

Mark twain

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



Samuel Langhorne Clemens, also known as Mark Twain, was born in 1835 and died in 1910 (Student Handbook 379). He is best known as an American humorist and for his realistic view of America in the nineteenth century through his novels and other stories. He had the whole world captivated through his expert writing and lectures. "I never let my schooling interfere with my education (home.eathlink.net/~fçÃçâ€š-Ã, !/twain.html)," Mark Twain once said. Mark Twain was a great inspiration to America in the nineteenth century and is still an inspiration to contemporary writers today. Mark Twain was born as Samuel Langhorne Clemens in the small town of Florida, Missouri. He lived in a small, two-bedroom house, and being the fourth of five children, it was obviously very crowded in their house (Compton's Interactive Encyclopedia 1). In 1839, at the age of four, he and his family moved to Hannibal, Missouri which is located directly adjacent to the Mississippi River (World Book 530). Here is where Twain grew up as a boy. This was where his inspiration for most of his books came from. He witnessed things that would later make him the great author as we know him today. Without this period in his life, a huge chunk of literary history would be missing from America. By living on the banks of the Mississippi River, he experienced many wonderful things like colorful steamboats traveling down the river, some would just pass by, while many would stop and exchange cargo. These steamboats would bring a variety of people including comedians, singers, gamblers, swindlers, slave dealers, and a great assortment of other travelers (World Book 530). Things went along fine in Twain's life until he was twelve. At that age, in 1847, his father died. As expected, he was shocked to lose his father at such a young age and it was

then that his formal days of learning were ended. To raise money he began to work as a printer's apprentice. Like most nineteenth century authors, he was prepared for his soon to be career by working with a typesetter and reading a lot in his spare time ([www. robinsonresearch. com/ÃfçÃçâ€š-Ã, ;/twain. html](http://www.robinsonresearch.com/~fçÃçâ€š-Ã, ;/twain.html)). In 1851, he began assisting his older brother, Orion, in the production of a newspaper, the Hannibal Journal. This is where Twain began to seriously write and where he first published his writing. He contributed to the newspaper his poems, reports, skits, and even humorous sketches for several years (World Book 530). This, added to his education from working in print shops, reading miscellaneous books, and working with a typesetter, was priceless for helping Mark Twain become the great American author that he is considered to be today. Throughout his life, Twain had seen the steamboats drive up and down the Mississippi River past his town and this created the desire in him to want to learn how to drive a steamboat and get his pilot's license. In 1853, Twain left his hometown in Hannibal with his desire to learn how to drive a steamboat in mind. While on a trip to New Orleans, he convinced the steamboat pilot to teach him how to drive and by the spring of 1859, Mark Twain was a licensed steamboat pilot ([www2. lucidcafe. com/ÃfçÃçâ€š-Ã, ;/twain. html](http://www2.lucidcafe.com/~fçÃçâ€š-Ã, ;/twain.html)). In 1861, with the outbreak of the Civil War, Twain and his brother, Orion, moved to Carson City, Nevada to get away from the war. He and his brother tried to make it rich by mining for gold and silver. After failing in this endeavor to get rich, he moved to Virginia City, Nevada to join the staff of a newspaper. There, in 1863, Samuel Langhorne Clemens first wrote under his pen name, Mark Twain, which is a call used by Mississippi boatmen meaning " two fathoms". In 1865 Mark

Twain wrote his first popular story titled "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County" (www2.lucidcafe.com/~jct/ct/ct.html). In 1870, he married his wife, Olivia Langdon. She consulted Twain on his writing and modified his exaggerations in his writings. Sometimes she weakened his stories while, at other times, actually making them even more readable (Compton's Interactive Encyclopedia 1). "Ever since papa and mamma were married, papa has written his books and then taken them to mamma in manuscript and she has expurgated them" (marktwain.miningco.com). After getting married, he began publishing a new book every few years. By the mid-1870's Mark Twain was doing very well financially. He and his family moved into an expensive mansion in Hartford and he was slowly gaining a larger and larger fortune. He earned money by giving lectures worldwide and writing books. In the early 1880's he founded and ran his own publishing firm. Ironically though, he lost almost all of his money through a series of very unfortunate events. During the time of the foundation of his publishing firm, he became very interested in a variety of investments. One of his main investments was a very modern and elaborate typesetting machine. The new machine belly-flopped and he lost almost \$200,000 in investments between 1881 and 1894. Also, incredibly, in April of 1894, his publishing company declared bankruptcy. Thus, in January of 1895, he found himself publicly humiliated due to the fact that he could not pay off his debts (World Book 531). Twain was at a loss, the only thing he could do would be to try his best to regain the fortune he had once acquired. If anyone could do it, Mark Twain would be that man. By 1898, Twain had all of his debts paid. He did this by continuing his writing and he set out on a world lecture tour. He lectured in

