



Mark Twain

(Samuel Clemens 1835-1910)

Adventures of Huckleberry Finn

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- Childhood in Hannibal, Missouri.
 - When his father died and left debts, brother started a newspaper; Twain wrote.
 - Twain's family sometimes had slaves.
 - Slaves began to be freed in the north by 1804.

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- Loved Mississippi—steamboat pilot.
 - “Mark Twain” means “two fathoms deep.”
 - Civil War ended steamboat traffic.
 - Missourians fought on both sides of the Civil War (Union’s soldiers the majority).

- Traveled west with his brother—
Roughing It.
- Failed as a miner; worked at a newspaper.
- 1st literary success “The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County.”
- *Huck Finn* was based on a boyhood friend.

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The Real Huck Finn

- According to Twain, he based Huck Finn on a boy from his hometown of Hannibal: “I have drawn Tom Blankenship exactly as he was. He was ignorant, unwashed, insufficiently fed, but he had as good a heart as ever any boy had. His liberties were totally unrestricted. He was the only really independent person—boy or man—in the community, and by consequence he was tranquilly and continuously happy and was envied by all the rest of us. We liked him, we enjoyed his society. And his society was forbidden us by our parents, the prohibition trebled and quadrupled its value, and, therefore, we sought and got more of his society than of any other boy’s.”


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Huck Finn was controversial from its first publication.

“The Public Library of Concord, Massachusetts banned the book, calling it ‘rough, coarse, and inelegant.’ Concord resident Louisa May Alcott, author of *Little Women*, sniffed, ‘If Mr. Clemens cannot think of something better to tell our pure-minded lads and lasses, he had best stop writing for them.’”

Twain's response:

“The truth is that when a library expels a book of mine and leaves an unexpurgated Bible around where unprotected youth can get hold of it, the deep unconscious irony of it delights me....”

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- Successful as a speaker in California.
 - Married Olivia Langdon in 1870 (4 children, 1 died as a toddler). (She was born into a family of abolitionists and may have changed Twain's mind from casual acceptance of slavery to abhorrence of it.)

Timeline of Slavery in U.S.

1619--Jamestown

1800--1 million
slaves in U.S.

1804—7 N. states
had freed slaves

1840—Douglass begins
speaking out.

1860—4 million
slaves in south

1865—End of
Civil War

1885—*Huck
Finn*