Order On The Edge Of Chaos Social Psychology And The Problem Of Social Order
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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 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 fenceline. After Tom is gone, Aunt Polly reflects sadly on Tom’s mischievousness and how she lets him get away with too much.

Tom comes home at suppertime and is asked what he has been doing all day. He has skipped school that day, and when Aunt Polly asks what he has been doing, he tells her that he has been helping the poor widow Mary Hamilton. Aunt Polly is satisfied, and Tom leaves. Tom’s half-brother Sid is also at home, and he teases Tom about his adventure.

Tom and the widow Hamilton’s son develop a friendship, and Tom gradually becomes fond of the old woman. Tom goes out of the house in the street one day and runs into Sid, who asks him to come out to play. Tom and Sid decide to play a game of marbles, and Tom eventually wins.

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. Jim passes by, and Tom tries to get him to do some of the whitewashing in return for a “white alley,” a kind of marble. Jim almost agrees, but Aunt Polly appears and chases him off, leaving Tom alone with his task.
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Tom comes home at supper and tells Aunt Polly about his adventures. During supper, Aunt Polly tells Tom she will not be skipped school that afternoon and great reward and encouragement and eventually chases the newcomer all the way home.

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