**Dialect in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer***

**"Hang the boy, cain't I never learn anything? Ain't he played me tricks enough for me t'know better? But old fools is the biggest fools there is. He 'pears t'know just how long he can tease a body before the anger starts. . . ."**

**This is a classic example of Twain's use of dialect in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer.* The term dialect refers to the way language is spoken by a particular group or in a particular area of the country. To give the feeling of a dialect, writers sometimes use distinct spellings, pronunciations, and ungrammatical expressions.**

**Spellings**

* **"t'know" means "to know"**
* **"'pears" means "appears"**

**Pronunciations**

* **"cain't" means "can't"**

**Ungrammatical Expressions**

* **"cain't I never learn nothing" means "can't I ever learn anything?"**
* **"old fools is the biggest fools" means "old fools are the biggest fools"**

**Twain uses dialect to give you clues about the characters. His characters talk the way people on the Missouri frontier talked in the middle of the 1800s. Twain also uses dialect to make you laugh. For example, Tom says things like "Consound it!" instead of "Confound it!" to express his disappointment. As Twain noted in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Fin* n, the dialects he uses "have not been done in a haphazard fashion or by guess-work; but painstakingly, and with the trustworthy guidance and support of personal familiarity with these several forms of speech."**