



Instruction Coach 8 English Language Arts






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Reading Fiction

Look at this group of teens. What can people's actions tell you about them?

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

How do stories teach us about human nature?

Listen and Learn

Consider ►

How can curiosity be both positive and negative?

What can a dangerous situation reveal about someone's character?



from

The Adventures of Tom Sawyer

by Mark Twain

ALLUSION An allusion is a reference to a person, place, or event from literature or history. Authors use allusions to provide context or to summarize an idea. The name "Aladdin's Palace" is an allusion to the Middle Eastern folk tale "Aladdin," in which a mischievous boy is tricked by a sorcerer and trapped in a cave. He is freed by a genie, and a palace is built for him. Why might the author have included this allusion? What does it tell you about Tom?

ARCHETYPE An archetype is a character who follows a specific pattern of behavior. Tom Sawyer is an archetype of a mischievous boy whose desire for adventure gets him in trouble. When Tom sees the natural stairway, "the ambition to be a discoverer seized him." What do you think Tom will do next? Will his actions have positive or negative results?

- 1 Now to return to Tom and Becky's share in the picnic. They tripped along the murky aisles with the rest of the company, visiting the familiar wonders of the cave—wonders dubbed with rather over-descriptive names, such as "The Drawing-Room," "The Cathedral," "Aladdin's Palace," and so on. Presently the hide-and-seek frolicking began, and Tom and Becky engaged in it with zeal until the exertion began to grow a trifle wearisome; then they wandered down a sinuous avenue holding their candles aloft and reading the tangled webwork of names, dates, post-office addresses, and mottoes with which the rocky walls had been frescoed¹ (in candle-smoke). Still drifting along and talking, they scarcely noticed that they were now in a part of the cave whose walls were not frescoed. They smoked their own names under an overhanging shelf and moved on. Presently they came to a place where a little stream of water, trickling over a ledge and carrying a limestone sediment with it, had, in the slow-dragging ages, formed a laced and ruffled Niagara in gleaming and imperishable stone. Tom squeezed his small body behind it in order to illuminate it for Becky's gratification. He found that it curtained a sort of steep natural stairway which was enclosed between narrow walls, and at once the ambition to be a discoverer seized him.

¹frescoed refers to a method of wall-painting



Becky responded to his call, and they made a smoke-mark for future guidance, and started upon their quest. They wound this way and that, far down into the secret depths of the cave, made another mark, and branched off in search of novelties to tell the upper world about. In one place they found a spacious cavern, from whose ceiling depended a multitude of shining stalactites² of the length and circumference of a man's leg; they walked all about it, wondering and admiring, and presently left it by one of the numerous passages that opened into it. . . . Under the roof vast knots of bats had packed themselves together, thousands in a bunch; the lights disturbed the creatures and they came flocking down by hundreds, squeaking and darting furiously at the candles. Tom knew their ways and the danger of this sort of conduct. He seized Becky's hand and hurried her into the first corridor that offered; and none too soon, for a bat struck Becky's light out with its wing while she was passing out of the cavern. The bats chased the children a good distance; but the fugitives plunged into every new passage that offered, and at last got rid of the perilous things. Tom found a subterranean lake, shortly, which stretched its dim length away until its shape was lost in the shadows. He wanted to explore its borders, but concluded that it would be best to sit down and rest awhile, first. Now, for the first time, the deep stillness of the place laid a clammy hand upon the spirits of the children. Becky said:

"Why, I didn't notice, but it seems ever so long since I heard any of the others."

"Come to think, Becky, we are away down below them—and I don't know how far away north, or south, or east, or whichever it is. We couldn't hear them here."

²**stalactites** icicle-shaped deposits hanging from the roof of a cave

ANALOGY An analogy is a comparison that shows the similarities between two things. An analogy can help readers visualize characters, events, or objects in a story. In this paragraph, the author compares stalactites to a man's leg. What do you learn about the stalactites from this analogy?





5

Becky grew apprehensive.

“I wonder how long we’ve been down here, Tom? We better start back.”

“Yes, I reckon we better. P’raps we better.”

“Can you find the way, Tom? It’s all a mixed-up crookedness to me.”

“I reckon I could find it—but then the bats. If they put our candles out it will be an awful fix. Let’s try some other way, so as not to go through there.”

