

Discussion of local color in mark twain

[Literature](#), [American Literature](#)



Mark Twain was the author of many famous novels and short stories such as "The Adventures Of Huckleberry Finn," "The Adventures Of Tom Sawyer," "The Notorious Jumping Frog Of Calaveras County," and "Pudd'nhead Wilson." Born Samuel L. Clemens, he was raised in a small village in Missouri. When he was twelve years old his father died, leaving him to take care of his family. He became an apprentice to a printer and later went to work for his brother who was a publisher. In 1861 he began to write his own short stories that were published in magazines. In many of Twain's novels and short stories he uses local color to help define his characters and give meaning to his stories ("The Norton Anthology Of American Literature" page 212-215). The use of language that is specific to a particular area, the depiction of his characters and people throughout the story, the use of idioms, and the description of places as settings characterize local color. In other words local color is used to express "distinctive natural, social, and linguistic features" ("The Norton Anthology Of American Literature" page 12). Mark Twain often used local color to create realistic characters and settings within his writings. In many of Mark Twain's stories, such as "The Adventures Of Huckleberry Finn," he easily gives his characters their own vernacular language. In "The Notorious Jumping Frog Of Calaveras County," Simon Wheeler speaks with a strong accent and it is as if he has actually speaking with a type of "southern drawl" such as when he says the name Daniel he says "Dan'l" ("The Norton Anthology Of American Literature" page 217). His accent and his way of speaking gives the reader the feeling that Simon is a respectable, knowing person. Twain uses this type of dialect for Simon to give him character and to give the reader a better view of Simon's personality. Twain

also uses this type of local color in "The Adventures Of Huckleberry Finn" where he uses many different types of dialects to show where each character comes from, how they were raised, and sometimes where they stand socially. Another characteristic of local color that Twain uses in his writings is the depiction of his characters. In many cases, Twain uses characters that could possibly exist instead of the more dramatic characters that were used more in writings from the romantic period. The depiction of characters describes to the reader where the characters stand socially, where they are from, and how they carry themselves in public and in private. Many of Twain's characters, such as Tom Sawyer, Huckleberry Finn, and Simon Wheeler are described in great detail. This as well as the use of dialect helps the reader to become more intimate with the characters. Twain uses depiction in local color to illustrate how the characters are to look, act, dress, and behave so that the reader can more easily develop a mental image of the characters in his or her head. The use of idioms is also common in local color. Idioms are words, phrases, or statements that are not to be taken literally. The idiom "to bite one's tongue" does not literally mean to bite someone's tongue. There is hidden meaning within the phrase and it means "to be quiet" or "stop talking". Twain uses idioms in many of his writings as well. In "The Notorious Jumping Frog Of Calaveras County," as Simon tells the story of Jim Smiley and the frog he says "Why blame my cats if he don't weigh five pound!" ("The Norton Anthology Of American Literature" page 219). This statement does not really mean that he is going to blame his cats for his loss, but that he had been tricked and someone had to take the blame. Writers often use idioms in their stories and they are often

used in everyday conversation, therefore it is easy for readers to pick up on them and to find the hidden meanings within the text. Authors such as Mark Twain often use the description of places to help them bring their stories to life. Detailed descriptions of the time, period, and place where an event is happening in the story can help the readers better understand what is happening and to get the full effect of the story. The setting is very important to the story because it give the time frame and the location in which the story takes place. The setting also gives a description of the scenery around the event. In " The Notorious Jumping Frog Of Calaveras County," Twain begins to describe the setting of the story by telling of the tavern in which the narrator encounters Simon Wheeler. If there were no descriptions of settings in short stories and novels the reader would have no idea where the story is taking place or what the setting looks like. In the early years of the realism period of writing many authors, such as Mark Twain, Bret Harte, and many others, use local color to bring originality to their stories and make them different from authors in the same genre. Local color is the use of vernacular language, depiction of character, the use of idioms, and the description if setting. Local color has helped define many stories and authors we have learned to appreciate today. Citations 1. The Norton Anthology Of American Literature. Sixth Edition. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1979.