

**Medieval Celebration and Ballads Lesson Plan  
Mark Twain Teachers' Workshop - Mark Twain Museum  
July 23-27, 2007 – Hannibal, Missouri**

**Developed by:**

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This lesson is designed as a culminating activity after a study of *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*

Suggested grade level: 9-12

1. Sign up to dress as one of the characters from *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*: Hank Morgan (plaid suit), Clarence, Sandy, King Arthur, Launcelot, Guenever, Mordred, Merlin, Hello Central, Sir Bedivere, Sir Galahad, Morgan le Fay, Sir Gawaine, Sir Uwaine, Sir Dinadin, Marco and his wife, Dowley, Sir Sagramour, a West Pointer, a Middy from the Naval Academy, Freeman farmer, Priest, Marhaus, Sir Cote Male Taile, King Uriens, Royalty-swine(ladies of the court), ogres, slave, slave driver, the earl Grip, newsboy, the pitiful mother and her child, one of the 52 teenage boys, smallpox woman and daughter. Prizes will be given to the most outstanding male & female costume.

2. Food of medieval times included fruit, ham, bread, fresh vegetables, and desserts that included pies and tarts. Sign up to bring to class a food item that your character would be most likely to bring and write the reasoning for your choice on an index card to be submitted with your name, your dish's recipe and why. You may be creative. For example- instead of beer, you could bring root beer; instead of a goose you could substitute turkey. Suggestions include an egg dish, roast beef, mutton, fish, ham, white wheaten bread, black bread (page 317)

3. Class members should sign up to entertain for credit. (e.g.):

- a. playing medieval tunes w/instruments (e.g., lyre, guitar, flute, keyboard, mandolin)
- b. ballad readings – your original\*
- c. singing ballads or modern folk songs
- d. simple medieval group dancing as led by the teacher
- e. Knighting Ceremony

4. We will play games (including vocabulary baseball with words from *Connecticut Yankee*). Research games played during medieval times for extra credit. Awards will include points for KNIGHTHOOD.

5. All are encouraged to get into the spirit to celebrate Mark Twain's novel, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*. His prodigious skill as the writer should be lauded especially for helping us discover his twist on what life was like in the medieval ages.

6. You may earn up to 100 points maximum out of the following possibilities:

|                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| Dress-          | 60 for medieval (fully dressed – head to toe)<br>30 for half medieval (top half)<br>25 for modern (fully dressed – head to toe)               |
| Food-           | 50 made at home food (w/ index card recipe & reason telling why)<br>25 bought from store (w/ index card telling why this choice)              |
| Entertainment - | 25 playing a song on an instrument<br>25 playing vocabulary baseball<br>15 reading your original ballad/poem<br>25 participation in the dance |

7. Pictures will be taken! So, come wearing your smile! ☺

A handout to be presented to the students in conjunction with the reading of Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*:

Simple FOLK BALLADS lesson (traditional or popular)

Read the characteristics of a folk ballad below:

- \* are narrative poems
- \* are brief
- \* are meant to be sung
- \* use dialogue in verse form to dramatize a story
- \* uses action in verse form to dramatize a story
- \* commonly use the four-line stanza
- \* sometimes are loosely based on real people
- \* sometimes are loosely based on real events
- \* are fictional in nature
- \* second and fourth lines rhyme

Remember that folk ballads:

- \* have been used for centuries to tell stories
- \* have been found in areas where a formal, written literature had yet to develop
- \* have been found where people's lives did not permit books and reading
- \* were not only sung but also included dances
- \* present a single dramatic episode
- \* are often told impersonally with little characterization, description or motivation
- \* often begins in the middle, lacks transitions and skips over incidents without explanation
- \* often carry an air of mystery
- \* deals often with adventure, love, jealousy, heroism, disaster, or revenge
- \* may be humorous
- \* of English and Scottish origins have been passed down from as early as the 6th century

Read several ballads including the following:

"Barbara Allen"                      "Sir Patrick Spens"  
"Get up and Bar the Door"        "Twa Corbies"

Discuss the qualities of the ballads including:

|                      |                   |                 |
|----------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| number of quatrains, | rhyme scheme,     | rhythm,         |
| dramatic episode,    | characterization, | missing pieces, |
| plot,                | dialogue,         | theme           |

Create an original ballad (due date: \_\_\_\_\_)

Use the scoring guide below:

|           |   |
|-----------|---|
| 20 points | Plot  |
| 10 points | 16 lines or 4 quatrains                             |
| 10 points | iambic tetrameter                                   |
| 10 points | Rhyme scheme - abcb (second and fourth lines rhyme) |
| 10 points | Dialogue  |
| 40 points | quality of the poem: theme                          |