

## Reading *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*: Checkpoints

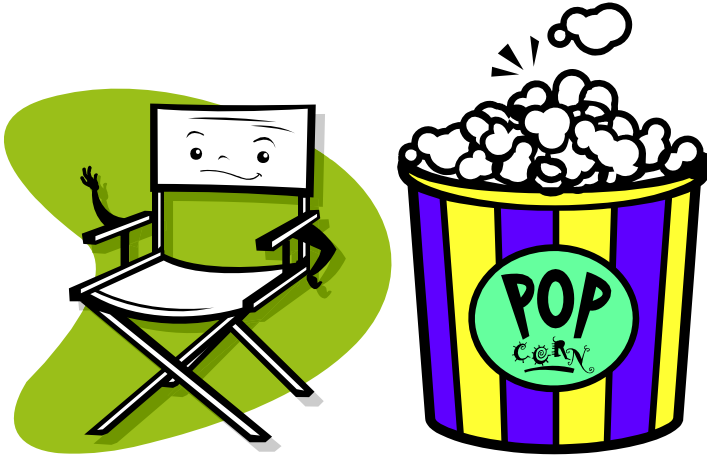
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Mark Twain Boyhood Home & Museum



Teachers, don't get caught in the "summarize each chapter" or "pop quiz" quagmire that will only cause your readers to feel dismay and resentment. Instead, engage them in Mark Twain's timeless classic by using fun "checkpoints" throughout the reading of *Tom Sawyer*. These are designed to use after students have read several chapters. (By the way, these checkpoints can be used when reading any book!) You will notice an increase in both enthusiasm and comprehension, and you won't have to be bothered with grading quizzes or reading the "same old summary" over and over. There are also suggestions to provide additional challenge for gifted and high achieving students. All of these activities can and should be modified to best suit you and your students.



## Checkpoint 1: CAST OF CHARACTERS



Identify the main characters. Cast each character, and tell why you've selected the actor/actress for each character. (Teachers: Invite discussion as to why certain actors were cast in certain "roles." If students are reading the same book, they will enjoy justifying their selections over someone else's. If students are reading different books, they can explain to the class a little about the characters. All of these explanations and justifications will help move their reading from surface knowledge of character traits to a deeper level of knowledge.) **Differentiation for gifted students:** Have students "add" an appropriate character to the story. Use the Character Profile Worksheet from "How to Create a Character Profile" found online at:

<http://www.writerswrite.com/journal/jun98/lazy2.htm>.

## Checkpoint 2: WORD SEARCH

Try to find as many good and bad nicknames as you can!

K O F R E A K Y S T N A P Y T R A M S  
 Y J O K E R L L U G N H O O P S O L T  
 N F U P A N U P U C E O B E E N P Y C  
 N U R E D N T W D A B L C R N O O E E  
 U N E E A E Z R R S L A Y D A B E N F  
 F N Y R C N Y T L U E T F Z S B M W R  
 G Y E P O K B K T M R L K A A Y A G E  
 W G S W O R L Z W O E C M O D R N I P  
 O I P O E D O E H O R A S Y O M C C S  
 N R W A D E B S F A M A W M A A T O S  
 D L K O O P Y T R A M S Y M R C O T I  
 E E L O P N A E B O C K R R O M U H M  
 R B M T E L M O O T E E O C Y A L E K  
 W O N S Y D E E P S H T U O M G I B E  
 O G P H G N I K E H T R D O T I S R R  
 M E N U T H E S U O P O O L R C A A G  
 A N A N A M R E P U S S W O M S G I N  
 N M M N M E T A L M O U T H E H U N K

Beanpole	Hoops	Snooby
Bigmouth	Joker	Speedy
Carrot Top	Klutzy	Superman
Crazy Legs	Magic	The Brain
Dopey	Mama's Boy	The Hunk
Four Eyes	Metal Mouth	The King
Freaky	Miss Perfect	Wonder Woman
Freckle face	Mr. Cool	
Funny Girl	Shorty	
Heartbreaker	Smarty Pants	



Mark Twain had a great vocabulary. As you read, jot down any interesting or new words. Some you might have to look up, some you might be able to define using context clues, etc. Select the 30 words you like best, and then go to <http://puzzlemaker.school.discovery.com/> Use this to create a word search of your newly discovered Mark Twain vocabulary. Bring in your word search and we will swap them with each other. (Note: Teachers, you can use this newfound vocabulary to play Mark Twain's Vocabulary Bingo. Bingo grid attached.) **Differentiation for gifted students:** Have students select their Top 10 Vocabulary words and write a passage in Twain's style.

