

Script Levels: Grade 5 (Early, Middle, Upper)

Word Count: 1,767

Script Summary:

In this retelling of the classic scene from *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, Aunt Polly tries to punish Tom by having him whitewash a fence. In the end, Tom finds a way to trick his friends into helping him and learns a lesson about people.

Objectives and Assessment

Monitor students to determine if they can:

- consistently read their lines with appropriate rate and accuracy
- consistently read their lines with appropriate expression, including pause, inflection, and intonation
- follow along silently and listen for spoken cues

Using the Scripts:

- Each role is assigned a reading level according to the syntactic and semantic difficulty encountered. Feel free to divide roles further to include more readers in a group.
- Discuss vocabulary and encourage readers to practice their lines to promote fluent delivery of the script.
- Have readers highlight their lines on the scripts, and encourage them to follow along as everyone reads.

Vocabulary:

Story words: britches, hooky, hovers, particular, seize, suspicion, switch, tackle, tattle, whitewash

Cast of Characters:

Grade 5 (Early)	Grade 5 (Middle)	Grade 5 (Upper)
Sid	Aunt Polly	Narrator
Jim	Ben	Tom

Cast of Characters:

Parts		
Sid	Aunt Polly	Narrator
Jim	Ben	Tom

Aunt Polly

Tom!

Tom!

Where’s that boy gone, I wonder? *Tom!*

If I get hold of you, young man, I’ll . . .

Narrator

Aunt Polly opens the door and looks out among the tomato vines. No Tom. She lifts up her voice again and shouts.

Aunt Polly

Tom!

Narrator

She hears something behind her and turns just in time to **seize** Tom by his **britches** as he is sneaking away.

Aunt Polly

Gotcha! I might have known you’d be in that pantry closet. What you been doing in there?

Tom

Nothing.

Aunt Polly

Nothing! Look at your hands, and what is that all over your face?

Tom

I don't know.

Aunt Polly

Well, I know. It's jam. I warned you if you didn't leave that jam alone, I'd skin you. Now where's that **switch**? Ah, here it is.

Narrator

Aunt Polly **hovers** the switch in the air, ready to strike her target.

Tom

Behind you, Aunt Polly!

Narrator

The old lady whirls around and snatches her skirts out of danger. Tom flees in an instant, scrambling up the white picket fence to disappear. Aunt Polly stands surprised a moment, then breaks into a gentle laugh.

Aunt Polly

Oh, that boy! He's played those kinds of tricks on me so many times, you'd think I'd have learned by now. I'm not doing him any good, letting him get away with it. Spare the rod and spoil the child—that's what people say.

I know I should punish him, but he's my dead sister's boy and I ain't got the heart to do it to him.

Narrator

While Aunt Polly is feeling sorry for him, Tom decides to skip school. He has a very enjoyable swim and gets back home just in time to help Sid, his younger half-brother, with the evening chores.

Aunt Polly

Sid tells me Tom played **hooky** from school today. That boy must be punished, but I need to catch him lying about it first. He's a mighty sneaky child.

Narrator

While Tom and Sid eat supper, Aunt Polly asks Tom questions to trap him in a lie about missing school.

Aunt Polly

Tom, it was mighty warm in school today, wasn't it?

Tom

Yes'm.

Aunt Polly

Powerful warm, wasn't it?

Tom

Yes'm.

Aunt Polly

Didn't you want to go a-swimming, Tom?

Narrator

A worried thought shoots through Tom—a touch of uncomfortable **suspicion**. He searches Aunt Polly's face, but it tells him nothing.

Tom

No, ma'am. Well, not very much.

Narrator

The old lady reaches out her hand and feels Tom's shirt.

Aunt Polly

But you ain't too warm now, are you? Let me feel you.

Why no, you're as cool as a cucumber.

Sid

That's mighty strange for as hot as that schoolhouse was while we studied. All day long, everyone was complaining about the heat. Why, the teacher even left the door and windows open a bit to help cool us down!

Narrator

Tom looks at Aunt Polly and at Sid. Yep, he knows where the breeze is blowing now. He tries to think what Aunt Polly's next move might be.

Tom

Some of us pumped water on our heads. Why, mine's damp yet. See?

Aunt Polly (to herself)

I could kick myself! I should have checked his hair first!

Sid

Hey Tom, how come the button on your collar has been sewn with black thread? Aunt Polly would never use black. She only uses white thread.

Aunt Polly

Why, I did sew it with white! Tom Sawyer, the only way that button could have come off is if you had taken off your shirt! You *did* play hooky today, and . . .

Narrator

Tom doesn't wait for the rest. He runs out the door as quick as he can.

Sid

Oh boy, he's in for it now. Right, Aunt Polly?

Narrator

The next morning, a Saturday, Tom appears on the sidewalk with a bucket of **whitewash** and a long-handled brush. He looks at the fence and sighs. Thirty yards of board fence, nine feet high. This is his punishment for playing hooky.

Tom

Oh, my life is over! It'll take forever to get this fence whitewashed! I'd better sit down on this here tree stump and rest a minute.

Narrator

As he sits on the stump feeling sorry for himself, he hears someone singing.

Jim *(singing)*

Buffalo Gals, won't you come out tonight, come out to night, come out tonight.

Tom

Hey, Jim, where you going?

Jim

I told Aunt Polly I would help her today, so I'm getting water from the town pump and taking it back to her.

Narrator

Bringing water from the town pump has always been hateful work in Tom's eyes, but now he thinks differently. Kids are there, waiting their turn, resting, trading playthings, quarreling, fighting, and joking around. That sounds better than painting!

