The Adventures of Tom Sawyer

Story by
Mark Twain

Adapted for the Stage by
Timothy Mason

The Adventures of Tom Sawyer was first presented by The Children’s Theatre Company for the 1985-1986 season.

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THE CHARACTERS

TOM SAWYER
HUCKLEBERRY FINN
MARK TWAIN
AUNT POLLY
SID
JIM
MUFF POTTER
INJUN JOE
DOC ROBINSON
MR. DOBBINS
BECKY THATCHER
JOE HARPER
REVEREND FORBES
JUDGE THATCHER
MRS. HARPER
PROSECUTOR
DEFENDER (MARK TWAIN)

OTHER CHILDREN AND ADULTS, INHABITANTS OF ST. PETERSBURG, MISSOURI

(AMY LAWRENCE, BEN ROGERS, SUSAN HARPER, GRACIE MILLER, WILL HANLEY
JACK TAYLOR, HANK, SHERIFF THOMPKINS, MOTHER HOPKINS, RIVERBOAT
CAPTAIN, RIVERBOAT CREWMAN, etc.)

THE SINGER

(The Singer referred to throughout the script is the musical narrative. It may be a single
tenor voice, or a small instrumental and vocal ensemble, depending on the form selected.
In the original production, the Singer was actually three costumed musicians, inhabit-
ants of St. Petersburg; a fiddler, a banjo player, and a guitar player; they also played
harmonica and ham-bone percussion; one was a tenor and another a bass. They moved
in and out of the action of the play, just as Mr. Twain both narrates and participates.)
THE SETTING

The Mississippi River is the dominant unseen character in the play.

A series of levels and platforms, all constructed of rough-hewn planks and all suggestive of a river wharf. Scattered hanging ropes and tackles. The set facilitates the almost continuous scene-to-scene flow of the script, with the assistance of area lighting and directorial focus.

General scenic locations are indicated in the script by the following labels:

The Slope (a series of broad steps which become the school room, courtroom, hillside, Aunt Polly’s sitting room, etc.)

The Graveyard (at the top of the slope, also serves as preacher’s pulpit, judge’s bench, island lookout, etc.)

Center Pier (broad down-center playing area, a portion of which lifts up from the floor to form the white-wash fence)

The Cave (an opening just left of center, beneath the graveyard, used throughout the play for exits and entrances, a street, etc., before it becomes the dark gaping mouth of the cave)

Upper Pier Left (which is also the Singer’s platform)

Lower Pier Left

Upper Pier Right (which is Tom’s bedroom, the church choir loft, etc.)

Lower Pier Right
(A single fiddle begins the hymn tune in the darkness. Then it is joined by the Singer.)

SINGER

SHALL WE GATHER AT THE RIVER
WHERE BRIGHT ANGEL FEET HAVE TROD
WITH THE CRYSTAL TIDE FOREVER
FLOWING BY THE THRONE OF GOD

YES! WE WILL GATHER BY THE RIVER
THE BEAUTIFUL, THE BEAUTIFUL RIVER...

(The distant barking of a dog. The Singer continues beneath the following speech, gradually fading.)

MR. TWAIN

St. Petersburg, Missouri. A shabby little village on the banks of the Mississippi. Eighteen forty-two, or thereabouts. I forget.

(A distant indistinguishable shout of a mother calling her child home.)

My name is Mark Twain, and I once wrote a story call The Adventures of Tom Sawyer. Some of you may have read that book. Others not. It is not a matter of great significance. Because I am going to tell it to you now. As best I can remember . . . Remember . . . St. Petersburg, and summer, and a boy, and the whole blessed town, early in June, eighteen forty-two. Or forty-three. I forget.

TOM SAWYER

(In the graveyard area with Huckleberry Finn.)

How does it go, Huck?

HUCK

Barley-corn, barley-corn, injun-meal shorts,
Spunk-water, spunk-water, swaller these warts . . .

(Lights on them fade.)
Remember a white-lace petticoat and a pair of pig-tails, oh, Becky . . .

(Becky Thatcher runs into a pool of light on the center pier.)

BECKY

All right, Tom. I'll whisper it in your ear. But you must promise you'll never tell, will you, Tom? Ever? Ever and forever and forever . . .

(She runs off and her light fades. It is replaced by a harsh mid-afternoon glare surrounding the cave entrance. Several men lean against posts and squat on the ground.)

TWAIN

Forever and ever . . . Remember . . . Muff Potter, forever drunk and in need of tobacco.

MUFF

Gimme a chaw'v tobacker, Hank.

HANK

Cain't. I hain't got but one chaw left, Muff. Ask Jack.

MUFF

I wisht you'd len' me a chaw, Jack, I jist this minute give Ben Thompson the last chaw I had . . .

JACK

You give him a chaw, did you? So did yer dead sister's cat's grandmother. You pay me back the chaws you've already borry'd off'n me. Muff Potter, and I'll loan you one or two ton of it.

(Lights on them fade.)

TWAIN

St. Petersburg, on the banks of the Mississippi. Summertime, eighteen forty-two, or maybe forty-three, I forget. I do remember . . . the Sabbath day.

(Lights up on the Preacher, standing at the top of the slope. The Choir sits in pews on the upper right pier.)
PREACHER

(A universal preacher's intonation.)

