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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 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 time to find his uncle, Dr. Joe, has been talking with the Reverend Muff Potter. Dr. Joe tells Tom that he cannot let him be skipped school that afternoon and promises to take him to school in the morning. Tom goes out into the streets of St. Petersburg to see his aunt and shows her that his collar is still sewn together. Tom’s half-brother, Sid, is watching, while Tom plans to use hisscheme to deceive his aunt. Tom has sworn the pushoff himself to dispose his clothes properly.

Tom goes out of the house to look for Sid. Tom finds Sid trying to wash the fence. Tom runs to him and tries to get him to do some of the whitewashing in return for a “white alley,” a kind of excuse. Tom almost agrees, but Aunt Polly appears and chases him off, leaving Tom alone with his toil.
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 fence. 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 supper time. While eating supper, Aunt Polly asks him about his adventures. During supper, Aunt Polly tells Tom about the importance of honesty and how he should be ashamed of his actions. Tom’s half-brother, Sid, is not present, as he is still away from home on a trip. Tomvice versa, he is not interested in the conversation and eventually returns the conversation to his own affairs.

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. Ian passes by, and Tom tries to get him to do some of the whitewashing in return for a “white alley,” a kind of naught. Ian almost agrees, but Aunt Polly appears and drives him off, leaving Tom alone with his task.