



THEATRE IV Classroom

Connections

Teacher Resources



In the Classroom For Teachers & Students Grades 2 - 8

Huck and Tom and the Mighty Mississippi and the Classroom

Connections Study Guide are produced in support of the teaching of Virginia Standards of Learning in English: 2.4, 2.5, 2.6, 2.7, 2.8, 3.3, 3.4, 3.6, 4.3, 4.5, 4.6, 5.4, 5.6, 5.7, 6.3, 6.5, 7.4, 7.6, 7.7, 8.4, 8.5, 8.6; History and Social Sciences: 2.5, 3.6, VS.1, USI.1, USI.2, USI.8, USII.1, USII.2, USII.3; and Science: 3.6, 6.5, 6.7, LS.10.



At the Library

A few by Mark Twain:
[A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court](#)

[The Adventures of Tom Sawyer](#)
[The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn](#)
[The Prince and the Pauper](#)
[Life on the Mississippi](#)

About Mark Twain:

[Mark Twain and the Queens of the Mississippi](#), by Cheryl Harness

[Who was Mark Twain?](#), by April Jones Prince



On the Web

The Mark Twain House and Museum in Hartford, Connecticut, has interactive activities just for kids, as well as teacher resources:
www.marktwainhouse.org

Famous quotations from Mark Twain:
www.quotationspage.com/quotes/MarkTwain

The Official Website of Mark Twain:
www.cmgworldwide.com/historic/twain/

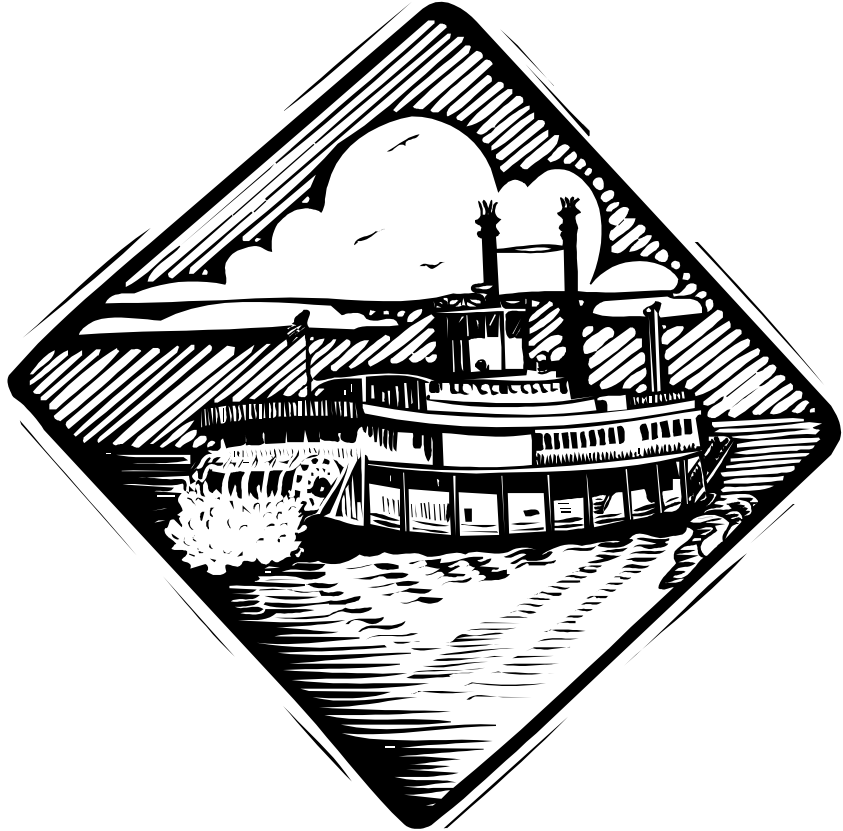
From PBS, a Mark Twain interactive scrapbook:
www.pbs.org/marktwain/scrapbook/index.html

