

Mark Twain: Words & Music

A unit of study addressing the Common Core State Standards for Language Arts (with an emphasis on Information Text and Expository Writing)

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GOALS of the unit:

- 1. To provide students with the knowledge, skills, and disposition necessary to access, critique, and utilize information text in meaningful ways, including expository writing.**
- 2. To engage students with information text through integrated curriculum (e.g., history, music, art, creative writing).**
- 3. To collaborate to create a readers theatre/musical performance describing a significant person and/or event.**

RATIONALE of the unit:

We encounter informative text throughout our lives on every possible topic. From **how-to-assemble instructions** to **prescription drug label directions** to biographies to **websites rallying for a cause** to **Wikipedia entries**, informative text must be evaluated (for accuracy, merit, etc.) and accessed for its intended purpose. This unit offers **CONTENT** (American history & biography) delivered in a unique format (art & music) through **INFORMATIVE TEXT** and **EXPOSITORY WRITING**. Students of all ages need to be comfortable and confident in evaluating (“Consider the source!”) and composing informative text and writing exposition across the curriculum.

BASIC INFO:

Materials: *Mark Twain: Words & Music* CD

Grade level(s): 5 to 12

Length of unit: 2 weeks

Other uses/adaptations for this unit: To introduce works by Mark Twain (*The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, etc.); to introduce memoir and/or biography; to introduce creative writing (e.g., song lyrics).

Lesson 1 – Introduction/Review of the Concept (Informative Text)

Objective: Students will **distinguish between informative text and literature/creative writing by identifying examples of both, listing characteristics** of both, and **writing an example** of informative text.

Materials: Samples of nonfiction/informative text; biography

Opening question: If you wanted to find out something about _____, where do you look?

Provide background: Review the concepts of INFORMATIVE TEXT and EXPOSITORY WRITING. Ask students to cite examples and non-examples, list attributes, characteristics. Ask students to comment on the pros and cons of suggested sources. Have examples available. Discuss subjectivity vs. objectivity. Discuss what is meant by a reliable source and why people will choose to believe something from an unreliable source. Discuss propaganda. Discuss biography and perspective/viewpoint.

Play opening narration from MTWAM: “YOU don’t know about me without you have read a book by the name of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*; but that ain’t no matter. That book was made by Mr. Mark Twain, and he told the truth, mainly. There was things which he stretched, but mainly he told the truth.”

For discussion: What is the source? Who is speaking? (Huck) What does he mean by this statement? Who is Mark Twain? How do authors integrate “the truth” in fiction? How is Twain using Huck’s voice to make a point? Is Huck reliable? Is fiction a reliable source of information text? Why or why not? What is a historical novel? Name examples. If you wanted to find out if Huck Finn was a real boy (or based on a real boy), where would you look? How would you verify what you discovered? Do we know enough about Huck at this point? How can we learn more without actually reading *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*? What can we learn from Twain’s autobiography (or biographies about Twain) that can tell us about Huck Finn?

Class evaluation: Ask students to name likely reliable sources for informative text (e.g., encyclopedia, reference book, journal) and *less* likely reliable sources for informative text (e.g., fiction, CD). Discuss why or why not these would be reliable, to what degree, etc.

Assessment: Ask students if there is an area or subject in which they consider themselves experts. Let them share. Then remind them that one subject they know more about than anyone else does is themselves. Create a class “Who’s Who?” book of student biographies. Ask students to suggest what is important information to include as this will be factual and informational. Agree on a list of key criteria, which could be a wide range depending on their abilities. Possible information to include in the biography: Name; birth date; birthplace; family info; places traveled; interests; clubs/organizations; important events; etc. Have students write about themselves in the third person. Encourage them to look at examples (e.g., encyclopedia entries, biographies). Students will draft a short account written objectively in the third person. (These can be edited and revised until ready to compile/publish in a class book.) They should query friends and family members for multiple perspectives. Have students help develop a rubric ahead of time for assessment (include assessment for objectivity).

CCSS: R.I. 5.6

Lesson 2 – Key Ideas and Details

Objective: Students will **describe at least two key ideas and identify supporting details from text**; students will **provide quotes from text to support their claims**; students will **write a comprehensive summary of the text**.

Materials: Copies of the narrative for MTWAM

Opening question: If you were going to write a biography about your hero, whom would you choose, and why? (Discuss)

Provide background: Ask students to share what they know about Mark Twain (Sam Clemens). Share background info from CD booklet. Explain that students will listen to the narrative while following along.

For discussion: Discuss sources for the narrative (e.g., Twain autobiography, *Huckleberry Finn*). Discuss reliability of sources. Put Twain’s life in context (1835-1910); ask students what other significant historical events occurred during Twain’s life. Emphasize that the story is about Twain, but it includes references to historical events. Play the narrative portions only from the CD; pause after Track 1 to discuss key ideas, supporting details (model the process). Encourage students to take notes on their handouts. Continue narrative pausing after each track to discuss throughout Disc One. Tell students that with Disc Two, they will be pausing to make notes about key ideas and details on their own. Play through to the end.

Class evaluation: Class discussion – share thoughts on key ideas/details; critique each other’s responses – agree/disagree, etc. Come to consensus about the key ideas and supporting details.

Assessment: Have students write an objective summary of Twain’s life (based on the informative text/CD narrative) integrating appropriate quotes from the project. Include two main ideas (e.g., adventure, family).

Homework: Create a rough draft of your biography; include details; focus on this school year

CCSS: RI.5.1 RI.5.2 RI.11-12.1 RI.11-12.2

Lesson 3 – Craft and Structure

Objective: Students will **compare and contrast the narrative to the song lyrics** (used to further the storyline of the CD); students will **consider other accounts of events described in the narrative** (e.g., Twain’s autobiographical passages; other biographies about Twain; song lyrics); students will **identify and defend a passage that is especially eloquent** (e.g., “Well, the muddy Mississippi was his Harvard and his Yale, And it forever put a stamp upon the way he’d spin a tale, It brought us the adventures of Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn, Who taught us the fires of Hell are better than betrayin’ your best friend” from “Comet Ride”).

