



**NSDAR Educational Resources Committee**  
**“Tom Sawyer – The Glorious Whitewasher”**  
**Lesson Plan**

**Contributor:** Dr. Elaine Alexander

**Grade Level:** Seventh Grade

**1. Identify the standards to be addressed:**

CCSS RL. 7.1, RL. 7.2, RL. 7.3, and W. 7.9 and TN State Standards 7.RL.KID.1, 7.RL.KID.2, 7.RL.KID.3, and 7.W.RBPK.9

**2. Statement of the objective and lesson outcomes:**

Students will determine themes of challenging text “The Glorious Whitewasher.” Students should be able to demonstrate close reading skills (identifying these, point of view, characterization, context, and academic vocabulary).

**3. Materials, resources, and technology to be used by teacher/students:**

Copies of Chapter 2 from *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* by Mark Twain, lesson outline handout (attached here), and PowerPoint presentation on close reading strategies and guiding questions ([download here](#))

**4. Introduction of the topic:**

Students will review details of four things to consider when doing a close reading (language, narrative, syntax, context) and five strategies for close reading (number paragraphs, chunk text, underline and circle with purpose, note what the author is saying in the left margin, note what the author is doing in the right margin).

**5. Procedure for instruction:**

Students read passage and answer questions, teacher re-reads passage to students and demonstrates annotation, students reread passage, annotate, and answer new questions, then students write a brief narrative with the same theme.

**6. Lesson closure:**

The teacher will randomly call on students for the answers to the following questions: A. What is the theme of “Whitewashing the Fence”? B. What is one phrase you find particularly humorous? C. How can you relate to Tom’s actions to the real world?

**7. Assessment of student understanding:**

The teacher will collect lesson outline notes and individual narratives persuading someone else to do their work to assess their understanding of the reading passage.

## Lesson Plan for NSDAR Educational Resources Committee

Teacher Name: Dr. Elaine G. Alexander

Grade Level: 7

Subject: English Language Arts

Lesson Plan Title: “Whitewashing the Fence” from *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*  
by Mark Twain

### Tennessee State Standards:

#### Reading Literature

7.RL.KID.1 **Analyze what a text says** explicitly and draw logical inferences; cite several instances of textual evidence to support conclusions.

7.RL.KID.2 **Determine a theme** or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary.

7.RL.KID.3 **Analyze how specific elements of a story or drama interact** with and affect each other.

#### Writing

7.W.RBPK.9 **Support interpretations, analyses, reflections, or research with evidence** found in literature or informational texts, applying grade 7 standards for reading; assess whether the evidence is relevant and sufficient to support the claims.

### Lesson Objectives:

1. Determine theme of challenging text “The Glorious Whitewasher” from *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* by Mark Twain.
2. Define high value academic or “Tier Two” words bolded in text.
3. Cite evidence from text to respond to guiding questions.
4. Relate the text to real life using personal experiences.

### Essential Questions: Are students able to

1. understand academic vocabulary, summarize the text, and make logical inferences from it?
2. analyze how and why characters develop within a text to support a theme?
3. participate effectively in collaboration with diverse partners to evaluate the text?
4. speak and write using the conventions of Standard English grammar and usage?

## Unit Goals

1. Increase text complexity by regular practice with complex text and its academic language.
2. Cite evidence by reading, writing, and speaking grounded in evidence from text.

## Accommodations for Individual Student Needs

Learning Styles -- video presentation "How to do a Close Reading" (visual and auditory), *PowerPoint* presentation as part of instruction (visual), individual efforts to read and annotate text from *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (independent learning), partner (think-pair-share) and whole group reading, discussing, and annotating text in response to guiding questions (auditory and visual), individual responses to guiding questions by citing evidence from text (independent learning).

Expectations -- Some students will be able to perform tasks without difficulty while others will need help from the teacher and peers.

Differentiated Instruction -- Students will view a video illustrating annotation of a close reading of a text, view a *PowerPoint* presentation of close reading strategies, read and annotate a text independently, discuss and cite textual evidence in response to guiding questions, and compose narrative to illustrate Twain's humor and attitudes about / theme of work and play (homework).

## Prior Knowledge

Students will have practiced using context clues to define academic vocabulary and citing evidence from texts in response to guiding questions this semester; however, no particular knowledge of the author Mark Twain or novel *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* will be necessary for this exercise in close reading.

## Procedures:

### Introduction of Lesson

The teacher will present key questions at the beginning, middle, and end of the lesson:  
Beginning – What are the key elements you need to know to study a piece of literature?  
Middle – What happens each time you reread the passage?  
End – How could you apply your close reading skills in science or social studies?

