

Mark Twain Anecdotes

David Bruce

Dedicated with Love to Brenda Kennedy

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Chapter 1: MARK TWAIN: ANECDOTES

Spelling

When Samuel Langhorne Clemens was a schoolboy, he was very good at spelling and usually won the Friday afternoon spelling bee in his class. However, one Friday he deliberately misspelled a word so a young girl he liked would win. As an adult writer, Mr. Clemens used the pseudonym “Mark Twain.”

Name

Mark Twain’s real name was Samuel Langhorne Clemens. When he was a steamboat pilot on the Mississippi River, he liked the words that rivermen called when they measured 12 feet of water. This much water had a depth of two fathoms, so the rivermen called out, “Mark twain.” The phrase meant, “Note that (or mark) there are two (or twain) fathoms of water.” Since two fathoms of water was deep enough to be safe for the steamboat, the pilot could heave a sigh of relief. Mr. Twain once took his family for a trip on a steamboat, and he stood on the deck listening to the cries of “Mark twain” coming from the rivermen. His daughter Clara came up to him and said, “I have hunted all over the boat for you. Don’t you know they are calling for you?”

Steamboat Pilot

As a cub steamboat pilot on the Mississippi River, Mark Twain was taught a valuable, but embarrassing, lesson by an experienced pilot, Mr. Bixby. Mr. Bixby asked Mark if he knew enough to take the steamboat across the next crossing. Aware that there was plenty of water in the channel and no chance of running aground, Mark replied that of course he could, since “I couldn’t get bottom there with a church steeple.” Mr. Bixby replied, “You think so, do you?” Something in Mr. Bixby’s voice shook Mark’s confidence, which Mr. Bixby’s leaving Mark alone in the pilothouse did nothing to

restore. The crossing did not go smoothly. Mark imagined shallow water and reefs everywhere, and eventually had to be rescued by Mr. Bixby, although there was absolutely no danger of grounding the steamboat. After the ordeal, Mr. Bixby told his protégé, “You shouldn’t have allowed me or anybody else to shake your confidence Try to remember that. And another thing: when you get into a dangerous place, don’t turn coward. That isn’t going to help matters any.”

Shoddy Contractors

While anchored before Constantinople (an adventure he described in *Innocents Abroad*), Mark Twain read up on the history of the Hellespont, a narrow channel of water over which the Persian king Xerxes ordered a bridge of ships to be built that his armies could cross on their way to attack Greece. The first bridge was destroyed, Mr. Twain writes, so Xerxes ordered the contractors to be rebuked — in other words, he had them beheaded. The second bridge was much more sturdy. According to Mr. Twain, “If our Government would rebuke some of our shoddy contractors occasionally, it might work much good.”

Innocents Abroad

While Mark Twain was traveling in Europe (an adventure he wrote about in *Innocents Abroad*), a number of tour guides made his life miserable, so with the help of a few friends, he decided to make the tour guides’ lives miserable. For the duration of the trip, Mark Twain and his friends refused to be impressed by anything a tour guide showed them. Once, a tour guide showed them a letter handwritten by Christopher Columbus. One of Mark Twain’s friends looked at the letter and complained about the sloppy penmanship, “Why, I have seen boys in America only fourteen years old that could write better than that.”

Irritating Tour Guides

While traveling, Mark Twain and his friends tortured irritating tour guides by constantly asking if someone was dead. Thus, when a tour guide showed them a bust of Christopher Columbus, they would ask, “Is he dead?” Once, Mr. Twain and friends visited the Capuchin Cemetery, where the bones of dead monks were used to make arches and other ornaments. One of the exhibitions of the cemetery was the corpse of a monk who had been dead for 150 years. Mr. Twain decided to cut the tour short because he could tell that his friends were tempted to ask, “Is he dead?”

Climbing Stairs

While visiting the cathedral at Milan, Italy, Mark Twain and a friend wished to go aloft. A sacristan told the party “to go up one hundred and eighty-two steps and stop till he came.” According to Mr. Twain, “It was not necessary to say stop — we should have done that anyhow. We were tired by the time we got there.”

David and Goliath

In *The Innocents Abroad*, Mark Twain wrote about visiting the Mosque of Omar and other interesting sites in the Holy Land. He writes, “Just outside the mosque is a miniature temple, which marks the spot where David and Goliath used to sit and judge the people.” In a footnote, Mr. Twain explains, “A pilgrim informs me that it was not David and Goliath, but David and Saul. I stick to my own statement — the guide told me, and he ought to know.”

Adam’s Grave

While on a trip to the Holy Land, Mark Twain visited the reputed grave of Adam. In *Innocents Abroad*, Mr. Twain writes, “There is no question that he is actually buried in the grave which is pointed out as his — there can be none —

because it has never yet been proven that that grave is not the grave in which he is buried.”

Hotels

Mark Twain once stayed in a hotel where the person before him had signed the register, “Countess X — and suite.” Mr. Twain therefore signed the register, “Mark Twain — and valise.”

Zwei Glas

While traveling abroad, Mark Twain heard of an American student who had struggled to learn German for three whole months, but who had learned to say only “*zwei glas*,” which means “two glasses” (of beer). Still, the student reflected, he had learned those words very thoroughly.

Class Attendance

In his book *A Tramp Abroad*, Mark Twain wrote about the lecture system at Heidelberg, where attendance was not mandatory. Often, only a few students showed up for especially arcane lectures. Mr. Twain told of a lecturer who spoke day after day to an audience consisting of three students. One day, two of the students were away, and only one student showed up for the lecture. The lecturer began his remarks as usual by saying, “Gentlemen,” corrected himself and said, “Sir,” then went on with his lecture.

Learning French

While in San Francisco, Mark Twain undertook to learn French. One day, a Frenchman who knew no English started asking questions of a group Mr. Twain was in. Because Mr. Twain was the only person in the group who had studied French, he listened to the Frenchman. However, before Mr. Twain had said a half-dozen words of French in reply, the Frenchman fainted, possibly from hunger. Mr. Twain said

later, “I’ll learn French if it kills every Frenchman in the country.”

Learning German

When Mark Twain decided to take his family to Germany, his family started to study German. He even instructed Rosa, his German maid, to speak only German to his children. His daughter Susy tried to learn the language, but she said to her mother, “I wish Rosa was made in English.”

Language

Mark Twain wrote in *Innocents Abroad* that when he was in Paris, he fell into the trap of thinking that no one around him could speak English. He told a friend, “Dan, just look at this girl — how beautiful she is!” The “girl” turned to him and said, “I thank you more for the evident sincerity of the compliment, sir, than for the extraordinary publicity you have given to it!”

Travel

“Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness, and many of our people need it sorely on these accounts. Broad, wholesome, charitable views of men and things can not be acquired by vegetating in one little corner of the earth all one’s lifetime.” — Mark Twain.

Profanity

Mark Twain believed that vigorous cussing was one of the greatest joys of life; unfortunately, his wife, Livy, disagreed. One morning, Mr. Twain cut himself while shaving, so he vigorously shouted a long stream of cuss words. Livy, in an attempt to shock him, calmly repeated each word he had said. Mr. Twain smiled at his wife, then said, “You know the words, dear Livy, but you don’t know the tune.”

More Profanity

“When angry, count to four; when very angry, swear.” — Mark Twain.

Yet More Profanity

The Reverend Joseph Twichell taught Mark Twain how to ride a bicycle. When they were taking a bicycle ride one day — Mr. Twain somewhat unsteadily — they came to a large stone in the middle of the road. Mr. Twain headed right toward the rock and didn’t know what to do to avoid hitting it and crashing. Reverend Twichell offered advice, but Mr. Twain replied, “Shut up, Joe. You ride ahead. I’m going to swear like hell in a minute.”

Work

In *Roughing It*, Mark Twain wrote about working as a common laborer in a quartz mill, where he refined silver ore into silver bricks. After a week of backbreaking labor, he went to his employer and said that although he had come to love the work, he felt that he could not continue working without a raise. The employer countered by saying that he was paying Mr. Twain \$10 a week, which he felt was a fair sum, and just how much of a raise did Mr. Twain want? Mark Twain replied that \$400,000 a month, and board, was all he could reasonably ask, considering the hard times. Of course, Mr. Twain was then ordered off the premises of the quartz mill.

Advertising

As the editor of a Western newspaper, Mark Twain once received a letter from one of its readers: “Dear Sir: When I opened my newspaper this morning, there was a spider inside; does this mean good luck or bad for me?” Mr. Twain replied, “Finding a spider in your paper did not mean either good luck or bad luck for you. He was merely looking to see which merchants advertised, so that he could go to the store of one who did not do so, build his web over the door, and remain peaceful and undisturbed for the rest of his days.”

