

Source of Lesson: *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County*

Concept: Understanding dialect as used by Mark Twain

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Grade Level: Grades 5-8

Time Frame: Several days, at least 3 with preliminary readings followed by a hands-on activity as part of an integrated unit exploring the works of Mark Twain.

Objectives:

Students will articulate examples of dialect.

Students will measure and compare the length of taproots.

Students will listen to examples of dialect as written by Mark Twain in *Tom Sawyer* in chapter 2 (with an emphasis on the white-washing scene) and listen to *The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County*. (The listening skills developed while listening to the dialect will aid in the understanding of the “Celebrated Gol’derndest Longest Taproot Diggin’ Contest of ‘Yer County” - a hands-on activity to be done with students outdoors).

State Standards: Illinois Learning Standards

Literature and Language Arts

4A3a Demonstrate ways that listening attentively can improve comprehension

4A3b Compare a speaker’s verbal and nonverbal messages

4A3c Restate and carry out multi-step oral instructions

4A3d Demonstrate the ability to identify and manage barriers to listening

4B3a Deliver planned oral presentations using language and vocabulary appropriate to the purpose, message and audience; provide details and supporting information that clarify main ideas, and use visual aids and contemporary technology as support

Science

12A3a Explain how cells function as “building blocks” of organisms and describe the requirements for cells to live (e.g., plant cells making taproots)

12A3b Compare and assess features of organisms for their adaptive, competitive, and survival potential

12B3b Compare and assess how different forms and structures reflect different functions

Assessment/Evaluation:

Day One: Students will exhibit the use of dialect by taking turns reading excerpts from *The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County* and Chapter 2, *Tom Sawyer* in pairs as part of their integrated curriculum in literature/science classes. Copies of each manuscript need to be distributed and pairs selected before the lesson. Participation is judged by willingness to vocalize the dialect that is intended by the author. The students will feel a little silly at first, as expected, but when the giggles subside the true color of Twain should shine through. Willingness to explore literature written in dialect can only be experienced by **ORAL** participation on everyone's part. The teacher can model at first, but the students need to verbally attempt it on their own for the desired result. (Twain would not object to their enjoyment ...and the giggles procured from his written words would make him chuckle too!)

Day Two: After the background lesson in understanding dialect, the next day's lesson will be evaluated by the students' participation in the hands-on activity, as it is also written in a dialect that patterns the writing of Mark Twain. Working with a team of teachers in a middle school setting is an ideal involvement for team evaluation of participation. A simple rubric or quiz evaluating both parts of the activity will encourage the students to complete the activity with accuracy.

Language /Vocabulary

As the teacher appears with a tooth blacked out, donning a flannel shirt and suspenders, a wrapped toe and straw hat, the students will be well aware that the activity that follows will be well worth their attention. Dressing the part puts everyone in the same framework of time and space. The students may even enjoy wearing the clothing of the times as well. For the pure, simple enjoyment of the students, the instructor should practice the dialect for the instructions of the activity. As the students read along in the classroom, the activity and the directions that will take place outside should become clear. To save time and move the lesson along, a choral reading with the whole class would come next.

The teacher will check for comprehension by explaining the following words or phrases:

confounded gol'derndest long taproot-explains the nature of the growth patterns of dandelion. As they send down a powerful taproot, anyone who has tackled such a weed will understand this frustrating concept of self survival of this pesky weed. This visual makes a great introduction to the difference of taproots (one main root) and fibrous roots (many roots of the same size) of most perennials.

danderlyins-better known as the yellow topped, seed spreading, dandelion

contraction-meaning the "contraption" known as a gardener's trowel

desterb-disturb

'em white narlly roots-those white gnarly roots

Jest-just

"jest like them chillens we all know of"- the students will know right away that this line refers to them, active teenagers with an equally innate ability to "sink their roots in as do as they please!"

“plumb filled back in with dirt”- Some will dig with such diligence that the **WHOLE hole** may end up **HUGE** before the project is completed. After the dandelion is removed, encourage backfilling the hole and replacing the mulch in that area of the garden.

