**Learning Objectives**

The goal of this lesson is to provide students an opportunity to explore targeted passages of complex texts. Through teacher Read Alouds, audio listening, careful student independent reading and rereading, and scaffolded discussion of text-dependent questions, students will explore the conundrum Tom Sawyer faced and how he “solved” his problem. Vocabulary is learned from context and writing fosters deeper understanding of text. The lesson culminates in an evidentiary writing activity. Teachers may need to further scaffold the activities to address individual students’ needs depending on the intent of the lesson. When combined with writing about the passage and teacher feedback, students will learn to appreciate how Twain’s humor contains a deeper message, and derive satisfaction from the struggle to master complex text.

**Rationale:** This lesson explores an excerpt from Mark Twain’s *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. This scene is a well-regarded favorite by Twain that illustrates core principles regarding attitudes towards work. The scene, drawn from his novel *Tom Sawyer*, stands on its own and allows for students to read deeply and extract meaning from a relatively brief passage that is rich in humor, insight, and vocabulary. Learning how to identify key passages within a novel for the purposes of close reading is also essential for creating confident independent readers. By looking at this fictional, short story, students will conduct a close, analytic reading to further explore, comprehend, and respond to classic literature.

**Text Title(s):** from *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876) by Mark Twain  
**Genre/Text Structure:** Literary Fiction (novel)

Adapted from Student Achievement Partners Common Core Standards Annotated Teaching Sample for Complex Text:
http://www.achievethecore.org/steal-these-tools/close-reading-exemplars

**Targeted Text Selection – “The Glorious Whitewasher”**

Common Core State Standards (CCSS)  
RL.6-8.1-3 & 6; W.6-8.3 & 9; SL.6-8.1; L.6-8.4-6.  
http://www.corestandards.org/the-standards/english-language-arts-standards/reading-literature-6-12/grade-7/

**Lesson Sequence**

**PERFORMANCE TASK /CULMINATING INDEPENDENT WRITING ASSESSMENT:**

Students will paraphrase different sentences and sections of Twain’s text and then write a narrative inspired by Twain’s message. Teachers might afford students the opportunity to rewrite their narrative or revise their in-class paraphrases after participating in classroom discussion, allowing them to refashion both their understanding of the text and their expression of that understanding.

**Activity 1:**
1. The teacher/students will read “Whitewashing the Fence” from “The Adventures of Tom Sawyer”.
2. Students should discuss and write about the initial meaning they have made from reading “Whitewashing the Fence” from Tom Sawyer.

**Activities 2, 3 and 4:**
1. Returning to the text, the teacher asks students a small set of guiding questions about analyzing how particular elements of a story or drama interact (e.g., how setting shapes the characters or plot).
2. The targeted text should be in front of the students as they engage in their discussions. Read and Say Something- D3 at http://www.classzone.com/cz/books/ml_lit_gr07/secured/teacher/resources/pdfs/best_practices/BPTK_MS_Tab_D.pdf
3. Graphic organizers or reader response journals serve as a means to organize thoughts for prewriting activities.  
http://www.classzone.com/cz/books/ml_lit_gr07/resources/pdfs/graphic_organizers/MS_Character_Profile.pdf  
Mischievous but lovable, Tom Sawyer is a fictional character so well known that he has become a folkloric figure. Even those who have not read *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* may be familiar with the episodes in which Tom tricks his friends into whitewashing his aunt’s fence for him. After carefully analyzing the illustration, explain what character traits Tom would need to persuade his friends to whitewash his aunt’s fence for him.

**Activity 5:**
Write a narrative essay that teaches the same lesson(s) that Tom learns at the end of the passage. Incorporate both the voice of a narrator as well as dialogue in your story.

**GUIDING QUESTION(S):** After thoroughly reading the text several times, would you consider Tom to be a lazy, good-for-nothing boy, or is he an intelligent, high-spirited young man? Use **claims**, from the text to support your answer.

**Possible Answers:** Tom reveals his basic knowledge of human psychology; that is, that a person most desires what cannot be easily attained. Tom is also a fine actor, and he cleverly uses this ability in handling his friends. Thus, Tom is able to use this basic understanding of human nature to get others to do his work for him *and* to pay for the privilege of doing it. Instead of being able to join the others at the town center, he brings the center of the town to him, has others do his work for him, and he ends up with all sorts of treasures. In this way, Twain reveals Tom as a natural leader. Throughout the passage, we will see that Tom is the leader; it will always be “Tom Sawyer’s gang;” it is always Tom’s ideas of what game to play; and Tom is always the winner in games as well as in fights with his peers. He is also usually the winner in his conflicts with the adult world.

