

A Connecticut Yankee Lesson Plan
Mark Twain Teachers Workshop – Mark Twain Museum
July 23-27th, 2007 Hannibal, Missouri
Developed by: Mickey Burle, Carol Haslag, Beth Parrish, Emma Williams
Linn Elementary School, Linn, Missouri

Lesson Title: My Fight with the Knight

Grade Level: Grades 4-6 (can be adapted for older grades)

Time Frame for Lesson: 3-5 days

Background Information:

Hank Morgan, a blacksmith, horse doctor, and machinist from the nineteenth century is transported back to sixth century England during the legendary King Arthur's reign. Because of his nineteenth century experiences he becomes known as a magician and is named second in command to the king. For most of the book he is referred to as, "The Boss". He uses his Yankee ingenuity and knowledge of modern inventions to bring changes to their barbaric way of life.

Chapter 39 "The Yankee's Fight with the Knights" begins with the prospect of a tournament pitting Henry Morgan, surname "The Boss", against Sir Sagramour le Desirous. The knight appears in full armor with a powerful steed ready to do battle, The Boss, making fun of the pageantry, appears in tights instead of armor and riding a small quick horse. Rather than attacking with a lance he makes it a game of dodging the charge and even uses a lasso to fell the knight. He continues to make a farce out of the joust by roping, in cowboy fashion, several more knights. Finally his rope is stolen and he is left to face the next knight with seemingly no weapon.

Literary/Language Arts Focus: vocabulary, critical listening, critical reading, visualizing, plot development, creative writing

Big Idea: Use an excerpt from Mark Twain's, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* to spark a creative writing piece.

State Standards: Missouri – Communications Arts

Curriculum Connections/Collaboration:

- ★ Media Specialist – research within computer lab time or in library the topics of knights, armor, tournaments
- ★ Physical Education – demonstration of sword fighting or fencing
- ★ Art – make a knight's banner, coat of arms, and/or weave a tapestry for the tournament

Vocabulary:

vacant	quarrel	encore
mammoth	combatants	errantry
tapestries	proclamation	alack
aristocracy	cumbrously	Christendom
gaudy	pirouetting	successor
suites	obeisance	etiquette
prism	gossamer threads	provincial
aurora borealis	procured	chivalry
beflagged	formidable	kerchiefs
sentinel	maneuver	invincible
ambition	disposed	lariat
castle	gait	Thou'rt
heralds	lasso	ween
tabards	a-cleaving	hilt
loins	novelty	sleight-of-hand
eloquent	cipher	
multitude	philological	

Vocabulary Activities:

Design a word search using 15-20 vocabulary words. Have students search out words from the excerpt without giving the students a word bank. The teacher can give hints by defining the word, giving the first letter and so forth.

Locate images from Google to reflect the meaning of the vocabulary words. This will provide students with a visual image to assimilate meaning.

Create a BINGO like game called JOUST. The students arrange vocabulary words on blank spaces. The students cannot declare a JOUST until they prove they can define the words they are using to win.

Materials:

- ★ Internet
- ★ Re-typed excerpt from Chapter 39 "The Yankee's Fight with the Knights" from *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (see appendix 1 for beginning and ending paragraphs of excerpt)
- ★ Appendix 2 and 3 scoring guides for the writing piece and creative project.
- ★ Appendix 4 letter home

Technology Support:

- ★ Google search engine
- ★ Armor Glossary can be found at www.medievaltymes.com
- ★ Students may find information from the time period at www.chronique.com
- ★ The vocabulary words can be arranged into a variety of puzzles at www.puzzlemaker.school.discovery.com

Content Objectives:

- ★ Using a scoring guide, the students will create an appropriate ending to the excerpt incorporating supporting details relevant to the time period.
- ★ The students will create a visual representation of their writing project.

Related Twain Quotes/Stories/Articles:

- ★ Additional Twain quotes are not used in this lesson but can be accessed at www.twainquotes.com

Home-School Connection: Letter home to parents to invite them to a knight's ceremony sharing the enchanting displays of their work. See appendix 4.

The Lesson:

Hook: Show a movie clip depicting a jousting tournament using one of the following movies or clip from the internet:

- A Knight's Tale*
- Sword in the Stone*
- A Connecticut Yankee* starring Bing Crosby

Activate Prior Knowledge:

- ★ Knights and jousting
- ★ Lassos and lariat skills

Procedure:

1. Research and share findings regarding knights, armor, jousting tournaments, and relevant time period information.
2. Read and discuss excerpt from Chapter 39.
3. Brainstorm ideas for continuation of this excerpt.
4. Follow the steps of the writing process to complete the creative writing project.
5. Assist students in selecting a creative presentation that reflects their creative writing piece, which they will share at the end of the unit ceremony.