### Warm-up and Curriculum Correlation

Time / Minutes

5 minutes

Students will review details of four things to consider when doing a close reading (language, narrative, syntax, context) and five strategies for close reading (number paragraphs, chunk text, underline and circle with purpose, note what the author is saying in the left margin, note what the author is doing in the right margin).

**Guided Practice**

Time / Minutes

10 minutes

Based on students' first reading of "Whitewashing the Fence" from Mark Twain's novel *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, students will respond to a guided question in a "quick write" and share their responses with partners. Table partners were assigned by mixing more independent learners with less independent learners so that students could stay on track by helping each other during sharing time.

Time / Minutes

10 minutes

The teacher will re-read the paragraphs 11 through 20 of the passage to students (2<sup>nd</sup> Read) then instruct students to think, write a response to another guided question, and share answers with the class. The teacher will randomly select students to respond in an effort to involve every student in the lesson.

Time / Minutes

10 minutes

For the third reading, students will re-read the passage independently, find answers and evidence from the text to support their answers, then annotate pages 2, 3, and 4 based on what the author was "saying" (left margin) and "doing" (right margin). Students will determine the theme of Chapter 2 of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*.

**Independent Practice**

Time / Minutes

10 minutes

Finally, each student will independently brainstorm then write a brief narrative persuading someone else to do his or her in the spirit of Tom Sawyer.

**Reflection & Lesson Closure**

Time / Minutes

5 minutes

The teacher will once again focus students on the lesson objectives (determine theme, define academic vocabulary, cite evidence, and relate the text to real life).

The teacher will randomly call on students for the answers to the following questions:

1. What is the theme of "Whitewashing the Fence"?
2. What is one phrase you find particularly humorous?
3. How can you relate Tom's actions to the real world?

The teacher will then direct students to turn in their lesson outline notes and individual narrative persuading someone else to do their work so that she can evaluate how well students understood the reading passage.



**Assessment (Formal)** – Well-written, accurate, and text-based evidence should be present in students' responses to the guiding questions on the lesson outline handout.

**Assessment (Informal)** – The teacher will note students' observations, interpretations, and comments about the text during the class period.

**Assessment (Ongoing)** -- Students will be expected to use vocabulary correctly and cite evidence from text when responding to questions about literature as well as informational texts.

**Assessment Plan for Unit** – Close reading skills (identifying theme, point of view, characterization, context, and academic vocabulary) should be observed in every extended response and essay written for every unit throughout the year.

### **Materials**

- Copies of Chapter 2 from *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* by Mark Twain
- Lesson outline handout
- *PowerPoint* presentation on close reading strategies and guiding questions

### How to Do a Close Reading

1. L\_\_\_\_\_ : Look at the diction or \_\_\_\_\_ .  
What words did the author choose to repeat or emphasize?
2. N\_\_\_\_\_ : Pay attention to \_\_\_\_\_ is telling the \_\_\_\_\_  
and how it is being told.
3. S\_\_\_\_\_ : Examine the \_\_\_\_\_ in which the words appear.
4. C\_\_\_\_\_ : Take note of the \_\_\_\_\_ and the  
author's background.

### Five Strategies for Close Reading

5. N\_\_\_\_\_ the paragraphs.
6. C\_\_\_\_\_ the text.
7. U\_\_\_\_\_ or c\_\_\_\_\_ with purpose.
8. Left m\_\_\_\_\_ : What is the author saying?
9. Right m\_\_\_\_\_ : Dig deeper into the text.

### Guiding Questions

10. How would you describe Tom's state of mind before his inspiration?
11. What new vocabulary did you find?
12. To convince Ben that he should want to whitewash the fence, Tom shows Ben that whitewashing is a rewarding experience and requires special skill.  
Which paragraphs provide evidence that whitewashing is rewarding? \_\_\_\_\_  
that whitewashing requires special skill? \_\_\_\_\_
13. What is the main theme of "Whitewashing the Fence"?
14. Which lines from the passage does the author provide to best illustrate this theme?
15. What is the "great law of human action" and the difference between "work" and "play"?

## How to Do a Close Reading

1. **Language**: Look at the diction or **word choice**. What words did the author choose to repeat or emphasize?
2. **Narrative**: Pay attention to **who** is telling the **story** and how it is being told.
3. **Syntax**: Examine the **order** in which the words appear.
4. **Context**: Take note of the **historical context** and the author's background.

## Five Strategies for Close Reading

5. **Number** the paragraphs.
6. **Chunk** the text.
7. **Underline** or **circle** with purpose.
8. Left **margin**: What is the author saying?
9. Right **margin**: Dig deeper into the text.