Mark Twain in Nevada

In her book *Mark Twain in Nevada*, Effie Mona Mack wrote about the cheapness of life in the frontier. In 1863, a man who was shot and died in Virginia City, Nevada, remained under a billiards table from 4 a.m. until noon while frontiersmen continued to shoot billiards above him. The coroner was too busy to come and take away the corpse.

Alcohol

Mark Twain and Bill Nye journeyed to Nevada, where the frontiersmen tried to drink them under the table. However, after a night of hard drinking, the only people still conscious were Mr. Twain and Mr. Nye. Finally, Mark Twain told his friend, “Well, Bill, what do you say we get out of here and go somewhere for a drink?”

Rare Women

Women were a rare sight in the western frontier. Mark Twain relates in *Roughing It* that “once in Star City, in the Humboldt Mountains, I took my place in a sort of long, post-office single file of miners, to patiently await my chance to peep through a crack in the cabin and a sight of the splendid new sensation — a genuine, live Woman! And at the end of half of an hour my turn came, and I put my eye to the crack, and there she was, with one arm akimbo, and tossing flap-jacks in a frying pan with the other. And she was one hundred and sixty-five years old, and hadn’t a tooth in her head.” (In a footnote, Mr. Twain says that since he is now in a calmer mood, he would knock 100 years off her age.)

No Place for a Presbyterian

Mark Twain, during his travels as a young man, went to Virginia City, Nevada, where a mining boom had brought in saloons, gambling places, and brightly painted women. Mr.

Twain said, “It was no place for a Presbyterian, and I did not long remain one.”

Begging

Mark Twain was once down on his luck in San Francisco and almost resorted to begging. Here’s how he tells it: “I remember a certain day in San Francisco, when, if I hadn’t picked up a dime that I found lying in the street, I should have asked someone for a quarter. Only a matter of a few hours and I’d have been a beggar. That dime saved me, and I have never begged — never.”

Snoring

Mark Twain was in a sleeper on a train, snoring loudly, when a porter awoke him to say that his snoring was keeping the other passengers awake. Mr. Twain said that he never snored, but the porter insisted that he had heard him. Mr. Twain replied, “You shouldn’t believe all you hear.”

Traveling by Train

Mark Twain was riding on a train from Hartford, Connecticut, to New York City when a woman asked him if the train would stop at Grand Central Station. Mr. Twain replied, “I hope it will, madam, for if it does not there will be the devil of a smash.”

An Eccentric Friend

Mark Twain was at the races outside London, where he met a friend who had lost all his pocket money gambling and who asked if Mr. Twain would buy him a ticket back to London. “I’m nearly broke myself but I’ll tell you what I’ll do,” Mr. Twain replied. “You can ride under my seat and I’ll hide you with my legs.” The friend agreed, but unknown to the friend, Mr. Twain bought two train tickets. When the train inspector came by to collect the tickets, Mr. Twain handed

him the two tickets, then said, “My friend is a little eccentric and likes to ride under the seat.”

Noisy Clocks

Humorist Mark Twain, author of *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, once stayed at the home of political cartoonist Thomas Nast, who first used the images of an elephant and a donkey to represent the Republican and the Democratic parties. During the night, Mr. Twain was bothered by the sounds of the Nast family’s clocks, so he got up and stopped all of them. The next morning, everyone overslept. Mr. Twain explained what had happened and stated that the clocks had been working too hard, so they should benefit from a good night’s rest.

Practical Jokes

Mark Twain was addicted to practical jokes — especially when they were jokes he played on other people. One day, when he was looking out the window of an editor’s office on the third floor of a building, he noticed a friend of his standing immediately below. Unfortunately for his friend, Mr. Twain had just been made the recipient of the gift of a watermelon by the editor. You can guess what happened to the friend and the watermelon. Still, Mr. Twain reflected, the friend came out ahead because the practical joke spoiled the watermelon, making it unsuitable for eating.

Beds

Mark Twain enjoyed reading and writing in bed. One day, a reporter was coming over to interview him, so his wife, Livy, said, “Don’t you think it would be a bit embarrassing for the reporter — your being in bed?” Mr. Twain replied, “Why, Livy, if you think so, we might have the other bed made up for him.”

An Interview

Edgar White, a reporter, was once asked to interview Mark Twain on a certain subject. He went to Mr. Twain's hotel close to midnight, and was shown to Mr. Twain's room. Mr. Twain was in bed, reading and smoking. Unfortunately, Mr. Twain announced that he couldn't talk about the reporter's proposed topic, as a contract he had signed forbade it. Mr. White was understandably disappointed and said in that case he had nothing to write about. "I've been in that fix many and many a time," Mr. Twain said. "Now if I were the reporter and you were the man in bed I'd tell how, over the vigorous remonstrances of the clerk I'd come up here in the dead hour of the night and aroused you from a sound sleep to" Mr. White interrupted to point out that that was not the truth — the clerk had politely shown him to the room and Mr. Twain had not been asleep. Mr. Twain sighed, then said, "If you're going to let a little thing like that stand in the way, I'm afraid I can't help you. Good night." Mr. White decided to write an article stating the absolute truth, just as it is related here. The newspaper ran his article under a big headline.

Photograph

A man was repeatedly told that he looked just like Mark Twain, so he finally sent Mr. Twain a photograph and asked if it were a good resemblance. Mr. Twain wrote back, saying that the photograph was such a good resemblance that he was using it instead of a mirror to shave by.

Lecture Tour

While on a lecture tour, Mark Twain got a shave in a local barbershop. The barber knew that he was shaving a stranger, but he didn't recognize Mr. Twain, so he said, "You've come into town at the right time. Mark Twain is lecturing tonight." When Mr. Twain said that he was planning to attend the

lecture, the barber asked if he had bought his ticket yet. Hearing that he had not, the barber said that he would have to stand, as most of the tickets were already sold. Mr. Twain sighed, then said, "That's my luck. Whenever that fellow gives a lecture, I always have to stand."

No Visit

Mark Twain wrote a letter to a friend, asking him to visit. The friend wrote back, "God be with you, for I cannot." Mark Twain wrote this note at the bottom of his friend's letter, then sent it back: "He didn't come. Next time please send someone we can depend upon."

Birthday Letter

Some friends of Mark Twain wrote him a humorous letter for his birthday, but then discovered that they did not have his address, because he was so often globetrotting. So the friends addressed the letter: "MARK TWAIN. LORD KNOWS WHERE." A few months later, one of the friends in the group received a note from Mr. Twain: "HE DID."

Letters

Sometimes Mark Twain was slow in answering letters. Once a friend wanted a quick reply from Mr. Twain, so he enclosed in his letter some paper and a stamp. Very quickly, a postcard arrived from Mr. Twain: "Thanks for the sheet of writing paper and the stamp. Please send an envelope."

A Thank-You Letter

In December 1908 Mark Twain received a gift of tobacco and whiskey from some family friends. In his thank-you letter, he wrote, "I had just reformed, but it is not too late to rearrange that."

Angry Letters

When Mark Twain got angry, he used to write a letter denouncing the person who had made him angry, but he wouldn't mail the letter right away. He waited three days, and if he was still angry at the end of that time, he mailed the letter. But if he had stopped being angry, he would burn the letter.

An Angry Letter

Mark Twain once wrote this letter to the gas company: "Some day you will move me almost to the verge of irritation by your chuckle-headed Goddamned fashion of shutting your Goddamned gas off without giving any notice to your Goddamned parishioners. Several times you have come within an ace of smothering half of this household in their beds and blowing up the other half by this idiotic, not to say criminal, custom of yours. And it has happened again today. Haven't you a telephone?"

Jokes

Many people who tell stories have the bad habit of stopping repeatedly to ask the listener if he or she has heard the story before. Henry Irving was one such person. In telling a story to Mark Twain, he stopped three different times to ask if Mr. Twain had heard the story before. Finally, Mr. Twain could stand it no longer and said, "I can lie once, I can lie twice for the sake of politeness, but there I draw the line. I not only heard the story — I invented it."

Sholom Aleichem

Sholom Aleichem (1859-1916) was a Yiddish humorist. Among the characters he created in his stories were those that became the basis of *Fiddler on the Roof*. In 1906, he came to the United States, where he met Mark Twain, to whom he was introduced as the "Jewish Mark Twain." Mr.

Twain then said that he would like to be introduced in Yiddish to Mr. Aleichem as the “American Sholom Aleichem.”