### Checkpoint 3: TRAVEL AGENT



In one to two paragraphs, describe a setting found in your reading. It could be a large setting (the Mississippi River or state of Missouri) or a more confined setting (the cemetery, Aunt Polly's kitchen). Use Google Image Search to find at least two corresponding pictures. **Differentiation for gifted students:** Challenge them to create descriptions for places that are *mentioned* but not *described*.

### Checkpoint 4: IN THE NEWS



Compare at least two events that you have read about so far to similar situations in current events. How do these past events compare to modern events? (HINT: As you read, select key terms you might use in a Google News Search. For instance, you might choose whitewash, school, etc.) (Teachers, students might need some guidance on this, so you can brainstorm topics as you read the book. For instance, Tom and Huck are eyewitnesses to a murder. Are there any stories in the news about eyewitness accounts? Google News is a great resource for finding current events on any topic.)

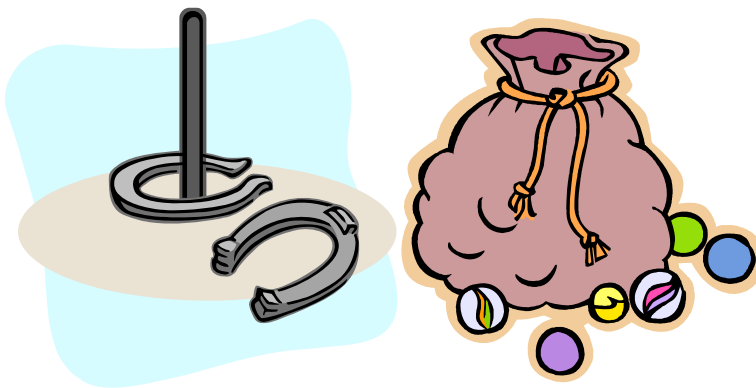
**Differentiation for gifted students:** Challenge students to select one event from *Tom Sawyer* and write it in the style of a newspaper story.

### Checkpoint 5: TALK TO ME



Mark Twain uses authentic dialogue. Select a passage of dialogue that you enjoy, and rewrite it as it might sound in today’s style of speech. Can you rewrite it as “chat room” speak? LOL! (Teachers, this is a great place to review the proper use of quotation marks.) **Differentiation for gifted students:** Challenge students to identify a passage of dialogue and create a cartoon of the event complete with “word bubbles”. See if their “action” corresponds with the story. Or, give them a cartoon, and have them use the actions and word bubbles to translate the comic into a written passage.

### Checkpoint 6: FUN AND GAMES



Select an activity or game from your reading. Learn the rules (marbles, for instance) and teach to/play with each other. **Differentiation for gifted students:** Select something from the story, and create a corresponding game.

### Checkpoint 7: TOM AND ME



How are you like Tom Sawyer? Locate a passage that reveals something specific about Tom Sawyer, which you believe reflects something about you. Write a comparison telling what you and Tom Sawyer have in common. Bring in a picture of yourself that shows this similarity, or draw one. (Teachers, in class, have each student create a scrapbook page showing how each is like Tom. Make a class scrapbook, and don't forget to do a page for yourself! After all, we all have a little Tom Sawyer in us!)






**Differentiation for gifted students:** Have students write a letter to Tom telling how they are like him, or have them write a journal entry “by” Tom from his perspective.

### Checkpoint 8: PREDICT THE FUTURE



You are nearing the end of the book. How will it turn out? Write a brief (2 or 3 paragraphs) prediction of how you think the story will end. **Differentiation for gifted students:** Write an alternative ending for the book. (Teachers, there are many ways to modify this assignment. You can arbitrarily decide to “kill off” a character or adding your own “what if” situation to the mix. Have fun with this!)

Directions: Students contribute one self-selected vocabulary word from their reading. They introduce it, spell it, and tell what it means. Students write the word somewhere on their bingo sheet, teachers write it on a slip of paper. Continue until all spaces filled. When someone calls, "TWAIN!" (*not* Bingo!), he/she must use the word correctly in a sentence. This ensures that students are actively listening to the meanings of the words.

				
		<p>Free Space</p>		