Opening question: What song would you choose for the soundtrack to your life? Discuss.

Provide background: Explain that corresponding songs were selected to further describe Twain’s life. Some songs already existed before the CD was created, while others were written especially for the project. Have students keep their narrative handy as a quick reference. Provide song lyrics; Play songs in sequence; stop and discuss after the first song. Ask about main ideas (e.g., Halley’s Comet/baby born) and details. Compare to corresponding narrative. (Continue throughout to the end of the CD.) Provide related passages from other Twain biographies (e.g., *Mr. Clemens/Mark Twain* by Justin Kaplan; *Mark Twain: A Life* by Ron Powers).

For discussion: Does each song further and/or enhance each segment of narrative? How so? Could you hear the songs only and have an understanding of Twain’s life story? Why or why not? Were liberties taken in any of the songs? If yes, provide examples.

Class evaluation: Discussion about the use of specific lyrics to tell Twain’s story. Ask students which songs they believe were written expressly for the CD (Run Mississippi, Safe Water, Huck Finn Blues, Indian Crow, Ink, Comet Ride). What is it about these songs that link them directly to Twain’s life story. Identify lyrics that are especially eloquent. Defend choices.

Assessment: Choose one narrative segment, corresponding song, and corresponding passage from another source (e.g., encyclopedia entry, biography); write an analysis comparing and contrasting the

Homework: Choose an existing song or write a new song that corresponds with the biographical sketch you wrote about yourself (lyrics to be included in class bio book).

CCSS: RI.5.5 RI.5.6 RI 11-12.5 RI.11-12.6

Lesson 4 – Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

Objective: Students will **review narrative to identify specific facts and/or quotes**; students will **research sources to verify facts/quotes**.

Materials: Internet access; books and journal articles about Twain; Ken Burns DVD on Twain

Opening question: If you wanted to verify what Livy’s nickname was for Sam, how would you do it?
Discuss.

Provide background: Review various sources available; ask students to suggest other possible sources.
Discuss merit.

For discussion: Students work in pairs to identify one fact from narrative they want to research, then work together to locate verifiable source. Share and discuss.

Class evaluation: Class activity (above)

Assessment: Individually, locate on quote by Twain that was not included in the narrative that would further support the overall story.

Homework: Locate inspirational quotes that tell your story. Include source for quotes. Think about how you would like to be remembered 100 years after you’re gone. Consider Twain’s quote: “Let us endeavor so to live that when we come to die even the undertaker will be sorry.”

CCSS: RI.5.7 RI.5.9 RI.11-12.7

Lesson 5

Objective: Students will **review and select photos/images** in CD liner notes and **evaluate their effectiveness** in conveying the narrative.

Materials: Liner notes from CD displayed on ELMO; Internet; books/articles with photos

Opening question: Is a picture really worth a thousand words? Discuss.

Provide background: Remind students that photography was relatively new when Clemens was a boy. Once he became famous, more photos were taken of him. Additionally, the Kodak camera was introduced, so more people had access to photography. Discuss the use of drawings and famous illustrators of Twain’s day (e.g., Daniel Beard, E.W. Kemble, True Williams, Thomas Nast, Currier & Ives).

For discussion: Review each image and discuss its effectiveness in telling the story.

Class evaluation: Use materials to research other photos that could have been used; justify/defend selections.

Assessment: Class activity (above)

Homework: Locate appropriate photos to tell the story of your life. Select one or two for the class biography.

CCSS: RI.11-12.7

Lesson 6

Objective: Students will **compare and contrast primary document to storybook format** of same account to determine accuracy.

Materials: *Papa* by Susy Clemens; *The Extraordinary Mark Twain (According to Susy)* by Barbara Kerley; handouts of excerpts of *Papa*

Opening question: What do you think Mark Twain meant when he commented on Susy’s biographer of him, saying, “This is a frank biographer and an honest one; she uses no sandpaper on me.”? Discuss.

Provide background: Remind students that one narrative section of the CD is that of Susy, Sam’s oldest daughter. By now they have learned that she died young and that the biography that she wrote of her “Papa” at age 13 was very precious to him. Author Barbara Kerley read Susy’s book and created a children’s picture book that includes excerpts from Susy’s journal.

For discussion: Ask how students would feel about writing a biography about a parent or other family member they loved. Would it be hard? Easy? Engaging? Challenging? Discuss what they might include, etc. Read Kerley’s book aloud to the class.

Class evaluation: Provide handouts of excerpts; have students work in pairs to locate passages that Kerley likely accessed.

Assessment: Ask students to locate other passages that could have been included but were not; justify their selections.

Homework: Write a short biography about a beloved family member.

CCSS: RI.5.1. RI. 11-12.1

Lesson 7

Objective: Students will **access a news item through a primary source and create a short work based on the actual event.**

Mark Twain Has Lost a Black Cat. From the *New York American*.

Have you seen a distinguished looking cat that looks as if it might be lost? If you have take it to Mark Twain, for it may be his. The following advertisement was received at the *American* office Saturday night:

A CAST LOST - FIVE DOLLARS REWARD for his restoration to Mark Twain, No. 21 Fifth avenue. Large and intensely black; thick, velvety fur; has a faint fringe of white hair across his chest; not easy to find in ordinary light.- reprint in *Kansas City Star*, April 5, 1905

Materials: *Bambino and Mr. Twain* by P.I. Maltbie; Website: <http://www.twainquotes.com/Bambino.html>

Opening question: Have you ever heard or read something in the news that sounds like it would make a good story – a book or a movie? Discuss.

Provide background: After Livy died, Sam Clemens was living in New York City when his favorite cat, Bambino, disappeared. He put an ad in the paper, and everyone came bringing cats. Author Priscilla Maltbie read about this and thought it would make a great children’s book. (Share accounts from website.)

For discussion: Read the book aloud to the class. Discuss. Good? Interesting? Was the topic an appropriate choice to make a children’s book?

Class evaluation: Ask students to review some articles about Twain at: <http://www.twainquotes.com/specialfeatures.html> or Google search others (many newspaper archives have these articles online). Working in groups, have them select one, read it, and collaborate on a brief story written in the style of a children’s book.