Introductions

A boy named Pat, comic writer H. Allen Smith’s nephew, had a unique way of introducing his uncle to his friends. One of Mr. Smith’s many books was on the coffee table, and whenever one of Pat’s friends came by, Pat would pick up the book, read one of the blurbs on the cover, then use the blurb as an introduction; for example, “Meet my uncle. He’s a screwball” or “Meet my uncle. He’s another Mark Twain.”

Insults

While in the company of Mark Twain, the French author Paul Bourget insulted all Americans by saying, “When an American has nothing else to do, he can always spend a few years trying to discover who his grandfather was.” Mr. Twain replied, “And when all other interests fail for a Frenchman, he can always try to figure out who his father was.”

Tobacco

Mark Twain constantly smoked cigars. Sometimes, he visited his friend and fellow novelist William Dean Howells, who declared that after Mr. Twain had stayed with him for a few days, he had to air out his entire house because Mr. Twain smoked from the time he got up to the time he went to bed — and sometimes later. Often, Mr. Howells would go to Mr. Twain’s bedroom at night and find him in bed asleep with a lit cigar in his mouth. (According to Mr. Twain, moderate cigar smoking consists of smoking “only one cigar at a time.” He also said that the first cigar he had smoked was probably not a good one — “or the previous smoker would not have thrown it away so soon.”)

Smoking Cigars

“More than one cigar at a time is excessive smoking.” — Mark Twain.

Invitations

Enrico Caruso was multi-talented — in addition to being the best tenor of his time, he was a skilled caricaturist. When Mark Twain invited a number of cartoonists to a dinner, but did not invite him, Mr. Caruso was disappointed and said, “Perhaps he knows me only as a tenor.”

Life on the Mississippi

Mark Twain told this story in *Life on the Mississippi*: A riverboat pilot named Stephen was out of money and in New Orleans. Aware of Stephen’s plight, a steamboat captain offered him the job of piloting a steamboat up the Mississippi — but at a salary of \$125 instead of Stephen’s usual salary of \$250. Having no choice, Stephen accepted the offer, but he piloted the boat up the middle of the river so that it had to fight the current instead of seeking the stiller water nearer the shore. Much slower boats sped past the steamboat Stephen was piloting. When the captain remonstrated with Stephen, he replied, “I know as much as any man can afford to know for \$125.” On hearing this, the captain raised Stephen’s salary to \$250, and Stephen began to make that steamboat fly upstream.

Money

People thought that Mark Twain received a dollar a word for his writing. Someone once sent him a dollar and requested, “Please send me a word.” Mr. Twain wrote back, “Thanks.”

“Take the Girl”

When Mark Twain wanted to marry Olivia Langdon, the daughter of a wealthy family in Connecticut, her father asked

him to provide character references. Mr. Twain gave him the names of some prominent men, including ministers, whom he had known in the West. Unfortunately, the men reported that Mr. Twain was “born to be hung” and would end up in a “drunkard’s grave.” Nevertheless, Mr. Langdon allowed Mr. Twain to marry his daughter, saying, “Take the girl. I know you better than they do.”

Gifts

Mark Twain married a woman from a wealthy family. Arriving in Buffalo, New York, Mr. and Mrs. Twain were driven to a house, where his new wife told Mr. Twain that house mansion was a gift to them from her father. Mr. Twain shook hands with his father-in-law, then said, “If you ever come to Buffalo, bring your grip [suitcase] and stay all night — it won’t cost you a cent.”

Clothing

Mark Twain liked to visit neighbors informally — without wearing a collar or tie. This upset his wife, Livy, so Mr. Twain wrapped up a package which he sent to his neighbors along with a note that read: “A little while ago, I visited you for about half an hour minus my collar and tie. The missing articles are enclosed. Will you kindly gaze at them for 30 minutes and then return them to me?”

Help Yourself

In his book *Roughing It*, Mark Twain tells a story that was old in 1872. A traveler sat down at a table on which was nothing but mackerel and mustard. The traveler asked, “Is that all there is?” The landlord replied, “*All!* Why, thunder and lightning, I should think there was mackerel enough there for six people.” The traveler said, “But I don’t like mackerel.” The landlord paused a moment, then said, “Oh — then help yourself to the mustard.”

Golf

Mark Twain once golfed with a very bad player who constantly missed the golf ball, striking the ground instead and throwing dust into the air where it settled on Mr. Twain's hair and clothes, and in his mouth. When the very bad player asked Mr. Twain for his opinion of the golf course, he replied, "The best I've ever tasted."

Hot Soup

Mark Twain once put a spoonful of very hot soup in his mouth, then turned his head and spit it out. He then remarked to his friends, "Some darn fools would have swallowed that."

Fishing

A man once asked Mark Twain if he had caught any fish lately. Mr. Twain said that he had caught 12 trout the day before. Hearing this, the man said, "Obviously, you don't know who I am. I am a game warden, and the season for catching trout is over." Mr. Twain replied, "Obviously, you don't know who I am. I am the biggest liar in the world."

Cloves

At one time, people chewed cloves to make their breath smell good. Once, a melancholy man who was depressed by statistics regarding death told Mark Twain, "Do you realize that every time I breathe an immortal soul passes into eternity?" Mr. Twain replied, "Have you ever tried cloves?"

Friends

Mark Twain attended a large dinner where the topic of conversation was Heaven and Hell. Mr. Twain remained quiet — something very uncharacteristic of him. When a woman asked him, "Why don't you say something? I would like to

hear your opinion,” he replied, “Madam, you must excuse me. I am silent of necessity — I have friends in both places!”

Pun

Because of his white hair and large moustache, Mark Twain resembled Melville Fuller, the Chief Justice of the United States. While Mr. Twain was visiting Washington, D.C., a little girl saw him, mistook him for Mr. Fuller, and asked, “Mr. Chief Justice Fuller, won’t you write something for me in my autograph book?” Mr. Twain agreed, wrote “It’s glorious to be full but it’s heavenly to be Fuller,” and then signed his own name.

Autographs

A nine-year-old boy knocked on Mark Twain’s hotel door to get an autograph, not knowing that Mr. Twain was very ill. The boy was about to be sent away when Mr. Twain called from his sickbed and asked that the boy be sent in to see him. He then wrote in the boy’s autograph book, “So live, that when you come to die, even the undertaker will be sorry.”

Mark Twain and a Preacher

Humorist Mark Twain once attended a sermon that he listened to very intently. After church was over, he told the preacher, “I have a book at home that has every word of your sermon in it.” The preacher was astonished because he thought that he had written his sermon without plagiarism. The preacher was also worried because he thought that he had perhaps read a sermon at seminary, then unconsciously plagiarized it while writing his sermon. Therefore, the preacher asked Mr. Twain to send him the book to look at. Mr. Twain did send him the book — it was a dictionary.

Dictionaries

While speaking at a graduation class at a grammar school, Mark Twain awarded one of the students a dictionary. As he gave it to the boy, Mr. Twain said, “This is a very interesting and useful book, my son. I have studied it often but I never could discover the plot.”

Printers

Mark Twain was once upset with the way that the printers of one of his books had changed his punctuation, so he said, “In the beginning God Almighty made men, and then He made damn fools, and when He got His hand in He must have made printers.”

Punctuation

Books should be properly edited and punctuated. When sending a book to his publishers, Mark Twain added this note: “Gentlemen: .,?!“ — *’;,: Please scatter these throughout according to your taste.”

Book Shelves

Mark Twain once showed a visitor his library. The visitor commented on the large numbers of books piled everywhere — on the floor, in chairs, everywhere handy. Mr. Twain explained, “It’s next to impossible to borrow shelves.”

Dedication

Mark Twain dedicated his first book — *The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County, and Other Sketches* — to “John Smith” because he had heard that people always buy a copy of any book that is dedicated to them. Mr. Twain wrote, “It is said that the man to whom a volume is dedicated, always buys a copy. If this prove true in the present instance, a princely affluence is about to burst upon the author.”

Publisher

A man had the opportunity to publish Mark Twain's first book, *The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County, and Other Sketches*, but declined it. Years later, the man chanced to meet Mr. Twain, and told him, "I refused a book of yours and for this I stand without competitor as the prize ass of the nineteenth century."

Lawyers

After Mark Twain had finished a humorous after-dinner speech, a lawyer stood up, put his hands in his pockets, then said, "Doesn't it strike this company as a little unusual that a professional humorist should be so funny?" Mr. Twain replied, "Doesn't it strike this company as a little unusual that a lawyer should have his hands in his own pockets?"

Two Important Facts

Before giving a speech, Mark Twain once introduced himself in this way: "I know of only two important facts about the man I am introducing. First, he has never been in a state prison, and second, I can't imagine why."