Tom

Say, Jim, I'll fetch the water if you'll whitewash some.

Jim

I can't, Tom. I'm helping Aunt Polly today. She told me to go get a pail of water and not to fool around with anybody. She said that if you asked me to help with the whitewashing, I was to just go along and tend to my own business of getting the water, or else!

Tom

Oh, never you mind what she said, Jim. That's the way she always talks. Give me the bucket. I won't be gone only a minute. She won't ever know.

Jim

Oh, no. Aunt Polly said I shouldn't stop and talk to you or I'd be in big trouble, and I believe her! No, I think I will go get the water, and you should start whitewashing. Sorry, Tom, but Aunt Polly is bound to teach you a lesson.

Tom

Aunt Polly? She never licks anybody. She just whacks 'em over the head with her thimble—and who cares for that, I'd like to know. Besides, if you'll help, I'll show you my sore toe.

Jim

Okay, okay! Show me your sore toe, and it better be good!

Tom

I have to unwind the bandage Aunt Polly put on it. Keep watching. I'm almost through!

Narrator

The next instant, Aunt Polly steps out onto the porch. Jim runs down the street with the pail in his hand, and Tom starts whitewashing as fast as he can! Aunt Polly returns to her kitchen with triumph in her eye.

Tom

I can't believe I'm stuck doing this all day while my friends are out having fun. There has to be a way to get this whitewashing done quickly. But how can I get someone to help me with this terrible chore. It's not fun at all, but wait . . .

Narrator

Suddenly, an inspiration bursts upon him! Tom takes up his brush and goes quietly to work while he waits for an unsuspecting kid. It isn't long before Ben Rogers comes skipping down the sidewalk, happy as can be. He's eating an apple and impersonating a steamboat with a long, melodious "whoop, whoop!"

Ben

Whoop, whoop, ding-dong-dong, ding-dong-dong!

Narrator

Tom goes on whitewashing—paying no attention to Ben.

Ben

Ha-ha! Hello, old friend! You got caught by Aunt Polly, didn't you?

Narrator

Tom doesn't answer but steps back and looks at his painting with the eye of an artist. He then continues to paint.

Ben

Looks like Aunt Polly is making you work!

Tom

Why it's you, Ben! I didn't notice you.

Ben

I'm on my way to the swimming hole, and I'm betting you're wishing you could come along. Or maybe you'd rather work now, wouldn't you? 'Course you would!

Tom

What? Do you call this work?

Ben

Why of course it's work!

Tom

Well, maybe it is, and maybe it ain't.

Ben

Oh come, now, you don't mean to let on that you like painting that big ol' fence?

Tom

Like it? Why shouldn't I like it? You don't get a chance to whitewash a fence every day!

Narrator

Ben stops nibbling his apple and thinks about it. Tom goes on painting, stepping back every few minutes to look at his progress.

Ben

Why, it almost looks like you're having fun. Say, Tom, why don't you let me whitewash a little.

Tom

I better not, Ben. You see, Aunt Polly's awful **particular** about this fence—it's right here on the street, you know. I wouldn't mind, but she would. I reckon I'm the only one that can do it the way it's got to be done.

Ben

Is that so? Oh come on, now—let me just try, only a little bit. I'd let you, if you was me, Tom.

Tom

I'd like to, honestly, but Aunt Polly . . . well, Jim wanted to do it, but she wouldn't let him. Sid wanted to do it, and she wouldn't let him. If you was to **tackle** this fence and anything was to happen to it . . .

Ben

Oh, shucks, I'll be just as careful. Now let me try. Say, I'll give you a bite of my apple.

Tom

Well, maybe. . . . No, Ben, now don't. I'm afraid—

Ben

I'll give you all of it!

Narrator

Tom gives up the brush with a reluctant face. Ben begins to paint.

Ben

How do you think I'm doing, Tom? Boy, it's hot out here! This sun is making me sweat!

Narrator

Tom sits on a barrel in the shade close by, dangles his legs, munches his apple, and plans the trick on more boys. His friends happen along every little while; they come to jeer, but remain to whitewash. By the afternoon, Tom is literally rolling in wealth when Sid comes by.

Sid

Say, what's that pile of stuff there? Is it all yours?

Tom

Yes sir! Seems everyone wants to paint my fence! Why, I've got here twelve marbles, a piece of blue bottle glass, a spool cannon, a key that won't unlock anything, a piece of chalk, a tin soldier, a couple of tadpoles, six firecrackers, a stuffed kitten with only one eye, a brass doorknob, a dog collar, and four pieces of an orange peel!

Sid

It looks like it could be fun. Why don't you let me have a try!

Tom

Well, I don't know. You might **tattle** on me again!

Sid

Come on, Tom. Let me have a chance. I'll give you my new kite!

Tom

I don't think so.

Sid

Come on. I'm sorry! I've got a dead rat and a string to swing it. Give me a chance, and you can have the kite and the rat!

Tom

Okay, but you better not tell Aunt Polly.

Sid

I promise, Tom.

Narrator

Tom enjoys a good time and plenty of company. By the end of the day, the fence has *three coats* of whitewash on it. If he hadn't run out of whitewash, he would have bankrupted every boy in the village!

Sid

Come on in, Tom! Aunt Polly says she thinks you learned your lesson!

Tom

Well, it's not such a hollow world, after all. And I did learn something about humans. Namely, if you want someone to do something unpleasant, make them think it's better than anything. Then everyone wants to join in!