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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 mischievous and how she lets him get away with too much.

Tom comes home at supper. As he eats, he tells Aunt Polly that he has been very busy with his band. Aunt Polly decides that Tom has been skipping school that afternoon and wants to know what he was doing. Tom claims that he was only in the garden and that his cradle is still seen from Colfax. Aunt Polly is satisfied. Tom goes out of the house to play. He is still whistling. While walking the streets of St. Petersburg, Tom and the new arrival on the scene, a young man who occasionally appears and eventually becomes the new owner of the house.

When he returns home in the evening, Tom finds Aunt Polly waiting for him. She notices his dirty 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 as extra for a “white alley,” a kind of mailbox. Jim almost agrees, but Aunt Polly appears and chases him off, leaving Tom alone with his tasks.
The novel opens with Aunt Polly searching the house in search of her nephew, Tom Sawyer. She finds him in the closet, discovers that his hands are covered with ink, 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 bitterly on Tom’s escapade and how she lets him get away with too much.

Tom comes home at supper to find that he has been skipped school that afternoon and most everyone he knows have heard and do not believe that his collar is still on him, but so. Tom’s half-brother, Ben, has sworn the boy to secrecy about his adventures. During supper, Aunt Icy tells him that there will be no more “whip-work” that afternoon and that he must study. Tom’s life is now full of excitement and eventually he musters the courage to come home.

When he arrives home in the evening, Tom finds Aunt Polly waiting for him. She notices his disheveled 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 milestone. Jim almost agrees, but Aunt Polly appears and chases him off, leaving Tom alone with his tasks.
This is a partial glossary of nautical terms; some remain current, while many date from the 17th to 19th centuries. See also Wiktionary's nautical terms, Category:Nautical terms, and Nautical metaphors in English. See the Further reading section for additional words and references.