Assessment: Share books by reading aloud to class; classmates will critique.

Homework: Create and illustrate (may use clip art) a children’s picture book of an incident in your life. Must be between 14 and 20 pages.

CCSS: RI. 11-12.7. RI. 11-12-9.

Bambino...



Lesson 8

Objective: Students will **summarize and critique any book** (or the CD) covered in this unit **citing examples** to defend their claims.

Most Helpful Customer Reviews

22 of 22 people found the following review helpful

★★★★★ **Like Ken Burns on CD! Well Done!** September 21, 2011

By [Albert F. White](#)

Format: Audio CD | [Amazon Verified Purchase](#)

I am more of a Mark Twain fan than bluegrass/country music fan. In fact, when I saw a sample of this on a recent trip to Hannibal, I didn't know who half the artists were! I was, however, able to listen to the entire CD from start to finish and read through the liner notes. All around, this is a quality project. The music reminds me of "Oh Brother, Where Art Thou" and the narration tells a splendid story in just the right amount. The songs selected to accompany the narration were spot on - some old stuff, some new stuff.

This Two-CD set tells the life story of Mark Twain, but not just the nuts-and-bolts of his life, but it tells the emotional story of his life. His love, and his loss. Mark Twain is a complicated character but this CD set captures the essence of who he was.

The liner notes are well done and include pictures of Twain interspersed with notes about the songs and a transcript of the narration. I don't know how the producers did it, but they got Jimmy Buffet, Garrison Keillor and Clint Eastwood to narrate the parts of Huck Finn, generic narrator, and Mark Twain, respectively.

If I have one criticism (and it's a minor one) it's of Clint Eastwood as Mark Twain. Maybe it's just me and too many "Dirty Harry" movies. He did do a decent job, though, and I could really hear Twain speaking through him. So again, it's just a minor nit-pick about an overall high-quality production.

If you like Twain, any of the artists on this CD, or if you liked "Oh Brother" then this CD is for you!

[Comment](#) | Was this review helpful to you?

Opening question: Have you ever read an Amazon customer review before buying a product? Discuss.

Provide background: Show examples of customer reviews on Amazon. Discuss whether or not students ever read a book or heard a CD they would like to recommend to others. Log onto Amazon. Read the reviews for *Mark Twain: Words & Music*. Have the class vote on whether or not the review was helpful, and vote according to the majority. Have them discuss/explain their positions.

For discussion: Have students discuss among themselves their favorite three books and/or CDs. Have them justify their opinions.

Class evaluation: Ask students to write a brief review (in the style on Amazon) of their favorite book.

Assessment: Students will read aloud and critique each other's reviews.

Homework: Write a brief summary and critique of any book covered in this unit – or the CD – including examples for justifying your opinion. Write it in a finished format with the intention of publishing this review on Amazon.

CCSS: RI.5.2 RI. 11-12.5

Suggestions/Topics for Integrated Curriculum

Mark Twain: Words & Music can be used in various ways to integrate curriculum and promote critical thinking and creative problem solving. Here are a few ideas:

Topics:

- Halley’s Comet
- Astronomy v. Astrology (Jane’s “prediction” about Sam)
- Poverty
- Farm life
- Mississippi River
 - Environment/Geography/Culture
 - *Down the Mississippi: A Modern-day Huck on America’s River Road* by Neal Moore & Cindy Lovell <http://moderndayhuck.com/>
- Golden Age of Steamboating (“floating palaces”)
- Slavery/Abolition/Civil War/Fugitive Slave Act (“Huck Finn Blues” and “Comet Ride”)
- Westward expansion/Gold Rush (“A Cowboy In His Soul”)
- Tourism
- Euro-centric
- Politics
 - Women’s rights/voting
 - Anti-imperialism
 - Mugwumps
- Metaphor (“Indian Crow”)
- Compare/contrast childhood of 1850s to today
- Sam Clemens as a typesetter
- Moral lessons: “Let us endeavor so to live that when we come to die even the undertaker will be sorry.” – MT

Related Literature:

- The Adventures of Tom Sawyer
- Adventures of Huckleberry Finn
- Little House series

Other Resources:

- The Mark Twain Project (search his letters, autobiography, and **Huck Finn** by keywords) <http://www.marktwainproject.org/homepage.html>
- University of Virginia (search most of Twain’s books by keywords) <http://etext.virginia.edu/railton/about/srchmtf.html>
- Twain Quotes (verified as his; organized by topic) <http://www.twainquotes.com/>
- Mark Twain: Words & Music (general background information, reviews, etc.) <http://www.marktwainmuseum.org/index.php/community-projects/mark-twain-cd>

English Language Arts Standards » Reading: Informational Text » Grade 5

Key Ideas and Details

- RI.5.1. Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.
- RI.5.2. Determine two or more main ideas of a text and explain how they are supported by key details; summarize the text.
- RI.5.3. Explain the relationships or interactions between two or more individuals, events, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text based on specific information in the text.

Craft and Structure

- RI.5.4. Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases in a text relevant to a *grade 5 topic or subject area*.
- RI.5.5. Compare and contrast the overall structure (e.g., chronology, comparison, cause/effect, problem/solution) of events, ideas, concepts, or information in two or more texts.
- RI.5.6. Analyze multiple accounts of the same event or topic, noting important similarities and differences in the point of view they represent.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

- RI.5.7. Draw on information from multiple print or digital sources, demonstrating the ability to locate an answer to a question quickly or to solve a problem efficiently.
- RI.5.8. Explain how an author uses reasons and evidence to support particular points in a text, identifying which reasons and evidence support which point(s).
- RI.5.9. Integrate information from several texts on the same topic in order to write or speak about the subject knowledgeably.

English Language Arts Standards » Reading: Informational Text » Grade 11-12

Key Ideas and Details

- RI.11-12.1. Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.
- RI.11-12.2. Determine two or more central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to provide a complex analysis; provide an objective summary of the text.
- RI.11-12.3. Analyze a complex set of ideas or sequence of events and explain how specific individuals, ideas, or events interact and develop over the course of the text.