## Guiding Questions

10. How would you describe Tom's state of mind before his inspiration?
11. What new vocabulary did you find?
12. To convince Ben that he should want to whitewash the fence, Tom shows Ben that whitewashing is a rewarding experience and requires special skill.  
Which paragraphs provide evidence that whitewashing is rewarding? \_\_\_\_\_  
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14. Which lines from the passage does the author provide to best illustrate this theme?
15. What is the "great law of human action" and the difference between "work" and "play"?

## Warm Up



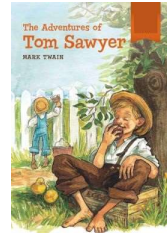
Take out your COPY of "Whitewashing the Fence" and read over the "notes" page for today's lesson on close reading and analysis of a literary text.

## Success Criteria

Today we will practice a "close reading" of "Whitewashing the Fence"

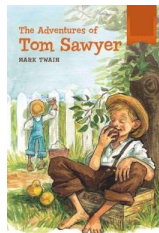
so we can read, annotate, and analyze the text.

We will know we have it when we can determine the theme and apply it to real life.



## Today's Activities

- Determine theme of challenging text "Whitewashing the Fence."
- Define high value academic or "Tier Two" words bolded in text.
- Cite evidence from text to respond to guiding questions.
- Relate the text to real life by writing a personal narrative.



### Language

1. Look at the diction or word choice. What words did the author choose to repeat or emphasize?

*From page 1*

"He was eating an apple, and giving a long, **melodious whoop**, at **intervals**, followed by a deep-toned ding-dong-dong, ding-dong-dong, for he was personating a steamboat."

### Narrative

2. Pay attention to who is telling the story and how it is being told.

*From page 4*

"If he had been a great and wise **philosopher**, like the writer of this book, he would now have comprehended that Work consists of whatever a body is **OBLIGED** to do, and that Play consists of whatever a body is not obliged to do."

### Syntax

3. Examine the order in which the words appear.

*From page 3*

"Now don't you see how I'm fixed? If you was to tackle this fence and anything was to happen to it—" "Oh, shucks, I'll be just as careful. Now lemme try. Say—I'll give you the core of my apple."



Context

4. Take note of the **historical context** and the author's background.

*From the entire passage*

When were riverboats common and marbles as toys popular? What do you know about Twain's background?

### Five Strategies for Close Reading

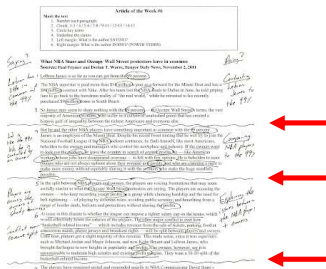
#### Lessons Learned from Publishing Local Election Data

- 1. [These lessons are taken from Publishing Local Open Data - Important Lessons from the Open Election Data project]
- 2. There is a lack of corporate awareness/understanding of open data issues, and this will inhibit take up of open, linked data publishing unless it is addressed. For many of the councils the project came into contact with, response to the initiative was by an individual, often the web manager/master working on their own initiative, rather than as a result of any corporate interest from their councils in open data.
- 3. There is a lack of even basic web skills at some councils. Worryingly there were councils where no-one had even basic web-authoring skills (i.e. a good understanding of HTML), being merely relegated to fill in forms in an (out-sourced) content management system. In a world where the web is becoming the main method of communication with citizens and between bodies, this is not unlike having a finance department with no-one who understands the core rules of accountancy. Without those basic skills as a foundation, there is no way a body can hope to produce linked data.

5. **Number** the paragraphs.

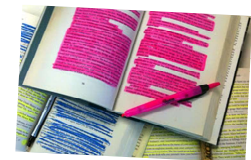
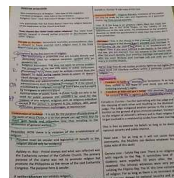
### Five Strategies for Close Reading

6. **Chunk** the text.



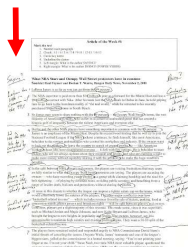
### Five Strategies for Close Reading

7. **Underline** or **circle** with purpose.



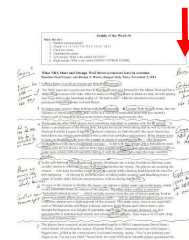
### Five Strategies for Close Reading

8. **Left margin:** What is the author saying?



### Five Strategies for Close Reading

9. **Right margin:** Dig deeper into the text.





Tom Sawyer (Whitewashing the Fence), 1906

For homework, students were asked to read and annotated the text.