10

“Well. But I hope we won’t get lost. It would be so awful!” and the girl shuddered at the thought of the dreadful possibilities.

They started through a corridor, and traversed it in silence a long way, glancing at each new opening, to see if there was anything familiar about the look of it; but they were all strange. Every time Tom made an examination, Becky would watch his face for an encouraging sign, and he would say cheerily:

“Oh, it’s all right. This ain’t the one, but we’ll come to it right away!”

But he felt less and less hopeful with each failure, and presently began to turn off into diverging avenues at sheer random, in desperate hope of finding the one that was wanted. He still said it was “all right,” but there was such a leaden dread at his heart that the words had lost their ring and sounded just as if he had said, “All is lost!” Becky clung to his side in an anguish of fear, and tried hard to keep back the tears, but they would come. At last she said:

“Oh, Tom, never mind the bats, let’s go back that way! We seem to get worse and worse off all the time.”

15

“Listen!” said he.

Profound silence; silence so deep that even their breathings were conspicuous in the hush. Tom shouted. The call went echoing down the empty aisles and died out in the distance in a faint sound that resembled a ripple of mocking laughter.



DIALOGUE AND PLOT

In many stories, dialogue (conversation between characters) serves to move the plot (what happens in a story) forward. Tom says to Becky, “If [the bats] put our candles out it will be an awful fix. Let’s try some other way, so as not to go through there,” and Becky agrees. What happens as a result of this dialogue? How does it move the plot forward?



“Oh, don’t do it again, Tom, it is too horrid,” said Becky.

“It is horrid, but I better, Becky; they might hear us, you know,” and he shouted again.

The “might” was even a chillier horror than the ghostly laughter, it so confessed a perishing hope. The children stood still and listened; but there was no result. Tom turned upon the back track at once, and hurried his steps. It was but a little while before a certain indecision in his manner revealed another fearful fact to Becky—he could not find his way back!

20 “Oh, Tom, you didn’t make any marks!”

“Becky, I was such a fool! Such a fool! I never thought we might want to come back! No—I can’t find the way. It’s all mixed up.”

“Tom, Tom, we’re lost! we’re lost! We never can get out of this awful place! Oh, why DID we ever leave the others!”

She sank to the ground and burst into such a frenzy of crying that Tom was appalled with the idea that she might die, or lose her reason. . . . Tom begged her to pluck up hope again, and she said she could not. He fell to blaming and abusing himself for getting her into this miserable situation; this had a better effect. She said she would try to hope again, she would get up and follow wherever he might lead if only he would not talk like that any more. . . .

So they moved on again—aimlessly—simply at random—all they could do was to move, keep moving. For a little while, hope made a show of reviving—not with any reason to back it, but only because it is its nature to revive when the spring has not been taken out of it by age and familiarity with failure.

25 By-and-by Tom took Becky’s candle and blew it out. This economy meant so much! Words were not needed. Becky understood, and her hope died again. She knew that Tom had a whole candle and three or four pieces in his pockets—yet he must economize.

By-and-by, fatigue began to assert its claims; the children tried to pay attention, for it was dreadful to think of sitting down when time was grown to be so precious, moving, in some direction, in any direction, was at least progress and might bear fruit; but to sit down was to invite death and shorten its pursuit.

SUSPENSE Suspense is a state of uncertainty. An author uses suspense to maintain the reader’s interest and keep the reader wondering about what will happen. What are Tom and Becky uncertain about in the story?

INFERENCE An inference is a guess based on evidence in a text. Becky agrees to try to have hope if Tom will stop blaming himself for their situation. What can you infer about Becky’s feelings for Tom?





CHARACTERIZATION A writer reveals a character's personality through several elements of characterization—direct statements, action, dialogue, thoughts and emotions, and interactions with other characters. What is revealed about Tom's personality when he says, "Cheer up, Becky, and let's go on trying"? Which elements of characterization are being used?

POINT OF VIEW Point of view is the perspective from which a story is told. The three most common points of view are: third-person omniscient (the narrator knows everything about all characters), third-person limited (the narrator knows the thoughts and feelings of one character), and first person (the narrator is a character in the story and uses the personal pronoun "I"). While Tom and Becky are trapped in the cave, we learn that "The village of St. Petersburg still mourned." How does this information reveal the narrator's point of view?

