

Lesson Plan – *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*

Concept: Parenting and Discipline
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**Brandy Uhlmeier: North Shelby, Shelbyville, MO
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Suggested Grade Level: Middle or High School

Time Frame: One to three class periods.

Objectives:

- Students will identify at least three methods of discipline in *Tom Sawyer*.
- Students will compare and contrast at least three methods of discipline portrayed in *Tom Sawyer* and today's society.
- Students will keep a collection of journal reflections on their findings, viewpoints, and reflections on discipline regarding *Tom Sawyer*, today's society, and their own life.

Missouri State Standards:

- **GLE-** Writing 3C and 1A.
- **Content-** CA 1,2,3,4
- **Process-** 2.1, 2.2, 1.8, 4.1

Assessment/Evaluation: There is an overall scoring guide that encompasses all activities to include reflective writing, participation, and an interview.

Language/Vocabulary: For knowledge of terminology regarding current discipline techniques, refer to the link containing the PowerPoint in the background information (e.g., corporal punishment). The following are some other types of punishment or discipline that may or may not come up in a class discussion:

- Bribery
- Guilt trips
- Grounding

Integrated Curriculum: This lesson could be used in an English classroom, but more specifically, it is designed for a Family and Consumer Sciences (FACS) teacher to use in a child development or parenting class. In addition, the lesson could be team taught.

Background information: This topic could be somewhat controversial regarding the discussion of corporal punishment. Keep in mind that students come from a variety of backgrounds; some have been spanked, some abused, and some have received no discipline as a child. It will be important when students speak of experiences and opinions regarding discipline that they respect everyone's opinions. The teacher should introduce the book as well as the main characters with a brief discussion of the main form of punishment for children at the timeframe of the book: corporal punishment. Students

will be reading parts of *Tom Sawyer* looking for examples of punishment Tom receives as a result of his antics. In addition, the teacher should provide the students with background knowledge on current methods of discipline, particularly positive guidance. The following link has a PowerPoint on positive guidance techniques that could be adapted by the teacher and/or shown to the students:

<http://www.uen.org/Lessonplan/preview.cgi?LPid=4899>

Materials: Internet access, Smart Board (optional), *Tom Sawyer* books for each student, pencil, paper, *Tom Sawyer* on audio, movie clips (scenes of discipline) from *Tom Sawyer* movie, copies of worksheet and scoring guide for each student

Technology support: Refer to the website in Background Information. The following are some Norman Rockwell paintings depicting punishment, which could also be used to introduce the topic of discipline:

www.zona-pellucida.com/im/wilson52a.jpg

<http://www.bible.ca/marriage/spanking-norman-rockwell.jpg>

Twain Quotes/Other Readings:

Reading Guide/Ideas to be used during the learning activities:

The following are some great passages, quotes, and discussion points for discipline. You can read these aloud to your students, have students share reading assignments, or have students read before class, then discuss. In addition, they could listen to the audio as they follow along in the book. The amount of time you want to spend in *Tom Sawyer* can dictate the amount of the book you want to cover:

- Pg. 5: “He was not the model boy of the village....”
- Chapter 2: The whitewashing punishment
- Pg. 21-22: Getting his knuckles rapped for stealing sugar and the sugar bowl Incident
- Pg. 25: “Tom turned in for bed without the added vexation of prayers, and Sid made mental note of the omission.”
- Pg 40-43: The pinch bug episode at church
- Chapter 6: Punishment at school
- Chapter 12: Feeding the cat the painkiller medicine, pg 96 “O, go ‘long with you, Tom, before you aggregate me again....”
- Chapter 13: Escape to the island (you may want to briefly introduce this with reading or just orally so they can complete the writing activity that follows)
 - i. Pg 111: The boys discover the boat is looking for their bodies.

- Chapter 15: Tom leaves the island, spies on Aunt Polly to see how they are grieving for the boys.
 - ii. Pg 129-131 The funeral and the boys “reappearance”
- Pg 133-37 Aunt Polly’s feelings regarding Tom’s behavior and disappearance. (This is a good point to discuss how the parent would feel when children misbehave.)

The page numbers were taken from the following printing of *Tom Sawyer*.

Twain, Mark. *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. University of California Press: Berkley, CA, 1982.

