

Tom Sawyer & Huckleberry Finn | Lesson Plan

How do Mark Twain's classic characters demonstrate the importance of learning about all aspects of history, both good and bad?

Students will discover the importance of perspective by analyzing the classic characters of author Mark Twain: Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn. They will recognize that learning about the good and bad parts of history reveals just how far we have come as a nation.

Learning Objectives:

- Describe traits of Mark Twain's classic characters, Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn.
- Recognize that history is comprised of both positive and negative practices and events.
- Explain the importance of learning from the mistakes of our past.
- Compare and contrast their lives with the lives of Mark Twain's characters.

Key Vocabulary:

- **Literature:** A collection of written work, often considered art.
- **Fiction:** Imaginative stories created by authors, not based on real events, but intended for entertainment and exploration of characters, places, and events.
- **Narrator:** A person or character who tells a story.
- **Racism:** When people are treated unfairly because of their skin color or background.

Educational Standards: CCRA.L.1, CCRA.L.2, CCRA.L.4, CCRA.W.4, CCRA.R.7, CCRA.SL.1, CCRA.SL.2, CCRA.SL.4, CCRA.W.2

Academic Subject Areas: Biography, History, Free Speech

What You'll Need

- Video: *Tom Sawyer & Huckleberry Finn: Mark Twain's Classic Literature* (Watch [Here](#))
- Worksheet: *Tom Sawyer & Huckleberry Finn: Mark Twain's Classic Literature* (Click [Here](#))
- Sticky notes
- Pictures of Mark Twain, Tom Sawyer, and Huckleberry Finn

Lesson Plan (45 minutes)

Warm-Up: (20 minutes)

1. First, ask students if they believe it's better to learn about only the good or all parts of history—the good and the bad. Challenge students to give reasons to support their answers.
2. Write the following statements on separate sections of the board:
 - Before 1920, women were not allowed to vote in the United States.
 - Black people were not allowed to play professional sports in the United States



- In the 1800s, there were no child labor laws. Children could be forced to work at any age without restrictions.
3. Give each student a sticky note and ask students to choose one statement on the board to focus on.
 4. Instruct students to write one specific way our country has improved in the area of the statement they chose (e.g., women's rights, racism, or child labor laws) and attach their notes under the statement it refers to.
 5. Allow students to read their notes aloud as they post them on the board, concluding that the United States has made many positive changes throughout its history.
 6. Deduce that our nation, like all nations, has made mistakes, but it is important to know our complete history to learn from those mistakes and do better in the future. Discuss Winston Churchill's quote: "Those that fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it."
 7. Display the worksheet and distribute individual copies to students.
 8. Explain that the upcoming video will feature two fictional characters, Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn, who can teach us the importance of perspective and learning from history. Show students pictures of Mark Twain and his fictional characters. Ask students to share what they already know about them.
 9. Read over the worksheet as a class so students know what to listen for during the video.

Watch and Complete: (15 minutes)

1. Watch the video.
2. Pause throughout the video to allow students to complete answers on the worksheet.

Wrap-Up: (10 minutes)

1. Allow students 10 minutes to complete the worksheet independently.
2. Invite volunteers to share and discuss their Venn diagrams with the class.
3. Remind students that history is made up of both bright and dark moments. Like Tom and Huck faced challenges and had exciting adventures, people in history also had good and tough times. By learning about all parts of history, students can better understand the world and become more compassionate people. Encourage them to keep exploring history with open minds because it can teach them something important about our past, present, and future.
4. Collect the worksheet as a formative assessment or participation grade.

Don't have time for the full lesson? Quick Activity (15-20 minutes)

Distribute the worksheet and allow students to complete it while they follow along with the video.