**Question #10:**  
How would you describe Tom's state of mind before his inspiration?

**Question #11:** What new vocabulary did you find?



Tom Sawyer (Whitewashing the Fence), 1906

Share your answers with a table partner.



**2<sup>nd</sup> Read:** Teacher reads aloud while students listen.



**2<sup>nd</sup> Read:** Teacher reads aloud while students listen.

Students think, then write, then talk.

**Question #12:**  
To convince Ben that he should want to whitewash the fence, Tom shows Ben that whitewashing is a rewarding experience and requires special skill.

Which paragraphs provide evidence that whitewashing is rewarding? \_\_\_\_\_  
that whitewashing requires skill? \_\_\_\_\_



**3<sup>rd</sup> Read:** Students reread to find answers & evidence.

**Question #13:**  
What is the main theme of "Whitewashing the Fence"?  
**Question #14:**  
Which lines from the passage does the author provide to best illustrate this theme?  
**Question #15:**  
What is the "great law of human action" and the difference between "work" and "play"?

*Saying?* 1  
Other boys can play, but Tom has to work.

The Text: Twain, Mark. "Whitewashing the Fence" from Tom Sawyer

**Exemplar Text**

But Tom's energy did not last. As soon as word of the fun he had obtained on the day, and his sorrows multiplied, soon the free boys would come tripping along on all sorts of delicious expeditions, and they would make a world of fun of him for having to work—the very thought of it burnt him like fire. He got out his worldly wealth and examined it—bits of toys, marbles, and trash; enough to buy an exchange of WORK, maybe, but not half enough to buy so much as half an hour of pure freedom. So he returned his straitened means to his pocket, and gave up the idea of trying to buy the boys. At this dark and hopeless moment an inspiration burst upon him. Nothing less than a great, magnificent inspiration.

2 He took up his brush and went tranquilly to work. Ben Rogers hove in sight presently—the very boy, of all boys, whose ridicule he had been dreading. Ben's gait was the hop-skip-and-jump—proof enough that his heart was light and his anticipations high. He was eating an apple, and giving a long, melodious whoop, at intervals, followed by a deep-toned ding-dong-dong, ding-dong-dong, for he was transporting a steamboat. As he drew near, he checked speed, took the middle of the street, leaned far over to starboard and rounded to ponderously and with laborious pomp and circumstance—for he was personating the big Missouri, and considered himself to be drawing nine feet of water. He was boat and captain and engine-bells combined, so he had to imagine himself standing on his own hurricane-deck giving the orders and executing them.

3 "Stop her, sir! Ting-a-ling-ling!" The headway ran almost out, and he drew up slowly toward the sidewalk. "Ship up to back! Ting-a-ling-ling!" His arms straightened and stiffened down his side.

4 "Set her back on the starboard! Ting-a-ling-ling! Chow! ch-how-wool! Chow!" His right hand, meantime, describing easy circles—for it was representing a forty-foot wheel.

**Vocabulary**

sharply limited  
proudly  
acting like an inchworm

*Doing?*  
Twain is setting the stage for Tom's big scam.

Saying?	Exemplar Text	Vocabulary	Doing?
5	"Let her go back on the lardboard! Ting-a-ling! Ting-a-ling! Chow-chow-chow!" The left hand began to describe circles. "Stop the stabboard! Ting-a-ling! Stop the lardboard! Come ahead on the stabboard! Stop her! Let your outside turn over slow! Ting-a-ling! Chow-chow-chow! Get out that head line! LIVE! now! Come-out with your spring-line—what're you about there! Take a turn round that stump with the bight of it! Stand by that <b>stage</b> , now—let her go! Done with the engines, sir! Ting-a-ling! SHIT! SHIT! SHIT!" (trying the gauge-cocks.)		
6	Tom went on whitewashing—paid no attention to the steamboat. Ben stared a moment and then said: "Hi! YOU'RE up a stump, ain't you?"		
7	No answer. Tom <b>surveyed</b> his last touch with the eye of an artist, then he gave his brush another gentle sweep and surveyed the result, as before. Ben <b>ranged</b> up alongside of him. Tom's mouth watered for the apple, but he stuck to his work.		
8	Ben said: "Hello, old chap, you got to work, hey?"		
9	Tom <b>wheeled</b> suddenly and said: "Why, it's you, Ben! I wasn't noticing."		
10	"Say—I'm going in a-swimming, I am. Don't you wish you could? But of course you'd dither. WORK—wouldn't you? Course you would!"		
11	Tom <b>contemplated</b> the boy a bit, and said: "What do you call work?" "Why, ain't THAT work?"	studied carefully	
12	Tom <b>resumed</b> his whitewashing, and answered carelessly: "Well, maybe it is, and maybe it ain't. All I know, is it suits Tom Sawyer."		
13	"Oh come, now, you don't mean to let on that you LIKE it?"		


