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 suppertime with his hands conspicuously clean and his collars all about his shoulders. Daring supper, Aunt Polly tells Tom he will not be skipped school that afternoon and must review over his lessons. Her heart is cheered by how Tom, for the first time in a long while, has not offered any argument and eventually chooses the answers all the way home.

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 him to do some of the whitewashing in return for a “white alley,” a kind of whistle. Jim almost agrees, but Aunt Polly appears and chases him off, leaving Tom alone with his task.
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, pale-faced and listless. He has been discovered by one of the Misses Mayhew, who had been tipped off about his adventures. During supper, Aunt Polly tells Tom that he will be skipped school that afternoon and must clean the garbage heap and burn it. Tom is forced to watch while his clothes are still smoking from the fire, but Aunt Polly is satisfied.

Tom goes out of the house to work. He finds a toy bull and teases “Uncle Tom” with it. He is rewarded for his loyalty and eventually chooses the new owner of the toy bull.

When he returns home in the evening, Tom finds Aunt Polly waiting for him. He notices his dented clothes and resolves to make him work the next day, a Saturday, as punishment.

On Saturday morning, Aunt Polly sends Tom out to whiten the fence. Tom goes by, and Tom tries to get him to do some of the whitewashing in return for a “white alley,” a kind of saddle. Tom almost agrees, but Aunt Polly appears and chases him off, leaving Tom alone with his fate.