Tom’s energy did not last. He began to think of the fun he had planned for this day, and his sorrows multiplied. Soon the free boys would come tripping along on all sorts of delicious expeditions, and they would make a world of fun of him for having to work—the very thought of it burnt him like fire. He got out his worldly wealth and examined it—bits of toys, marbles, and trash; enough to buy an exchange of WORK, maybe, but not half enough to buy so much as half an hour of pure freedom. So he returned his straitened means to his pocket, and gave up the idea of trying to buy the boys. At this dark and hopeless moment an inspiration burst upon him! Nothing less than a great, magnificent inspiration.

He took up his brush and went **tranquilly** to work. Ben Rogers hove in sight **presently**—the very boy, of all boys, whose ridicule he had been dreading. Ben’s gait was the hop-skip-and-jump—proof enough that his heart was light.

**Targeted Text Selection—See Text**

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<td><strong>Underline words with insufficient contextual clues</strong></td>
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<td><strong>BOLD:</strong> Tier Two words</td>
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<td><strong>Sharply limited</strong></td>
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**Teacher Activities and Techniques**

Text-Dependent Questions

(Q1) Describe Tom’s state of mind prior to his inspiration.

**Possible Answer:**
Tom Sawyer is a high spirited boy who was looking forward to a fun day he had planned, but unfortunately he had to work. This realization “burnt him like fire” and he contemplates trying to buy his way out of his labors, only to realize that he doesn’t possess the financial wherewithal to do so—driving him further into a “dark and hopeless” mood.
and his *anticipations* high. He was eating an apple, and giving a long, melodic whoop, at *intervals*, followed by a deep-toned ding-dong-dong, ding-dong-dong, for he was *personating* a steamboat. As he drew near, he *slackened* speed, took the middle of the street, leaned far over to starboard and rounded to *ponderously* and with *laborious* pomp and circumstance—for he was personating the Big Missouri, and considered himself to be drawing nine feet of water. He was boat and captain and engine-bells combined, so he had to imagine himself standing on his own hurricane-deck giving the orders “Stop her, sir! Ting-a-ling-ling!” The headway ran almost out, and he drew up slowly toward the sidewalk. “Ship up to back! Ting-a-ling-ling!” His arms straightened and stiffened down his sides.

“Set her back on the stabbord! Ting-a-ling-ling! Chow! ch-ch-chow-wow! Chow!” His right hand, meantime, describing *stately* circles—for it was representing a forty-foot wheel.

“Let her go back on the labboard! Ting-a-ling-ling! Chow-ch-chow-chow!” The left hand began to describe circles. “Stop the stabbord! Ting-a-ling-ling! Stop the labboard! Come ahead on the stabbord! Stop her! Let your outside turn over slow! Ting-a-ling-ling! Chow-ow-ow! Get out that headline! LIVELY now! Come—out with your spring-line—what’re you about there! Take a turn round that stump with the bight of it! Stand by that stage, now—let her go! Done with the engines, sir! Ting-a-ling-ling! SH’T! SH’T!” (trying the gauge-cocks).

Tom went on *whitewashing*—paid no attention to the steamboat. Ben stared a moment and then said: “Hi-Yi! YOU’RE up a stump, ain’t you!”

No answer. Tom *surveyed* his last touch with the eye of an artist, then he gave his brush another gentle sweep and surveyed the result, as before. Ben *ranged* up alongside of him. Tom’s mouth watered for the apple, but he stuck to his work.

Ben said: “Hello, old chap, you got to work, hey?”

Tom wheeled suddenly and said: “Why, it’s you, Ben! I warn’t noticing.”

“Say—I’m going in a-swimming, I am. Don’t you wish you could? But of course you’d druther

RK—wouldn’t you? Course you would!”

Tom *contemplated* the boy a bit, and said: “What do you call work?”

“Why, ain’t THAT work?”

Tom *resumed* his whitewashing, and answered carelessly: “Well, maybe it is and maybe it ain’t. All I know, is it suits Tom Sawyer.”

“Oh come, now, you don’t mean to let on that you LIKE it?”

