**Source of Lesson:** *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *The Celebrated Jumping Frog*

*of Calaveras County*

**Concept: Understanding dialect as used by Mark Twain**

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**Grade Level: Grades 6-8**

**Time Frame**: Several days, at least 3 with preliminary readings followed by a handson

activity as part of an integrated unit exploring the works of Mark Twain.

**Objectives:**

Students will articulate examples of dialect.

Students will measure and compare the length of taproots.

Students will listen to examples of dialect as written by Mark Twain in *Tom Sawyer* in

chapter 2 (with an emphasis on the white-washing scene) and listen to *The Celebrated*

*Jumping Frog of Calaveras County*. (The listening skills developed while listening to the

dialect will aid in the understanding of the “Celebrated Gol’derndest Longest Taproot

Diggin’ Contest of ‘Yer County” - a hands-on activity to be done with students outdoors).

***State Standards: Illinois Learning Standards***

***Literature and Language Arts***

4A3a Demonstrate ways that listening attentively can improve comprehension

4A3b Compare a speaker’s verbal and nonverbal messages

4A3c Restate and carry out multi-step oral instructions

4A3d Demonstrate the ability to identify and manage barriers to listening

4B3a Deliver planned oral presentations using language and vocabulary appropriate to

the purpose, message and audience; provide details and supporting information that

clarify main ideas, and use visual aids and contemporary technology as support

***Science***

12A3a Explain how cells function as “building blocks” of organisms and describe the

requirements for cells to live (e.g., plant cells making taproots)

12A3b Compare and assess features of organisms for their adaptive, competitive, and

survival potential

12B3b Compare and assess how different forms and structures reflect different functions

***Assessment/Evaluation:***

**Day One:** Students will exhibit the use of dialect by taking turns reading excerpts from

***The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County*** and Chapter 2, ***Tom Sawyer*** in pairs

as part of their integrated curriculum in literature/science classes. Copies of each

manuscript need to be distributed and pairs selected before the lesson. Participation is

judged by willingness to vocalize the dialect that is intended by the author. The students

will feel a little silly at first, as expected, but when the giggles subside the true color of

Twain should shine through. Willingness to explore literature written in dialect can only

be experienced by **ORAL** participation on everyone’s part. The teacher can model at

first, but the students need to verbally attempt it on their own for the desired result.

(Twain would not object to their enjoyment …and the giggles procured from his written

words would make him chuckle too!)

**Day Two**: After the background lesson in understanding dialect, the next day’s lesson

will be evaluated by the students’ participation in the hands-on activity, as it is also

written in a dialect that patterns the writing of Mark Twain. Working with a team of

teachers in a middle school setting is an ideal involvement for team evaluation of

participation. A simple rubric or quiz evaluating both parts of the activity will encourage

the students to complete the activity with accuracy.

***Language /Vocabulary***

As the teacher appears with a tooth blacked out, donning a flannel shirt and suspenders, a

wrapped toe and straw hat, the students will be well aware that the activity that follows

will be well worth their attention. Dressing the part puts everyone in the same framework

of time and space. The students may even enjoy wearing the clothing of the times as

well. For the pure, simple enjoyment of the students, the instructor should practice the

dialect for the instructions of the activity. As the students read along in the classroom,

the activity and the directions that will take place outside should become clear. To save

time and move the lesson along, a choral reading with the whole class would come next.

The teacher will check for comprehension by explaining the following words or phrases:

**confounded gol’derndest long taproot**-explains the nature of the growth patterns of

dandelion. As they send down a powerful taproot, anyone who has tackled such a weed

will understand this frustrating concept of self survival of this pesky weed. This visual

makes a great introduction to the difference of taproots (one main root) and fibrous roots

(many roots of the same size) of most perennials.