Punishment

As a young schoolboy, Samuel Langhorne Clemens got into trouble with his teacher, and she sent him outside to find a switch that she could use to hit him. Young Samuel returned with a wood shaving that would definitely not hurt if it were used as a switch. Later in life, Samuel became better known to the world as the celebrated humorist Mark Twain.

High Praise

The writer J.I.C. Clarke once introduced Mark Twain and very highly praised the stories Mr. Twain had set in Yuba Dam, saying that they were the best things Mr. Twain had ever written. Mr. Twain then stood up and enthusiastically

praised a German girl for 10 minutes — to no point, it seemed. Finally, Mr. Twain said, “Gentlemen, I suppose you are wondering what my story of that German girl has to do with Mr. Clarke’s speech and his reference to Yuba Dam. Well, nothing at all, and that’s just it. I never wrote about Yuba Dam. Mr. Clarke is thinking of Bret Harte.” Everyone, including an embarrassed Mr. Clarke, laughed, then Mr. Twain and Mr. Clarke shook hands.

Advertising

Mark Twain understood small print and advertising. One of his advertisements for a lecture tour consisted of the huge words “MAGNIFICENT FIREWORKS” followed by the small print “were in contemplation for this occasion, but the idea has been abandoned.” Another of his advertisements read, “The doors open at 7; the trouble begins at 8.”

Public Speaking

When Mark Twain was scheduled to speak at a small town, he would often enter a store and ask if people knew about his lecture being scheduled that night. Once he entered a grocery store and asked if there were anything special going on that evening. The grocer replied, “I think there’s a lecture tonight — I’ve been selling eggs all day.”

More Public Speaking

On a voyage, Mark Twain and Chauncey Depew were asked to speak after dinner. Mr. Twain spoke for 20 minutes and was a huge hit with the audience. Mr. Depew then arose and said, “Mr. Toastmaster and Ladies and Gentlemen, before this dinner Mark Twain and I made an agreement to trade speeches. He has just delivered my speech, and I thank you for the pleasant manner in which you received it. I regret to say that I have lost the notes of his speech and cannot remember anything he has to say.” Mr. Depew then sat down to much laughter. The next day a passenger on the ship said

to Mr. Twain, “I consider you were much imposed upon last night. I have always heard that Mr. Depew is a clever man, but really, that speech of his you made last night struck me as being the most infernal rot.”

Speech

Mark Twain once attended a dinner with the understanding that he would not make a speech. Near the end of the dinner, Mr. Twain arose and everyone applauded. Mr. Twain then said, “Waiter, please pass the bread.”

Speakers Should Be Brief

Mark Twain once told a story that illustrated why speakers should be brief: Mr. Twain said he attended a church when a missionary began to speak. At first Mr. Twain was fired up with enthusiasm for the missionary’s work and wanted to donate the \$400 he had and borrow all he could to give to the missionary. However, the missionary kept talking, and the longer the missionary talked, the less enthusiastic Mr. Twain became — when the offering plate was finally passed around, Mr. Twain stole ten cents from it.

“To Hell With! To Hell With!”

In his sketch “‘Party Cries’ in Ireland,” Mark Twain tells of the conflict between Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland. Commonly, according to Mr. Twain, Irishmen would cry out either “To hell with the Pope” or “To hell with the Protestants,” depending on the religion of the crier. This became so common that a law was passed attempting to stop the custom by imposing a fine and court costs on anyone found guilty of giving a party cry. Once, a drunk was found lying in an alley, shouting, “To hell with! To hell with!” A police officer found the drunk and asked him, “To hell with what?” But the drunk replied, “Ah, bedad ye can finish it yourself — it’s too expinsive for me!”

Family Prayers

Mark Twain once stayed over at the house of a friend. The next morning, he was seen standing at the top of the staircase. His friend said, "What's the matter? Why not come on down?" Mr. Twain asked, "Family prayers over yet?" Hearing that they were over, Mr. Twain said, "All right then, I'll come down."

Attending Church

Mark Twain attended the church of his friend, the Reverend Joseph Twichell, and he became very interested in the sermon. After the church service was over, Mr. Twain told Reverend Twichell, "Joe, this mustn't happen again. When I go to church, I go for a good rest and quiet nap. Today I haven't been able to get a single wink. I tell you it won't do; and it must not happen again."

Request for a Donation

Andrew Carnegie was a very wealthy man who had a reputation for donating money to charitable causes. Mark Twain wrote him to say that he wanted to buy a \$2 hymn-book, pointing out that "I will bless you, God will bless you and it will do a great deal of good." Mr. Twain then added a post-script: "Don't send me the hymn-book — send me the two dollars."

Politics

George Haven Putnam was Executive of the Copyright League from 1886-1891 and worked for the passage of bills to protect the copyrights of authors. Often he testified before Congress, sometimes taking along an author to buttress his arguments about the importance of a bill to provide copyright protection. Once he took along Mark Twain, but as soon as the members of Congress saw Mr. Twain, they immediately cried out for a story. For the next hour, Mr. Twain

told anecdotes. Finally, the members of Congress had to leave, although no testifying had been done about the bill before Congress. After that experience, Mr. Putnam was careful not to take Mr. Twain along when he went to Congress.

More Politics

President Woodrow Wilson liked to tell a story of his incognito visit to Hannibal, Missouri, famous for its association with Mark Twain, who grew up there. President Wilson fell into conversation with a native and asked, “Have you ever heard of Tom Sawyer?” The native had not, so President Wilson asked, “Have you ever heard of Huckleberry Finn?” Again, the native had not, so President Wilson asked, “Do you know of Pudd’nhead Wilson?” This time, the native recognized the name and said, “Sure do — voted for him twice.”

The Damned Human Race

In his personal copy of Charles Darwin’s *Journal of Researches* (1890), Mark Twain wrote, “Can any plausible excuse be furnished for the crime of creating the human race?”

Ulysses S. Grant

When Ulysses S. Grant was dying of cancer of the throat, he knew he needed money to provide for his family after he died. Mark Twain came to the rescue. He had recently become a publisher, and he agreed to pay Mr. Grant the huge royalty of 20 percent for his memoirs, much more than authors usually received. In July 1885, only three days after he had completed the second volume of his memoirs, Mr. Grant died. His family received more than enough money to take care of their needs, collecting over \$400,000 from the sale of his book.

Mark Twain in Old Age

When Mark Twain was very old, he sometimes would reach for a doorknob but miss it. He then would turn to his secretary and say, “Just practicing.”

A Funeral

A few days before Christmas, a man named Smith at the Players Club asked Mark Twain to lend him his long-tailed black coat, as he needed something suitable to go to a funeral and he hadn't a long-tailed black coat himself. Mr. Twain agreed, but told Smith to take good care of the contents in the pockets. Smith found an assortment of junk in the pockets, which he wrapped up and gave to the clerk at Mr. Twain's hotel. When Mr. Twain was given the wrapped-up package later, he remarked that he must be getting an early Christmas present. After unwrapping the “present” and realizing where the junk had come from, he remarked, “I hope that damned Smith's funeral will be a failure.”

Reports of Mark Twain's Death

While travelling abroad, Mark Twain read newspapers reports that he had died, so he sent this telegram to the Associated Press: “The reports of my death are greatly exaggerated.”

Joan of Arc

When he was a young boy, Samuel Langhorne Clemens saw a piece of paper flying down the street. He chased after it, caught it, and discovered that the page came from a biography of Joan of Arc. He asked his brother who she was, discovered that she was a French heroine who had died by being burned at the stake, and started reading as much as he could about her. As an adult, he wrote a book titled *Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc*, using his world-famous pseudonym, Mark Twain.

More Joan of Arc

Among Mark Twain's favorites of the books he had written was *Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc*, about a French heroine for whom Mr. Twain had enormous respect. Mr. Twain met the Archbishop of Orléans, who told him that St. Joan (aka the Maid of Orléans) would no doubt see to it that anyone who wrote so beautifully about her would get into Heaven. Mr. Twain replied that he would be "perfectly satisfied" in the next life if he were near Joan of Arc and as far away as possible from her enemies.

Cremation

Mark Twain once remarked that when his time came, he wanted to be cremated. His pastor replied, "I wouldn't worry about that, if I had your chances."

Deep Pleasure

When Mark Twain was dying, a relative wrote him to say that she had asked some nuns to pray for him. Mr. Twain wrote back, "I am grateful for the prayers of those good nuns and for yours; they have already answered themselves in giving me a deep pleasure."

Chapter 2: MARK TWAIN: QUOTATIONS

It is better to remain silent and be thought a fool than to open one's mouth and remove all doubt.

Go to Heaven for the climate, Hell for the company.