Remember the Sabbath-day, to keep it holy.

Which being anxious, can add one cubit to his span of life?

And why troubled over what ye shall put on?

Consider the lilies of the field . . .

They neither spin . . .

Yet I say unto you, not even Solomon in all his glory . . .

TWAIN

(Suddenly appearing amid the choir on the upper right pier.)

I remember Solomon in all his glory. Who wouldn't.

PREACHER

You there! In the choir! Please to hush up!

TWAIN

(Rising and walking down to the edge of the pier.)

The choir always tittered and whispered all through the services.

(A high female titter from the choir.)

There was once a church choir that was not bad-mannered, but I have forgotten where it was, now. It was a great many years ago, and I think it was in some foreign country.
THE CHOIR

YES WE WILL GATHER BY THE RIVER,
THE BEAUTIFUL, THE BEAUTIFUL RIVER . . .

(Lights on Choir fade.)

TWAIN

The river! I remember the river!

(With whoops and cries and musical accompaniment on the banjo and fiddle, five naked boys run across the uppermost platform, leap upstage in the air and plummet down into the river, with the sound of a great splash.)

The river and summer and summer nights thick with fog.

(All lights grow dim and murky and tinged with blue. The sound of a paddle-wheel steamboat on the river, a fog horn, and muffled shouts.)

RIVERBOAT CREWMAN

(Standing with a measuring line on the lower left pier.)

Half twain! Half twain! Half twain!

RIVERBOAT CAPTAIN

(Standing on the upper left pier, above the Crewman.)

Let her go about!

CREWMAN

Let her go about! Ease, starboard! Strong on the larboard! Starboard, give way!

CAPTAIN

Cramp her up to the bar! What are you standing up through the middle of the river for?

CREWMAN

Starboard, give way!
CAPTAIN

Whar’n the hell you goin’ to! Cain’t you see nothin’, you egg-suckin’, sheep-stealin’, one-eyed son of a stuffed monkey!

(Lights on Captain and Crewman begin to fade, river sounds continue at lower level.)

TWAIN

(In a pool of light on the lower right pier.)

I wished I could talk like that.

CREWMAN

(From the near-darkness.)

Mark twain!

TWAIN

Bless my soul, I wished I could talk like that.

(All river sounds fade.)

SINGER

SHALL WE GATHER AT THE RIVER THAT FLOWS BY THE THRONE OF GOD...

TWAIN

St. Petersburg. A little village in Missouri, so shabby that if I were given the choice of spending eternity in Heaven or there, I’d take St. Petersburg every time.

HUCK

(Running on past Twain, with Tom following close behind.)

No, no, no! That ain’ it!

Barley-corn, barley-corn, injun-meal shorts,
Spunk-water, spunk-water, swaller these warts...

and then you walk away quick, seven steps, with your eyes shut, and turn around three times, and all your warts is gone!
TOM

Well, it sounds right. Did you ever try it, Huck?

HUCK

No, but old Mother Hopkins told me.

TOM

Mother Hopkins! Well, I reckon it is right then. Becuz they say she's a witch.

HUCK

Say? Why, Tom, I know she's a witch . . .

(The boys part company with a ritualistic gesture which should be repeated at various times throughout the play: they both lick the tips of their thumbs and then press the thumbs together. Tom runs up the slope into darkness. Huck crosses left slowly as Twain makes the following speech.)

TWAIN

Mother Hopkins wasn't quite what you'd call refined. Mother Hopkins wasn't quite what you'd call unrefined. Mother Hopkins was the kind of person that keeps a parrot.

(Mother Hopkins jumps out of the shadows beneath the upper left pier, parrot on her shoulder squawks, Huck jumps and runs off. Light on her fades. Light on Tom in his bedroom rises.)

TOM

Lemme see.

Barley-corn, barley-corn, injun-meal shorts,
Spunk-water, spunk-water, swaller these warts!

(He examines his hands.)

Must be it takes some time to work.

(He looks up and notices the Singer on the upper left pier.)

Howdy.
SINGER

Howdy, Tom.

TOM

(Addressing the audience directly.)

Anyway, my name is Tom Sawyer, and Mr. Twain, he put me in a book. And some of what he wrote is even true. As for the rest of it . . . well . . . Mr. Twain says that he was born honest. But it wore off later on. I don’t know nothin’ about that, but I’m glad he put my friend, Huck, in it. And Aunt Polly and my half-brother, Sid. Though I don’t much care for him. I’m even glad he put Injun Joe in it, cuz what kind of a story would it be without him?

(Lights on him fade.)

TWAIN

Summertime. St. Petersburg. The Mississippi, and a boy named Sawyer. Tom Sawyer.

(During the preceding speech, Twain walks up the slope. As he passes, Aunt Polly appears, wiping her hands on her apron.)

AUNT POLLY

Tom? Tom!

(She bustles past him down the slope.)

TWAIN

He was not the Model Boy of the village.

AUNT POLLY

You — Tom! I never did see the beat of that boy! You-u-u-u Tom!

TWAIN

Oh, the village had its Model Boy. And he had our undivided contempt.

SID

(Coming down from his bedroom to Aunt Polly.)

Tom’s hiding in the fruit cellar, Mother. He’s been into the jam.
AUNT POLLY

(With barely disguised distaste.)