**danderlyins-**better known as the yellow topped, seed spreading, dandelion

**contraction-**meaning the “contraption” known as a gardener’s trowel

**desterb-disturb**

**‘em white narlly roots-**those white gnarly roots

**Jest-just**

**“jest like them chillens we all know of”-** the students will know right away that this line

refers to them, active teenagers with an equally innate ability to “sink their roots in as do

as they please!”

**“plumb filled back in with dirt”-** Some will dig with such diligence that the WHOLE

**hole** may end up HUGE before the project is completed. After the dandelion is removed,

encourage backfilling the hole and replacing the mulch in that area of the garden.

**“you jest might win yourselfs a prize”-**A potted plant to be placed in a garden at home

is the prize for the longest dandelion taproot to be removed by the students

**TEACHER’S NOTE:** As they re-read the directions clipped to their clipboard,

encourage them to read their directions out loud as they do the activity in the garden.

They will chuckle with the sound of their own voice speaking in dialect and really enjoy

understanding written directions in a whole new way.

**Integrated curriculum:** Although the concept of dialect may originate in the

literature classroom, it can extend from a more complex unit of study of the works of

Mark Twain. Literature and Language Arts classes may start the unit by reading his

works and understanding the dialect as written. Math classes can make origami frogs,

measure their “jumping capacity” or use linear measuring tools for a REAL jumping frog

contest. Measuring the taproot in question and charting it in comparison with the others

on a master chart is another math related skill. Science takes over as the concepts of

plant survival prevail and the action begins in a hands-on exploratory EVENT! The

concept of integrating the fine arts with very little costuming effort and the dramatic

presentation of dialect by the teacher will help Twain’s works come ALIVE before their

very eyes. An integrated unit of study with cooperation of the middle school staff is the

ideal venue.

The culmination of the unit of study of Mark Twain would end with a field trip to the

boyhood home, museum, and cave. With all teachers presenting lessons in their

classrooms with the same theme, the involvement can be extensive and enthusiastic for

the staff and students as well.

***Background Information:***

Students should be aware of the different styles of written dialect and understand their

meanings to convey the tone and intent of the author.

Students should be aware of the fact that their knowledge of dialect will help them do an

outdoor hands-on activity.

Students should derive the concept of “clever cunning” techniques to get a task finished.

As Tom Sawyer conned his friends into white-washing the fence, the teacher used the

same technique to lure them into removing dandelions from the school garden…..it works

well!

Students must know the different types of root systems and their adaptation to specific

plants. The concept of observing taproots (in dandelions) as compared to fibrous (most

flowering plants) or prop roots (mangrove trees or corn) in a Life Science class through

illustrations or research would be a prerequisite to introducing this lesson.

***Materials:***

Distribute copies of chapter 2 *Tom Sawyer* and the *Celebrated Jumping Frog of*

*Calaveras County* by Mark Twain.

Costume: straw hat, bibs or jeans, flannel shirt, corncob pipe, bare feet with a cloth

bandage on ‘yer toe, and pocket items such as marbles, door knobs and other shiny

“Tom” treasures, and an assortment of “polecats” and other creatures (use puppets to get

the concept of Tom as a real, outdoor loving, genuine boy!

Distribute copies of “Celebrated Gol’derndest Longest Taproot Diggin’ Contest in Yer

County” and a chart to measure their root systems

A long chart (taped to the sidewalk) with inch spaced increments for measurement and

comparison of the taproot treasures

A prize for the WINNER, maybe a perennial for their OWN garden with FIBROUS

ROOTS instead!

Hand-held gardens trowels for EACH child. Also a spade or shovel for the difficult ones

Clipboards to safely keep their directions where they belong while outdoors

Knee pads or garden gloves for the prissy ones

Garden hose, water anti-bacterial soap for clean-up and hand-washing

Ice cold “skunk water” and cups –(AKA Lemonade to serve when the task is done)

Simply add a CREATIVE teacher who loves to get dirty!

