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The novel opens with Aunt Polly scowling the house in search of her nephew, Tom Sawyer. She finds him in the closet, discovers that his hands are covered with jam, and prepares to give him a whipping. Tom cries out dramatically, "Look behind you!" and when Aunt Polly turns, Tom escapes over the fence. After Tom is gone, Aunt Polly reflects sadly on Tom's mischief and how she lets him get away with too much.

Tom crosses home at supper time. He has been skiping school that afternoon and the rain is on. He gets a black eye when he skipped school that afternoon and the rain is on.

Tom and the new arrival are met by the schoolmaster and eventually choose the newcomer at the way home.

When he returns home in the evening, Tom finds Aunt Polly waiting for him. She notices his dirtied clothes and resolves to make him work the next day, a Saturday, as punishment.

On Saturday morning, Aunt Polly sends Tom out to whitewash the fence. Jon passes by, and Tom tries to get Jon to do some of the whitewashing in return for a "white alley," a kind of medal. Jon almost agrees, but Aunt Polly appears and chases him off, leaving Tom alone with his task.
The novel opens with Aunt Polly scrounging the house in search of her nephew, Tom Sawyer. She finds him in the closet, discovers that his hands are covered with jam, and prepares to give him a whipping. Tom cries out theatrically, "Look behind you!" and when Aunt Polly turns, Tom escapes over the fence. After Tom is gone, Aunt Polly reflects wistfully on Tom's mishap and how the lie he got away with too much.

Tom comes home at supper time. His beard has grown and he is much taller. He has been across the river and has told his mother about his adventures. During supper, Aunt Polly tells Tom that he will not be skipped school that afternoon and must write a letter of explanation to the principal. Tom looks down at the table and knows that his letter is still near by his cracker box. But first, Tom's half-brother, Ben, wants to ask Tom about the new arrival. Tom warms the steward to the lie himself to disguise his letter.

Tom goes out of the house and walks around the town. He is faced with a decision: to go to school or to escape. Tom decides to escape, leaving a note that he will be back soon. While wandering the streets of St. Petersburg, Tom meets Huckleberry Finn, who tells him about his adventures on the Mississippi River. Tom is mesmerized and eventually chooses to join Huckleberry on his journey.

When Tom returns home in the evening, Aunt Polly finds Aunt Polly waiting for him. She notices his dirtied clothes and resolves to make him work the next day, a Saturday, as punishment.

On Saturday morning, Aunt Polly sends Tom out to whitewash the fence. Jim passes by, and Tom tries to get him to do some of the whitewashing in return for a "share alley," a kind of security. Jim almost agrees, but Aunt Polly appears and chases him off, leaving Tom alone with his tasks.