places like India, South Africa, and Australia. Through this he paid off all of his debts. When he came back to America, he returned as an international hero. He enjoyed this publicity for a while until tragedy started hitting his household. In 1896, his oldest daughter, Suzy, died from meningitis and in 1903, he sold his beloved house in Hartford where he had written most of his popular novels. During the next year on June 5, 1904, his wife died and his life fell apart. His youngest daughter, Jean, died on Christmas Eve, 1909. Mark Twain died of heart disease on April 21, 1910 at the age of 74.

Throughout his life, Mark Twain wrote many books, novels, and poems, most of which became somewhat popular and many became very popular. His greatest work, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884) is considered an American classic although it has provoked some very heated controversy. One argument is its continual use of the word "nigger". Many say this is inappropriate language and shouldn't be put in front of the eyes of middle or high school age children but Twain does this to give a true sense to life in the south. Critics both in the nineteenth and twentieth century have both strongly accepted and strongly rejected *Huckleberry Finn*. *Huckleberry's* careless grammar and casual morals disturbed readers of Twain's time and in 1885, the Free Public Library in Concord, Massachusetts banned the novel (World Book 531). *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* will undoubtedly continue to be battered by harsh critics but will also undoubtedly continue to be an American classic. *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876), the prequel to *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, was the first book that Twain wrote using the memories from his childhood. *Life on the Mississippi* (1883) was also written from his memories of living on the bank of the Mississippi River

(World Book 531). Other major works of Mark Twain include, " The Innocents Abroad" (1869), " Roughing It" (1872), " The Gilded Age" (1873), " A Tramp Abroad" (1880), " The Prince and the Pauper" (1882), " A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court" (1889), " The Tragedy of Pudd'nhead Wilson" (1894), and " Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc" (1896). Some stories written by Twain were found after his death and were published. These include, " The Mysterious Stranger" (1916), " Mark Twain's Notebook" (1935), and " Autobiography" (1959) (Compton's Interactive Encyclopedia 1). Just recently, many people have come to know Mark Twain as more of a gloomy and pessimistic person rather than the American humorist that everyone knew him as. His later works, like " The Mysterious Stranger", although not accepted back in the early twentieth century, have now received much more attention as the general public is getting to know Twain's pessimistic side. " Why is it that we rejoice at a birth and grieve at a funeral? It is because we are not the person involved" (home. eathlink. net/ÃfçÃçâ€š-Ã, !/twain. html) Mark Twain once wrote. The deeper meaning of this statement simply states that one should be happy to leave this cruel world and sad for someone who is entering it. One reason for his change of personality in his writings was because of the deaths in his family. His dark side is also represented in his words again, " Pleasure, Love, Game, Riches: they are but temporary disguises for last realities- Pain, Grief, Shame, Poverty," (home. eathlink. net/ÃfçÃçâ€š-Ã, !/twain. html). This gloomy side of Twain is important to his literary history, but is not the prominent factor in the remembrance of him. He will always be remembered as Mark Twain, " The American Humorist". Throughout Mark Twain's life, he not only contributed his wonderful and

inspiring stories to the world, but also gave the literary world something wonderful also. He was one of the first Americans to have a real American style of writing. Most authors of the nineteenth century would try to imitate English writers, while Mark Twain's loose rhythms in the language of his novels gave the reader a real sense of American way of speaking. Mark Twain's realistic style of writing has influenced many authors during his lifetime and after his lifetime. Ernest Hemingway once stated, " all modern American literature comes from *Huckleberry Finn*," (World Book 532). Mark Twain truly was an American hero and his memory will live on forever.