

# Meet Mark Twain



*I was born the 30th of November, 1835, in the almost invisible village of Florida, Monroe County, Missouri. . . . The village contained a hundred people and I increased the population by 1 percent. It is more than many of the best men in history could have done for a town.*

—*The Autobiography of Mark Twain*

**M**ark Twain, whose real name was Samuel Clemens, was in many ways a self-made man. Clemens was born on the Missouri frontier, learned several trades, traveled widely, and transformed himself into Mark Twain, the larger-than-life writer, lecturer, and symbol of America.

Four years after Clemens was born, his father moved the family to Hannibal, Missouri, on the Mississippi River. There, the young boy lived an idyllic life. Some of his happiest days were spent on the riverbanks watching the parade of boats that passed by. In his memoir *Life on the Mississippi* (1883), he recalls the excitement people felt when the lazy summer air was pierced by the cry of “S-t-e-a-m-boat a-comin!” “All in a twinkling,” he wrote, “the dead town is alive and moving.” Hannibal was also home to relatives, friends, and townspeople who served as the inspiration for characters in his fiction.

But before Clemens could turn his childhood memories into literature, he needed to see something of the world. At the age of seventeen, he left

Hannibal to work as a printer’s assistant. He held printing jobs in New York, Pennsylvania, and Iowa. Then, when he was twenty-one, he returned to the Mississippi River to train for the job he wanted above all others: steamboat pilot. A few years later, he became a licensed pilot, but his time as a pilot was cut short by the start of the Civil War, in 1861.

After a two-week stint in the Confederate army, Clemens joined his brother in Carson City, Nevada. There, Clemens began to write humorous sketches and tall tales for the local newspaper. In February 1863, he first used the pseudonym, or pen name, that would later be known by readers throughout the world. It was a riverboating term for water two fathoms, or twelve feet, deep: “Mark Twain.”

Clemens next worked as a miner near San Francisco. In 1865 he published in a national magazine a tall tale he had heard in the minefields—“The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County.” It was an instant success. Later, he traveled to Hawaii, Europe, and the Middle East. The humorous book he wrote about his travels, *The Innocents Abroad*, made him famous.

In 1870 Clemens married Olivia Langdon. A year later they moved to Hartford, Connecticut. At the same time, he began a successful career as a lecturer, telling humorous stories and reading from his books.

More books followed, including *Roughing It*, a travel memoir about the West; *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*; *Life on the Mississippi*; and *The Prince and the Pauper*. Thanks to his lecture tours and books, Mark Twain became familiar around the world. His death in 1910 was met with great sorrow.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mr. Fegley  
English  
Mark Twain: Biography

1. What is Mark Twain real Name?
2. What river does he grow up near?
3. What exciting event happened on lazy summer days?
4. What job did he real want above all others?
5. What event cut short his career as a river boat captain?
6. What does mark twain mean?
7. What job was Mark Twain working when he wrote a Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaverdas County?
8. In 1870 Mark Twain began a career has a \_\_\_\_\_.
9. Name two Mark Twain Books?