---

**Possible answer.**

This is a good question to ask to determine close reading comprehension. There is ample evidence that Tom is well aware of Ben’s presence (“paid no attention to the steamboat”; “Tom’s mouth watered for the apple”) but is feigning surprise (“Why, it’s you, Ben! I warn’t noticing”).

**Possible answer.**

Unlike Tom, Ben’s “heart was light” in anticipation of the fun he would have this day. His carefree attitude is reflected in his impersonation of a steamboat, captain, and even the bells of the engine.

**Picture of a Steamboat**
The brush continued to move.

“Like it? Well, I don’t see why I oughtn’t to like it. Does a boy get a chance to whitewash a fence every day?” That put the thing in a new light. Ben stopped nibbling his apple. Tom swept his brush daintily back and forth—stepped back to note the effect—added a touch here and there—criticized the effect again—Ben watching every move and getting more and more interested, more and more absorbed. Presently he said:

“Say, Tom, let ME whitewash a little.”

Tom considered, was about to consent; but he altered his mind:

“No—no—I reckon it wouldn’t hardly do, Ben. You see, Aunt Polly’s awful particular about this fence—right here on the street, you know—but if it was the back fence I wouldn’t mind and SHE wouldn’t. Yes, she’s awful particular about this fence; it’s got to be done very careful; I reckon there ain’t one boy in a thousand, maybe two thousand, that can do it the way it’s got to be done.”

“No—is that so? Oh come now—lemme just try. Only just a little—I’d let YOU, if you was me, Tom.”

“Ben, 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 don’t you see how I’m fixed? If you was to tackle this fence and anything was to happen to it—” “Oh, shucks, I’ll be just as careful. Now lemme try. Say—I’ll give you the core of my apple.”

“Well, here—No, Ben, now don’t. I’m afeard—” “I’ll give you ALL of it!”

Tom gave up the brush with reluctance in his face, but alacrity in his heart. And while the late steamer Big Missouri worked and sweated in the sun, the retired artist sat on a barrel in the shade close by, dangled his legs, munched his apple, and planned the slaughter of more innocents. There was no lack of material; boys happened along every little while; they came to jeer, but remained to whitewash. By the time Ben was fagged out, Tom had traded the next chance to Billy Fisher for a kite, in good repair; and when he played out, Johnny Miller bought in for a dead rat and a string to swing it with—and so on, and so on, hour after hour. And when the middle of the afternoon came, from be-ing a poor poverty-stricken boy in the morning, Tom was literally rolling in wealth. He had besides the things before mentioned, twelve marbles, part of a jews-harp, a piece of blue bottle-glass to look through, a spool cannon, a key that wouldn’t unlock anything, a fragment of chalk, a glass stopper of a decanter, a tin soldier, a couple of tadpoles, six fire crackers, a kitten with only one eye, a brass doorknob, a dog-collar—but no dog—the handle of a knife, four pieces of orange-peel, and a dilapidated old window sash.

He had had a nice, good, idle time all the while—plenty of company—and the fence had three coats of whitewash on it! If he hadn’t run out of whitewash he would have bankrupted every boy in the village.

Tom said to himself that it was not such a hollow world, after all. He had discovered a great law of human action, without knowing it—namely, that in order to make a man or a boy covet a thing, it is only necessary to make the thing difficult to attain. If he had been a great and wise philosopher, like the writer of this book, he would now have comprehended that Work consists of whatever a body is OBLIGED to do, and that Play consists of whatever a body is not obliged to do. And this would help him to understand why constructing artificial flowers or performing on a tread-mill is work, while rolling ten-pins or climbing Mont Blanc is only amusement. There are
wealthy gentlemen in England who drive four-horse passenger-coaches twenty or thirty miles on a daily line, in the summer, because the privilege costs them considerable money; but if they were offered wages for the service, that would turn it into work and then they would resign. The boy mused awhile over the substantial change which had taken place in his worldly circumstances, and then wended toward headquarters to report.

Cross Genre Connections OR Across Text or Non-Text Sources: Excerpts from “The Watsons Go to Birmingham” by Christopher Paul Curtis

Kenny is often the subject of bullying at school because he has a lazy eye. Larry Dunn is the biggest bully in the school, but sometimes Kenny is even bullied by Byron and his friend Buphead. One day on the bus, Kenny thinks that his “personal saver” has arrived in the form of a new kid named Rufus. Rufus has a thick Southern accent and shares his clothes with his little brother; Kenny believes that surely Rufus will become the new target of the other kids’ teasing. Kenny is right that Rufus’s arrival takes some of the bullies’ attention away from him. But when he finds himself becoming good friends with Rufus, suddenly it doesn’t feel like much of a relief after all.

