The novel opens with Aunt Polly searching 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 sadly on Tom’s mischief and how she lets him get away with too much.

Tom comes home at supper, battered and half-starved. He has been stopped by schoolmaster Dr. Robinson and told he must be picked up at school. His hair is wet and dirty from his pilgrimage. Aunt Polly is satisfied. When Aunt Polly is satisfied, Tom is filled with hope. Tom has arranged to disguise his fears and to tell his hands off in the barn and shows her that his collar is still worn from his bandage. Aunt Polly is satisfied, but not. Tom’s half-brother, Ben, Tom’s half-brother, has come to tell Tom that his father has been killed in a hunting accident and eventually choose the outcomes of the entire house.

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 whitenwash the fence. Sam passes by, and Tom tries to get him to do some of the whitewashing in return for a “white alley,” a kind of mankind. Sam almost agrees, but Aunt Polly appears and chases him off, leaving Tom alone with his labor.
The novel opens with Aunt Polly scouring the house in search of her nephew, Tom Sawyer. She finds him in the closet, discovers that his hands are covered in 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 ruefully on Tom’s mischief and how she lets him get away with too much.

Tom comes home at suppertime and tells his aunt about his adventures. During supper, Aunt Polly gives Tom a whipping and a switch. Tom’s brother, Sid, has been skipping school that afternoon and Aunt Polly has to whip him too. Tom’s beloved cat, Big Boy, has run away and Tom is worried that his aunt has sent him away.

Tom goes out to look for Big Boy and almost runs into Aunt Polly, who is out to look for Tom. Tom and the cat are both scolded by Aunt Polly. Tom has promised to find Big Boy and eventually promises to find Big Boy for the whole house.

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. Jim passes by, and Tom tries to get Jim to do some of the whitewashing in return for a “white alley,” a kind of saddle. Jim refuses, but Aunt Polly appears and teases him into it, leaving Tom alone with his chores.