Quotes regarding children, discipline, and behavior:

These are quotes that could be used as an attention getter, to spark thought for discussion, or as part of the closing activity. Many are witty, and some of them don’t actually help prove the point of why a student should be disciplined and well-behaved, but they could be used for humor in the classroom.

To be good is noble; but to show others how to be good is nobler and no trouble.
-*Following the Equator*, Pudd’nhead Wilson’s New Calendar

Be good and you will be lonesome.
-*Following the Equator*, Pudd’nhead Wilson’s New Calendar

[A motto of Jane Clemens]: “People born to be hanged are safe in water.”
-*Mark Twain, a Biography*, Paine, I, p.35

The irritating thing about ungoverned children is that they often make as orderly and valuable men and women as do the other kind.
-*Mark Twain’s Notebook*, p. 266

Always obey your parents, when they are present. This is the best policy in the long run, because if you don’t they will make you. Most parents think they know better than you do, and you can generally make more by humoring that superstition than you can by acting on your own better judgment.
-*Mark Twain’s Speeches* (1923), p. 104

All crimes should be punished with humiliations-public exposure in ridiculous and grotesque situations-and never in any other way.
-*Mark Twain’s Notebook*, p. 193

It used to take all vacation to grow a new hide in place of the one they flogged off me during the school term.
-“Foolishness,” *Mark Twain’s Travels with Mr. Brown*, p. 244

Lesson Plan:

A. Introduction: (20 minutes)

Write the terms discipline and punishment on the board. Ask students if they know the difference, if they think there is a difference, and what they think the terms mean. Define the terms using a dictionary.

Find a clip from the movie showing Tom being punished. (For example, the whitewashing incident or the sugar bowl incident.) Have students discuss or prewrite answers to the following questions:

- **Do you think Tom's punishment was fair?**
- **Would you have handled the situation differently if you were Aunt Polly?**
- **Do you think this is an accurate punishment for today's society? Why or why not?**

Now, you will need to introduce the book to students and tell them they will be learning about discipline through an American classic by Mark Twain. Introduce characters, setting, and a brief history of the book for those that may not know anything about it to get them interested.

You will also need to lay out some ground rules regarding the controversy over corporal punishment and respect for all views during class discussions. They will all come from a variety of backgrounds and methods of being disciplined.

2. Lesson:

NOTE: The following activities are designed to be completed in one to several class periods, depending on the amount of time you want to spend on the topic. Leaving out a couple activities could cut down the amount of time spent on this lesson if necessary to fit into your curriculum.

Activity #1: (15 minutes) Have students write about a time they got into big trouble. Have them write the punishment they received and whether or not they think it was fair. If they didn't feel it was fair, how would they have handled it?

Activity #2: (30 minutes) Hand students a chart and have them listen as you read the first chapter aloud. As the teacher is reading, have students write down punishments Tom faced on the left side. Students will fill out some basic notes about punishment in today's society based on information in the PowerPoint from the link above. Discuss any similarities or differences. Write down the methods of punishment you were given and write them in the appropriate column. Compare these to the ways you were disciplined as a child and share with the class. In activity #3, students will complete an interview of two generations to compare methods of discipline. Students can then fill in the last two portions of the chart.

Activity #3: (20 minutes) **Do you think your parents and grandparents received similar punishments as you or Tom?** Students will be compiling a set of interview questions to conduct an interview of two generations to see how methods have changed regarding discipline and punishment. Each student will need to come up with five interview questions. Questions need to be open-ended and not simple yes or no questions. As a class, they will narrow down and refine questions to come up with a class sheet of 10 questions to be analyzed at a following class period. (Teacher can computer generate an interview sheet with the questions or have students write them down once the master list is made.)

HOMEWORK: Students will need to write down answers to the interview questions themselves as they conduct the interview in person, by phone, or email depending on the location of the interviewee. Students will also need to complete answers to the reflection questions (see **Discipline Then and Now** worksheet) after conducting the interviews.

Activity #4: (30 minutes) Read the passage about Tom and the beetle in church. Note that Aunt Polly either doesn't know he is guilty or Mark Twain chooses not to write about Tom's punishment in the book. After reading it, have students write a journal reflection on how they would discipline Tom if they were Aunt Polly.