Sample Ideas:

- ★ act out the continuation
- ★ create a diorama of the scene
- ★ write a how-to guide book (How to Fight Like a Knight)
- ★ design a model of tournament grounds
- ★ develop illustrations for your story
- ★ video yourself as a reporter 'On the Scene' at the tournament

Assessment/Evaluation (Options for mastery):

Students will write a creative ending for the excerpt that is read in class. The students will show an understanding of the characters, plot, and setting. All assignments must be written, proofread, and rewritten to ensure few errors in

spelling, grammar, punctuation, and capitalization. Students also will design and present a creative project to expound upon their alternate ending.

Rubric that includes points for the integration of research details into the student's writing project. (See appendix 2 & 3)

Strategies used in lesson to support learners with special needs, (e.g., English language learners, gifted, learning disabled, etc.):

- ★ Excerpt could be read aloud and/or provided on a tape for a listening center for struggling readers.
- ★ Students with writing disabilities could speak ending into a tape recorder.
- ★ Vocabulary list could be modified.
- ★ Gifted students could provide research on Mark Twain's life, medieval time period, and/or Camelot.

Possible Follow-up Activities:

- ★ Attend a local Renaissance festival

Possible Guest Speakers/Other Resources:

- ★ Local rodeo club members
- ★ Local performing arts group

Appendix 1

Excerpt from Chapter 39 "A Yankee's Fight with the Knights" from *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* by Mark Twain

Beginning paragraph:

Vast as the show-grounds were, there were no vacant spaces in them outside of the lists, at ten o'clock on the morning of the 16th. The mammoth grand stand was clothed in flags, streamers, and rich tapestries, and packed with several acres of small-fry tributary kings, their suites, and the British aristocracy, with our own royal gang in the chief place, and each and every individual a flashing prism of gaudy silks and velvets – well, I never saw anything to begin with it but a fight between an Upper Mississippi sunset and the aurora borealis. The huge camp of beflagged and gay-colored tents at one end of the lists, with a stiff-standing sentinel at every door, and a shining shield hanging by him for challenge, was another fine sight. You see, every knight was there who had any ambition or any caste feeling; for my feeling toward their order was not much of a secret, and so here was their chance. If I won my fight with Sir Sagramour, others would have the right to call me out as long as I might be willing to respond...

Continuing with the next 13 paragraphs and ending with these paragraphs.

...“Thou’rt quick of ear, but it will not save thee from this!” and he touched the hilt of his great sword. “An ye are not able to see it, because of the influence of the veil, know that it is no cumbrous lance, but a sword – and I ween ye will not be able to avoid it.”

His visor was up; there was death in his smile. I should never be able to dodge his sword, that was plain. Somebody was going to die, this time. If he got the drop on me, I could name the corpse. We rode forward together, and saluted the royalties.

Appendix 2

Scoring Guide for Creative Writing

	5 Exceeds Expectations	3 Meets Expectations	1 Below Expectations
Writing an appropriate ending (70% of grade)	Mark Twain would smile with delight for this ending and compliment it with a quote.	Mark Twain would nod in acceptance and ask you a few questions about your choices.	Mark Twain would appreciate your efforts but would look forward to the next presentation.
Creativity (10% of grade)	Mark Twain would rewrite chapter 39 to include your ideas and ingenuity.	Mark Twain would consider using your suggestions and like your creativity.	Mark Twain would appreciate your try at being creative.
Grammar (10% of grade)	Mark Twain would make you editor of his next book.	Mark Twain would create a new maxim about your grammar usage.	Mark Twain would need to look over your work carefully and make quick fixes.
Use of class time (10% of grade)	Mark Twain would want to hire you on the spot to work for him.	Mark Twain would recommend you to work for a friend.	Mark Twain would tell you there was no job available.

Appendix 3

Scoring Guide for Creative Project

	5 Exceeds Expectations	3 Meets Expectations	1 Below Expectations
Create an appropriate project (50% of grade)	Mark Twain would offer to buy your project to put on display in his office.	Mark Twain would tell you "Job well done!" and get up close to get a better look.	Mark Twain would appreciate your efforts.
Presentation (30% of grade)	Mark Twain would stand, applaud vigorously and request your presence during his next lecture tour.	Mark Twain would applaud, smile and nod his head.	Mark Twain would clap politely but would recommend that you take a course in public speaking.
Use of Time (20% of grade)	Mark Twain would want to hire you on the spot to work for him.	Mark Twain would recommend you to work for a friend.	Mark Twain would tell you there was no job available.

Hear ye! Hear ye!

Let it be known that on the 24th day of the month thee fifth grade students will engage the audience with their enchanting displays. There is a vast matter at stake here, where ye children will be presenting their best work for thee peers and ye family. This endeavor will commence at 10:00 on the morn. There will be much greeting and ceremony, and a gay display of thee knights and ladies. So mark ye calendars for this date to witness this pageantry.

Officially proclaimed by:

The Queen of the Land