Thank you, Sid.

(Shouting into the fruit cellar.)

You — Tom!

(She pulls Tom out by an ear.)

TOM

I'll get you for that, Sid. See if I don't.

AUNT POLLY

Tom! Look at your hands! And look at your mouth! What is that truck?

TOM

I don't know, Aunt Polly.

AUNT POLLY

Well I do. It's jam — that's what it is. Forty times I've said if you didn't let that jam alone I'd skin you. Hand me that switch.

(The mimed switch is produced, Aunt Polly brandishes it above Tom, the peril is desperate.)

TOM

(Pointing off.)

My gracious! Look a' there, Aunt Polly!

AUNT POLLY

(Whirling around and shrieking.)

What is it!

(Tom give one jab to Sid's belly, two to his ear, jumps up, runs R past Sid, catches hold of upper pier right, spins and drops to the floor.)
SID

Owww!

AUNT POLLY

Tom!

TOM

(Whooping like an Indian.)

Woo-woo-woo-woo-woo-woo-woo-woo!

(He turns and runs off. Aunt Polly stands surprised for a moment, then begins to laugh. Sid is whimpering.)

AUNT POLLY

Hang that boy, can’t I never learn anything? Ah, but old fools is the biggest fools there is.

(To Sid.)

What are you carrying on for, boy? You ain’t gonna die from it, I suppose. Now get off with you and get to school.

SID

(Sulking)

Yes, ma’am.

(Sid turns and mopes slowly off.)

AUNT POLLY

And make sure Tom gets there, too!

SID

(Instantly jubilant.)

Oh, yes ma’am, I shore will, ma’am!

(He runs out.)
AUNT POLLY

(Sweeping the down right pier with a real broom.)

I ain't doin' my duty by Tom Sawyer, and that's the Lord's truth. But laws-a-me, he's my own dead sister's boy, poor thing, and I ain't got the heart to thrash him, somehow. Though I oughter. And if it's the Lord's will I thrash that boy, then I just will . . . the next time. Only I pray the Lord Tom don't make me laugh again—it's so dang hard to hit him when I'm a-laughin'.

II

(Continuous with the preceding. A rush of children from left to right, laughing and shouting, school-books in their arms. Cries of "Morning, Miss Polly!" They exit off R, Aunt Polly climbs the slope and exits. Doc Robinson appears beneath the upper right pier. He looks about him furtively and then motions to the dark shapes behind him in the shadows. They come down and join him on the lower right pier: Muff Potter and Injun Joe.)

DOC ROBINSON

What the devil are you two hounding me in the streets for? And in broad daylight! You have your instructions!

MUFF POTTER

Oh, we got yer instrukshuns awright, Doc. We jist ain't got yer money yet.

ROBINSON

I told you I'd make payment when you'd finished your work, Muff Potter.

MUFF

Well, what you tol' us and what we wants is two diff'rent things, seemin'ly.

INJUN JOE

You give us that money now, Robinson.
ROBINSON

You listen to me, Joseph . . .

INJUN JOE

*Injun Joe* is good enough for me, *Doc*.

ROBINSON

(After a brief hesitation.)

Oh, curse you both!

(He takes bills from his pocket.)

There! Five dollars. And see you don't spend it on whiskey, Muff Potter. You're no good to me drunk.

INJUN JOE

Oh, we're plenty good to you, *Doctor* Robinson. You couldn't do without us, I reckon.

ROBINSON

Now leave me alone . . .

INJUN JOE

Till tomorrow night, Doc. In the graveyard, with two shovels and a pine box.

ROBINSON

. . . And don't ever talk to me in the street again!

(Robinson strides off UC to the mouth of the cave, where Tom and Huck have just appeared. Injun Joe and Muff Potter fall back into the shadows beneath the pier and vanish.)

TOM

Mornin', Doc.

ROBINSON

(Startled.)

(Robinson exits U through the cave.)

HUCK

(With a gratified chuckle.)

That Doc Robinson—he allas treats me like I was folks. I like that in a man, makes me feel good.

SID

(Running down out of cave to the boys, but keeping his distance.)

Tom—you git on to school!

TOM

I don't gotta mind you, Sid!

SID

I'm tellin' Aunt Polly you talkin' with the riff-raff!

HUCK

(Picking Sid up by the back of his trousers.)

Riff-raff!

(Sid "runs" without getting anywhere.)

You best keep on runnin', boy!

(Huck releases Sid, who edges past and then breaks into a run, R. Tom mimes picking up clods of dirt and hurling them after Sid.)

TOM

I'll lick you, Sid! I swear I will!

(Exit Sid R. Enter Mark Twain, R, dusting off his white jacket which has received the benefit of Tom's anger—real dirt on his jacket.)

TWAIN

(To the audience.)

It's a bombardment. It's an outrage. It's dirt.
(A light on Huck alone, amusing himself. Perhaps he flaps his wings like a bird, turns his back to the audience and pees, lights his pipe and checks the contents of the sack he carries. All this slowly, in a contemplative fashion, while Twain speaks.)

TWAIN

That creature there is Huckleberry Finn, son of the town drunkard. Huckleberry comes and goes as he pleases—he does not have to go to school, or to church, and there is no one to tell him to wash or to put on a clean shirt. He knows how to smoke a pipe and he can swear wonderfully. In short, everything that goes to make life precious, that boy has.