(30 minutes) Another good passage would be to read passages from the island escape episode and when he reappears. Be sure to give a little background if you are not going to read the entire episode. Have students do a journal reflection from Aunt Polly's point of view. This passage shows a little insight into how Aunt Polly feels regarding Tom lying and pulling such a morbid stunt. She appears more hurt than angry in the book, which is a good discussion point from a parenting point of view.

Activity #5: (15 + minutes depending on how far you take this activity) As a culminating activity, for homework, or in class as time allows, have each student write a "Top Ten List" for parents based on their knowledge of discipline. The list should be positive things that every parent should do to raise their children to be independent, productive individuals. Statements must be positive in a hierarchy order from 10 to 1 being the most important. Students can present these in poster format, as a poem, as a "live" broadcast, or a song.

3. Closure: (15 minutes) Teacher asks:

- Now, how have your definitions and views of discipline changed from your prewriting?
- Do you feel the dictionary definitions are accurate?
- Is there a difference between discipline and punishment?

Have students briefly discuss this and then post-write under their prewriting assignment.

As a final closing for humor, food for thought, etc. read several or all of the quotes from Mark Twain. Students can then discuss/write a short interpretation regarding the topic.

Strategies/accommodations to support students with exceptionalities:

For the most part, students should be able to complete the activities. During the chart completing activity, the teacher could provide a completed copy or a somewhat completed copy for students to fill in the blanks as they listen.

Possible Follow-up Activities:

Students could look up current issues regarding laws and corporal punishment and present their findings to the class. Students could research discipline in the 19th century. Do a Google newsflash search of “school” and “punishment” to see what current issues are occurring regarding discipline and punishment worldwide.

Possible Guest Speakers/Other Resources:

Conduct a parent panel for students to hear disciplinary measures they have used for a variety of age groups. Have a Division of Family Services guest speaker to speak with students over the topic of child abuse.

Charting Discipline

Tom

Today's Society

You

Your Parent's Generation

Your Grandparent's Generation

Discipline Then and Now

Directions: After completing your interviews, answer the following questions using complete thoughts and thorough reflections. You may use separate paper if necessary.

1. Were you surprised by any of the responses to the questions? Explain and use examples.
2. Have you been disciplined in a similar way to either one of your interviewees? Why do you think this is so?
3. What were some of the major differences in the ways that each generation was disciplined? Why do you think the differences occurred?
4. What were some of the similarities in the ways that each generation was disciplined? Why do you think this is so?
5. After conducting the interviews and reflecting on the answers, what can you conclude about discipline in general regarding today's society and discipline in the two generations?

Reflective Writing/Participation Scoring Guide

	4 Excellent	3/2 Average	1/0 Barely or not Evident
Participation	Student actively participates in all discussion activities, is actively engaged during the learning and discussing process, contributes to group ideas and opinions in a respectful manner	Student participates in some class discussion, is engaged most of the time, contributes passively with the group activities and is respectful of others.	Student is very passive in class, does not contribute to group projects or discussions. Student is not respectful of others opinions and ideas.
Reflective writing activities	Student writes several thoughtful responses using personal opinions, experiences, and/or examples from the text or life observances. Thoughts are elaborated on and not just listed with no reasoning.	Student writes minimal responses but may be lacking some personal opinions, experiences, or examples that relate to the student's life and opinions. There is a lack of depth to the writing, it is just some form of responding to the question with little evidence of deep thought.	Student does not respond to all reflective writing activities. When student does respond, responses are very brief and just answer the question in a short sentence.
Interview	Student completes both interviews and writes responses that elaborate for the question. The written responses allow for class discussion on the topic.	Student completes one interview and writes elaborative responses for the question.	Student does not complete the interview or there is evidence that student did not complete the interview truthfully.
Reflection responses to interview questions	Student wrote thoughtful, detailed, reflective answers to all questions. Answers are not a simple response but draw on responses from interviews and uses knowledge of discipline from class and life experiences.	Students wrote responses to all or most questions but are lacking depth or detail. Answers are not reflections of knowledge of discipline from class and life experiences.	Students completed 2 or fewer questions. Answers were one sentence or less and did not use detail or apply knowledge.