“you jest might win yourselfs a prize”-A potted plant to be placed in a garden at home is the prize for the longest dandelion taproot to be removed by the students

TEACHER’S NOTE: As they re-read the directions clipped to their clipboard, encourage them to read their directions out loud as they do the activity in the garden. They will chuckle with the sound of their own voice speaking in dialect and really enjoy understanding written directions in a whole new way.

Integrated curriculum: Although the concept of dialect may originate in the literature classroom, it can extend from a more complex unit of study of the works of Mark Twain. Literature and Language Arts classes may start the unit by reading his works and understanding the dialect as written. Math classes can make origami frogs, measure their “jumping capacity” or use linear measuring tools for a **REAL** jumping frog contest. Measuring the taproot in question and charting it in comparison with the others on a master chart is another math related skill. Science takes over as the concepts of plant survival prevail and the action begins in a hands-on exploratory **EVENT!** The concept of integrating the fine arts with very little costuming effort and the dramatic presentation of dialect by the teacher will help Twain’s works come **ALIVE** before their very eyes. An integrated unit of study with cooperation of the middle school staff is the ideal venue.

The culmination of the unit of study of Mark Twain would end with a field trip to the boyhood home, museum, and cave. With all teachers presenting lessons in their classrooms with the same theme, the involvement can be extensive and enthusiastic for the staff and students as well.

Background Information:

Students should be aware of the different styles of written dialect and understand their meanings to convey the tone and intent of the author.

Students should be aware of the fact that their knowledge of dialect will help them do an outdoor hands-on activity.

Students should derive the concept of “clever cunning” techniques to get a task finished. As Tom Sawyer conned his friends into white-washing the fence, the teacher used the same technique to lure them into removing dandelions from the school garden.....it works well!

Students must know the different types of root systems and their adaptation to specific plants. The concept of observing taproots (in dandelions) as compared to fibrous (most flowering plants) or prop roots (mangrove trees or corn) in a Life Science class through illustrations or research would be a prerequisite to introducing this lesson.

Materials:

Distribute copies of chapter 2 *Tom Sawyer* and the *Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County* by Mark Twain.

Costume: straw hat, bibs or jeans, flannel shirt, corncob pipe, bare feet with a cloth bandage on 'yer toe, and pocket items such as marbles, door knobs and other shiny "Tom" treasures, and an assortment of "polecats" and other creatures (use puppets to get the concept of Tom as a real, outdoor loving, genuine boy!

Distribute copies of "Celebrated Gol'derndest Longest Taproot Diggin' Contest in Yer County" and a chart to measure their root systems

A long chart (taped to the sidewalk) with inch spaced increments for measurement and comparison of the taproot treasures

A prize for the WINNER, maybe a perennial for their OWN garden with FIBROUS ROOTS instead!

Hand-held gardens trowels for EACH child. Also a spade or shovel for the difficult ones

Clipboards to safely keep their directions where they belong while outdoors

Knee pads or garden gloves for the prissy ones

Garden hose, water anti-bacterial soap for clean-up and hand-washing

Ice cold "skunk water" and cups –(AKA Lemonade to serve when the task is done)

Simply add a CREATIVE teacher who loves to get dirty!

Technology Support:

www.kirjasto.sci.fi/mtwain.htm

(a brief sketch with teacher references, mentions both works of Mark Twain)

www.librivox.org/theadventures-of-huckleberry-fin-by-mark-twain/

(audio clips of the dialect of the works of Mark Twain)

http://school.eb.com/lm/passport/dialects_in_literature.pdf

(for intermediate language arts, great picture of Mark Twain, comparison to other authors and works with dialect

<http://www.salpointe.org/sperri/huckstudyguide.htm>

(a teacher's prepared study guide for *Huckleberry Finn* covered many issues discussed in the Mark Twain workshop

LESSON PLAN

Introduction: Teachers on a middle school team will first denote a period of time to discover and focus on the works of Mark Twain. Each prepares lessons within their realm of learning to share with the team for the students to participate within the allotted time frame, 40-42 minutes

