

# Mark Twain Boyhood Home & Museum

Unit Plan for *Tom Sawyer*

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## “Family Story Written in the Style of Mark Twain”

UNIT PLAN for <i>Tom Sawyer</i>	
<b>Concept or Topic:</b> Story Writing	<b>Suggested Grade Level(s)/Course:</b> 6th or 7th
<b>Subject:</b> Literature	<b>Suggested Time Frame:</b> 6 days; amount of time per day varies
<b>Objective(s):</b> Students will interview a grandparent or other person from that generation, then rewrite the story they have heard in 300 - 400 words using Mark Twain's style and including 8 - 10 words/phrases from the vocabulary list.	
<b>Common Core State Standards:</b> CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.  CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.6.1.e Recognize variations from standard English in their own and others' writing and speaking, and identify and use strategies to improve expression in conventional language.	
<b>Assessments:</b> 1) Story written in the style of Mark Twain. 2) Class game of concentration.	
<b>Vocabulary (Tiers 2 &amp; 3):</b> 1) I don't give a dead rat what ... 2) by and by 3) smouch 4) I bet I will! 5) go down the road a piece 6) Whilst we was a standing there... (or similar verb construction) 7) That does beat all! 8) to cipher 9) vittles 10) Why land sakes! 11) peachy 12) fixing to 13) reckon	

- 14) fetch
- 15) says I
- 16) a fine howdy-do
- 17) Why dog my cats!
- 18) bully
- 19) No, indeed!
- 20) My, my!
- 21) learn (meaning teach)

**Subject Area Integration:**  
Social Studies/Geography

**Background Information Required for Lesson:**  
I will have read *Tom Sawyer* to the students, and they will have written and performed a 5-act play about the book.

**Materials:**  
Grandparent or other adult of that generation, typed list of tier-3 words, concentration cards

**Technology:**  
Students' computers and printers at home

**Related Twain Quotes/Passages:**  
"The right word may be effective, but no word was ever as effective as a rightly-timed pause." ([www.twainquotes.com/Word.html](http://www.twainquotes.com/Word.html))

**Lesson Sequence:**  
**Day 1: (15 minutes)**  
**Hook/Intro:**  
Remind us of a funny story that Mark Twain told in *Tom Sawyer*. Why was it funny? Did anything in his word choice increase your enjoyment of the story?

**Teaching of the Concept(s):**  
1. Have students copy the assignment; namely, to ask a grandparent or other adult of that generation to tell them a short, humorous story from their childhood.  
2. Write the story.  
3. Bring the story to class in 4 days (giving time over the weekend.)

**Suggested Questions:**  
How can you get ahold of this person besides a personal visit? Remember: A live or over the phone interview is better than e-mail. Why?

**Learning Activity:**  
Homework to find a person to interview.

**Review/Closure:**  
Tell your partner who you might try to contact and how.

**Day 2: (30 minutes)****Hook/Intro:**

Pass out list of words/phrases from Mark Twain. Read them to your partner.

**Teaching of the Concept(s):**

1. Go over list. Students define and fill in “modern” translations.
2. Have students copy the assignment; namely, to rewrite their grandparent’s story into a story of 300 - 400 words written in the style of Mark Twain, using 8 - 10 of the terms from the vocabulary list. Underline the terms as you use them. Be especially careful of your use of quotations in dialogues. Proofread carefully!
3. Type and print. Due in 3 days.

**Suggested Questions:**

Looking over the list, which words/phrases seem like they would fit your story? Why?

**Learning Activity:**

Homework

**Review/Closure:**

Begin telling your partner your story orally, using some of the terms.

**Day 3: (10 minutes)****Teaching of the Concept(s):**

1. Give your story to your partner to read for understanding and to edit.
2. Give it to another person to read for understanding and to edit.
3. Bring corrected version the next day.

**Suggested Questions:****Learning Activity:**

Homework

**Review/Closure:**

Any questions?

Show Scoring Guide.