Huck and Tom and the Mighty Mississippi

Adaptation by Peter Howard

Music by Ron Barnett

Based on the classic books by Mark Twain



"Mark Twain grew up on the mighty Mississippi River, in the little town of Hannibal, Missouri. He played in the river, washed in the river, fished in the river. He did many things in his long and exciting life: he was a printer, a soldier, a reporter, and a miner. But his favorite days were spent as the captain of a Mississippi steamboat, traveling up and down the river...."
- from "*Huck and Tom and the Mighty Mississippi*"

About the Play:

Huck and Tom and the Mighty Mississippi introduces the audience to the characters, setting, humor and humanity of Mark Twain's most famous novels, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Selected scenes from the novels form the basis of our musical play and introduce us to some of the most legendary adventures and characters in all of American literature.

Join Huck, Tom, Jim, Becky Thatcher, Aunt Polly and all the residents and rascallions of Hannibal, Missouri as they explore the majestic river that defined their lives, tested their souls, and carried their spirit into the heart of America.

Huck and Tom: Comparing Characters

Acting Out

The actors on stage are playing the characters in the play. They have to learn all they can about their character so that they can act out his or her personality. Below, help the actors learn about characters by creating a list of traits for:

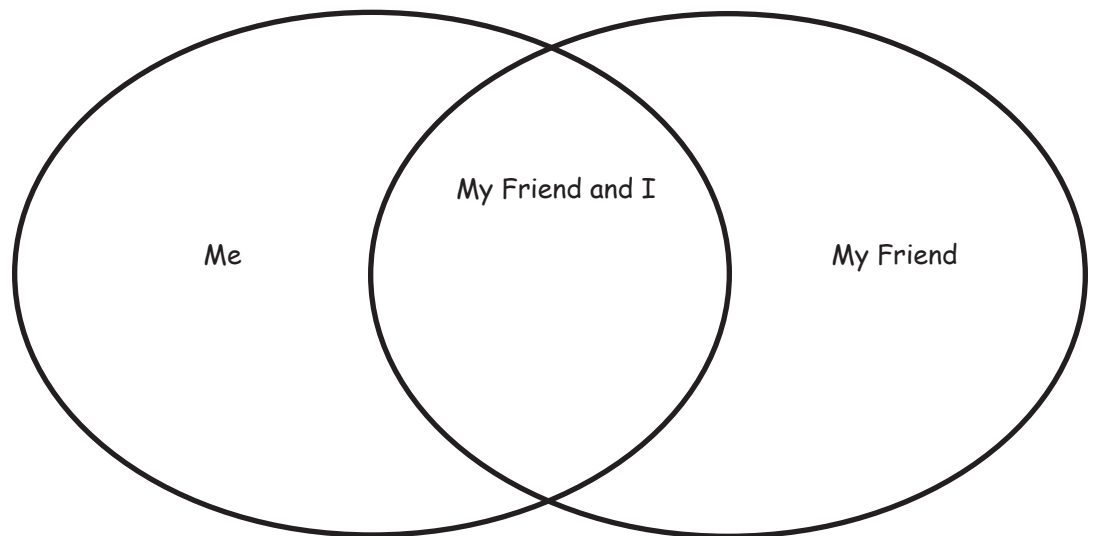
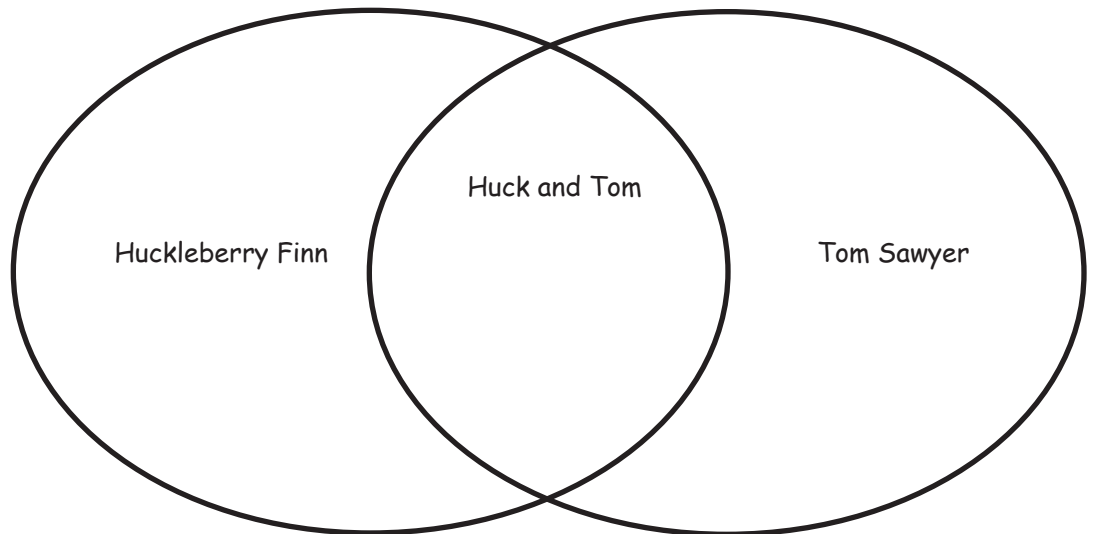
Huck