Meanwhile, Byron’s behavior gets worse and worse: He skips school, and does things against his parents’ wishes. Byron and Buphead are too “cool” for school and often play hookey. “Give my regards to Clark, Poindexter,” he says, letting Kenny know that he won’t be at school that day. Once, when Momma discovers that Byron has been playing with matches, after being told again and again not to, she is at her wit’s end. She is so angry that she tells Byron that she’s going to burn him as punishment. Joetta and Kenny try to protect Byron from Momma, but she just says, “Don’t you see how Momma has to help Byron understand how dangerous and painful fire can be? Don’t you see we’ve tried everything and nothing seems to get through that rock head of his?”

(Q7) Describe the dynamics of each of the friendships in both the excerpt from “The Adventures of Tom Sawyer” and the excerpt from “The Watsons Go to Birmingham.” How can you relate to each of these characters and their friendships described in each story?

Possible Answer:
Peer pressure is immense, especially during the adolescent years. Therefore, friendships are developed in order to be accepted, protected, or popular. Teens will often be enticed to do things that they may not whole-heartedly want to do. Give examples from the text how Byron is influenced by peer pressure.

“Don’t you see how Momma has to help Byron understand how dangerous and painful fire can be? Don’t you see we’ve tried everything and nothing seems to get through that rock head of his?”

Class discussion(s) Why are friendships so important, especially in middle school?

Writing Directions: Tell about a time that someone you knew acted like he/she wanted to be your friend but actually did something mean to you instead.

Extension Activities/Further Resources
Write a parody of the scene by changing the characters and work being done to reflect a modern dilemma. During the next class period the stories could be peer reviewed and or time set aside to revise them.

Technology:
www.discoveryeducation.com — (see links embedded in pacing guide)
www.classzone.com

Interdisciplinary Connections, if applicable
Graphic Organizers at www.classzone.com
### Key Academic Vocabulary

|--------------|---------|----------|--------|-------------|-------------|------|-----------|-------|------|-------------|-----------|-----------|----------|-----------|--------|---------|------------|-------|-------|-------------|---------|-------|--------|---------|--------|---------|----------|--------|-------|-------------|---------|-------|--------|---------|--------|---------|----------|--------|-------|-------------|---------|-------|--------|---------|--------|---------|

### Vocabulary Idioms/Phrases/Figurative Language/Sayings

- “...his sorrows multiplied”
- “...worldly wealth”
- “...the hop-skip-and-jump”
- “...giving a melodious whoop”
- “...toned ding-dong-dong”
- “...laborious pomp and circumstances”
- “...Ting-a-ling-ling”
- “...Chow-chow-wow! Chow!”
- “...take a turn round”
- “...Hi-Yi...ain’t you!”
- “...mouth watered”
- “...warn’t”
- “...you’d druther work”
- “...lemme just try”
- “...I’m afeared”
- “...poverty-stricken boy”
- “...glass stopper”

### Writing Task

Use McDougal Littell Best Practices under the tab “Writing and Grammar”, click on Graphic Organizers and use the organizer entitled Frayer Model to work with the following vocabulary: sorrows, tripping, wealth, inspiration, magnificent, hove, presently, dread, gait, anticipation, slackened, ponderously, executing, stiffened, stabboard, stately, labboard, springline, lump, bight, whitewashing, surveyed, sweep, ranged, wheeled, resumed, nibbling, absorbed, consent, reckon, shucks, reluctance, jeer, decanter, tadpoles, dilapidated, idle, hollow, amusement, wages, mused, wended. This graphic organizer can be found at [www.classzone.com](http://www.classzone.com).

Explain these phrases, expressions to students and then help students paraphrase them.

- “...his sorrows multiplied”
- “...worldly wealth”
- “...the hop-skip-and-jump”
- “...giving a melodious whoop”
- “...toned ding-dong-dong”
- “...laborious pomp and circumstances”
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- “...poverty-stricken boy”
- “...glass stopper”

Use McDougal Littell Best Practices under the tab “Writing and Grammar”, click on Graphic Organizers and use the organizer entitled 5W’s and H to work on the following writing task:

Explain how the character on the piece we read was able to have other people do his job. What is the writer’s philosophy on the difference between performing a task to amuse you or to be paid for?