Huckleberry is cordially hated by all the mothers in St. Petersburg, because he is idle and lawless and vulgar and bad—and because all their children love him. Tom, of course, is under strict orders not to play with him.

(We see Tom poke his head out from behind a post.)

So he plays with him every chance he gets.

(Tom runs up to the graveyard platform to join Huck. Twain walks slowly off L.)

TOM

What's that you got in the bag, Huck?

HUCK

Dead cat.

TOM

Lemme see him.

(Tom digs in the sack and comes out with a rigid cat.)

My, he's pretty stiff. Where'd you get him?

HUCK

Bought him off'n a boy.

TOM

Say—what is dead cats good for, Huck?

HUCK

Cure warts with.
TOM

Bob Tanner tried it with a dead cat, and it didn't work.

HUCK

Bob Tanner is the wartiest boy in this town. Bob Tanner wouldn't have a wart on him if'n he know how to work dead cats.

TOM

How do you do it, Huck?

HUCK

Well, you jist take yer cat and go to the graveyard 'long about midnight when somebody that was wicked has been buried. And when it's midnight, a devil will come, or mebby two or three, and when they're takin' that wicked feller away, you throw yer cat after 'em and say, "Devil follow corpse, cat follow devil, warts follow cat, I'm done with you."

Shoot. Fetch any wart.

TOM

Say, Huck. When you going to try that cat?

HUCK

Tomorrer night. They're a-buryin' old Hoss Williams, and he was wicked enough, I reckon.

TOM

Kin I go with?

HUCK

O'course—if you ain't afeard.

TOM

That ain't likely. Will you meow beneath my winda?

HUCK

I suppose—but you meow back this time. Last time, you kep' me a-meowin' around till the neighbors went to throwin' rocks at me.
TOM

I will, Huck, for sure this time. Tomorrer night.

HUCK

Tomorrer night.

TOM

(Running off.)

Mee-oow!

III

(In an instant, the school children spill over the top of the uppermost platform and down the slope into the schoolroom, noisily taking their seats. Mr. Dobbins appears, R, standing at his desk. He brings his stick down on the desk with a crack and all is silent.)

MR. DOBBINS

Children?

CHILDREN

(Sing-song unison.)

Good morning, Mr. Dobbins.

DOBBINS

Decent children sit up straight in their seats, like little soldiers.

CHILDREN

(Readjusting themselves to imitate little soldiers.)

Yes, sir, Mr. Dobbins.
DOBBINS

*Decent* children don't slouch in their seats like Joe Harper there. Stand up, Harper.

JOE

(Standing.)

Yes, sir.

DOBBINS

(Standing above him.)

Now, class. Is this boy a good little soldier?

CHILDREN

(Drearily.)

No, sir.

DOBBINS

No, indeed. Sit down, Harper.

(Joe Harper sits. Mr. Dobbins continues his rounds.)

Oh, oh, oh. I see one little girl who is looking out the window. I am afraid she thinks that I am out there somewhere—perhaps up in one of the trees, making a speech to the little birds . . .

(Mr. Dobbins enjoys his own devastating wit for a moment. Polite titter from the class. Dobbins suddenly interrupts it with a crash of his stick on the desk.)

Silence!

(There is silence.)

Amy Lawrence.

(She pops up out of her seat.)

Spell the word, "latitude."
AMY
“Latitude.” L-A-T-I-T-U-D.

(Mr. Dobbins harpoons a glance at her.)

E. “Latitude.”

(She sits down.)

DOBBINS

Joe Harper?

(Joe Harper stands. As he does so, Dobbins turns his back and and two boys on either side of Harper tickle him.)

What is the meaning of the word . . . “latitude.”

JOE

(Trying to recover.)


DOBBINS

Joe Harper!

JOE

Uh, yes sir, Mr. Dobbins? What was it you wanted to know again?

DOBBINS

Sit down, Harper!

(He attempts to do so, but the boy to his right has placed a ruler on end for Joe to sit on. Joe springs up again.)

Harper!

JOE

Yes, sir.

DOBBINS

Sit down!
(Doing so.)

Yes, sir.

DOBBINS

You will write forty line. "I will not be such a fool in the future."

JOE

Yes, sir.

DOBBINS

The rest of you. Open your readers to page twenty-one.

(The children open their books and bend over them studiously. In the subsequent hush, Tom Sawyer appears at the top of the uppermost platform.)

Sawyer! Come here!

(Tom hesitates, begins to do an about-face.)

Thomas Sawyer! Come back here at once!

(Tom turns back and descends the slope until he is face to face with Dobbins at his desk.)

Well. What was it this time, to make you so late? Hmm? Is your Aunt Polly on her deathbed again? Like she was on Tuesday? Or did you stop to give a basket of eggs and ham to a poor family, as you so kindly did on Monday?

TOM

(After a slight hesitation and a backward glance at Becky Thatcher.)

No, sir. No... I stopped... I STOPPED TO TALK TO HUCKLEBERRY FINN!

(A gasp from students and teacher alike, and then a dreadful pause.)

DOBBINS

(Quietly, with relish.)

This is the most astonishing confession I have ever heard! You will be whipped, boy! You will remain after school to be whipped!
TOM

Yes, sir.