Craft and Structure

- RI.11-12.4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term or terms over the course of a text (e.g., how Madison defines faction in Federalist No. 10).
- RI.11-12.5. Analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of the structure an author uses in his or her exposition or argument, including whether the structure makes points clear, convincing, and engaging.
- RI.11-12.6. Determine an author’s point of view or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is particularly effective, analyzing how style and content contribute to the power, persuasiveness or beauty of the text.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

- RI.11-12.7. Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem.
- RI.11-12.8. Delineate and evaluate the reasoning in seminal U.S. texts, including the application of constitutional principles and use of legal reasoning (e.g., in U.S. Supreme Court majority opinions and dissents) and the premises, purposes, and arguments in works of public advocacy (e.g., *The Federalist*, presidential addresses).
- RI.11-12.9. Analyze seventeenth-, eighteenth-, and nineteenth-century foundational

U.S. documents of historical and literary significance (including The Declaration of Independence, the Preamble to the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and Lincoln’s Second Inaugural Address) for their themes, purposes, and rhetorical features.

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

RI.11-12.10. By the end of grade 11, read and comprehend literary nonfiction in the grades 11–CCR text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.

By the end of grade 12, read and comprehend literary nonfiction at the high end of the grades 11–CCR text complexity band independently and proficiently.

Suggest books (A Silent Spring) to turn into music.

NARRATIVE FOR MARK TWAIN: WORDS & MUSIC

Track: “Hello yourself, and see how you like it...”

HUCK: “YOU don't know about me without you have read a book by the name of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*; but that ain't no matter. That book was made by Mr. Mark Twain, and he told the truth, mainly. There was things which he stretched, but mainly he told the truth.”

NARRATOR: Samuel Langhorne Clemens was the sixth of seven children born to John and Jane Clemens. His mother would tell him later that he came into the world with the arrival of Halley's Comet, a cosmic event that occurred every 75 years, and so she predicted greatness for her premature and sickly infant son, whose survival in those challenging times was not typical.

TWAIN: “I was born the 30th of November, 1835, in the almost invisible village of Florida, Monroe County, Missouri. The village contained a hundred people and I increased the population by 1 per cent. It is more than many of the best men in history could have done for a town. It may not be modest in me to refer to this but it is true. There is no record of a person doing as much – not even Shakespeare. But I did it for Florida and it shows that I could have done it for any place – even London, I suppose.” (*Autobiography*)

Track: “Hannibal, Missouri, where my boyhood was spent...”

NARRATOR: When Sam was almost four years old, his folks, who just couldn't make a go of it in Florida, Missouri, moved the family a short distance to a village nestled on the west bank of the Mississippi River - Hannibal, Missouri.

HUCK: “Well, when Tom and me got to the edge of the hill-top we looked away down into the village and could see three or four lights twinkling, where there was sick folks, maybe; and the stars over us was sparkling ever so fine; and down by the village was the river, a whole mile broad, and awful still and grand. We went down the hill and found Jo Harper and Ben Rogers, and two or three more of the boys, hid in the old tanyard. So we unhitched a skiff and pulled down the river two mile and a half, to the big scar on the hillside, and went ashore.”

NARRATOR: His father was the Justice of the Peace and attempted several business endeavors, yet the family continued to experience financial hardship. This didn't seem to hamper young Sam, who found mischief and excitement in his surroundings... the cave, the steamboats, the wide, muddy river, uninhabited islands, the woods on Holliday's Hill. Hannibal offered plenty of playground for its children, rich or poor, and would later become the setting for Sam's most beloved books.

TWAIN: “In the small town of Hannibal, Missouri, when I was a boy everybody was poor but didn't know it; and everybody was comfortable and did know it...” (*Autobiography*)

HUCK: “Well, the woman fell to talking about how hard times was, and how poor they had to live, and how the rats was as free as if they owned the place, and so forth and so on... She was right about the rats...”

TWAIN: “Once a day a cheap, gaudy packet arrived upward from St. Louis, and another downward from Keokuk. Before these events, the day was glorious with expectancy; after them, the day was a dead and empty thing. Not only the boys, but the whole village, felt this. After all

these years I can picture that old time to myself now, just as it was then: the white town drowsing in the sunshine of a summer's morning; the streets empty, or pretty nearly so; one or two clerks sitting in front of the Water Street stores, with their splint-bottomed chairs tilted back against the wall, chins on breasts, hats slouched over their faces, asleep -- with shingle-shavings enough around to show what broke them down; a sow and a litter of pigs loafing along the sidewalk, doing a good business in watermelon rinds and seeds; two or three lonely little freight piles scattered about the 'levee;' a pile of 'skids' on the slope of the stone-paved wharf, and the fragrant town drunkard asleep in the shadow of them; two or three wood flats at the head of the wharf, but nobody to listen to the peaceful lapping of the wavelets against them; the great Mississippi, the majestic, the magnificent Mississippi, rolling its mile-wide tide along, shining in the sun..." (*Autobiography*)

HUCK: “We had mountains on the Missouri shore and heavy timber on the Illinois side, and the channel was down the Missouri shore at that place, so we warn't afraid of anybody running across us. We laid there all day, and watched the rafts and steamboats spin down the Missouri shore, and up-bound steamboats fight the big river in the middle.”

NARRATOR: Sam cherished the summers he spent back at his Uncle John's farm in Florida, Missouri, where he looked up to Uncle Dan'l – an affectionate friend and ally, and one of Uncle John's slaves. Uncle Dan'l would later provide the inspiration and model for the character, Jim, the runaway slave and friend of Huckleberry Finn.