TIME	Activity/Questions	Student activity
Day 1- 40 minutes	<p>Have you ever had a chore that you just didn't want to do?</p> <p>Have you ever been creative in getting someone to work for you?</p> <p>Teacher gives background to the personality of Tom Sawyer</p> <p>How does Tom use his imagination to get chores done?</p>	<p>Read: chapter 2 <i>Tom Sawyer</i> (aloud)</p> <p>Taking turns reading and discussing the author's style and use of dialect to give a feel for the setting and characterization</p>
Day 2- 40 minutes	<p>Discuss other works of Mark Twain</p> <p>Start with a quote such as : "You cannot depend on your eyes, when your imagination is out of focus" (A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court)</p> <p>Use their imagination as they listen to, or read along, <i>The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County</i></p> <p>Ask if anyone knows a local personality that goes "on and on"?</p>	<p>Listen or read and respond</p> <p>Compare the story in <i>Tom Sawyer</i> for similarities and differences</p> <p>Students listen</p> <p>Give time for discussion</p>
Day 3 (earlier in the day Teacher uses popsicle sticks to mark numbers, placing them in the ground next to dandelions within the school garden)	Dress as Tom Sawyer with costume and straw hat	Students have not become aware of the lesson... YET!

<p>Day 3 (later in the day)</p> <p>During Science class</p> <p>(10 minutes at most)</p>	<p>Greet students and speak in dialect the minute they enter they classroom</p> <p>Pass out the directions to the enclosed activity</p> <p>Each student should have: clipboard, trowel, and a good sense of humor</p> <p>Read aloud the directions</p> <p>Students do choral of directions,(teacher leading the dialect)</p> <p>Go over rules of outdoor classroom</p>	<p>Students respond with ENTHUSIAM!</p> <p>Students read directions</p> <p>Gather supplies</p> <p>Students go out to the garden</p>
<p>In the GARDEN.....</p> <p>(30 minutes at least)</p>	<p>Students choose a number from a flowerpot</p> <p>As they are dug, the roots are placed on a comparative chart</p> <p>If time allows, dig another (not marked already)</p>	<p>Student begins digging up a dandelion</p> <p>Place dandelion on chart</p> <p>Students compare, bigger of 2 gets placed on chart</p>
	<p>Students compare and vote on the longest taproot in ONE piece</p>	<p>Prize awarded for longest root...and following directions written in dialect</p>

CONCLUSION: The next day during Science class, students will fill out their own quiz which will earn them participation points for the activity.

NAME: _____

Evaluation

Class hour _____

QUIZ : Mark Twain, Science

Review of the “Celebrated Gol’derndest Longest Taproot Diggin’ Contest

1. Name the first book we used to explain the style of Mark Twain. 1 pt
2. Name the main character in this chapter. 1 pt
3. What activity did he “con” into being done? 1 pt
4. What animal was the victim of a scheme in the 2nd selection? 1pt
5. What is a TAPROOT? 1pt
6. Explain why Mark Twain uses dialect in each (2 reasons) 4 pts
7. Explain why these 2 stories were read prior to the “Danderlyin’ Contest. 4 pts
8. Name 4 things you learned about stories written in dialect. 4 pts
9. Name your favorite Mark Twain book or piece of literature. 1 pt
10. What do you like about his writing style? 2 pts

BONUS: Who won the “Celebrated Gol’derndest Longest Taproot Diggin Contest in your (hour) class ?

TOTAL /20 points

BONUS:

Extra Bonus Activity

“Gol ‘Derndest Longest Taproot Diggin’ Contest

Name: _____

Hr: _____

DRAW yer’ danderlyin here.....label the parts as if they was in Twain dialect....
Color et in really good like.....et will shore be perty when you’s done colorin’
with dem crayolas!!

The Celebrated Gol'Derndest Longest Taproot Diggin' Contest in Yer County

In keepin' with the hometown traditions of frog jumpin' and white washin' em fences (like dat der Mark Twain was to be sayin') ...you are 'bout to venture into an AMAZIN' contest of skill and dexterity....here's yer mission.....