DOBBINS

And in the meantime, you can go and sit with the girls!

(Titter from the class, catcalls as Tom makes his way into the girls' section. He sits down next to Becky Thatcher and the lights on the school room fade. A thin, lyrical melody from the fiddle.)

TWAIN

Which, of course, was exactly what Tom wanted. A seat next to a lovely blue-eyed creature named Becky Thatcher. Until a week ago, Tom had loved a certain Amy Lawrence. To distraction. He would have gladly died for her. But of course, that was last week.

(Lights on Tom and Becky intensify, remain dim on the rest of class.)

TOM

Do you like rats?

BECKY

Rats? Of course not! I hate them!

TOM

(Switching tactics.)

Oh! Well, o'course, I hate 'em too. Live ones. But I mean, dead ones, to swing around yer head with a string.

BECKY

No, I mostly don't care for rats either way. What I like is chewing gum.

TOM

Oh, I should say so! I wisht I had some right now.

BECKY

Do you? I've got some. I'll let you chew it awhile, but you have to give it back.

(The wad of chewing gum changes hands furtively.)
TOM
It’s all right. Nobody’s lookin’. Say, Becky, was you ever engaged?

BECKY
What?

TOM
Engaged to be married.

BECKY
Why, no.

TOM
Would you like to?

BECKY
I suppose so. I don’t know. What’s it like?

TOM
Like? Why it ain’t like anything. You only just tell a boy that you love him forever and ever, and then you kiss and that’s all there is to it. Shoot. It’s easy.

BECKY
What do you have to kiss for?

TOM
Why, that’s, you know — well, they always do it.

BECKY
Everybody?

TOM
Why, sure! Come on, say you love me.

BECKY
No!
TOM

Please?

BECKY

...Tomorrow.

TOM

No, now. Just whisper it, that's all.

BECKY

Well, you turn your face away so you can't see. And you mustn't ever tell anybody—will you, Tom? Ever?

(Tom shakes his head, Becky leans close to his ear and whispers.)

TOM

Hooo-ee! Now it's all over but the kiss, and that ain't nothin' at all.

(Tom raises Becky's slate in front of their faces and they kiss behind it.)

See? Ain't it nice to be engaged?

BECKY

Oh, Tom it's ever so nice! I never even heard of it before.

TOM

Oh, shoot. It's lots of fun. Why, when me and Amy Lawrence was engag...

(Tom suddenly realizes his blunder.)

BECKY

Oh, Tom! You mean I ain't the first girl you've ever been engaged to?

(She bursts into tears.)
TOM

Don’t cry, Becky! Me and Amy, we wasn’t really engaged, not like you and me . . .

(Mr. Dobbins appears directly behind Tom like one of the avenging angels. He takes Tom by the ears and slowly lifts him out of his seat.)

DOBINS

Becky Thatcher?

BECKY

(Cowering with fright.)

Yes, sir.

DOBINS

This boy bothering you?

BECKY

(Relieved.)

Oh. Oh, yes! That's for certain, Mr. Dobbins, he certainly was botherin' me . . .

(The action shifts to slow motion and although people's mouths move, no sound comes out. Mr. Dobbins, in slow motion, shaking Tom back and forth, Becky looking on, a low light on the other school children reveals them laughing, pointing, jeering with grotesque exaggeration.)

SINGER

BLEST BE THE TIE THAT BINDS
OUR HEARTS IN CHRISTIAN LOVE.
THE FELLOWSHIP OF KINDRED MINDS
IS LIKE TO THAT ABOVE.

TWAIN

Let us draw the curtain of charity over the remainder of this scene.

(The lights on the schoolroom fade.)
(Twain joins in singing the next verse.)

**SINGER & TWAIN**

*WE SHARE OUR MUTUAL WOES,*  
*OUR MUTUAL BURDENS BEAR,*  
*AND OFTEN FOR EACH OTHER FLOWS*  
*THE SYMPATHIZING TEAR.*

(All lights fade except on Twain.)

**TWAIN**

Tom was miserable. It seemed to him that his life was nothing but trouble. In fact, he would almost be willing to pass on into a better world, right there and then, if only his Sunday-school record were clean. Which it wasn't. Oh, she would be sorry some day— they'd all be sorry—when it was too late. Tom went to bed that night devoutly wishing that he could die—but temporarily, temporarily . . .

**IV**

(Tom in his bed. His vision.)

**DOC ROBINSON**

(Closing up his black bag and departing.)

I'm sorry, Aunt Polly. I'm afraid there's nothing more we can do. That sore toe has mortified beyond recall. He was a splendid lad.

(Robinson leaves. Aunt Polly kneels beside Tom's bed.)

**AUNT POLLY**

Oh, Tom, Tom—don't leave us now! I'm sorry for all those thrashings and scoldings I gave you, Tom—please, please . . .
TOM

(In a faint and holy voice.)

That don’t matter none, Aunt Polly. Not now. I know you liked Sid best, and I don’t blame you.

AUNT POLLY

No, Tom, no!

TOM

I forgive you. I forgive you all.

MR. DOBBINS

Thomas Sawyer was the finest student I ever had. Oh, if only I hadn’t treated him so badly. Thomas, if you’ll only come back, you may sit at the head of the class . . . at the head of the class . . . Sid! Sidney! Stop scratching your nose! Can’t you be a good little soldier, like Tom here?