HUCK: “Sometimes we'd have that whole river all to ourselves for the longest time. Yonder was the banks and the islands, across the water; and maybe a spark -- which was a candle in a cabin window; and sometimes on the water you could see a spark or two -- on a raft or a scow, you know; and maybe you could hear a fiddle or a song coming over from one of them rafts. It's lovely to live on a raft. We had the sky up there, all speckled with stars, and we used to lay on our backs and look up at them, and discuss about whether they was made or only just happened. Jim he allowed they was made, but I allowed they happened; I judged it would have took too long to *make* so many. Jim said the moon could a *laid* them; well, that looked kind of reasonable, so I didn't say nothing against it, because I've seen a frog lay most as many, so of course it could be done. We used to watch the stars that fell, too, and see them streak down. Jim allowed they'd got spoiled and was hove out of the nest.

“Once or twice of a night we would see a steamboat slipping along in the dark, and now and then she would belch a whole world of sparks up out of her chimbleys, and they would rain down in the river and look awful pretty; then she would turn a corner and her lights would wink out and her powwow shut off and leave the river still again; and by and by her waves would get to us, a long time after she was gone, and joggle the raft a bit, and after that you wouldn't hear nothing for you couldn't tell how long, except maybe frogs or something.”

NARRATOR: On the farm, Uncle Dan'l thrilled the children with stories, and Sam vividly recalled the largesse of farm life.

TWAIN: “It was a heavenly place for a boy, that farm of my uncle John's. The house was a double log one, with a spacious floor connecting it with the kitchen. In the summer the table was set in the middle of that shady and breezy floor, and the sumptuous meals – well, it makes me cry to think of them. Fried chicken, roast pig; wild and tame turkeys, ducks and geese; venison just killed; squirrels, rabbits, pheasants, partridges, prairie-chickens; biscuits, hot batter cakes, hot buckwheat cakes, hot “wheat bread,” hot rolls, hot corn pone; fresh corn boiled on the ear, succotash, butter-beans, string-beans, tomatoes, peas, Irish potatoes, sweet potatoes; buttermilk, sweet milk, “clabber”; watermelons, musk-melons, cantaloupes – all fresh from the

garden; apple pie, peach pie, pumpkin pie, apple dumplings, peach cobbler – I can’t remember the rest.” (*Autobiography*)

Track: “He agreed to teach me the Mississippi River...”

NARRATOR: Steamboats plied the Mississippi River, often stopping in Hannibal to load or unload passengers and cargo. A puff of black smoke announced their arrival long before the boats were visible.

HUCK: “...a steamboat landed, and in about two minutes up comes a crowd a-whooping and yelling and laughing and carrying on...”

NARRATOR: Young Sam Clemens watched and yearned for journeys on that river. He watched as every type of freight was loaded and unloaded there in Hannibal – lumber, hemp, even slaves. When Sam was eleven his father died from pneumonia, and Sam had to leave school and work as a printer’s apprentice to provide some financial help for his mother and his brothers and sister. He earned his keep there in Hannibal setting type from the age of 12 to 17, but he always kept an eye on that river. He left Hannibal at 17, set type in St. Louis to earn steamboat passage to New York City, and set himself in motion...

TWAIN: “When I was a boy, there was but one permanent ambition among my comrades in our village on the west bank of the Mississippi River. That was, to be a steamboatman. We had transient ambitions of other sorts, but they were only transient. When a circus came and went, it left us all burning to become clowns; the first negro minstrel show that came to our section left us all suffering to try that kind of life; now and then we had a hope that if we lived and were good, God would permit us to be pirates. These ambitions faded out, each in its turn; but the ambition to be a steamboatman always remained. A pilot, in those days, was the only unfettered and entirely independent human being that lived in the earth.” (*Life on the Mississippi*)

HUCK: “...the night got gray and ruther thick, which is the next meanest thing to fog. You can’t tell the shape of the river, and you can’t see no distance. It got to be very late and still, and then along comes a steamboat up the river. We lit the lantern, and judged she would see it. Up-stream boats didn’t generly come close to us; they go out and follow the bars and hunt for easy water under the reefs; but nights like this they bull right up the channel against the whole river.

“We could hear her pounding along, but we didn’t see her good till she was close. She aimed right for us. Often they do that and try to see how close they can come without touching; sometimes the wheel bites off a sweep, and then the pilot sticks his head out and laughs, and thinks he’s mighty smart. Well, here she comes, and we said she was going to try and shave us; but she didn’t seem to be sheering off a bit. She was a big one, and she was coming in a hurry, too, looking like a black cloud with rows of glow-worms around it; but all of a sudden she bulged out, big and scary, with a long row of wide-open furnace doors shining like red-hot teeth, and her monstrous bows and guards hanging right over us. There was a yell at us, and a jingling of bells to stop the engines, a powwow of cussing, and whistling of steam -- and as Jim went overboard on one side and I on the other, she come smashing straight through the raft.”

TWAIN: “Piloting on the Mississippi River was not work to me; it was play--delightful play, vigorous play, adventurous play--and I loved it... When I find a well-drawn character in fiction or biography I generally take a warm personal interest in him, for the reason that I have known him before -- met him on the river.” (*Life on the Mississippi*)

Track: “Several years of variegated vagabondizing...”

NARRATOR: Sam did become a steamboat pilot – got his license in 1859, his run took him back and forth between New Orleans and St. Lou.

HUCK: “Every night we passed towns, some of them away up on black hillsides, nothing but just a shiny bed of lights; not a house could you see. The fifth night we passed St. Louis, and it was like the whole world lit up. In St. Petersburg they used to say there was twenty or thirty thousand people in St. Louis, but I never believed it till I see that wonderful spread of lights at two o’clock that still night.”

NARRATOR: But when the Civil War broke out in 1861, his “permanent ambition” came to an end. He joined his brother on a stagecoach journey to the Nevada Territory where they would live for the next several years in the company of gold miners, silver miners, cay-otes, cowboys, saloonkeepers, antelope, politicians, prairie dogs, and various colorful characters. And this is where Sam Clemens would officially become “Mark Twain” writing for the *Virginia City Territorial Enterprise*. Sam got a glimpse of a Pony Express rider, he shared a cup of coffee with the legendary gunslinger, Slade, he bought himself a “genuine Mexican plug,” and speculated on the Comstock Lode. Although he distinguished himself as a storyteller and immortalized many a western rapsallion, he never did master that “genuine Mexican plug.”

