

## READING

### Mark Twain

Mark Twain was an American humorist, journalist and writer. His real name was Samuel Langhorne Clemens and he was born on November 30, 1835. He was the sixth child of John and Jane Clemens. He was born in a small village in Missouri, but when he was four years old, the family moved to Hannibal, a nearby town of 1,000 people.

Twain's father was a serious man. According to one legend, young Sam Clemens never saw his father laugh. His mother, by contrast, loved fun and spent a lot of time telling stories. In 1847, Twain's father suddenly died.

Mark Twain lived in Hannibal from age four to age seventeen. The town is situated on the Mississippi River and it inspired several towns in Mark Twain's books. When he was twelve, he started working as a printer for the *Hannibal Courier*. Later, he worked as a printer for the *Hannibal Western Union*, a newspaper owned by his brother.

In 1857, Twain began learning the art of piloting a steamboat on the Mississippi. He was twenty-one years old. He loved his career because it was exciting and well-paid. When the Civil War started, Twain joined the Confederate Army, but served for only a few weeks.

After the Civil War, Twain headed for Nevada and California. There he became one of the best-known storytellers in the West, but later he moved back to the East. He married Olivia Langdon, a daughter of a rich New York businessman. They moved to Buffalo and later had four children. Mark Twain continued writing. He published *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* in 1876, *Life on the Mississippi* in 1883, and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* in 1884.

Ernest Hemingway once wrote: "All modern American literature comes from one book by Mark Twain called *Huckleberry Finn*." The book tells the story of a young boy called Huckleberry Finn who runs away from his bad father and travels down the Mississippi river with a runaway slave called Jim.

In June 1904, Mark Twain's wife died after a long illness. Twain himself died on April 21, 1910, at the age of seventy-four, at his country home in Redding, Connecticut.

#### 1 Read the text and answer the following questions.

- 1 What was Mark Twain's real name? \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 What happened to Mark Twain in 1847? \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 Who owned the *Hannibal Western Union*? \_\_\_\_\_
- 4 Why did Mark Twain like being a pilot on the Mississippi River? \_\_\_\_\_
- 5 How many children did Mark Twain have? \_\_\_\_\_
- 6 When did Mark Twain publish *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*? \_\_\_\_\_
- 7 How old was Mark Twain when he died? \_\_\_\_\_

#### 2 Are these sentences true (T) or false (F)?

- 1 Mark Twain was born in Hannibal, Missouri. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 Twain's father loved fun and telling stories. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 When he was a child, Mark Twain worked as a printer. \_\_\_\_\_
- 4 Twain's wife's father had a lot of money. \_\_\_\_\_
- 5 Ernest Hemingway thought that *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* was an important book. \_\_\_\_\_
- 6 Huck Finn travels down the Mississippi River alone. \_\_\_\_\_
- 7 Mark Twain's wife died in a car accident. \_\_\_\_\_

**SOURCES:** <https://www.biography.com/people/mark-twain-9512564>, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Mark-Twain>

## KEY

### 1 Read the text and answer the following questions.

- 1 What was Mark Twain's real name? **Samuel Langhorne Clemens**
- 2 What happened to Mark Twain in 1847? **his father died**
- 3 Who owned the *Hannibal Western Union*? **Mark Twain's brother Orion**
- 4 Why did Mark Twain like being a pilot on the Mississippi River? **it was exciting and well-paid**
- 5 How many children did Mark Twain have? **4**
- 6 When did Mark Twain publish *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*? **in 1876**
- 7 How old was Mark Twain when he died? **74**

### 2 Are these sentences true (T) or false (F)?

- 1 Mark Twain was born in Hannibal, Missouri. **F (he was born in a small village in Missouri and later moved to Hannibal)**
- 2 Twain's father loved fun and telling stories. **F (his mother loved fun and telling stories, his father was serious)**
- 3 When he was a child, Mark Twain worked as a printer. **T (he started working as a printer when he was 12)**
- 4 Twain's wife's father had a lot of money. **T**
- 5 Ernest Hemingway thought that *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* was an important book. **T (he said that all modern American literature comes from this book)**
- 6 Huck Finn travels down the Mississippi River alone. **F (he travels with a runaway slave called Jim)**
- 7 Mark Twain's wife died in a car accident. **F (she died after a long illness)**