**Technology Support**:

**www.kirjasto.sci.fi/mtwain.htm**

**(a brief sketch with teacher references, mentions both works of Mark Twain)**

**www.librivox.org/theadventures-of-huckleberry-fin-by-mark-twain/**

**(audio clips of the dialect of the works of Mark Twain)**

**http://school.eb.com/lm/passport/dialects\_in\_literature.pdf**

**(for intermediate language arts, great picture of Mark Twain, comparison to other**

**authors and works with dialect**

**http://www.salpointe.org/sperri/huckstudyguide.htm**

(a teacher’s prepared study guide for *Huckleberry Finn* covered many issues discussed in

the Mark Twain workshop

**LESSON PLAN**

Introduction: Teachers on a middle school team will first denote a period of time to

discover and focus on the works of Mark Twain. Each prepares lessons within their

realm of learning to share with the team for the students to participate within the allotted

time frame, 40-42 minutes

**TIME Activity/Questions Student activity**

**Day 1- 40 minutes Have you ever had a chore that you just didn’t want to do? Have you ever been creative in getting someone to work for you?**

**Teacher gives background to the personality of Tom Sawyer.**

**How does Tom use his imagination to get chores done?**

**Read: chapter 2 *Tom Sawyer* (aloud) Taking turns reading and discussing the author’s style and use of dialect to give a feel for the setting and characterization**

**Day 2- 40 minutes Discuss other works of Mark Twain Start with a quote such as : “You cannot depend on your eyes, when your imagination is out of focus” (A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court) Use their imagination as they listen to, or read along, *The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County* Ask if anyone knows a local personality that**

**goes “on and on”?**

**Listen or read and respond Compare the story in *Tom Sawyer* for similarities and differences Students listen Give time for discussion**

**Day 3 (earlier in the day Teacher uses popsicle sticks to mark numbers, placing them in the**

**ground next to dandelions within the school garden) Dress as Tom Sawyer with costume and straw hat Students have not become aware of the lesson… YET!**

**Day 3 (later in the day) During Science class ( 10 minutes at most) Greet students and speak in dialect the minute they enter they classroom Pass out the directions to the enclosed activity Each student should have: clipboard, trowel, and a good sense of humor. Read aloud the directions Students do choral of directions,( teacher leading the dialect) Go over rules of outdoor classroom Students respond with ENTHUSIAM!**

**Students read directions**

**Gather supplies**

**Students go out to the garden**

**In the GARDEN…..( 30 minutes at least) Students choose a number from a flowerpot**

**As they are dug, the roots are placed on a comparative chart If time allows, dig another ( not marked already) Student begins digging up a dandelion Place dandelion on chart**

**Students compare, bigger of 2 gets placed on chart Students compare and vote on the longest taproot in ONE piece Prize awarded for longest root…and following directions**

**written in dialect CONCLUSION: The next day during Science class, students will fill out their own quiz which will earn them participation points for the activity.**

**NAME: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Evaluation**

**Class hour\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**QUIZ : Mark Twain, Science**

**Review of the “Celebrated Gol’derndest Longest Taproot Diggin’ Contest**

**1. Name the first book we used to explain the style of Mark Twain. 1 pt**

**2. Name the main character in this chapter. 1 pt**

**3. What activity did he “con” into being done? 1 pt**

**4. What animal was the victim of a scheme in the 2nd selection? 1pt**

**5. What is a TAPROOT? 1pt**

**6. Explain why Mark Twain uses dialect in each (2 reasons) 4 pts**

**7. Explain why these 2 stories were read prior to the “Danderlyin’ Contest.**

**4 pts**

**8. Name 4 things you learned about stories written in dialect. 4 pts**

**9. Name your favorite Mark Twain book or piece of literature. 1 pt**

**10. What do you like about his writing style? 2 pts**

**BONUS: Who won the “Celebrated Gol’derndest Longest Taproot Diggin**

**Contest in your (hour) class ?**

**TOTAL /20 points**

**BONUS:**

Extra Bonus Activity Name:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

“Gol ‘Derndest Longest Taproot Diggin’ Contest

Hr:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

DRAW yer’ danderlyin here………label the parts as if they was in Twain dialect….