TWAIN: “In the afternoon I brought the creature into the plaza, and certain citizens held him by the head, and others by the tail, while I mounted him. As soon as they let go, he placed all his feet in a bunch together, lowered his back, and then suddenly arched it upward, and shot me straight into the air a matter of three or four feet! ...I heard a stranger say: “Oh, *don’t* he buck, though!” While I was up, somebody struck the horse a sounding thwack with a leathern strap, and when I arrived again the Genuine Mexican Plug was not there. A California youth chased him up and caught him, and asked if he might have a ride... He mounted the Genuine, got lifted into the air once, but sent his spurs home as he descended, and the horse darted away like a telegram. He soared over three fences like a bird, and disappeared down the road toward the Washoe Valley.” (*Roughing It*)

Track: “It liberates the vandal to travel...”

NARRATOR: Sam Clemens loved to travel. After leaving Hannibal when he was in his ‘teens, his curiosity about the world spurred him to visit new places.

HUCK: “...it was a grand adventure, and mysterious, and so it hit him where he lived...”

NARRATOR: From Nevada he went to San Francisco and then visited Hawaii, or the Sandwich Islands as it was called back then. When he headed east, he wanted to see more of the world. He booked passage on the steamer, the Quaker City, for a five-month excursion to Europe and the Holy Land. He had contracted with the San Francisco *Alta* newspaper to send letters back describing his tour and the voyage and all the places he would visit. But when they docked in Greece, the passengers learned that they were to be quarantined and were forbidden to leave the ship. The itinerant journalist chafed at the news.

TWAIN: “It was the bitterest disappointment we had yet experienced. To lie a whole day in sight of the Acropolis, and yet be obliged to go away without visiting Athens! Disappointment was

hardly a strong enough word to describe the circumstances. At eleven o'clock at night, when most of the ship's company were abed, four of us stole softly ashore in a small boat, a clouded moon favoring the enterprise... Seeing no road, we took a tall hill to the left of the distant Acropolis for a mark, and steered straight for it over all obstructions... The full moon was riding high in the cloudless heavens, now. We sauntered carelessly and unthinkingly to the edge of the lofty battlements of the citadel, and looked down -- a vision! And such a vision! Athens by moonlight!" (*The Innocents Abroad*)

Track: “You ain’t ever to love anybody but me...”

NARRATOR: After the 164-day voyage on the Quaker City, Sam Clemens would reconnect with a friend he'd met on that journey, Charley Langdon. Sam had seen a photo of Langdon's sister, Olivia, in Langdon's stateroom on the boat and within a year he contrived to meet this beautiful, educated, genteel Eastern woman who was ten years younger and every bit his intellectual match. He went so far as to fake a head injury so that he could prolong a visit at the Langdons' home. And thus began an enduring love affair.

TWAIN: “I saw her first in the form of an ivory miniature in her brother Charley's stateroom...in the Bay of Smyrna, in the summer of 1867, when she was in her twenty-second year. I saw her in the flesh for the first time in New York in the following December. She was slender and beautiful and girlish – and she was both girl and woman. She remained both girl and woman to the last day of her life.” (*Autobiography*)

NARRATOR: Olivia's father gave permission for the engagement despite Sam Clemens's unpolished background and his lack of references. And in a letter to Livy, Sam wrote passionately of their impending union.

TWAIN: “...it makes of two fractional lives a whole; it gives to two purposeless lives a work, & doubles the strength of each whereby to perform it; it gives to two questioning natures a reason for living, & something to live for; it will give a new gladness to the sunshine, a new fragrance to the flowers, a new beauty to the earth, a new mystery to life; & Livy, it will give a new revelation to love, a new depth to sorrow, a new impulse to worship. In that day the scales will fall from our eyes & we shall look upon a new world. Speed it!” (Letter to Livy, 9/8/1869)

Track: “It was a mighty nice family...”

NARRATOR: Sam and Livy married February 2nd, 1870. They had four children: a son, Langdon, who died of diphtheria at 19 months, followed by three daughters, Susy, Clara, and Jean. They built a mansion in Hartford, Connecticut for a storybook existence as Mark Twain's literary star continued to soar. Livy's nickname for her husband was “Youth,” because he had the heart and soul of a boy, and his nickname for her was, “Gravity,” because she did try to keep his feet on the ground. They were a close and loving family, and their happiness was almost dreamlike.

TWAIN: “When Susy was thirteen and was a slender little maid with plaited tails of copper-tinged brown hair down her back and was perhaps the busiest bee in the household hive... she secretly and of her own motion and out of love added another task to her labors – the writing of a biography of me. She did this work in her bedroom at night and kept her record hidden. After a little the mother discovered it and filched it and let me see it; then told Susy what she had done and how pleased I was and how proud. I remember that time with a deep pleasure. I had had compliments before but none that touched me like this...” (*Autobiography*)

SUSY: “We are a very happy family. We consist of Papa, Mamma, Jean, Clara and me. It is papa I am writing about, and I shall have no trouble in not knowing what to say about him, as he is a very striking character. Papa’s appearance has been described many times, but very incorrectly. He has beautiful gray hair, not any too thick or any too long, but just right; a Roman nose, which greatly improves the beauty of his features; kind blue eyes and a small mustache. He has a wonderfully shaped head and profile. He has a very good figure – in short, he is an extraordinarily fine looking man. All his features are perfect, except that he hasn’t extraordinary teeth. His complexion is very fair, and he doesn’t wear a beard. He is a very good man and a very funny one. He has got a temper, but we all of us have in this family. He is the loveliest man I ever saw or ever hope to see – and oh, so absent-minded. He does tell perfectly delightful stories. Clara and I used to sit on each arm of his chair and listen while he told us stories about the pictures on the wall.” (Susy Clemens, *Papa*, as published in Twain’s *Autobiography*)

TWAIN: “I remember the story telling days vividly. They were a difficult and exacting audience – those little creatures. As romancer to the children I had a hard time, even from the beginning. If they brought me a picture in a magazine and required me to build a story to it, they would cover the rest of the page with their pudgy hands to keep me from stealing an idea from it. The stories had to be absolutely original and fresh. Sometimes the children furnished me simply a character or two, or a dozen, and required me to start out at once on that slim basis and deliver those characters up to a vigorous and entertaining life of crime. If they heard of a new trade or an unfamiliar animal or anything like that, I was pretty sure to have to deal with those things in the next romance. Once Clara required me to build a sudden tale out of a plumber and a “bawgun strictor,” and I had to do it. She didn’t know what a boa constrictor was until he developed in the tale - then she was better satisfied with it than ever.” (*Autobiography*)

Track: “Don’t scrunch up like that, Huckleberry...”