**Scoring Guide:** Score this assignment on 3 criteria, rated 1 - 5. Use these categories: Quality of writing/editing, Correct use of given vocabulary, and Correct length of story.

**Day 4: (30 - 35 minutes)****Hook/Intro:**

- 1) Project this paragraph by Mark Twain from “How to Tell a Story” (<http://twain.lib.virginia.edu/onstage/how2tell.html>). Have students read it quietly to themselves, then read aloud to them, before lastly reading it sentence by sentence and asking for explanations as to what Twain means.

"The pause is an exceedingly important feature in any kind of story, and a frequently recurring feature, too. It is a dainty thing, and delicate, and also uncertain and treacherous; for it must be exactly the right length--no more and no less--or it fails of its purpose and makes trouble. If the pause is too short the impressive point is passed, and the audience have had time to divine that a surprise is intended--and then you can't surprise them, of course."

- 2) Using Buck's riddle from Chapter 17 for Huck Finn (<https://americanliterature.com/author/mark-twain/book/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/chapter-17>), shown below, about Moses and the candle, show students about how a rightly-timed pause can improve the telling of a story.

"When we got upstairs to his room, he got me a coarse shirt and a roundabout and pants of his, and I put them on. While I was at it he asked me what my name was, but before I could tell him, he started to telling me about a blue jay and a young rabbit he had caught in the woods day before yesterday, and he asked me where Moses was when the candle went out. I said I didn't know; I hadn't heard about it before, no way.

"Well, guess," he says.

"How'm I going to guess," says I, "when I never heard tell about it before?"

"But you can guess, can't you? It's just as easy."

"Which candle?" I says.

"Why, any candle," he says.

"I don't know where he was," says I; "where was he?"

"Why, **(insert pause here)** he was in the dark! That's where he was!"

"Well, if you knowed where he was, what did you ask me for?"

"Why, blame it, it's a riddle, don't you see?"

**Teaching of the Concept(s):**

1. Have students read their story to themselves, finding the place(s) where they will make their effective pause(s) (for example, just before the "punchline").
2. Get students into groups of four to read stories to each other. Listen carefully for the pause. Use your best Missouri accent. (Check Accent Tag - Southwest Missouri on YouTube):  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v6yS\\_NVtfPQ&t=17s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v6yS_NVtfPQ&t=17s)
3. When all readers are finished, have each group select their best story/reader to read their story to the class. Reader must agree.

**Suggested Questions:**

- 1) How were the stories? Did you hear a very effective pause? What effect did it have on you?
- 2) Have you found corrections/improvements in your own story?

**Learning Activity:**

Homework for the next day - turn in final, corrected story.

**Review/Closure:**

Any questions?

Pass out copy of Scoring Guide to attach to final paper.

**Day 5: (20 - 25 minutes)****Teaching of the Concept(s):**

1. Selected readers read story to class.
2. Feedback on stories, reading, and pauses from listeners.
3. Collect all corrected stories.
4. Tell your partner what you learned by doing this activity. Then, have students share their thoughts with the whole class.

**Suggested Questions:**

Why did we spend so much time doing this activity? Why else? (conversations with grandparents, who crave this interaction)

**Learning Activity:**

Homework: Read or send your corrected story to the person you interviewed.

**Review/Closure:**

What did you learn from this writing activity?

**Day 6: (25 minutes)****Hook/Intro:**

After hearing the vocabulary words used so many times, are you an expert at them? We'll see.

**Teaching of the Concept(s):**

1. Play Concentration game as a whole-class activity with as many of the words as possible.
2. When a student makes a match, they must use it in a sentence, then translate the sentence into "modern-speak."

**Homework (for the unit):**

See the daily plans.

**Strategies for Exceptional Students (for the unit):**

Writing is innately self-differentiating.

**Suggested Follow-Up Activities (for the unit):**

Keep reading short stories of Mark Twain with the class throughout the year, including "The Golden Arm."