Saying?	Exemplar Text	Vocabulary	Doing?
14	The brush continued to move.		
15	"Like it? Well, I don't see why I oughtn't to like it. Does a boy get a chance to whitewash a fence every day?" That put the thing in a new light. Ben stopped nibbling his apple. Tom swept his brush <b>daintily</b> back and forth—stepped back to note the effect—added a touch here and there—criticized the effect again—Ben watching every move and getting more and more interested, more and more <b>absorbed</b> . Presently he said:		
16	"Say, Tom, let ME whitewash a little."		
17	Tom considered, was about to <b>consent</b> ; but he altered his mind: "No—no reckon I wouldn't hardly do, Ben. You see, Aunt Polly's awful <b>particular</b> about this fence—(right there on the street, you know—'bout it was the back fence, I wouldn't mind and SHE wouldn't), yes, she's awful particular about this fence; it's got to be done very careful. I <b>reckon</b> there ain't one boy in a thousand, maybe two thousand, that can do it the way it's got to be done."		
18	"No—is that so? Oh come now—lemme just try. Only just a little—I'll let YOU, if you was me, Tom."		
19	"Ben, I'd like to, honest injun; 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 Sid. Now don't you see how I'm fixed? If you was to tackle this fence and anything was to happen to it—" "Oh, shucks, I'll be just as careful. Now lemme try. Say—I'll give you the core of my apple."		
20	"Well, here—No, Ben, now don't, I'm afraid—" "I'll give you ALL of it!"		
21	Tom gave up the brush with <b>reluctance</b> in his face, but <b>alacrity</b> in his	steady progress	

Saying?	Exemplar Text	Vocabulary	Doing?
	heart. And while the <b>late</b> steamer Big Missouri worked and roared in the sun, the <b>retired</b> artist sat on a barrel in the shade close by, dangled his legs, munched his apple, and planned the slaughter of more innocents. There was no lack of <b>material</b> ; boys happened along every little while; they came to jeer, but remained to whitewash. By the time Ben was <b>ragged out</b> , Tom had traded the next chance to Billy Fisher for a kite, in good repair; and when he played out, Johnny Miller brought in for a dead rat and a string to swing it with—and so on, and so on, hour after hour. And when the middle of the afternoon came, from being a poor <b>penetrates</b> boy in the morning, Tom was literally rolling in wealth. He had besides the things before mentioned, twelve marbles, part of a jaw-hair, a piece of blue bottle-glass to look through, a spoon cannon, a key that wouldn't unlock anything, a <b>fragment</b> of chalk, a glass <b>stopper</b> of a <b>deanter</b> , a tin soldier, a couple of tin-pipes, six fire-crackers, a kitten with only one eye, a brass doorknob, a dog-collar—but no dog—the handle of a knife, four pieces of orange-peel, and a <b>dilapidated</b> old window-sash.	rehabilitated	
22	He had a nice good <b>take</b> time all the while— plenty of company—and the fence had three coats of whitewash on it! If he hadn't run out of whitewash he would have <b>bankrupted</b> every boy in the village.		
23	Tom said to himself that it was not such a <b>hollow</b> world, after all. He had discovered a great law of human action, without knowing it— namely, that in order to make a man or a boy <b>cooperate</b> a thing, it is only necessary to make the thing <b>difficult</b> to <b>attain</b> ; if he had been a great and wise <b>philosopher</b> , like the writer of this book, he would now have comprehended that <b>Work</b> consists of whatever a body is <b>OBLIGED</b> to do, and that <b>play</b> consists of whatever a body is not obliged to do. And this would help him to understand why constructing <b>artificial</b> flowers or performing on a tread-mill is work, while rolling the pins or climbing <b>Mount</b> Blenc is only <b>amusement</b> . There are wealthy gentlemen in England who drive four horse passenger-coaches thirty or thirty miles on a daily line, in the summer, because the <b>privilege</b> costs them <b>considerable</b> money; but if they were offered <b>wages</b> for the service, that would turn it into work and then they would resign.	devised, get	
24	The boy <b>mused</b> awhile over the <b>substantial</b> change which had taken place in his worldly circumstances, and then <b>waddled</b> toward headquarters to report.		

**Independent Practice:**

**Write a brief, humorous narrative persuading someone else to do an unpleasant task.**

**Length (100 words)**



**Reflection & Lesson Closure**

1. What is the theme of "Whitewashing the Fence"?
2. What is one phrase you found humorous?
3. How can you relate Tom's actions to real life?

