

Short Story Lesson Plan: “Taming the Bicycle”
Mark Twain Teachers Workshop – Mark Twain Museum
June 19-23, 2006 – Hannibal, Missouri
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Short Story Title: “Taming the Bicycle”

Grade Level: 8 (can be modified for intermediate grades)

Time Frame for Lesson: 3 class periods (one to introduce/read/discuss story, one to work on writing and editing, one for presentations); this can be modified to be shorter or longer as desired.

Background Information: In May of 1884, Sam Clemens (Mark Twain) and his good friend, Joe Twichell, tried to learn how to ride a bicycle. The bicycle was a new invention, and it became more difficult a task for Clemens than riding a horse, which he didn't like either. According to Clemens, it was a painful and short-lived experience. This essay was 3,400 words long, and he was not happy with it, so it was not published until after his death.

Literary/Language Arts Focus: Creative writing, humor, sarcasm, critique, editing, perspective; (could also develop a lesson on expository writing – “how to _____” essays)

State Standards:

Communications Arts CA 1: Speaking and writing standard English;
CA 3: Reading and evaluating non-fiction works and materials;
CA 6: Participate in formal and informal presentations

Curriculum Connections: Art (illustrate articles, cartoons, and story), social studies (inventors and inventions; culture – Chinese transportation), music (songs about bicycles, motorcycles – *Born to be Wild*, etc.), careers (messengers in NYC), etc.

Vocabulary: traversed, immutable, mull, subjunctive, villainy, celebrity, patriarch, reposeful, gait, novice, anxieties, starboard, magnanimity, precariousness

Materials:

- Photos of Mark Twain and Joe Twichell
- Advertisements and/or photos depicting an early bicycle, bicycle built for two, etc.
- Photo of Lance Armstrong on his bike
- Instructions on how to ride a bike
- Pictures of modern “bikes” including a Harley-Davidson
- Lyrics for “Bicycle Built for Two”
- Pencil
- Visuals depicting vocabulary

Technology Support:

- Twain quotes online at <http://www.twainquotes.com/>
- Jim Zwick’s Mark Twain site at: www.boondocks.net
- Recording of “Bicycle Built for Two”
- Robert Howe’s Antique Bicycle Page <http://home.inreach.com/rhowehmd/AntiqueBikes.html>
- Video clip of antique bicycles (replicas) being ridden:
<http://home.inreach.com/rhowehmd/AntiqueBikesImages/FolsomBridge.mov>
- List of bicycle films at <http://bicycleuniverse.info/stuff/movies.html>

Content Objectives:

- Students will define vocabulary with 80% accuracy.
- Students write and present a humorous “how to” project scoring at least 80% with attached scoring guide

Related Twain Quotes/Stories:

- “Diligence is a good thing, but taking things easy is much more restful.” (Speech, 3/30/1901)
- “Human pride is not worthwhile; there is always something lying in wait to take the wind out of it.” (*Following the Equator*, 1897)
- “It was on the 10th of May—1884—that I confessed to age by mounting spectacles for the first time, and in the same hour I renewed my youth, to outward appearance, by mounting a bicycle for the first time. The spectacles stayed on.” (*Mark Twain’s Speeches*)
- “In early times some sufferer had to sit up with a toothache, and he put in the time inventing the German language.” (Notebook #14, 11/1877-7/1878)
- The “Mexican plug” story from *Roughing It* (1872) in which Twain tries to ride a horse
- *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court* (1889) includes many stories of inventions

The Lesson:

