; he did not have to go to school or to church, or call any being master or obey anybody; he could go fishing or swimming when and where he chose, and stay as long as it suited him; nobody forbade him to fight; he could sit up as late as he pleased; he was always the first boy that went barefoot in the spring and the last to resume leather in the fall; he never had to wash, nor put on clean clothes; he could swear wonderfully. In a word, everything that goes to make life precious that boy had. So thought every harassed, hampered, respectable boy in St. Petersburg.

The Adventures of Tom Sawyer
--Mark Twain







HUCKLEBERRY FINN.