

Biography

Mark Twain: His Amazing Adventures

He was an American original, a gifted and irreverent storyteller whose portrayal of a young nation captured the imagination of the world. On the trails of the Wild West, on the streets of New York, and in the shore towns of his beloved Mississippi River, Mark Twain lived out the greatest adventures of 19th century America. BIOGRAPHY tells Twain's life story—from his carefree boyhood in Hannibal, Missouri to the devastating tragedies of his later life—with rare photographs, expert interviews and excerpts from the stories that made him a legend. Mark Twain: His Amazing Adventures would be useful for classes on American History, American Culture and Literature. It is appropriate for middle school and high school.

Discussion Questions

1. The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn is one of the most famous works of American literature. But this book was, and is, controversial. What is so controversial about this book?
2. Mark Twain lived most of his life during the 19th century. How was he a product of his times? How did he come to be a symbol for the era?
3. How did Twain and his work embody the best and worst in America during the 19th century?
4. As a young man, Twain worked as a pilot on a riverboat. How did his experiences as a river pilot contribute to his writing?
5. Twain's real name was Samuel L. Clemens. Why did he use a pen name, and why did he choose the name Mark Twain?
6. Mark Twain abhorred the treatment that Chinese immigrants received in America. Why was there so much prejudice against the Chinese in America? What other groups have faced similar circumstances?
7. Twain fell madly in love with Olivia Langdon, but at first her family opposed their marriage. Why did they think that Twain was not good enough for their daughter?
8. Twain's *The Gilded Age* named an era in American history that still carries this title. How was *The Gilded Age* an indictment of late 19th century America?
9. Was Mark Twain a "living American dream?"
10. Mark Twain made a great deal of money in his life. Yet at the age of 60 he was forced to claim bankruptcy. How did such a wealthy man go bankrupt?
11. How did the death of Twain's daughter affect him?

Extended Activities

1. Mark Twain created his characters from the people in his life. Write a short story using some of the characters in your life.
2. Create a broadside or poster advertising one of Mark Twain's popular lectures.
3. Design a book jacket for your favorite book by Mark Twain.