At last Becky's frail limbs refused to carry her farther. She sat down. Tom rested with her, and they talked of home, and the friends there, and the comfortable beds and, above all, the light! Becky cried, and Tom tried to think of some way of comforting her, but all his encouragements were grown thread-bare with use, and sounded like sarcasms. Fatigue bore so heavily upon Becky that she drowsed off to sleep. Tom was grateful. He sat looking into her drawn face and saw it grow smooth and natural under the influence of pleasant dreams; and by-and-by a smile dawned and rested there. The peaceful face reflected somewhat of peace and healing into his own spirit, and his thoughts wandered away to bygone times and dreamy memories. While he was deep in his musings, Becky woke up with a breezy little laugh—but it was stricken dead upon her lips, and a groan followed it.

"Oh, how COULD I sleep! I wish I never, never had waked! No! No, I don't, Tom! Don't look so! I won't say it again."

"I'm glad you've slept, Becky; you'll feel rested, now, and we'll find the way out."

30 "We can try, Tom; but I've seen such a beautiful country in my dream. I reckon we are going there."

"Maybe not, maybe not. Cheer up, Becky, and let's go on trying."

. . . Tuesday afternoon came, and waned to the twilight. The village of St. Petersburg still mourned. The lost children had not been found. . . Mrs. Thatcher was very ill, and a great part of the time delirious. . . Aunt Polly had drooped into a settled melancholy, and her gray hair had grown almost white. The village went to its rest on Tuesday night, sad and forlorn.

Away in the middle of the night a wild peal burst from the village bells, and in a moment the streets were swarming with frantic half-clad people, who shouted, "Turn out! turn out! they're found! they're found!" . . .

The village was illuminated; nobody went to bed again; it was the greatest night the little town had ever seen. During the first half-hour a procession of villagers filed through Judge Thatcher's house, seized the saved ones and kissed them, squeezed Mrs. Thatcher's hand, tried to speak but couldn't—and drifted out raining tears all over the place. . . .

35 Tom lay upon a sofa with an eager auditory about him and told the history of the wonderful adventure, putting in many striking additions to adorn it withal; and closed with a description of how he left Becky and went on an exploring expedition; how he followed two avenues as far as his kite-line would reach; how he followed a third to the fullest stretch of the kite-line, and was about to turn back when he glimpsed a far-off speck that looked like daylight; dropped the line and groped toward it, pushed his head and shoulders through a small hole, and saw the broad Mississippi rolling by!

. . . He told how he went back for Becky[;] . . . how he pushed his way out at the hole and then helped her out; how they sat there and cried for gladness; how some men came along in a skiff and Tom hailed them and told them their situation and their famished condition; how the men didn't believe the wild tale at first, "because," said they, "you are five miles down the river below the valley the cave is in"—then took them aboard, rowed to a house, gave them supper, made them rest till two or three hours after dark and then brought them home.

IRONY Verbal irony occurs when a character's or narrator's words do not match what is really meant. Situational irony occurs when the outcome of an event is the opposite of what is expected. When the narrator says that Tom "told the history of the wonderful adventure," which type of irony is occurring? Why?

THEME A story's theme is the general idea about life that it reveals. One of this story's themes is that it is much easier to get into trouble than out of it. How does the story reveal this general idea about life? What are some other themes in the story?

Comprehension Check

Look back in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* to see how Tom thinks and behaves during the story. Think about how the author presents Tom through the narrator's eyes. Use the graphic organizer to develop a character sketch of Tom Sawyer.

The graphic organizer is a central box labeled "Tom Sawyer" connected to five surrounding boxes. The boxes are:

- what he thinks
- what he does
- what he says
- what the narrator says
- what other characters think

Each box contains three horizontal lines for writing.

Vocabulary

Use the word map below to help you define and use one of the highlighted vocabulary words from the Share and Learn reading or another word your teacher assigns you.

atmosphere	daunted	countenance	abashed
discomfiture	ballast	affable	

Synonyms

Antonyms

My word

Definition

Other forms

My sentence

Share and Learn

Consider ►

How is the main character in this story similar to and different from Tom Sawyer?