NARRATOR: These family years brought profound joy and comfort. His books were bestsellers around the world. Sam Clemens, now widely known as “Mark Twain,” was beloved by presidents and the populace alike. Thomas Edison said, “An average American loves his family. If he has any love left over for some other person, he generally selects Mark Twain.” Mark Twain was very prolific, and during summers at Quarry Farm in Elmira, New York, and back home in Hartford, he wrote such masterpieces as *Roughing It*, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, *The Prince and the Pauper*, *Life on the Mississippi* and *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court*. Mark Twain said, “High and fine literature is wine, and mine is only water; but everybody likes water.” Of course his greatest work of all was written during this period, his main character based on a neighbor boy back in Hannibal, Missouri.

TWAIN: “In Huckleberry Finn I have drawn Tom Blankenship exactly as he was. He was ignorant, unwashed, insufficiently fed; but he had as good a heart as ever any boy had. His liberties were totally unrestricted. He was the only really independent person--boy or man--in the community, and by consequence he was tranquilly and continuously happy and envied by the rest of us. And as his society was forbidden us by our parents the prohibition trebled and quadrupled its value, and therefore we sought and got more of his society than any other boy’s.” (*Autobiography*)

HUCK: “We went tiptoeing along a path amongst the trees back towards the end of the widow’s garden, stooping down so as the branches wouldn’t scrape our heads. When we was passing by the kitchen I fell over a root and made a noise. We scrouched down and laid still. Tom he made a sign to me -- kind of a little noise with his mouth -- and we went creeping away on our hands and knees. ...we cut along the path, around the garden fence, and by and by fetched up on the steep top of the hill the other side of the house.”

Track: “The crows would gather on the railing and talk about me...”

NARRATOR: The tranquility of the Clemens family, like many well to do families of the time, was to be shattered by the countrywide Panic of 1893 and further complicated by Sam’s poor investments. Facing potential bankruptcy, Sam, Livy, and Clara left the United States in 1895 for a thirteen-month lecture tour around the world, Susy and Jean staying behind with family. The girls were young adults now, and although it was painful, the separation seemed bearable under the circumstances. From Fiji to Australia to New Zealand to Ceylon, India, South Africa, the three of them pressed on with Sam lecturing and getting material for a book about his journey, *Following the Equator*. Sam Clemens recounted adventures and described characters from every culture, but he was especially enchanted with India and one certain “resident” in particular, the “Bird of Birds the Indian crow.”

TWAIN: “I suppose he is the hardest lot that wears feathers. Yes, and the cheerfulest, and the best satisfied with himself. He never arrived at what he is by any careless process, or any sudden one; he is a work of art, and “art is long”; he is the product of immemorial ages, and deep calculation; one can’t make a bird like that in a day. He has been reincarnated more times than Shiva; and he has kept a sample of each incarnation, and fused it into his constitution. In the course of his evolutionary promotions, his sublime march toward ultimate perfection, he has been a gambler, a low comedian, a dissolute priest, a fussy woman, a blackguard, a scoffer, a liar, a thief, a spy, an informer, a trading politician, a swindler, a professional hypocrite, a patriot for cash, a reformer, a lecturer, a lawyer, a conspirator, a rebel, a royalist, a democrat, a practicer and propagator of irreverence, a meddler, an intruder, a busybody, an infidel, and a wallower in sin for the mere love of it. The strange result, the incredible result, of this patient accumulation of all damnable traits is, that he does not know what care is, he does not know what sorrow is, he does not know what remorse is, his life is one long thundering ecstasy of happiness, and he will go to his death untroubled, knowing that he will soon turn up again as an author or something...” (*Following the Equator*)

Track: “So wounded, so broken-hearted...”

NARRATOR: The tour was a triumph. Sales of the new book would allow the family to pay off every cent of their debt. Sam, Livy, and Clara had kept in touch with Susy and Jean during those 13 months of traveling through letters and cablegrams. And now a reunion was planned for the family to live together once again – this time in England where it wouldn’t cost so much and where Sam could write in peace.

TWAIN: “Clara and her mother and I arrived in England from around the world on the 31st of July and took a house in Guildford. A week later, when Susy, Katy, and Jean should have been arriving from America we got a letter instead. It explained that Susy was slightly ill – nothing of consequence. But we were disquieted and began to cable for later news. This was Friday. All day no answer – and the ship to leave Southampton next day at noon. Clara and her mother began packing, to be ready in case the news should be bad. Finally came a cablegram saying, “Wait for cablegram in the morning.” This was not satisfactory – not reassuring. I cabled again, asking that the answer be sent to Southampton, for the day was now closing. I waited in the post office that night till the doors were closed, toward midnight, in the hope that good news might still come, but there was no message. We sat silent at home till one in the morning, waiting – waiting for we knew not what. Then we took the earliest morning train and when we reached Southampton the message was there. It said the recovery would be long but certain. This was a great relief to me but not to my wife. She was frightened. She and Clara went aboard the steamer at once and sailed for America to nurse Susy. I remained behind to search

for another and larger house in Guildford. That was the 15th of August, 1896. Three days later, when my wife and Clara were about halfway across the ocean, I was standing in our dining-room, thinking of nothing in particular, when a cablegram was put into my hand. It said, “Susy was peacefully released to-day.” It is one of the mysteries of our nature that a man, all unprepared, can receive a thunder-stroke like that and live... The calamity that comes is never the one we had prepared ourselves for.” (*Autobiography* and letter to Olivia Clemens, 8/16/1896)

Track: “Wheresoever she was, there was Eden...”

