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 naughtiness and how she lets him get away with too much.

Tom comes home at supper and is given a good scolding for skipping school and the many other misdeeds he has committed. The following morning he is skipped school that day as well. Aunt Polly is very much concerned and demands to know what Tom has been doing. Tom is silent and Aunt Polly is satisfied.

Tom and the new arrival are taken to St. Petersburg and Tom is given the job of whitewashing the fence. While wandering the streets of St. Petersburg, Tom meets Huckleberry Finn, a street urchin and adventurer. Tom is taken with the idea of becoming a river pilot and eventually whiskers the newcomers all the way back.

When he returns home in the evening, Tom finds Aunt Polly waiting for him. She notices his dirty 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. Finn passes by, and Tom lies to get him to do some of the whitewashing in return for a “white alley,” a kind of whistle. Finn almost agrees, but Aunt Polly appears and chases him off, leaving Tom alone with his task.
The prone position — recommended for patients with severe acute respiratory distress syndrome — is underused, so two critical care nurses developed a protocol that standardizes the procedure.