{Foller these directions. You might win yourself a PRIZE!}

1. Find you one of 'em confounded gol'derndest long taproots that's connected to one of 'em DANDERLYINS that matches the number of yourn.
2. Start to diggin' that there DANDERLYIN root plumb clear outa the ground. Now be caredful, mind ya, that them there DANDERLYINS has gots some mighty in the ground roots... so be mighty careful!
3. Dig yer hole with yer own little digger contraction that has been given' to ya. Dig yer hole deep alt around that there DANDERLYIN as to not DESTERB the root or break it in any way. You'll be wantin' the whole gol'dern root in one big 'ol peace! Make sur yous don't leave anys of the DANDERLYIN midst the dirt anywheres... 'cause it will make a new 'un... sure as shootin!
4. Now yous have to pull that there DANDERLYIN root plumb outs of the ground real-I-I-I easy like. If it won't pull right out with a tiny little tug , you best be diggin' rounst the edges some more. Onest its out in the aire, give 'er a big-g-g shake to gets the dirt off' em white narly roots.
5. Now, find that chart like tablet youst have been given by yourst teacher. Attach the part wherest the root starts to go down to the top of that there chart wherest there is a black band. Line it up real careful so the roots can be measured by the squares 'neath the plant part. Youst be JEST measurin' them TAPROOTS... them taproots is mighty healthy, ain't they. That must be ther' reason why those Danderlyins are such a healthy sort. Ya' jest can't kill 'em... whenst they want to go...they just go there and set themselves down some POWERFUL roots. Those DANDERLYINS sometimes jest DO WHAT THEY WANT....just like some of them chillens we all know of.
6. Now, make sure the hole where that there DANDERLYIN is NO MORE is plumb filled back in with dirt.
7. Take yer completed DANDERLYIN , connected with the little chart...then place it on that big YELLER chart that's been made for you. Puts it amongst the others of yer friends and buddies and see who has the GOL'DERNDEST LONGEST TAPROOT DIGGIN skills in yer county!!!
8. YOU jest might wins yourselfs a PRIZE!!!!!!!

Strategies/accommodations for students with exceptionalities: Most children LOVE being outdoors, so the setting is conducive to hand-on learning which has its own charm and appeal with most students. Pairing up students who might not understand the directions, or have trouble with LITERAL understanding would be a good idea. Children with limited use of their hands could be the cheerleaders, or judges for the contest. Children who always finish early could help those with especially LONG root systems dig their a little deeper. Engaging the children in an active, and rather unstructured setting is tricky for even the veteran teachers... but RELAX, have fun, it's OK to get dirty, and you "might just win yourself a PRIZE!". What a NOBLE thing to do!

Follow-up activities:

Learn to read dialect yourself, as a teacher, then let them try it on their own.

Bring in costume pieces of the era and see what dramatic dialogue will come about through dramatic play and role-playing .

Play some of games or relays dressed like Tom or Huck or dear Becky

Teach them to make origami frogs... or corn bread... or something that delights their senses and make them WANT to read more.

Invite the "folks" for a "town meetin'" about happenings at the school and involve the media to catch some of the newly enlightened dialog between characters of Mark Twain.

Draw pictures of what life was like for them in Twain's day.

POSSIBLE GUEST SPEAKERS/Other resources

By all means, apply early for your year-end visit to Hannibal. Bus service and permission to cross state lines can sometimes be an issue.

Plan a whole day to visit the places where Mark Twain got his inspiration. Maybe the EXPERTS, like Dr. Cindy Lovell or Henry Sweets will give you an enthusiastic dose of their vast knowledge about Mark Twain and inspire great lessons for your waiting students.

FINAL THOUGHTS: As said by the master storyteller himself, "Persons attempting to find motive in this narrative will be prosecuted; persons attempting to find a moral in it will be banished; persons attempting to find a plot in it will be shot." by Mark Twain.

We are all better people because he enriched our lives----by Julie Ann Bice