Time	Teacher Activity/Questions	Student Activity
5–10 min.	Hook: What is the hardest thing you have learned how to do? Facilitate discussion about what is hard for some people may be easy for others, etc.	Listen and respond
15-20 min.	Explain background of the story. Discuss how the bicycle was a new invention and that Twain was always very interested in anything new. Show pictures of Twain and Twichell, early bicycles, etc. Discuss how early bicycles were not as easy to ride as today’s. Ask students if they remember learning how to ride a bike. Ask students what they have tried to master (e.g., X-Box, iPod, etc.). Ask if they would be able to write instructions for one of these inventions so that someone else could learn successfully.	Listen and respond
10-15 min.	Read the story aloud. Students can follow along with their own copy or simply listen. Invite them to sketch an image of an event from the story as they listen.	Listen
20–30 min.	Question/discussion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the point of view? • What are the behaviors and motives of characters in the story? • How did Twain compare the German language to riding a bicycle? (<i>Teachers: Here would be a good place to discuss the challenges Twain often described in learning a foreign language.</i>) • What is Pond’s Extract? What was its use in the story? • How does the bicycle today differ from the bicycle of Twain’s day? • What does the author mean when he says that what was required was “against nature?” • Why does Twain feel that you cannot learn to ride without a teacher? • Do you prefer having someone teach you a new skill or would you rather figure it out for yourself? • Have you ever had someone make fun of you because you could not learn something right away? How did you feel? • Was this story funny or serious? Could it be both? Why or why not? • How does this story resemble Twain’s lifelong struggles? (<i>Teachers: You may need to provide more background here.</i>) • Was the “Expert” really an expert on bicycles? • How does the main character feel throughout the story? Give three evidences • Where was the author being sarcastic? 	Listen and respond

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did you identify with any of the characters? Which one, and why? • Have you ever tried to teach someone a skill and they just couldn't "get it?" How did you feel? • How is the word "taming" used in the title? Have you ever "tamed" anything besides an animal? • How did you feel about the ending? <p>Read the following quote from Helen Hayes, First Lady of American Theater. She was asked prior to her death at age 92 if she had any regrets. Her answer was, "I regret that I never rode a bicycle. I wish I had. That's all." Ask students if there is one thing they would most like to learn at some point in their lives. If there is time, ask them how they feel about learning to drive a car, which will occur in their near future.</p> <p>Review photos of Twain, Twichell, and old bicycle. Compare to photos of Lance Armstrong, motorcycles, etc.</p>	
10 min.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closure: Have students do a quick summarization of the story. Discuss content objectives and assessment options. Assign homework (students will select an option from list below, write a draft, and bring in the next day for peer review and editing). Provide students with a copy of the scoring guide. 	Listen and respond
2 nd Day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vocabulary quiz; score in class; discuss meanings and usage • Circulate and provide feedback as students share their projects with each other; encourage peer exchange and review. 	Take quiz; participate in discussion; interact with other students to edit, and revise assessment option; peer evaluate
3 rd Day	Facilitate presentations by students.	Present

Assessment/Evaluation (Options for Mastery):

Students will demonstrate at least 80% mastery of vocabulary through a verbal or written quiz.

Students will write and present a humorous "how to" project scoring at least 80% with attached scoring guide. The project can be selected from the following list or students may suggest their own topic (with teacher approval). Students must earn at least 80% for mastery. (See scoring guide below.) Possible projects include:

- Write an essay or story describing the hardest (or funniest) thing you ever learned.
- Rewrite Twain's essay from another character's perspective (the dog's, for instance).
- Rewrite Twain's essay from the bicycle's perspective.
- Create a cartoon/comic strip depicting Mark Twain and his bicycle experience.
- Write an essay or story describing how hard it is to teach someone something.
- Create a visual story (e.g., PowerPoint, poster, Sunday-style comic, etc.) that depicts the humorous challenges of learning something new.
- Create a news-broadcast about an unlikely character learning an unlikely skill (e.g., Rosalyn Carter learning to ride a Harley-Davidson, Arnold Schwarzenegger learning ballet, etc.).
- Compile a scrapbook (include captions) depicting the hardest or funniest thing you ever learned.
- Write a song or rap describing the hardest (or funniest) thing you ever learned.
- Students can suggest an appropriate project.