Tom

Jim

Becky

Use the Venn Diagram to compare the two friends, Huckleberry Finn and Tom Sawyer. In what ways are they alike? How are they different? Use the second Venn Diagram to compare yourself and one of your friends.



Try This!

Merriam-Webster's website, www.wordcentral.com is the place to go for fun with words. Having trouble coming up with good adjectives to describe your characters? Their Online Student Thesaurus can help. Build your own dictionary, play word games, find rhyming words, and check out their word of the day!



Today's Tom and Huck:

Dialect for a Different World

Definition:

dialect - spoken language that is different because of how it is pronounced and the type of vocabulary that is used.

Update the following phrases from the play so that they sound like a kid today, rather than a kid from the 19th century!

"You're up a stump, ain't you!" - Ben

"There's no getting round it; you can work when you're a mind to, Tom. But it's powerful seldom you're a mind to, I'm bound to say." -Aunt Polly

"Afeared! Tain't likely." - Tom

"No, I won't. 'Deed and 'deed and double 'deed I won't." - Becky

"A body can't be too partic'lar how they talk 'bout these-here...people, Tom" - Huck

"I hauled out of there mighty quick." - Huck

Writing in Dialect

One thing that made Mark Twain an important American writer was the fact that he wrote in dialect, or common, everyday language that people who lived along the Mississippi used during the time that his stories took place.

If you were going to write a story in the dialect you and your friends use, what words would you include?

What words would you spell differently to let your reader know how they are spoken?

On the Web

Try a story of your own, complete with dialect, at www.kids-space.org/HPT/1a/11a.html. Create your own play on this site!

Check out the latest buzzwords at The American Dialect Society: www.americandialect.org.

M-i-s-s-i-s-s-i-p-p-i: The Father of the Waters

Use the following Mississippi River facts and the map to answer the questions at the bottom of the page.

Length: River length is a difficult measurement to pin down. The river channel is constantly changing. For example, Itasca State Park staff say the Mississippi is 2,552 miles long. The US Geologic Survey says 2,300 miles, the US Environmental Protection Agency says it is 2,320 miles long, and the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area maintains its length at 2,350 miles.

Width: At Lake Itasca, the river is between 20-30 feet wide, the narrowest stretch for its entire length. The Mississippi is more than four miles wide at Lake Onalaska, in Wisconsin.

Depth: At its headwaters, the Mississippi is less than 3 feet deep. The river's deepest section is between Governor Nicholls Wharf and Algiers Point in New Orleans where it is 200 feet deep.