Suppose you were an idiot, and suppose you were a member of Congress; but I repeat myself.

Get your facts first, then you can distort them as you please.

If you tell the truth, you don't have to remember anything.

Kindness is the language which the deaf can hear and the blind can see.

Whenever you find yourself on the side of the majority, it is time to pause and reflect.

A man who carries a cat by the tail learns something he can learn in no other way.

A person who won't read has no advantage over one who can't read.

Courage is resistance to fear, mastery of fear, not absence of fear.

Truth is stranger than Fiction, but it is because Fiction is obliged to stick to possibilities; Truth isn't.

In the first place, God made idiots. That was for practice. Then he made school boards.

Giving up smoking is the easiest thing in the world. I know because I've done it thousands of times.

A man is never more truthful than when he acknowledges himself a liar.

To succeed in life, you need two things: ignorance and confidence.

The lack of money is the root of all evil.

The only way to keep your health is to eat what you don't want, drink what you don't like, and do what you'd rather not.

It ain't what you don't know that gets you into trouble. It's what you know for sure that just ain't so.

Do the right thing. It will gratify some people and astonish the rest.

Clothes make the man. Naked people have little or no influence on society.

The secret of getting ahead is getting started.

It could probably be shown by facts and figures that there is no distinctly native criminal class except Congress.

Don't let schooling interfere with your education.

Patriot: the person who can holler the loudest without knowing what he is hollering about.

If the world comes to an end, I want to be in Cincinnati. Everything comes there ten years later.

It ain't those parts of the Bible that I can't understand that bother me, it is the parts that I do understand.

There are lies, damned lies, and statistics.

Against the assault of laughter nothing can stand.

It's not the size of the dog in the fight, it's the size of the fight in the dog.

When your friends begin to flatter you on how young you look, it's a sure sign you're getting old.

Honesty is the best policy — when there is money in it.

Never put off till tomorrow what you can do the day after tomorrow.

I can live for two months on a good compliment.

Cauliflower is nothing but cabbage with a college education.

It is curious that physical courage should be so common in the world and moral courage so rare.

Man was made at the end of the week's work when God was tired.

It is better to deserve honors and not have them than to have them and not deserve them.

If it's your job to eat a frog, it's best to do it first thing in the morning. And if it's your job to eat two frogs, it's best to eat the biggest one first.

The first of April is the day we remember what we are the other 364 days of the year.

Under certain circumstances, profanity provides a relief denied even to prayer.

By trying we can easily endure adversity. Another man's, I mean.

Everything has its limit — iron ore cannot be educated into gold.

Many a small thing has been made large by the right kind of advertising.

I was gratified to be able to answer promptly, and I did. I said I didn't know.

Man is the only animal that blushes — or needs to.

There are times when one would like to hang the whole human race, and finish the farce.

The difference between the right word and the almost right word is the difference between lightning and a lightning bug.

There is no sadder sight than a young pessimist, except an old optimist.

Never pick a fight with people who buy ink by the barrel.

Familiarity breeds contempt — and children.

Good breeding consists in concealing how much we think of ourselves and how little we think of the other person.

Part of the secret of a success in life is to eat what you like and let the food fight it out inside.

Truth is the most valuable thing we have. Let us economize it.

Few things are harder to put up with than the annoyance of a good example.

No sinner is ever saved after the first twenty minutes of a sermon.

I was seldom able to see an opportunity until it had ceased to be one.

Nothing so needs reforming as other people's habits.

It usually takes me more than three weeks to prepare a good impromptu speech.

I have never taken any exercise except sleeping and resting.

Truth is mighty and will prevail. There is nothing wrong with this, except that it ain't so.

Work consists of whatever a body is obliged to do. Play consists of whatever a body is not obliged to do.

Thousands of geniuses live and die undiscovered — either by themselves or by others.

Let us not be too particular; it is better to have old secondhand diamonds than none at all.

I have made it a rule never to smoke more than one cigar at a time.

George Washington, as a boy, was ignorant of the commonest accomplishments of youth. He could not even lie.

I make it a rule never to smoke while I'm sleeping.

To be good is noble; but to show others how to be good is nobler and no trouble.

Humor must not professedly teach and it must not professedly preach, but it must do both if it would live forever.

There are basically two types of people: people who accomplish things, and people who claim to have accomplished things. The first group is less crowded.

Go to heaven for the climate and hell for the company.

A lie can travel half way around the world while the truth is putting on its shoes.

Be careful about reading health books. You may die of a misprint.

Never tell the truth to people who are not worthy of it.

Classic — a book which people praise and don't read.

The fear of death follows from the fear of life. A man who lives fully is prepared to die at any time.

Keep away from people who try to belittle your ambitions. Small people always do that, but the really great make you feel that you, too, can become great.

In a good bookroom you feel in some mysterious way that you are absorbing the wisdom contained in all the books through your skin, without even opening them.

Don't go around saying the world owes you a living. The world owes you nothing. It was here first.

But who prays for Satan? Who, in eighteen centuries, has had the common humanity to pray for the one sinner that needed it most?

God created war so that Americans would learn geography.

Heaven goes by favor. If it went by merit, you would stay out and your dog would go in.

I would rather have my ignorance than another man's knowledge, because I have so much more of it.

It is by the goodness of God that in our country we have those three unspeakably precious things: freedom of speech, freedom of conscience, and the prudence never to practice either.

We ought never to do wrong when people are looking.

Be good and you will be lonesome.

Books are the liberated spirits of men.

A full belly is little worth where the mind is starved.

Nothing so needs reforming as other people's habits.

I was born modest, but it didn't last.

All good things arrive unto them that wait and don't die in the meantime.

Never tell the truth to people who are not worthy of it.

Chapter 3: MARK TWAIN: HIS LIFE

What was Mark Twain's real name?

Mark Twain's real name was Samuel Langhorne Clemens.

What is one story of how Mark Twain got his pseudonym?

Of course, a pseudonym is a fictional name. Many writers publish works of literature using a fictional name or pseudonym.

When Sam Clemens was a steamboat pilot on the Mississippi River, he liked the words that rivermen called when they measured 12 feet of water. This much water had a depth of two fathoms, so the rivermen called out, "Mark twain." The phrase meant, "Note that (or mark) there are two (or twain) fathoms of water." Since two fathoms of water was deep enough to be safe for the steamboat, the pilot could heave a sigh of relief.

Mr. Twain once took his family for a trip on a steamboat, and he stood on the deck listening to the cries of "Mark twain" coming from the rivermen. His daughter Clara came up to him and said, "I have hunted all over the boat for you. Don't you know they are calling for you?"

Twain scholar Stephen Railton points out that the phrase "Mark twain" can be either good news or bad news. River steamboats needed a certain level of water in order to stay afloat — between 9 ½ and 10 ½ feet. If the water was getting shallower when the person measuring the level of water shouted "Mark twain," that was bad news. If the water was getting deeper when the person measuring the level of water shouted "Mark twain," that was good news.

Similarly, in much of Twain's writing is an ambiguity. His writing can be very funny, but it is also sharply satiric. He

uses satire to criticize the bad parts of being human beings. Satire is humorous criticism. The humor makes you laugh, but the criticism can make you cry.

What is the other, less known story of how Mark Twain got his pseudonym?

When Sam Clemens was a newspaper reporter working in the Nevada Territory, he used a variety of pseudonyms, including Mark Twain.

The second story of how he got his pseudonym was that he drank a lot, and he enjoyed drinking a lot although he didn't have much money. Sam Clemens always ordered two drinks when he walked into the saloon either because he was powerful thirsty, or because he wanted to treat a friend.

Therefore, he opened up a tab in the saloon. When he walked into the saloon, he would call out, "Mark twain." This meant, "Mark (or write down) two more drinks on my tab."

In time, he adopted the pseudonym "Mark Twain."

Mark Twain and Bill Nye journeyed to Nevada, where the frontiersmen tried to drink them under the table. However, after a night of hard drinking, the only people still conscious were Mr. Twain and Mr. Nye. Finally, Mark Twain told his friend, "Well, Bill, what do you say we get out of here and go somewhere for a drink?"

What does the phrase "mark twain" mean?

The phrase means "note the two." Of course, many two's appear in Mark Twain's writings. The major two that appears in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* is Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn, and of course another notable two appears in *The Prince and the Pauper*. In *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, another notable two, besides Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn, is the King and the Duke.

Which is the best biography of Mark Twain?

The best biography of Mark Twain is probably Justin Kaplan's *Mr. Clemens and Mark Twain*, which won the Pulitzer Prize. Mr. Kaplan focuses mainly on Mark Twain and his life in 1865 and after. Of course, 1865 is the year the Civil War (1861-1865) ended.