What various features of being young do these two characters illustrate?



from Little Women

by Louisa May Alcott

THEME Look at the description of Jo in paragraph 1. Underline phrases that show that this story is about her pursuit of a dream.

ARCHETYPE Which phrase in paragraph 1 best describes a type of character you might see in other stories?

ANALOGY Circle the name of the fairy tale character in paragraph 2 that Jo is compared to. Explain how the author is saying the two characters are similar.

1 Though very happy in the social **atmosphere** about her, and very busy with the daily work that earned her bread and made it sweeter for the effort, Jo still found time for literary labors. The purpose which now took possession of her was a natural one to a poor and ambitious girl, but the means she took to gain her end were not the best. She saw that money conferred power, money and power, therefore, she resolved to have, not to be used for herself alone, but for those whom she loved more than life. The dream of filling home with comforts, giving Beth everything she wanted, from strawberries in winter to an organ in her bedroom, going abroad herself, and always having more than enough, so that she might indulge in the luxury of charity, had been for years Jo's most cherished castle in the air.¹

The prize-story experience had seemed to open a way which might, after long traveling and much uphill work, lead to this delightful chateau en Espagne.² But the novel disaster quenched her courage for a time, for public opinion is a giant which has frightened stouter-hearted Jacks on bigger beanstalks than hers. But the "up again and take another" spirit was as strong in Jo as in Jack, so she scrambled up on the shady side this time and got more booty, but nearly left behind her what was far more precious than the moneybags.

¹**castle in the air** a metaphor meaning that this was Jo's greatest dream

²**delightful chateau en Espagne** another reference to Jo's dream of having a comfortable home



She took to writing sensation stories,³ for in those dark ages, even all-perfect America read rubbish.⁴ She told no one, but concocted a “thrilling tale”, and boldly carried it herself to Mr. Dashwood, editor of the *Weekly Volcano*. She had never read *Sartor Resartus*, but she had a womanly instinct that clothes possess an influence more powerful over many than the worth of character or the magic of manners. So she dressed herself in her best, and trying to persuade herself that she was neither excited nor nervous, bravely climbed two pairs of dark and dirty stairs to find herself in a disorderly room, a cloud of cigar smoke, and the presence of three gentlemen, sitting with their heels rather higher than their hats, which articles of dress none of them took the trouble to remove on her appearance. Somewhat **daunted** by this reception, Jo hesitated on the threshold, murmuring in much embarrassment.

“Excuse me, I was looking for the *Weekly Volcano* office. I wished to see Mr. Dashwood.”

- 5 Down went the highest pair of heels, up rose the smokiest gentleman, and carefully cherishing his cigar between his fingers, he advanced with a nod and a **countenance** expressive of nothing but sleep. Feeling that she must get through the matter somehow, Jo produced her manuscript and, blushing redder and redder with each sentence, blundered out fragments of the little speech carefully prepared for the occasion.

“A friend of mine desired me to offer—a story—just as an experiment—would like your opinion—be glad to write more if this suits.”

While she blushed and blundered, Mr. Dashwood had taken the manuscript, and was turning over the leaves with a pair of rather dirty fingers, and casting critical glances up and down the neat pages.

“Well, you can leave it, if you like. We’ve more of this sort of thing on hand than we know what to do with at present, but I’ll run my eye over it, and give you an answer next week.”

³**sensation stories** stories that may involve characters whose actions are not admirable

⁴**rubbish** refers to literature that is poorly written or has no moral value

ALLUSION Circle the name of the magazine in paragraph 3 that Jo might have read for fashion tips.

SETTING Based on the details in paragraph 3, what words would you use to describe the newspaper office?

CHARACTER Circle the words and phrases in paragraph 5 that the author uses to describe Mr. Dashwood.

INFERENCE What can you infer about Jo’s feelings in paragraphs 5 through 7?

HUMOR Underline the description of the humor directed against Jo in paragraph 9.

POINT OF VIEW What does paragraph 9 tell you about the point of view of the narrator?