AUNT POLLY

Sid! Go sit in the cellar!

TOM

No, Aunt Polly. Don’t send him away. He can’t help the way he is.

AUNT POLLY

(With a melodramatic gasp.)

Ahhh! Here she comes!

(Becky Thatcher, with a wrapped present.)

BECKY

Oh, Tom, I didn’t mean to be so cruel! I love you, Tom, forever and ever! I brought you a present, Tom. Please take it, and say you forgive me. I wrapped it up special for you, Tom. It’s a package of chewing gum and a dead rat. Please, Tom . . .

(Tom puts a hand to his brow and turns away.)

AUNT POLLY

(Shaking him gently by his nightgown, and sobbing piteously.)

Oh, Tom! Tom! Tom!
(All the others vanish. Aunt Polly’s voice changes to an angry tone. She is still shaking Tom.)

AUNT POLLY

Tom! Tom! You – Tom! Wake up, you idle thing! Did you expect to sleep clear through Saturday?

TOM

(Dreamily.)

I forgive you, Aunt Polly.

AUNT POLLY

You forgive me? What a notion! I’ll forgive you when you’ve white-washed that fence like I told you to.

TOM

But what about my mortified toe?

AUNT POLLY

Your what?

TOM

You mean . . . I’m gonna live?

AUNT POLLY

I am distinctly afraid that that is the case, Tom Sawyer. Now git up outta that bed, you ridiculous creature! And take you mortified toe with you! Forgive me, indeed!

(She leaves the bedroom, Tom pulling on his trousers beneath his nightgown, then pulling the nightgown over his head.)

Two coats a’ whitewash, Tom! You hear me?

(Aunt Polly collides with Twain on her way out.)

Oh! My gracious, I nearly run you down!
TWAIN

That you did, Miss Polly, that you did. You're a tropical storm this morning, Miss Polly — and I pity the man or boy who gets in your way.

AUNT POLLY

(Delighted.)

Oh, the way you talk, sir. I declare, it's almost a pleasure to listen to your foolishness . . .

(Jim runs between them.)

Jim!

(To Twain.)

I beg your pardon.

(To Jim, who has halted in his tracks.)

Jim, get a bucket and fetch the water from town.

JIM

Yes'm.

AUNT POLLY

And Jim . . .

(Jim goes to her. She excuses herself to Twain.)

Pardon me.

(She whispers something in Jim's ear.)

JIM

Yes'm, Miss Polly. Doan you worry 'bout that.

(Jim runs off.)

TWAIN

Good day to you, Miss Polly.
AUNT POLLY

Good day to you, sir.

(Aunt Polly exits off the slope, UC. A little girl jumps rope down-stage from L to R and off. Twain walks down center. He stoops and lifts up a portion of the plank floor, which is counterweighted, to form the white-wash fence. He gives the audience a meaningful look and then exits UC, puffing on his cigar. Tom Sawyer enters from DL, carrying a bucket and a brush. He stops in front of the fence and surveys it with dismay. “Buffalo Gals” starts up on the banjo.)

TOM

(Grieving.)

Jiminy.

(To the audience.)

A body could grow old and die before he was finished with this here fence.

(Tom dips his brush in the bucket — there is no whitewash in it, by the way — and makes a pass at the fence. Then another, and then a third swipe. He steps back to look at his work — compares the insignificant “whitewashed streak” with the far-reaching continent of un-whitewashed fence, and sits down on a lower step of the slope, utterly discouraged. Jim enters from L with a tin pail, singing “Buffalo Gals” on his way to the town pump.)

JIM

BUFFALO GAL, WON'T YOU COME OUT TONIGHT,
COME OUT TONIGHT,
COME OUT TONIGHT?
BUFFALO GAL, WON'T YOU COME OUT TONIGHT,
AND DANCE BY THE LIGHT OF THE MOON . . .

TOM

Hey, Jim.

JIM

Howdy, Tom.

TOM

Say, Jim, I'll fetch the water for you, if you'll whitewash some.
Cain't Tom. Miss Polly, she tole me I got to go an' git dis water an' not to stop foolin' roun' wid nobody. She say she spec' you going to ax me to whitewash, an' she tole me to get along and not let you do it.

TOM

Oh, never mind what she said, Jim. That's the way she always talks. Gimme that bucket — I won't be gone only a minute. She won't ever know.

JIM

Uh-uh. Miss Polly, she'd take an' tar de head off'n me, she would.

TOM

Oh, shoot! She never licks anybody. Only whack's 'em over the head with her thimble, and who cares for that, I'd like to know. Jim — I'll give you a marble. I'll give you this white alley!

JIM

That's a mighty nice marble.

TOM

A white alley, Jim!

JIM

But I'm powerful 'fraid a' Miss Polly . . .

TOM

And besides, if you whitewash some, I'll show you my sore toe!

JIM

(Genuinely excited now.)

Your sore toe! You mean it?

(Tom squats to unwind the bandage around his toe. Jim bends over it with consuming interest. Aunt Polly appears unseen by the boys. She elaborately creeps up behind them, fitting a thimble over her middle finger as she goes. Crack! It come down on Jim's head, followed by a mild slap to his rear. Jim pick ups his bucket and runs off, while Polly gives a perfunctory twist to one of Tom's ears. Tom begins whitewashing furiously, even while she has hold of his ear.)
AUNT POLLY

That's a mighty fine start you got there, Tom. Remember now, two coats.