What happened to Sam Clemens from 1835-1955 (His Birth and Youth)?

On November 30, 1835, Samuel Langhorne Clemens was born in a very small village named Florida in Missouri. He was the sixth child among seven children, but only three of his siblings survived to become adults. In those days, death during childhood was common because antibiotics and other modern medicines had not been discovered. His older siblings were his brother Orion and his sister, Pamela. He also had a younger brother named Henry. Sam was born when Halley's Comet was very visible from the Earth.

When Sam was four years old, his family moved to Hannibal, Missouri. This is the village that Mark Twain writes about as St. Petersburg in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. This is where Sam grew up among other children and had many experiences such as exploring a cave that appear in his novels.

As a young schoolboy, Sam got into trouble with his teacher, and she sent him outside to find a switch that she could use to hit him. Young Sam returned with a wood shaving that would definitely not hurt if it were used as a switch.

When Sam was 11, his father, John Marshall Clemens, died of pneumonia acquired while riding in the rain as he sought to be elected to public office to support his family. John was a big dreamer, but his dreams never came to fruition. His businesses tended to fail, and his family was impoverished.

In his book *Roughing It*, Mark Twain wrote:

He left us a sumptuous legacy of pride in his fine Virginia stock and his national distinction, but I presently found I could not live on that alone without occasional bread to wash it down with.

His family needed money, so Sam went to work as a typesetter in printing offices. This, of course, involved working with words, although other people wrote the words.

One important fact of Sam's early life is that Missouri was a slave state. This meant that slaves surrounded Sam when he was growing up, and it meant that people who supported slavery surrounded him when he was growing up. As a result, he accepted slavery when he was young. He once wrote, "In church we were told, 'God approved it. Slavery was a holy thing.'"

However, Sam did see slaves being mistreated — even killed — when he was growing up. He also saw slaves waiting to be taken down the Mississippi River to be sold to plantation owners.

But at the same time he played with young slave children when he was growing up. In addition, he listened to stories told by elderly slaves. In particular, he listened to stories told by an elderly slave named Dan'l, who told him the story about "The Golden Arm," a story that Mark Twain told often during lectures and a story that actor Hal Holbrook tells in his one-man show *Mark Twain Tonight*.

When Sam was 17 or 18 years old, he ran away from Hannibal, Missouri, and he went to New York to see the World's Fair there. He never lived in Hannibal again.

What happened to Sam Clemens from 1855-1865 (Mark Twain is born)?

Sam did return to the Mississippi River, however, becoming a riverboat pilot after being apprenticed under pilot Horace Bixby. He wrote about his time of his life in his fictionalized autobiography titled *Life on the Mississippi*.

As a cub steamboat pilot on the Mississippi River, Mark Twain was taught a valuable, but embarrassing, lesson by an experienced pilot, Mr. Bixby. Mr. Bixby asked Mark if he knew enough to take the steamboat across the next crossing. Aware that there was plenty of water in the channel and no chance of running aground, Mark replied that of course he could, since “I couldn’t get bottom there with a church steeple.” Mr. Bixby replied, “You think so, do you?” Something in Mr. Bixby’s voice shook Mark’s confidence, which Mr. Bixby’s leaving Mark alone in the pilothouse did nothing to restore. The crossing did not go smoothly. Mark imagined shallow water and reefs everywhere, and eventually had to be rescued by Mr. Bixby, although there was absolutely no danger of grounding the steamboat. After the ordeal, Mr. Bixby told his protégé, “You shouldn’t have allowed me or anybody else to shake your confidence Try to remember that. And another thing: when you get into a dangerous place, don’t turn coward. That isn’t going to help matters any.”

Mark Twain told this story in *Life on the Mississippi*: A riverboat pilot named Stephen was out of money and in New Orleans. Aware of Stephen’s plight, a steamboat captain offered him the job of piloting a steamboat up the Mississippi — but at a salary of \$125 instead of Stephen’s usual salary of \$250. Having no choice, Stephen accepted the offer, but he piloted the boat up the middle of the river so that it had to fight the current instead of seeking the stiller water nearer the shore. Much slower boats sped past the steamboat

Stephen was piloting. When the captain remonstrated with Stephen, he replied, "I know as much as any man can afford to know for \$125." On hearing this, the captain raised Stephen's salary to \$250, and Stephen began to make that steamboat fly upstream.

In 1859, Sam received his riverboat license. He served as a riverboat pilot on the Mississippi River until 1861, when the Civil War broke out.

Sam could have served either the North or the South as a riverboat pilot, but he briefly served as a Confederate irregular on horseback before going west. He wrote about this part of his life in "The Private History of a Campaign that Failed." Of course, after the Civil War both the North and the South could have been angry at him. The North could have been angry at him because he fought briefly for the South, and the South could have been angry at him because he served only briefly and went West quickly. However, neither side became angry at him. Humor is an excellent way of deflecting anger, and both the North and the South laughed at his explanation of why he went West: He got tired of constantly retreating.

Sam's older brother, Orion, had been appointed Secretary of the Nevada Territory, and Sam went West with Orion. Many prospectors were searching for and finding silver, which they mined, and Sam was hopeful — or even certain — that he would become rich as a prospector.

Sam never did find silver — or gold — metal. However, he did find lots of humor. The miners amused themselves by telling tall tales, and Sam listened to those stories, and later he retold them in his books. His first important story, "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County," is one he heard out West. In Sam's hands, these stories became silver and gold of a different sort.

Because Sam had no luck as a prospector, he decided to make a living with words. He had been making money by publishing articles — in the form of letters — in newspapers, and he got a job as a reporter at the *Virginia City Enterprise*.

Because Sam had no money, he walked 120 miles to get to his new job.

In her book *Mark Twain in Nevada*, Effie Mona Mack wrote about the cheapness of life in the frontier. In 1863, a man who was shot and died in Virginia City, Nevada, remained under a billiards table from 4 a.m. until noon while frontiersmen continued to shoot billiards above him. The coroner was too busy to come and take away the corpse.

Still, humor existed out West, and Sam provided some of it. Early in 1863, he started using the pseudonym “Mark Twain,” and this is the pseudonym that stuck. Many of his articles were humorous, and the name “Mark Twain” became associated with humor, especially in 1865, when he published “The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County,” the story that made him nationally famous after it was published in the east and in newspapers across the country. The Civil War was over, people were tired of suffering, and they were eager to laugh at Mark Twain’s story.

What happened to Mark Twain from 1865 to 1875 (Sam comes east)?

Mark Twain went East, and in 1867, he took a trip to Europe and the Holy Land. His expenses were paid by a California newspaper for which he worked.

Mark had earlier published a book titled *The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County and Other Stories*, but the book was badly proofread and did not sell many copies, so he regarded his first real book as *Innocents Abroad*, which was written about his trip to Europe and the Holy Land. This book was his best-selling book during his life — his best-

selling novel during his life was *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. *Innocents Abroad* is well worth reading today; in it, Mark Twain criticizes both Europe and the Holy Land. The United States comes off well by comparison.

One other important thing happened to Mark Twain during his trip abroad. He saw an ivory miniature portrait of Olivia Langdon, the sister of fellow traveler Charles Langdon, and he fell in love. Eventually, he married her, but it took some persuasion.

Olivia's family was wealthy, in contrast to Mark Twain's family. She was 10 years younger than he was, and Mark Twain's manners were much rougher than those of Olivia and her family. One of the things that Mark Twain did was to ask her to help him reform. He called her "Livvy."

When Mark Twain wanted to marry Olivia Langdon, the daughter of a wealthy family in Connecticut, her father asked him to provide character references. Mr. Twain gave him the names of some prominent men, including ministers, whom he had known in the West. Unfortunately, the men reported that Mr. Twain was "born to be hung" and would end up in a "drunkard's grave." Nevertheless, Mr. Langdon allowed Mr. Twain to marry his daughter, saying, "Take the girl. I know you better than they do."

As you may expect, Mark Twain was a hard man to reform, and his reformation was a work in progress:

- Mark Twain liked to visit neighbors informally — without wearing a collar or tie. This upset his wife, Livvy, so Mr. Twain wrapped up a package which he sent to his neighbors along with a note that read: "A little while ago, I visited you for about half an hour minus my collar and tie. The missing articles are enclosed. Will you kindly gaze at them for 30 minutes and then return them to me?"

- Mark Twain enjoyed reading and writing in bed. One day, a reporter was coming over to interview him, so his wife, Livy, said, “Don’t you think it would be a bit embarrassing for the reporter — your being in bed?” Mr. Twain replied, “Why, Livy, if you think so, we might have the other bed made up for him.”