Graphic organizer can be found at [www.classzone.com](http://www.classzone.com).
Text Title(s):  
Genre/Text Structure:  
Text Selection  
“The Adventures of Tom Sawyer” and “The Watsons Go to Birmingham”  
Vocabulary  
Text-Dependent Questions

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Paraphrase the opening paragraph.

Return to the text, and ask students a small set of guiding questions about the targeted section.

(Q1) Describe Tom’s state of mind prior to his inspiration.

(Q2) Why was Ben Rogers whooping melodiously? What is the meaning of the last sentence in this selection?

(Q3) Is Tom’s surprise genuine?

(Q4) List at least five of the ways Twain has used so far to describe Tom painting the fence. What impact do these descriptions have on Ben’s attitude towards painting?
course you’d druther WORK—wouldn’t you? Course you would!”

Tom contemplated the boy a bit, and said: “What do you call work?”

“Why, ain’t THAT work?”

Tom resumed his whitewashing, and answered carelessly: “Well, maybe it is and maybe it ain’t. All I know, is it suits Tom Sawyer.”

“Oh come, now, you don’t mean to let on that you LIKE it?”

The brush continued to move.

“Like it? Well, I don’t see why I oughtn’t to like it. Does a boy get a chance to whitewash a fence every day?” That put the thing in a new light. Ben stopped nibbling his apple. Tom swept his brush daintily back and forth—stepped back to note the effect—added a touch here and there—criticized the effect again—Ben watching every move and getting more and more interested, more and more absorbed. Presently he said:

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He had had a nice, good, idle time all the while—plenty of company—and the

(Q5) Why does Tom hesitate to allow Ben to paint the fence? What effect does Tom’s hesitation have on Ben?

(Q6) What great lesson did Tom discover about human nature?
fence had three coats of whitewash on it! If he hadn’t run out of whitewash he would have bankrupted every boy in the village.

Tom said to himself that it was not such a hollow world, after all. He had discovered a great law of human action, without knowing it—namely, that in order to make a man or a boy covet a thing, it is only necessary to make the thing difficult to attain. If he had been a great and wise philosopher, like the writer of this book, he would now have comprehended that Work consists of whatever a body is obliged to do, and that Play consists of whatever a body is not obliged to do. And this would help him to understand why constructing artificial flowers or performing on a treadmill is work, while rolling ten-pins or climbing Mont Blanc is only amusement. There are wealthy gentlemen in England who drive four-horse passenger-coaches twenty or thirty miles on a daily line, in the summer, because the privilege costs them considerable money; but if they were offered wages for the service, that would turn it into work and then they would resign.

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Excerpts from “The Watsons Go to Birmingham” by Christopher Paul Curtis

Kenny is often the subject of bullying at school because he has a lazy eye. Larry Dunn is the biggest bully in the school, but sometimes Kenny is even bullied by Byron and his friend Buphead. One day on the bus, Kenny thinks that his “personal saver” has arrived in the form of a new kid named Rufus. Rufus has a thick Southern accent and shares his clothes with his little brother; Kenny believes that surely Rufus will become the new target of the other kids’ teasing. Kenny is right that Rufus’s arrival takes some of the bullies’ attention away from him. But when he finds himself becoming good friends with Rufus, suddenly it doesn’t feel like much of a relief after all.

Meanwhile, Byron’s behavior gets worse and worse: He skips school, and does things against his parents’ wishes. Byron and Buphead are too “cool” for school and often play hooky. “Give my regards to Clark, Poindexter,” he says, letting Kenny know that he won’t be at school that day. Once, when Momma discovers that Byron has been playing with matches, after being told again and again not to, she is at her wit’s end. She is so angry that she tells Byron that she’s going to burn him as punishment.

Joetta and Kenny try to protect Byron from Momma, but she just says, “Don’t you see how momma has to help Byron understand how dangerous and painful fire can be?” Don’t you see we’ve tried everything and nothing seems to get through that rock head of his?

(Q7) Describe the dynamics of each of the friendships in both the excerpt from “The Adventures of Tom Sawyer” and the excerpt from “The Watsons Go to Birmingham.” How can you relate to each of these characters and their friendships described in each story?
Write a SUMMARIZATION: After reading the excerpts from “The Adventures of Tom Sawyer” and “The Watsons Go to Birmingham”, what was the essential message that the two excerpts had in common?