(Aunt Polly retires, triumphant. Enter Joe Harper, eating an apple and imitating a riverboat.)

JOE

Ding, ding, ding, ding! Let her go about! Ding, ding, ding!

(Breaking off.)

Hey, Tom.

(No answer from Tom.)

You're up a stump, ain't you!

(No response from Tom, who is suddenly very fastidious about his labors.)

Hey, Tom! You got to work, huh?

TOM

(Wheeling around suddenly.)

What? Oh! It's you, Joe. I weren't noticing.

JOE

Sure you weren't. Say, Tom I'm goin' in a-swimmin'. Wanna come? —Oh, no! I suppose you'd druther work, wouldn't you . . .

TOM

(He resumes whitewashing.)

Whatta you call work?

JOE

(A little hesitation.)

Why . . . ain't that work?
TOM

(Punctuating the following with stokes of his brush.)

Mebbe . . . mebbe not. All I know is, it suits Tom Sawyer.

JOE

Oh, come on . . . you don’t mean to let on that you like it?

TOM

Like it? Don’t see why I oughtn’t to like it. Does a boy get a chance to whitewash a fence every day?

JOE

(After a considerable pause, watching Tom.)

Say, Tom . . . let me whitewash a little.

TOM

Mmmm . . . no. No, I reckon it wouldn’t hardly do, Joe. You see, Aunt Polly’s awful particular about this fence—right here on the street and all . . . If it was the back fence, I wouldn’t, and she wouldn’t mind . . . buuuut . . .

JOE

Oh, come on . . . lemme just try. I’d let you, if you was me, Tom.

TOM

(So sincere.)

Joe, I’d like to, honest injun. But Aunt Polly—well, Jim wanted to do it, but she wouldn’t let him. Sid wanted to do it, and she wouldn’t let Sid. Now, if you was to tackle this fence and anything was to happen to it . . .

JOE

Oh, shucks. I’ll be careful. I’ll give you half my apple if you let me.

TOM

No, Joe, now don’t. I’m afeard . . .

JOE

I’ll give you all my apple!
AUNT POLLY

(Thrown away, as they exit.)

Oh, I’m not suggestin’ that I allow Tom to ‘sociate with Huck Finn. That don’t even enter in. No, I’m always sayin’ to him . . .

(The ladies are gone. Tom and Joe remain. Huck emerges from his hiding place to complete the unhappy trio. They sit on their haunches at the bottom of the slope. Twain stands above them.)

TWAIN

Has the world ever beheld three such miserable boys? It’s not likely. Joe Harper hadn’t even touched those rasberry preserves. Least, he didn’t recollect having done so. No, no, it was plain to Joe Harper that his mother simply had no further use for him, and wished he would go away. Tom Sawyer felt the same about his Aunt Polly. If her life would be better off without him, so be it. Huck Finn didn’t have a loving mother or a kindly aunt to make him feel miserable, but he was in mortal terror of Injun Joe. So the three of them decided there was only one honorable choice open to them. They’d run away.

(We see the three boys discussing their possibilities, but they make no sound.)

Joe Harper was all for becoming a hermit, and living in a cave, and dying of starvation. Well, that sounded pretty tempting to the boys, but Tom Sawyer finally convinced them that there were more advantages to a life of crime. And so they all became pirates. Then and there.

(The boys leap to their feet, lick their respective thumbs, and press thumbs together all around. Then all three run off in separate directions. The Singer begins as the boys jump up.)

SINGER

GET ON BOARD, LITTLE CHILDREN,
GET ON BOARD,
WHILE THE MOON IS SHININ’ BRIGHT. (SHININ’ BRIGHT)
GET ON BOARD, DOWN THE RIVER FLOAT,
GONNA RAISE A RUCKUS TONIGHT.

(We see the boys sneaking stolen provisions onto a raft. — N.B. The raft may be realized scenically in a number of different ways. In the original production, it was located down of the apron, in the orchestra pit. It was a plank raft mounted on automobile springs which in turn were mounted on a wagon. Once the boys cast loose from their moorings, a crew member in the orchestra pit moved the wagon slowly from right to left across the pit. Subdued lighting and the motion of the spring-mounted planks created the illusion.)
(Midway through the following stanza, the lights on the boys fade.)

SINGER

GET ON BOARD, LITTLE DOGGIES,
GET ON BOARD,
WHILE THE MOON IS SHININ' BRIGHT
GET ON BOARD AND DOWN THE RIVER FLOAT,
WE GONNA RAISE A RUCKUS TONIGHT.

TWAIN

About a mile below St. Petersburg, where the Mississippi was particularly wide, there was an island. Jackson’s Island. There, they beached their raft, staked out their camp, and began their lives as cut-throats. Or maybe they’d be Indian warriors. It was hard to say.