- Mark Twain believed that vigorous cussing was one of the greatest joys of life; unfortunately, his wife, Livy, disagreed. One morning, Mr. Twain cut himself while shaving, so he vigorously shouted a long stream of cuss words. Livy, in an attempt to shock him, calmly repeated each word he had said. Mr. Twain smiled at his wife, then said, “You know the words, dear Livy, but you don’t know the tune.”

Mark Twain and Livy got married in 1870, and immediately Mark became a member of the upper class as a result of marrying well. Livy’s father even gave them a house in Buffalo, New York. It was a surprise. Mark Twain was expecting to have to stay in a hotel, but instead his father-in-law presented him and Livy with a house. Mark Twain joked that his father-in-law could stay there anytime he wanted to — and he wouldn’t have to pay anything, either.

Eventually, Mark Twain and Livy moved to Hartford, Connecticut, where he had built a house. The house was lavish, and it required seven servants to run. Mark Twain had to work very hard to pay the bills. In fact, sometimes he and his family lived in Europe to cut down on living expenses.

Mark Twain was a true original. He lived for years in Hartford, Connecticut, whose most learned citizen was J. Hammond Trumbull. Mr. Twain was very impressed by him — because he knew how to use profanity in 27 languages. While Mr. Twain was living in Hartford, he attended a baseball game at which a boy stole his umbrella. Mr. Twain

offered two rewards: \$5 for the umbrella, and \$200 for the boy's corpse.

What happened to Mark Twain from 1875 to 1885 (productivity and happiness)?

From 1875 to 1885, Mark Twain was at his happiest and his most productive. This is when he published the novels he is most remembered for.

Twain published *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* in 1876.

He published *The Prince and the Pauper* in 1881.

He published *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* in 1885.

During this time, a son named Langdon was born, but the child died when he was two years old. Mark Twain felt guilty because he had taken his son out for a ride in a carriage and had not noticed that the furs keeping his son warm had fallen from around his legs. The son died of diphtheria in 1872.

Mark Twain also had three daughters, all of whom he loved deeply. In 1872, Susy was born. As a young girl, she wrote a book, the first sentence of which stated, "We are a very happy family." Daughter Clara was born in 1874, and daughter Jean was born in 1880.

However, Mark Twain needed money. His elaborate house required \$100,000 annually to maintain, and he once wrote in a letter to one of his friends, "My household expenses are something ghastly."

In part because of this, Mark Twain was always in search of ways to make money — lots of money. He invested in many inventions that he hoped would make his fortune, but unfortunately these inventions seldom worked out and ended up costing him money instead of making him money.

What happened to Mark Twain from 1885 to 1895 (bankruptcy)?

Mark Twain wrote two important novels during this time: He published *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* in 1889, and he published *Pudd'nhead Wilson* in 1894.

Unfortunately, much of the money he made was going into keeping his speculative ventures afloat. He invested a fortune into perfecting the Paige typesetting machine, but the machine was never perfected. This machine was supposed to do mechanically what Sam had done as a teenager: set type so it could be printed. (The Duke sets type in one of his scams in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.) Unfortunately, this machine and its failure bankrupted Mark Twain.

In 1894, he found that he was bankrupt, and that he owed \$100,000 — a lot of money now, and a great fortune at the time.

What happened to Mark Twain from 1895 to 1910 (the last 15 years of his life)?

Mark Twain did not stiff his creditors. He got financial advice from Henry Rogers, a Standard Oil executive, and he set out on an around-the-world lecture tour to earn money to pay off all his debts. He did pay off his debts, and in his old age he actually had lots of money.

Mark Twain was a lecturer for a long time. He did not always enjoy it, but the audience did. He was able to draw humor from his life of lecturing:

- Mark Twain understood small print and advertising. One of his advertisements for a lecture tour consisted of the huge words “MAGNIFICENT FIREWORKS” followed by the small print “were in contemplation for this occasion, but the idea has been

abandoned.” Another of his advertisements read, “The doors open at 7; the trouble begins at 8.”

- While on a lecture tour, Mark Twain got a shave in a local barber shop. The barber knew that he was shaving a stranger, but he didn’t recognize Mr. Twain, so he said, “You’ve come into town at the right time. Mark Twain is lecturing tonight.” When Mr. Twain said that he was planning to attend the lecture, the barber asked if he had bought his ticket yet. Hearing that he had not, the barber said that he would have to stand, as most of the tickets were already sold. Mr. Twain sighed, then said, “That’s my luck. Whenever that fellow gives a lecture, I always have to stand.”

- When Mark Twain was scheduled to speak at a small town, he would often enter a store and ask if people knew about his lecture being scheduled that night. Once he entered a grocery store and asked if there were anything special going on that evening. The grocer replied, “I think there’s a lecture tonight — I’ve been selling eggs all day.”

Of course, Mark Twain was widely loved, and his books were widely loved. He also earned a large amount of respect because he had paid all his debts.

However, Mark Twain suffered in his old age because of deaths in the family.

First Susy died in 1896 of spinal meningitis, an infection. This hit Mark Twain hard. He loved his daughter, and he did not get to see her before she died. The last time he saw her was when he set off on his around-the-world lecture tour. She died at the end of the tour, but before Mark Twain made it home again.

His wife, Livy, died in 1904. For much of the time Mark Twain was not allowed to see her, as the doctors thought that seeing him might excite Livy and that would be bad for her. They often exchanged affectionate notes, however.

His daughter Jean died on December 24, 1909. She had an epileptic seizure when taking a bath and drowned to death.

Mark Twain was often depressed and unhappy at the end of his life. He wrote dark stories such as *The Mysterious Stranger*. Much of his writing remained unfinished and unpublished.

He also worked on his *Autobiography*, which remained unfinished at the time of his death.

Still, Mark Twain retained his humor:

- When Mark Twain was very old, he sometimes would reach for a doorknob but miss it. He then would turn to his secretary and say, “Just practicing.”
- When his wife, Livy, worried that his spending lots of time in bed reading and writing might sap his strength, she had their daughter Clara read him a biographical passage about the poet William Cullen Bryant, who at age 80 was still taking vigorous and invigorating early-morning walks. Mr. Twain said, “Mr. Bryant was wonderful to do those early risings, and all that at eighty. If ever I get to be eighty, I mean to do them, too.”
- When he was even older, and a widower, he built and lived in a house he called Stormfield. Quickly, burglars stole the silverware from the house. Also quickly, Mr. Twain posted this note on the front door of the house: “To the next burglar. There is nothing but plated ware in this house, now and henceforth. You will find it in that brass thing in the dining-room

over in the corner by the basket of kittens. If you want the basket, put the kittens in the brass thing.”

- Before he died, he felt ill. Of course, he was widely loved by the reading public, and many fans sent him home remedies in hopes that they would make him feel better. He replied using this letter: “Dear Sir (or Madam). I try every remedy sent to me. I am now on no. 67. Yours is 2,653. I am looking forward to its beneficial results.” In his old age, Mr. Twain was also still capable of savage satire: He advocated the passing of a law that would forbid white people from lynching black people on Christmas.

Mark Twain died on April 21, 1910, of a heart attack. A nation mourned him. Halley’s Comet was visible from the earth that year.

Appendix A: About the Author

It was a dark and stormy night. Suddenly a cry rang out, and on a hot summer night in 1954, Josephine, wife of Carl Bruce, gave birth to a boy — me. Unfortunately, this young married couple allowed Reuben Saturday, Josephine’s brother, to name their first-born. Reuben, aka “The Joker,” decided that Bruce was a nice name, so he decided to name me Bruce Bruce. I have gone by my middle name — David — ever since.

Being named Bruce David Bruce hasn’t been all bad. Bank tellers remember me very quickly, so I don’t often have to show an ID. It can be fun in charades, also. When I was a counselor as a teenager at Camp Echoing Hills in Warsaw, Ohio, a fellow counselor gave the signs for “sounds like” and “two words,” then she pointed to a bruise on her leg twice. Bruise Bruise? Oh yeah, Bruce Bruce is the answer!

Uncle Reuben, by the way, gave me a haircut when I was in kindergarten. He cut my hair short and shaved a small bald spot on the back of my head. My mother wouldn’t let me go to school until the bald spot grew out again.

Of all my brothers and sisters (six in all), I am the only transplant to Athens, Ohio. I was born in Newark, Ohio, and have lived all around Southeastern Ohio. However, I moved to Athens to go to Ohio University and have never left.

At Ohio U, I never could make up my mind whether to major in English or Philosophy, so I got a bachelor’s degree with a double major in both areas, then I added a Master of Arts degree in English and a Master of Arts degree in Philosophy. Yes, I have my MAMA degree.