Watershed Area: The Mississippi River Basin or Watershed drains 41% of the continental United States. Thirty-one states and 2 Canadian provinces are included in the watershed. The total area drained by the watershed is between 1.2 - 1.8 million square miles.



Why do you think the term “river system” is used to describe the Mississippi? What other rivers are part of the Mississippi River system? Into what body of water does the river flow?

Read the information above about the river’s depth. Would it be useful to calculate the river’s average depth? Would that information help boaters? Swimmers? Why or why not?

Color the Mississippi River’s watershed green on this map. Why should everyone living in that area be aware of the river’s pollution, water quality, and the health of its fish and wildlife?

* The map and facts above are courtesy of the US National Park Service: Mississippi National River and Recreation Area. Go to www.nps.gov/archive/miss/features/factoids/ for more information.

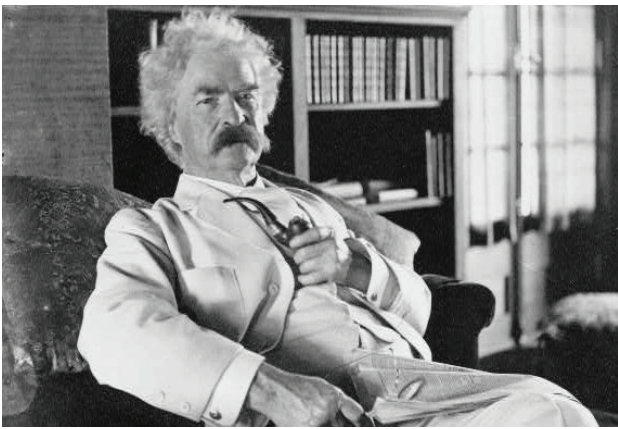
Try It!

Choose some of the following supplies to make a “log raft” to sail the Mississippi:

toothpicks
pipe cleaners
string
popsicle sticks
styrofoam



Discovering Mark Twain



"[Samuel Langhorne Clemens, three-quarter length portrait, seated, facing slightly right, holding pipe]." Created [between 1900 and 1910], c1941. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.

Mark Twain (1835 - 1910) is considered by many to be the father of modern American literature. He endowed his characters and narratives with the natural speech patterns (**dialect**) of the common person, and wrote about topics that some considered 'beneath' serious literature of the time.

Mark Twain was a **pen name** for Samuel Langhorne Clemens. He wrote under other pen names too, such as Thomas Jefferson Snodgrass, Josh, Grumbler, and even Muggins.

Born in Florida, Missouri on November 30, 1835, Clemens grew up in the Mississippi River town of Hannibal, Missouri, which later served as a model for many settings and characters for Twain's writing. At age 11 (5th grade), Samuel Clemens quit school and began delivering papers and working as an errand boy for the *Hannibal Gazette*. By the time he was 17, his first **sketches** were appearing in the

newspaper. During the late 1850's, Clemens piloted steamboats on the Mississippi. He also served in the Confederate militia, traveled west, and worked as a silver miner and reporter in Nevada and California. In 1865 he **published** his first important sketch in a New York periodical.

In 1870, Clemens married Olivia Langdon, settled in Hartford, CT, and published his first novel. Twain's popular children's book, The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, was published in 1876. The sequel, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, was published (and misunderstood and banned) in 1885. Later, critics recognized this novel as Twain's masterpiece.

The Clemens family had four children. One only lived for two years, and two of the other three died before they reached the age of 30. These tragedies, the death of his wife, and financial **bankruptcy** caused Twain to become pessimistic and cynical, even as he found inspiration and a sense of joy in his happy youthful memories of his days on the Mississippi. Clemens died on April 21, 1910. Twain's importance as a writer lies not only in the power of his ideas, but in the universality of his characters and the accessibility of his works to readers of all ages.

