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 time. He looks pale and thin, as though he had been ill. In the ashes of the fireplace are a few unburnt letters. Aunt Polly has read them, and the house is full of the smell of burnt paper. Tom is told that he must be skipped school that afternoon and next evening, and that his coffee is still warm on the table, but that, Tom’s half-brother, Huck, has been afraid to give it to him. Tom has sworn the boy to secrecy, and Aunt Polly is satisfied.

Tom goes out of the house into the street. The wind is blowing from the river, and Tom ponders the question of whether to go to the river or to the house of his friend, Becky Thatcher. He goes to the river, and there he meets old Dr. Blank, who is coming to take his first walk since his convalescence.

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. He passes by, and Tom tries to get him to do some of the whitewashing in return for a "white alley," a kind of marble. He almost agrees, but Aunt Polly appears and chases him off, leaving Tom alone with his labor.
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 pathetically, "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 and finds that he has been skipped school that afternoon and that no one at the house knows what has happened. His aunt is satisfied. In the evening, Tom goes out of the house in search of his accomplices. He is surrounded and attacked by his classmates, and eventually chases them 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. Man passes by, and Tom tries to get him to do some of the whitewashing in return for a "shoe alley," a kind of marble. Man almost agrees, but Aunt Polly appears and chases him off, leaving Tom alone with his tasks.