Currently, and for a long time to come (I eat fruits and veggies), I am spending my retirement writing books such as *Nadia Comaneci: Perfect 10*, *The Funniest People in Dance*, *Homer’s Iliad: A Retelling in Prose*, and *William Shakespeare’s Othello: A Retelling in Prose*.

By the way, my sister Brenda Kennedy writes romances such as *A New Beginning* and *Shattered Dreams*.

Appendix B: Some Books by David Bruce

Discussion Guides Series

Dante's Inferno: A Discussion Guide

Dante's Paradise: A Discussion Guide

Dante's Purgatory: A Discussion Guide

Forrest Carter's The Education of Little Tree: A Discussion Guide

Homer's Iliad: A Discussion Guide

Homer's Odyssey: A Discussion Guide

Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice: A Discussion Guide

Jerry Spinelli's Maniac Magee: A Discussion Guide

Jerry Spinelli's Stargirl: A Discussion Guide

Jonathan Swift's "A Modest Proposal": A Discussion Guide

Lloyd Alexander's The Black Cauldron: A Discussion Guide

Lloyd Alexander's The Book of Three: A Discussion Guide

Mark Twain's Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: A Discussion Guide

Mark Twain's The Adventures of Tom Sawyer: A Discussion Guide

Mark Twain's A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court: A Discussion Guide

Mark Twain's The Prince and the Pauper: A Discussion Guide

Nancy Garden's Annie on My Mind: A Discussion Guide

Nicholas Sparks' A Walk to Remember: A Discussion Guide

Virgil's Aeneid: A Discussion Guide

Virgil's "The Fall of Troy": A Discussion Guide

Voltaire's Candide: A Discussion Guide

William Shakespeare's 1 Henry IV: A Discussion Guide

William Shakespeare's Macbeth: A Discussion Guide

William Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream: A Discussion Guide

William Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet: A Discussion Guide

William Sleator's Oddballs: A Discussion Guide

(*Oddballs* is an excellent source for teaching how to write autobiographical essays/personal narratives.)

Philosophy for the Masses Series

Philosophy for the Masses: Ethics

Philosophy for the Masses: Metaphysics and More

Philosophy for the Masses: Religion

Retellings of a Classic Work of Literature

Ben Jonson's The Alchemist: A Retelling

Ben Jonson's Bartholomew Fair: A Retelling

Ben Jonson's The Case is Altered: A Retelling

Ben Jonson's Catiline's Conspiracy: A Retelling

Ben Jonson's The Devil is an Ass: A Retelling

Ben Jonson's Epicene: A Retelling

Ben Jonson's Every Man in His Humor: A Retelling

Ben Jonson's The New Inn: A Retelling

Ben Jonson's The Staple of News: A Retelling

Ben Jonson's Volpone, or the Fox: A Retelling

Christopher Marlowe's Complete Plays: Retellings

Christopher Marlowe's Dido, Queen of Carthage: A Retelling

Christopher Marlowe's Doctor Faustus: Retellings of the 1604 A-Text and of the 1616 B-Text

Christopher Marlowe's Edward II: A Retelling

Christopher Marlowe's The Massacre at Paris: A Retelling

- Christopher Marlowe's The Rich Jew of Malta: A Retelling*
- Christopher Marlowe's Tamburlaine, Parts 1 and 2: Retellings*
- Dante's Divine Comedy: A Retelling in Prose*
- Dante's Inferno: A Retelling in Prose*
- Dante's Purgatory: A Retelling in Prose*
- Dante's Paradise: A Retelling in Prose*
- The Famous Victories of Henry V: A Retelling*
- From the Iliad to the Odyssey: A Retelling in Prose of Quintus of Smyrna's Posthomerica*
- George Peele: Five Plays Retold in Modern English*
- George Peele's The Arraignment of Paris: A Retelling*
- George Peele's The Battle of Alcazar: A Retelling*
- George's Peele's David and Bathsheba, and the Tragedy of Absalom: A Retelling*
- George Peele's Edward I: A Retelling*
- George Peele's The Old Wives' Tale: A Retelling*
- George-A-Greene, The Pinner of Wakefield: A Retelling*
- The History of King Leir: A Retelling*
- Homer's Iliad: A Retelling in Prose*
- Homer's Odyssey: A Retelling in Prose*
- Jason and the Argonauts: A Retelling in Prose of Apollonius of Rhodes' Argonautica*
- The Jests of George Peele: A Retelling*
- John Ford: Eight Plays Translated into Modern English*
- John Ford's The Broken Heart: A Retelling*
- John Ford's The Fancies, Chaste and Noble: A Retelling*
- John Ford's The Lady's Trial: A Retelling*

- John Ford's The Lover's Melancholy: A Retelling*
- John Ford's Love's Sacrifice: A Retelling*
- John Ford's Perkin Warbeck: A Retelling*
- John Ford's The Queen: A Retelling*
- John Ford's 'Tis Pity She's a Whore: A Retelling*
- John Webster's The White Devil: A Retelling*
- King Edward III: A Retelling*
- The Merry Devil of Edmonton: A Retelling*
- Robert Greene's Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay: A Retelling*
- The Taming of a Shrew: A Retelling*
- Tarlton's Jests: A Retelling*
- The Trojan War and Its Aftermath: Four Ancient Epic Poems*
- Virgil's Aeneid: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's 5 Late Romances: Retellings in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's 10 Histories: Retellings in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's 11 Tragedies: Retellings in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's 12 Comedies: Retellings in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's 38 Plays: Retellings in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's 1 Henry IV, aka Henry IV, Part 1: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's 2 Henry IV, aka Henry IV, Part 2: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's 1 Henry VI, aka Henry VI, Part 1: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's 2 Henry VI, aka Henry VI, Part 2: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's 3 Henry VI, aka Henry VI, Part 3: A Retelling in Prose*

William Shakespeare's All's Well that Ends Well: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's As You Like It: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's The Comedy of Errors: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's Coriolanus: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's Cymbeline: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's Hamlet: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's Henry V: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's Henry VIII: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's Julius Caesar: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's King John: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's King Lear: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's Love's Labor's Lost: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's Macbeth: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's Measure for Measure: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's The Merchant of Venice: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's The Merry Wives of Windsor: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's Much Ado About Nothing: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's Othello: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's Pericles, Prince of Tyre: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's Richard II: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's Richard III: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's The Taming of the Shrew: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's The Tempest: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's Timon of Athens: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's Titus Andronicus: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's Twelfth Night: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's The Two Gentlemen of Verona: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's The Two Noble Kinsmen: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's The Winter's Tale: A Retelling in Prose

Children's Biography

Nadia Comaneci: Perfect Ten

Personal Finance

How to Manage Your Money: A Guide for the Non-Rich

Anecdote Collections

250 Anecdotes About Opera

250 Anecdotes About Religion

250 Anecdotes About Religion: Volume 2

250 Music Anecdotes

Be a Work of Art: 250 Anecdotes and Stories

Boredom is Anti-Life: 250 Anecdotes and Stories

The Coolest People in Art: 250 Anecdotes

The Coolest People in the Arts: 250 Anecdotes

The Coolest People in Books: 250 Anecdotes

The Coolest People in Comedy: 250 Anecdotes

Create, Then Take a Break: 250 Anecdotes

Don't Fear the Reaper: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Art: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Books: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Books, Volume 2: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Books, Volume 3: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Comedy: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Dance: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Families: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Families, Volume 2: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Families, Volume 3: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Families, Volume 4: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Families, Volume 5: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Families, Volume 6: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Movies: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Music: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Music, Volume 2: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Music, Volume 3: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Neighborhoods: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Relationships: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Sports: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Sports, Volume 2: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Television and Radio: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Theater: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People Who Live Life: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People Who Live Life, Volume 2: 250 Anecdotes

The Kindest People Who Do Good Deeds, Volume 1: 250 Anecdotes

The Kindest People Who Do Good Deeds, Volume 2: 250 Anecdotes

Maximum Cool: 250 Anecdotes

The Most Interesting People in Movies: 250 Anecdotes

The Most Interesting People in Politics and History: 250 Anecdotes

The Most Interesting People in Politics and History, Volume 2: 250 Anecdotes

The Most Interesting People in Politics and History, Volume 3: 250 Anecdotes

The Most Interesting People in Religion: 250 Anecdotes

The Most Interesting People in Sports: 250 Anecdotes

The Most Interesting People Who Live Life: 250 Anecdotes

The Most Interesting People Who Live Life, Volume 2: 250 Anecdotes

Reality is Fabulous: 250 Anecdotes and Stories

Resist Psychic Death: 250 Anecdotes