X

(A screaming Banchee, half-naked and painted with stripes of charcoal, runs shrieking down from the top-most platform, leaps off the over-hanging ledge, and falls with deadly intent upon another Indian brave directly below. It is Tom Sawyer, doing in Joe Harper. Tom raises his tomahawk and strikes Joe a mortal blow. Joe crumples and falls dead. From nowhere, a third painted devil comes roaring out at Tom and fells him after a brief struggle. Huck stands triumphant over the corpses, one of which is still twitching piteously. However, the twitching corpse — Tom Sawyer — suddenly leaps up and tomahawks Huck on the back of the neck. Huck merely turns and looks at Tom with disgust.)

TOM

Fall, Huck! Yer supposed to fall!

HUCK

Whadda you mean, fall? I kilt you dead, Tom Sawyer! Once yer dead, you stay dead!

JOE

(Still supine.)

You lie back down, Tom!
TOM

I weren't dead. I were only wounded!

JOE

(Jumping up.)

That ain't playin' fair, Tom an' you know it!

HUCK

(To Joe.)

What're you doin', Joe Harper? I spose you was only wounded, too!

(A general melee breaks out among the three of them, ending only when all three Indians have fallen. They lie there, luxuriating in the prospect of a life without care, their heads cupped in their hands, staring at the sky, or propped up on an elbow.)

TOM

Ain't it bully out here on this here island?

JOE

It shore is, Tom. Gosh, if the other boys could see us now.

TOM

You know, there's sposed to be treasure buried on this island.

HUCK

That's what Mother Hopkins says. She tole me that this yer island was a camp once, fer river-bandits. An' they buried heaps a' treasure right here somewheres. Unless somebody already done found it.

(A low and distant booming sound.)

JOE

What's that?

HUCK

What's what?
That noise.

(It grow louder.)

TOM

I hear it too.

HUCK

It ain’t thunder.

TOM

It’s comin’ from the other side of the island.

(They get to their feet and scramble up the slope until they stand looking upstage off the other side of the island over the river.)

JOE

What’s that ferryboat doin’? Goin’ back an’ forth across the river like that?

HUCK

An’ all those skiffs, jist a-floatin’ with the stream?

TOM

(Excited.)

I know what it is! Somebody’s drowned!

HUCK

That’s it, Tom! They done that last summer, when Bill Turner got drowned! They fire a cannon over the water, and that makes the body come up. I wonder who it is . . .

JOE

I’d give heaps to know who drowned. By jings, I wisht I was over there now . . .

TOM

Wait a minute . . . wait a minute . . . Huck! Joe! I know who got drowned! It’s us! They all think we got drowned when we never came back, and they’re a-lookin’ for us now—at the bottom of the river!
HUCK

Whoooppeee!

JOE

(Jubilant.)

We's drownded!

TOM

An' they're all a-cryin' and a-moanin' for us . . . Oh, jiminy! It's bully, that's what it is!

(The boys scramble half-way down the upstage side of the set. We can still see their backs, when a man stalks furtively out from the planks beneath them. He wears a long cape and a hood. He stops beneath the overhanging ledge and looks about him. He does not see the boys, and they do not notice him. He unfolds a map and takes his bearings. He paces off a short distance, gets down on all fours and crawls beneath the slope. He immediately finds what he's looking for, and begins to drag it out. It's a small chest, but obviously very heavy. Huck and Joe are still engrossed in the activities on the river, but Tom hears the noise and slowly walks down to the over-hanging ledge. By this time the man has got the chest all the way out of its hiding place. He straightens up and catches his breath just as Tom leans over the edge for a look. Tom drops flat. The man throws off his hood — it's Injun Joe.)

TOM

(Terrified, he hisses back to the other boys.)

Hsssst!

(The boys turn and look at Tom who motions to them. Silently, Huck and Joe climb down behind the upstage side of the set. But Injun Joe has heard the "hiss" too, and draws his knife. Tom slithers in beneath one of the plank steps as Injun Joe goes to the foot of the slope and then starts up it. Tom is hanging now like a monkey to the underside of the over-hanging ledge. Injun Joe walks right over him to the top of the river-bank. He sees no one and starts back down the slope. He sees the raft moored at the edge of the apron. He stops. Then he goes to it.)

INJUN JOE

A raft.

(He wheels around and looks over the area. He turns back to the raft.)
INJUN JOE

Mighta been left here some time ago.

(Pause.)

Might not.

(He wheels around again and stands motionless. Then he walks to where the chest lies, picks it up and walks back to the raft. He sets the chest down.)

We'll just let this here raft travel some . . . on its own.

(The raft is moored to the island by a rope tied to a post. Injun Joe unties it and tosses the rope onto the raft. He gives the raft a shove and watches it move off from the island. Then he picks up the chest and exits off right.)

(Tom drops from his perch to the ground. Huck and Joe slowly emerge from their hiding places. They walk to the edge of the apron and look out disconsolately over the river at their disappearing raft. Their faces are frightened.)

SINGER

I AM A POOR WAYFARING STRANGER,
TRAVELING THROUGH THIS WORLD OF WOE,
AND THERE’S NO SICKNESS, TOIL OR DANGER
IN THAT BRIGHT LAND TO WHICH I GO.

(The lights begin a very slow fade on the boys.)

I’M GOIN’ THERE TO MEET MY BROTHER,
I’M GOIN’ THERE NO MORE TO ROAM,
I’M JUST A-GOIN’ OVER JORDAN,
I’M JUST A-GOIN’ OVER HOME.

(Lights out.)

INTERMISSION