Scoring Guide for Assessment:

	4 (Exceeds Expectations)	3 (Meets Expectations)	2 (Approaches Expectations)	1 (Expectations Not Met)
Organization (10%)	Student presents information in logical, interesting sequence, which thoroughly engages the reader. (4 points)	Student presents information in logical sequence which reader can follow. (3 points)	Reader has some difficulty following work because student jumps around. (2 points)	Sequence of information is difficult to follow. (1 point)
Content Knowledge (40%)	Student elaborates fully and provides supporting details that add to the quality of the project. (16 points)	Student is at ease with content but fails to elaborate. (12 points)	Student is uncomfortable with content and demonstrates only basic concepts. (8 points)	Student does not have grasp of information; student cannot answer questions about subject. (4 points)
Grammar and Spelling (10%)	Project has no more than two errors. (4 points)	Project has three-four errors. (3 points)	Project has four-five errors. (2 points possible)	Project has six or more errors. (1 point)
Neatness (10%)	Project is neatly done – attractive and eye-catching. (4 points)	Project is neat and presentable. (3 points)	Project contains a few careless/sloppy areas. (2 points)	Project is not legible in several areas and/or contains several careless/sloppy areas. (1 point)
Creativity (30%)	Project contains vivid images, original and fresh, funny ideas. Entire project is highly creative and unusual. (12 points)	Project contains several original and engaging ideas. Humor is effective. (9 points)	Project includes one or two original ideas and some good attempts at humor. (6 points)	Project reflects little to no creativity. Lacks humor. (3 points)
A score of 80% (or 32 points) is required to demonstrate mastery of content objective	40 points possible	30 points possible	20 points possible	10 points possible
Grade:	Teacher's Comments:			

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

- Background, prior knowledge, and vocabulary are discussed ahead of time to support comprehension.
- Visuals are provided for some of the vocabulary.
- Reading aloud to students allows them the opportunity to hear inflections that carry meaning. They can also follow along to see how certain words are pronounced.
- Opportunities are provided for discussion and interaction.

- Options for assessment provide choice and promote student interest.
- The use of primary documents provides real life examples and is especially effective with gifted students

Possible Follow-up/Related Activities:

- Create a scrapbook of bicycle advertisements from the past as well as today
- Take a virtual tour of the Bicycle Museum at <http://www.bicyclemuseum.com/> or do a Google search for other bicycle museums
- Write a “how to” paper on a topic and include criteria
- Research the history of the bicycle
- Research the history of motorcycles
- Research other inventions that were introduced during Twain’s life (e.g., telephone, linotype, etc.)
- Field trip to related sites (e.g., Twain exhibits, bicycle manufacturer, etc.)
- Organize a class bike ride to support a worthy cause (e.g., Lance Armstrong “Live Strong” program, make bracelets, etc.)
- Locate and read other stories involving bicycles
- Examine Leonardo da Vinci’s bicycle sketches

Possible Guest Speakers/Other Resources:

- Movies on biking (*Breaking Away*, *Beijing Bicycle*, *Rush It*, *The Tour de France*, etc.)
- “How-to” or instructional videos (write a spoof, etc.)
- Harley-Davidson employee/owner
- Create a Bicycle Bulletin Board (this can be connected to other areas of curriculum)

Song Lyrics: "A Bicycle Built for Two" by Harry Dacre, 1892

There is a flower
Within my heart,
Daisy, Daisy!
Planted one day
By a glancing dart,
Planted by Daisy Bell!
Whether she loves me
Or loves me not,
Sometimes it's hard to tell;
Yet I am longing to share the lot -
Of beautiful Daisy Bell!

Daisy, Daisy,
Give me your answer do!
I'm half crazy,
All for the love of you!
It won't be a stylish marriage,
I can't afford a carriage
But you'll look sweet upon the seat
Of a bicycle made for two.

We will go 'tandem'
As man and wife,
Daisy, Daisy!
'Peddling' away
Down the road of life,
I and my Daisy Bell!
When the road's dark
We can both despise
P'licemen and 'lamps' as well;
There are 'bright lights'
In the dazzling eyes
Of beautiful Daisy Bell!

Daisy, Daisy,
Give me your answer do!
I'm half crazy,
All for the love of you!
It won't be a stylish marriage,
I can't afford a carriage
But you'll look sweet upon the seat
Of a bicycle made for two.

I will stand by you
In 'wheel' or woe,
Daisy, Daisy!
You'll be the bell(e)
Which I'll ring you know!
Sweet little Daisy Bell!
You'll take the 'lead'
In each 'trip' we take,
Then if I don't do well,
I will permit you to
Use the brake,
My beautiful Daisy Bell!