Vocabulary

dialect: a spoken language that is different because of how it is pronounced and the type of vocabulary that is used

pen name: a name an author uses that is not his/her real name

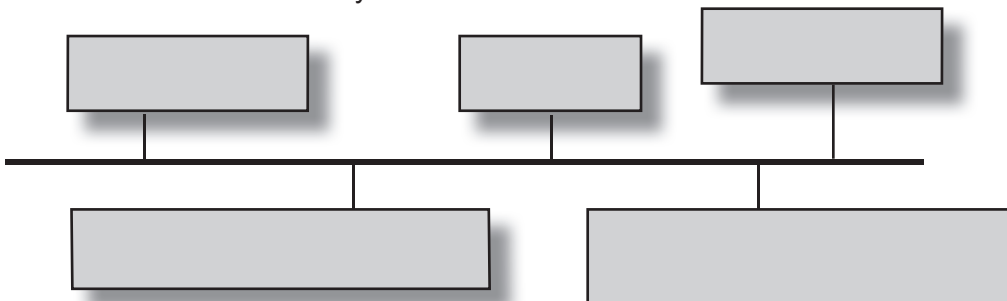
publish: to print, make public, and distribute a book

sketch: a short, written comedy piece

bankruptcy: in a state of being unable to pay one's debts

Questions to Consider:

1. Why do you think an author would use a pen name? If you were to choose a pen name, what would it be?
2. Clemens lived from 1835 - 1910, a time of both strife and growth for our nation. Technologies that we take for granted were unheard of in that time. In what ways do you think his stories about childhood in America might have been different if it were written in the 21st century?
3. Using the information above, create a timeline of important events in Samuel Clemens' life. Add boxes if you need to.



Challenge

Think About It:

If Twain's stories were rewritten today, how would the characters change or stay the same? Are there still people around like Huck or Tom?



114 West Broad St.
Richmond, VA 23220
1.800.235.8687

www.TheatreIV.org

Theatre IV Presents...

Huck and Tom and the Mighty Mississippi, adaptation by Peter Howard.

Music by Ron Barnett.
Based on the classic books by Mark Twain.

Theatre IV...

Bruce C. Miller
Artistic Director
Phil Whiteway
Managing Director

Classroom Connections
Study Guide Written by
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Widener Consulting LLC

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10 Fascinating Facts: Huck and Tom and the Mighty Mississippi

1. Mark Twain's name was not even Mark! His real name was Samuel Clemens. Samuel grew up along the Mississippi River, and even piloted steamboats. Mark Twain is a navigational term meaning 12 feet of safe water.
2. Mark Twain was considered by many to be the father of American literature. He used many happy boyhood memories from his life along the Mississippi to write his wonderful stories of Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn.
3. The famous American writer Ernest Hemingway said, "*All modern American literature comes from one book by Mark Twain called Huckleberry Finn.*"
4. At age 11 (5th grade), Samuel Clemens quit school and began delivering papers and working as an errand boy for the *Hannibal Gazette*.
5. The Mississippi is the largest river system in North America, and the third longest in the world. It stretches more than 2,000 miles from Minnesota all the way to the Gulf of Mexico.
6. The word "Mississippi" is derived from two Indian words, *misi sipi*, meaning "great water" or "father of the waters."
7. In the mid-1800's, the steamboat dominated commerce in the central United States. Travel by steamboat increased quickly. For example, in 1814 New Orleans had fewer than 20 steamboat arrivals; by 1834 that figure had reached 1,200.
8. Clemens held many jobs in his lifetime: printer, writer, satirist, lecturer, soldier, Mississippi steamboat pilot, and silver miner
9. The Mississippi River is home to such important cities as Minneapolis - St. Paul, Minnesota; St. Louis, Missouri; Memphis, Tennessee; and Baton Rouge and New Orleans, Louisiana.
10. Mark Twain once said, "*Humor is the great thing, the saving thing. The minute it crops up, all our irritations and resentments slip away and a sunny spirit takes their place.*"