Color et in really good like………….et will shore be perty when you’s done colorin’

with dem crayolas!!

The Celebrated Gol’Derndest Longest Taproot Diggin’ Contest in Yer County

**In keepin’ with the hometown traditions of frog jumpin’ and white washin’ em**

**fences ( like dat der Mark Twain was to be sayin’) …you are ’bout to venture**

**into an AMAZIN’ contest of skill and dexterity….here’s yer mission……..**

**{Foller these directions. You might win yourself a PRIZE!}**

**1. Find you one of ‘em confounded gol’derndest long taproots that’s**

**connected to one of ‘em DANDERLYINS that matches the number of**

**yourn.**

**2. Start to diggin’ that there DANDERLYIN root plumb clear outa the**

**ground. Now be caredful, mind ya, that them there DANDERLYINS has**

**gots some mighty in the ground roots… so be mighty careful!**

**3. Dig yer hole with yer own little digger contraction that has been given’**

**to ya. Dig yer hole deep alt around that there DANDERLYIN as to not**

**DESTERB the root or break it in any way. You’ll be wantin’ the whole**

**gol’dern root in one big ‘ol peace! Make sur yous don’t leave anys of the**

**DANDERLYIN midst the dirt anywheres… ’cause it will make a new ‘un…**

**sure as shootin!**

**4. Now yous have to pull that there DANDERLYIN root plumb outs of the**

**ground real-l-l-l easy like. If it won’t pull right out with a tiny little tug ,**

**you best be diggin’ rounst the edges some more. Onest its out in the**

**aire, give ‘er a big-g-g shake to gets the dirt off’ em white narly roots.**

**5. Now, find that chart like tablet youst have been given by yourst**

**teacher. Attach the part wherest the root starts to go down to the top**

**of that there chart wherest there is a black band. Line it up real careful**

**so the roots can be measured by the squares ‘neath the plant part.**

**Youst be JEST measurin’ them TAPROOTS… them taproots is mighty**

**healthy, ain’t they. That must be ther’ reason why those Danderlyins**

**are such a healthy sort. Ya’ jest can’t kill ‘em… whenst they want to**

**go…they just go there and set themselves down some POWERFUL**

**roots. Those DANDERLYINS sometimes jest DO WHAT THEY**

**WANT….just like some of them chillens we all know of.**

**6. Now, make sure the hole where that there DANDERLYIN is NO MORE is**

**plumb filled back in with dirt.**

**7. Take yer completed DANDERLYIN , connected with the little**

**chart…then place it on that big YELLER chart that’s been made for you.**

**Puts it amongst the others of yer friends and buddies and see who has**

**the GOL’DERNDEST LONGEST TAPROOT DIGGIN skills in yer county!!!**

**8. YOU jest might wins yourselfs a PRIZE!!!!!!!**

**Strategies/accommodations for students with exceptionalities**: Most

children LOVE being outdoors, so the setting is conducive to hand-on learning which has

its own charm and appeal with most students. Pairing up students who might not

understand the directions, or have trouble with LITERAL understanding would be a good

idea. Children with limited use of their hands could be the cheerleaders, or judges for the

contest. Children who always finish early could help those with especially LONG root

systems dig their a little deeper. Engaging the children in an active, and rather

unstructured setting is tricky for even the veteran teachers… but RELAX, have fun, it’s

OK to get dirty, and you “might jest win yourselfs a PRIZE!”. What a NOBLE thing to

do!

**Follow-up activities:**

**Learn to read dialect yourself, as a teacher, then let them try it on their own.**

**Bring in costume pieces of the era and see what dramatic dialogue will come about**

**through dramatic play and role-playing .**

**Teach them to make origami frogs… or corn bread… or something that delights**

**their senses and make them WANT to read more.**

**Draw pictures of what life was like for them in Twain’s day.**