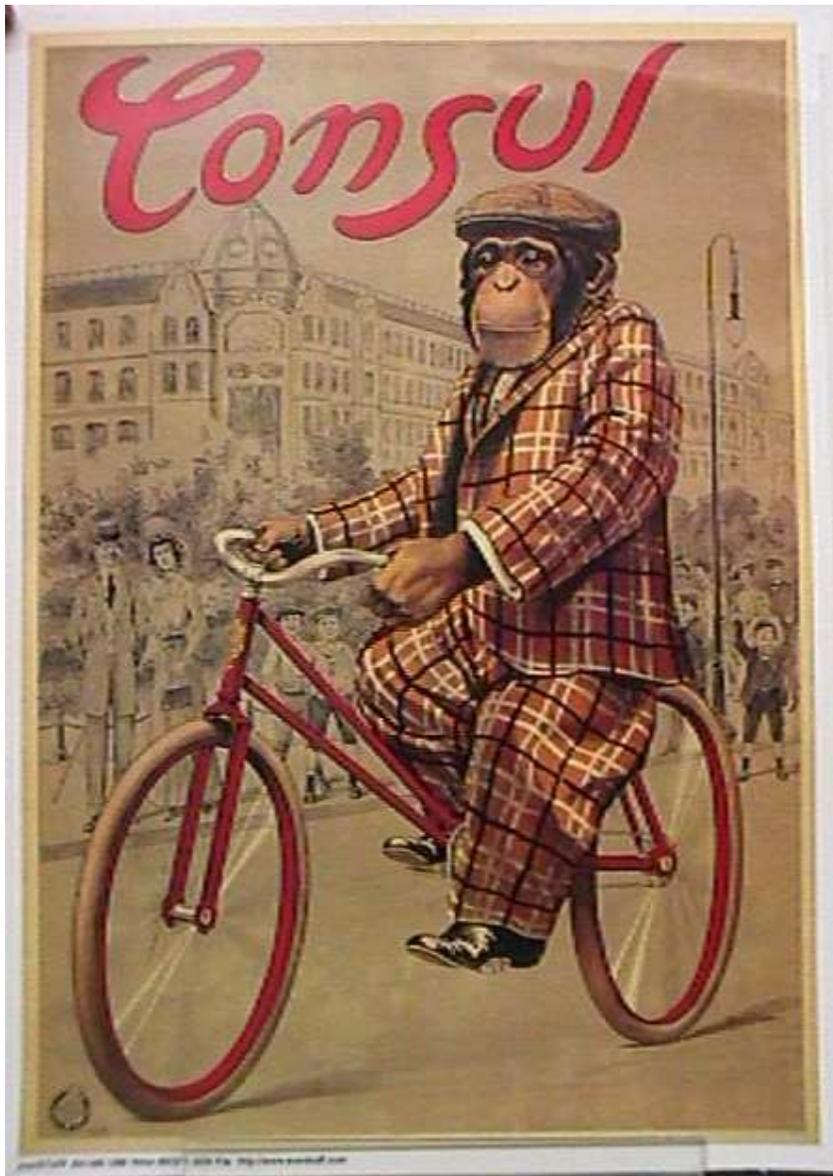


THE WHEELMEN

Yosemite Valley Oct. 1893

G.L. GRULKEY PHOTOG. VALLEJO, CAL.





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Ride a Bike...

Whoopee! - the best fun ever
from morning till night



"See, daddy,
what Knute Rockne says"

This famous trainer of football stars and athletes thinks every boy should have a bicycle. You ought to have this fascinating free book which pictures Lindbergh, Douglas Fairbanks, Jack Dempsey, and many other notables. Among other things, it tells you how to earn money with a bicycle—how to make it pay for itself.

Whoopee! Plenty of fun and noise.
Biking's the sport for out-door boys.
Racing along on the level ways.
Flying down hill like a flock of jays.
Clicking pedals, and tinkling bells.





Mark Twain and Joe Twichell