

SAMUEL LANGHORNE CLEMENS ALSO KNOWN AS MARK TWAIN



Samuel Langhorne Clemens was born on November 30, 1835, in Florida, Missouri. He was sickly as a boy, but grew to be healthy. He was both adventurous and mischievous. In 1839, his family moved to Hannibal, Missouri. He spent much of his time playing along the Mississippi River and in the woods nearby.

He spent summers at an uncle's farm where he'd get into mischief along with his group of friends. At the farm, he also saw several disturbing incidents, including slave beatings and murder, which he later used as material for his novels.

Samuel's father died in 1847, and he left school and became a printer's apprentice to help support his family. He left Hannibal in 1853 to pursue his printing work in St. Louis, New York, Philadelphia, Cincinnati, and Iowa. From 1857 until the Civil War started in 1861, he piloted a riverboat on the Mississippi River. After the war, he went to Nevada to prospect for silver and gold, but he didn't like the West's hardships.

He returned to the East and worked as a reporter under the pseudonym of "Mark Twain," which was a boating phrase that indicated two fathoms of water. In 1864, he went to San Francisco and wrote for magazines and newspapers.

In 1866, he started traveling extensively, visiting Hawaii, Europe, and the Middle East, studying people to gather material for his writing. In 1870, Samuel married Olivia Langdon. They had a son who died in infancy and three daughters. The family lived in Hartford, Connecticut, from 1871 until 1891. In 1872, he published his first book *Roughing It*. He published his first of many novels, *The Gilded Age*, in 1873. In 1876, he published *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, and in 1885, he published *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.

Clemens was often depressed and melancholy during his last twenty years of life. He had financial obligations after several failed investments, and he went on a lecture tour in Europe in 1895 and 1896 to raise money to pay his debts. During the tour, his daughter Suzy died. His wife Olivia died in 1904. His youngest daughter Jean died in 1909. His family members' deaths and his own poor health added to his depression.

Reading Comprehension/ Biography

Name _____ Date _____

He received honorary degrees from Yale in 1901 and from the University of Missouri in 1902, and he received another honorary degree from Oxford in 1907. On April 21, 1910, Samuel Clemens died of angina.

Name _____ Date _____

Answer the questions about SAMUEL LANGHORNE CLEMENS

1. As a boy, Samuel Langhorne Clemens could be described as:
 - a. naughty
 - b. ugly
 - c. depressed
 - d. boring

2. Samuel Clemens left school and began working at a printer's shop...
 - a. because he was interested in becoming a novelist.
 - b. because he wanted to be a riverboat captain.
 - c. because his father died and they needed money.
 - d. He did not work in a print shop.

3. "Mark Twain" was...
 - a. Samuel Langhorne Clemens' supervisor.
 - b. Samuel Langhorne Clemens' pen name.
 - c. A riverboat captain he met on the Mississippi.
 - d. A magazine in San Francisco.

4. Clemens' was _____ for much of the last two decades of his life.
 - a. financially successful
 - b. unhappy and downhearted
 - c. healthy and energetic
 - d. foolish and funny

5. How old was Clemens when he published his first book?
 - a. 35
 - b. 37
 - c. 41
 - d. 50

6. Clemens was a good writer, but a bad businessman. How do we know this?
 - a. He changed jobs a lot.
 - b. He traveled a great deal.
 - c. He had significant debts due to failed investments.
 - d. He was depressed.

Name _____ Date _____

7. Why did Clemens tour Europe with his family at the end of the 19th century?
 - a. Traveling to Europe was cheaper than Asia at that time.
 - b. He had debts because of unsuccessful business dealings.
 - c. He did not get along with his mother-in-law.
 - d. He never went to Europe.

8. What did Clemens do in Nevada?
 - a. Searched for precious metals.
 - b. Tried his luck at the casino business.
 - c. Wrote for a magazine.
 - d. Gave lectures.

9. *True or false?* Samuel Langhorne Clemens used experiences from his own life for his stories.
 - a. true
 - b. false

10. *True or false?* His daughter Suzy died in Hawaii.
 - a. true
 - b. false

11. *True or false?* Clemens never went on a boat because he was superstitious.
 - a. true
 - b. false

12. *True or false?* Clemens was stalked by Mark Twain for much of his adult life.
 - a. true
 - b. false

13. *True or false?* Clemens never traveled to the Pacific Coast.
 - a. true
 - b. false

14. Which book by Samuel Langhorne Clemens is your favorite? Why? What is the book about?

Name _____ Date _____

Use complete sentences to answer the questions below.

1. Describe an experience or situation in your life that is similar to Mark Twain prospecting for gold.

2. From the way it is used in the article what do you think is the meaning of *pseudonym*?

3. What do you believe was the result of Twain being a mischievous boy and having adventures?

4. Imagine yourself witnessing a murder on your summer vacation. Describe what you would feel and do.

5. What do you understand differently after reading about Mark Twain? How will you use this information in the future?

Name _____ Date _____

Answers:

1. a
2. c
3. b
4. b
5. b
6. c
7. b
8. a
9. a
10. b
11. b
12. b
13. b
14. Answers will vary.

Short-answer

1. (Answers may vary, accept reasonable answers.)
2. *Pseudonym* = pen name, nom de plume, fictitious name used by a writer or other person
3. (Answers may vary, accept reasonable answers.)
4. (Answers may vary, accept reasonable answers.)
5. (Answers may vary, accept reasonable answers.)