Now, Jo did *not* like to leave it, for Mr. Dashwood didn't suit her at all, but, under the circumstances, there was nothing for her to do but bow and walk away, looking particularly tall and dignified, as she was apt to do when nettled or **abashed**. Just then she was both, for it was perfectly evident from the knowing glances exchanged among the gentlemen that her little fiction of "my friend" was considered a good joke, and a laugh, produced by some inaudible remark of the editor, as he closed the door, completed her **discomfiture**. Half resolving never to return, she went home, and worked off her irritation by stitching pinafores⁵ vigorously, and in an hour or two was cool enough to laugh over the scene and long for next week.

⁵**pinafores** garments worn over dresses or skirts, popular among girls in this time period



10 When she went again, Mr. Dashwood was alone, whereat she rejoiced. Mr. Dashwood was much wider awake than before, which was agreeable, and Mr. Dashwood was not too deeply absorbed in a cigar to remember his manners, so the second interview was much more comfortable than the first.

“We’ll take this, if you don’t object to a few alterations. It’s too long, but omitting the passages I’ve marked will make it just the right length,” he said, in a businesslike tone.

Jo hardly knew her own MS⁶ again, so crumpled and underscored were its pages and paragraphs, but feeling as a tender parent might on being asked to cut off her baby’s legs in order that it might fit into a new cradle, she looked at the marked passages and was surprised to find that all the moral reflections—which she had carefully put in as **ballast** for much romance—had been stricken out.

“But, Sir, I thought every story should have some sort of a moral, so I took care to have a few of my sinners repent.”

Mr. Dashwood’s editorial gravity relaxed into a smile, for Jo had forgotten her “friend”, and spoken as only an author could.

15 “People want to be amused, not preached at, you know. Morals don’t sell nowadays.” Which was not quite a correct statement, by the way.

“You think it would do with these alterations, then?”

“Yes, it’s a new plot, and pretty well worked up—language good, and so on,” was Mr. Dashwood’s **affable** reply.

“What do you—that is, what compensation—” began Jo, not exactly knowing how to express herself.

“Oh, yes, well, we give from twenty-five to thirty for things of this sort. Pay when it comes out,” returned Mr. Dashwood, as if that point had escaped him.

⁶MS an abbreviation of the word *manuscript*

COMPARE AND CONTRAST FICTION

Compare and contrast how Tom and Jo each handle stressful situations in the two stories. How are they alike and different?

CONTEXT CLUES What context clues in paragraph 12 can help you determine the meaning of **ballast**?

CHARACTERIZATION

What do Mr. Dashwood’s actions in paragraph 14 tell you about his personality?

20 “Very well, you can have it,” said Jo, handing back the story with a satisfied air, for after the dollar-a-column work, even twenty-five seemed good pay.

“Shall I tell my friend you will take another if she has one better than this?” asked Jo, unconscious of her little slip of the tongue, and emboldened by her success.

“Well, we’ll look at it. Can’t promise to take it. Tell her to make it short and spicy, and never mind the moral. What name would your friend like to put on it?” in a careless tone.

“None at all, if you please, she doesn’t wish her name to appear and has no *nom de plume*,”⁷ said Jo, blushing in spite of herself.

“Just as she likes, of course. The tale will be out next week. Will you call for the money, or shall I send it?” asked Mr. Dashwood.

25 “I’ll call. Good morning, Sir.”

As she departed, Mr. Dashwood put up his feet, with the graceful remark, “Poor and proud, as usual, but she’ll do.”

⁷**nom de plume** a French term meaning “pen name”; a name the author chooses to be called instead of using his or her given name

SUMMARY How would you summarize the second interaction between Jo and Mr. Dashwood?



Discussion Questions

Discuss the following questions with your peer group. Then record your answers in the space provided.

1. Jo goes through a lot of trouble to get her story published, yet she decides not to take credit for it. What does this decision reveal about Jo's values? Support your answer with evidence from the text.

2. The narrator describes Jo's second interview as "much more comfortable" than the first. Does Jo grow to like Mr. Dashwood? What is Jo's opinion of him by the end of the passage? Support your answers with evidence from the text.

Comprehension Check

1. How would you describe Jo based on what she does in the story? What character traits does she reveal through her actions?

2. Summarize Jo's dreams and her plan to make those dreams come true.

3. One of the themes of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* is about taking responsibility. How does this theme appear in *Little Women*?

Read On Your Own

Read another story, "Striking Out," independently. Apply what you learned in this lesson and check your understanding.