NARRATOR: The family never fully recovered from the impact of Susy’s death. Livy, who had always experienced frail health, endeavored to press on despite her physical weaknesses.

TWAIN: “She could not rest. She never was intended to rest. She had the spirit of a steam engine in a frame of flesh.” (*Autobiography*)

NARRATOR: The Clemenses had lived in a Florentine villa before, in 1892. And in 1903 doctors advised a return to Florence when Livy’s health appeared to be worsening.

TWAIN: “It is agreed that life at a Florentine villa is an ideal existence. The weather is divine, the outside aspects lovely, the days and the nights tranquil and reposeful, the seclusion from the world and its worries as satisfactory as a dream. Late in the afternoons friends come out from the city and drink tea in the open air and tell what is happening in the world; and when the great sun sinks down upon Florence and the daily miracle begins, they hold their breaths and look. It is not a time for talk.” (*Autobiography*)

NARRATOR: In Florence, Clemens grew hopeful that Livy would recover, and she appeared to be getting better. And then on Sunday evening, June the fifth, 1904 he wrote:

TWAIN: “She has been dead two hours. It is impossible. The words have no meaning. But they are true; I know it, without realizing it. She was my life, and she is gone; she was my riches, and I am a pauper... Only four hours ago I sat by her bedside while Clara and Jean were at dinner, and she was bright and cheerful... Only four hours ago – and now there she lies, white and still! She was the most beautiful spirit, and the highest and the noblest I have ever known. And now she is dead... I wish I were with Livy.” (*Autobiography*)

Track: “My conscience got to stirring me up hotter than ever...”

NARRATOR: After Livy’s death Twain poured his grief and rage into the social commentary that had come to define him – honest, scathing tirades against hypocrisy, dishonesty, greed, and bigotry. No subject escaped his famous “pen warmed up in hell” – politics, business, religion, education, prisons – all affronts were challenged, debated and opined. Twain’s view was sought in all matters.

TWAIN: “Strange – it is just like religion and politics! In religion and politics people’s beliefs and convictions are in almost every case gotten at second-hand, and without examination, from authorities who have not themselves examined the questions at issue but have taken them at

second-hand from other non-examiners, whose opinions about them were not worth a brass farthing.” (*Autobiography*)

HUCK: “It was a close place. I took it up, and held it in my hand. I was a-trembling, because I'd got to decide, forever, betwixt two things, and I knowed it. I studied a minute, sort of holding my breath, and then says to myself:

“All right, then, I'll go to hell” -- and tore it up.

It was awful thoughts and awful words, but they was said. And I let them stay said; and never thought no more about reforming. I shoved the whole thing out of my head, and said I would take up wickedness again, which was in my line, being brung up to it, and the other warn't. And for a starter I would go to work and steal Jim out of slavery again; and if I could think up anything worse, I would do that, too; because as long as I was in, and in for good, I might as well go the whole hog.”

TWAIN: “It is an odd and curious and interesting ass, the human race. [And] when the human race has once acquired a superstition nothing short of death is ever likely to remove it.” (*Autobiography*)

NARRATOR: On most topics, Twain spoke candidly. But many of his controversial writings he suppressed until after his death. In his autobiography, which was published after his death, Twain wrote:

TWAIN: “I have always preached. That is the reason I have lasted thirty years. If the humor came of its own accord and uninvited I have allowed it a place in my sermon, but I was not writing the sermon for the sake of the humor. I should have written the sermon just the same, whether any humor applied for admission or not.” (*Autobiography*)

HUCK: “And I about made up my mind to pray, and see if I couldn't try to quit being the kind of a boy I was and be better. So I kneeled down. But the words wouldn't come... You can't pray a lie -- I found that out.”

TWAIN: “I am saying these vain things in this frank way because I am a dead person speaking from the grave. Even I would be too modest to say them in life. I think we never become really and genuinely our entire and honest selves until we are dead – and not then until we have been dead years and years. People ought to start dead and then they would be honest so much earlier.” (*Autobiography*)

Track: “The report of my death was an exaggeration...”

NARRATOR: Sam stayed busy giving speeches, granting interviews, and writing commentary. He accepted honors and accolades, including an honorary doctorate from Oxford University. His daughter, Clara, married and moved away. Daughter Jean had suffered from epilepsy for years and often lived in sanitariums where doctors searched for a cure. Lonesome for each other, Jean came home to live with her father. Their days together were sweet, and made more poignant by their brevity. Jean died of a seizure that Christmas Eve in 1909 just a short time after coming to live with her father. Clemens' grief was profound, and his own days were numbered.

TWAIN: “I came in with Halley's Comet in 1835. It is coming again next year, and I expect to go out with it. It will be the greatest disappointment of my life if I don't go out with Halley's Comet. The Almighty has said, no doubt: ‘Now here are these two unaccountable freaks; they came in together, they must go out together.’” (*Autobiography*)

Track: “The truth, mainly...”

HUCK: “...and so there ain't nothing more to write about, and I am rotten glad of it, because if I'd a knowed what a trouble it was to make a book I wouldn't a tackled it, and ain't a-going to no more. But I reckon I got to light out for the Territory ahead of the rest, because Aunt Sally she's going to adopt me and sivilize me, and I can't stand it. I been there before.”

NARRATOR: Samuel Langhorne Clemens died on April 21st, 1910 in Redding, Connecticut with the perihelion of Halley's Comet blazing in the night sky – just as he had predicted. His only surviving daughter, Clara, had one child – Nina Clemens Gabilowitsch. Nina never married, bore no children, died in Los Angeles at the age of 55 leaving no direct descendents of Samuel Langhorne Clemens, whom the world lovingly remembers as “Mark Twain”. Sam's longtime friend, William Dean Howells, lamented his friend's passing. He said, “Emerson, Longfellow, Lowell, Holmes - I knew them all and all the rest of our sages, poets, seers, critics, humorists; they were like one another and like other literary men; but Clemens was sole, incomparable, the Lincoln of our literature.”