

**LIBRARIAN'S
RESOURCE
GUIDE**

Mark Twain

Photo courtesy of the Mark Twain House, Hartford
Signature courtesy of The Mark Twain Project, Bancroft Library, Berkeley, CA



A proud
sponsor of
Ken Burns
since 1987.

A FILM DIRECTED BY KEN BURNS

January 14 and 15, 2002, on PBS from 8 to 10 p.m. ET.

DEAR LIBRARIAN,

General Motors is proud to sponsor an outreach program to libraries across America in support of literacy and America's favorite humorist, Mark Twain. This program has been developed to celebrate the presentation of *Mark Twain*, a two-part film directed by Ken Burns, scheduled to air on PBS stations on January 14 and 15, 2002.

When Samuel Langhorne Clemens was born in the backwoods of Missouri in 1835 under the glow of Halley's Comet, his mother thought he was so thin and sickly that she could "see no promise in him." But by 1910, at the end of his long and eventful life, and as the comet once again blazed in the sky, he had become Mark Twain, America's best-known and best-loved author, its most popular humorist and one of its most profound social commentators.

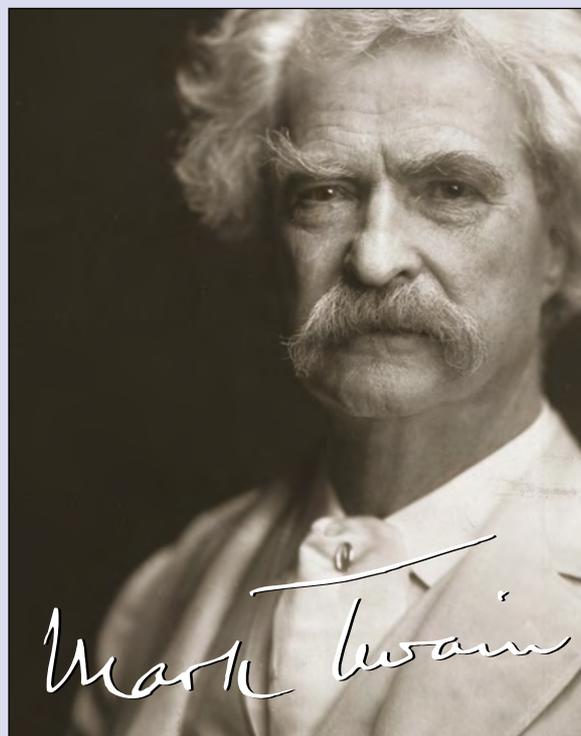


Photo courtesy of the Mark Twain House, Hartford

A FILM DIRECTED BY KEN BURNS

January 14 and 15, 2002, on PBS

The GM is delighted to present this library program for you to share with your patrons. We consider it our mission to share the American experience through first-rate educational materials. This outreach program includes activities that you may implement in your library this fall, including Twain read-alouds, art contests, trivia bees, etc.

The activities will serve as a springboard of interest for patrons drawn to your library eager to learn more about Twain. We hope you proudly display the *Mark Twain* poster on the reverse side of this guide as a greeting to patrons when they arrive.

We encourage you to use this library program to help bring the genius—and the irreverent wit and wisdom—of Mark Twain to patrons of your library.

Sincerely,



A proud
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Ken Burns
since 1987.

About the Curriculum Guide for



A curriculum guide for the film of *Mark Twain*, directed by Ken Burns, was recently sent to all the junior and senior high school English department chairpersons in your community. The guide was sponsored by General Motors, long-time sole corporate underwriter of Ken Burns' films. The film presentation of *Mark Twain* is scheduled to air on PBS stations on January 14 and 15, 2002, from 8 to 10 p.m. ET.



Mark Twain vacationing in Bermuda with Woodrow Wilson and other friends. 1908

The study guide was designed to help bring the genius—and the irreverent wit and wisdom—of Mark Twain to life in the classroom.

TWAIN SAID IT FIRST

“‘Classic.’ A book which people praise and don’t read.”

“Few things are harder to put up with than the annoyance of a good example.”

“Always do right. This will gratify some people & astonish the rest.”

“One of the most striking differences between a cat and a lie is that a cat has only nine lives.”

Here are some of the activities students in schools in your area will be exploring:

★ **A WRITER’S INSPIRATION** asks students to consider Mark Twain as “the enormous noticer” pointed out in the film, and think about the humor he found in ordinary, everyday details.

★ **A REPORT FROM 21ST-CENTURY AMERICA** focuses on the study of Twain, the humorist, along with Twain, the newspaper reporter.

★ **TALL TALES AND DARK SIDES** has students match their skill in weaving a tall tale with that of Twain, the master storyteller. They also learn about Twain’s private side—the dark side—of the person known to the public as the funniest man on earth, the man who once wrote: “The secret source of Humor itself is not joy but sorrow. There is no laughter in heaven.”



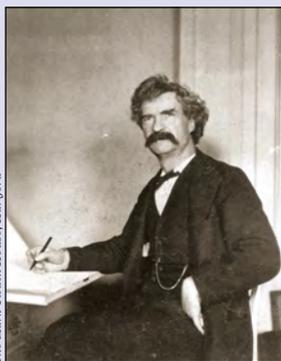
★ **POWERFUL MEMORIES, POWERFUL WORDS** has students focus on the impact Twain’s ability to tell a story in the vernacular had on his audience. Using the example of a story retold by Twain of the experiences of former slave Mary Ann Cord, students explore how Twain employed Cord’s use of words—her inflections, pauses and unique patterns of speech—to frame her story in a clear and compelling manner. Students also consider other examples of Twain’s vernacular storytelling through his pictures of race relations and the lives of African Americans in his time.

Also included in the curriculum guide are extended activities related to the themes covered above, as well as resource listings for books, videos and Web sites.

A NOTE TO LIBRARIANS

The life and literature of Mark Twain has broad appeal to people of all ages and interests. This guide, provided by General Motors, includes the following suggestions for ways to involve your patrons, from children to seniors, in fully utilizing your library's resources to further expand their areas of interest as they may relate to Twain, his life and his writings. The *Mark Twain* poster on the reverse side of this guide can be mounted as a special display for your patrons' enjoyment.

First create patron interest by placing the poster on the other side of this guide in a prominent location, then assemble a display of Twain's books and other materials related to the times in which he lived. A companion book to the film directed by Ken Burns, written by Geoffrey C. Ward and Dayton Duncan with an introduction by Burns, is scheduled for publication by Alfred A. Knopf in November 2001. You will want to have copies of this volume handy for patrons whose interest in Twain will have been further sparked by viewing the Burns film on PBS on January 14 and 15, 2002.



The Mark Twain House, Hartford

Mark Twain c. 1884

Celebrate Twain by introducing some of these activities into your library to tie-in with the airing of the *Mark Twain* film series and the school curriculum program:

- ★ Hold a **Twain Read-Aloud**, where patrons choose books written by Twain and then read passages from them to get a sense of the different subjects and writing styles Twain employed over the

course of his career. See how many budding actors you have in your community!

- ★ Plan a **celebration of American literature**, with posters and memorabilia from Twain's and other eras reflecting the times in which notable books were written. Arrange the displays in sequence in the library as patrons enter, from the earliest era to the most recent.



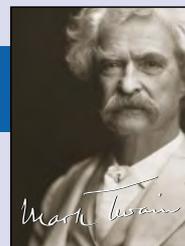
A proud sponsor of **Ken Burns** since 1987.



Nick Karwanich

Mark Twain aboard the U.S.S. Mohican. 1895

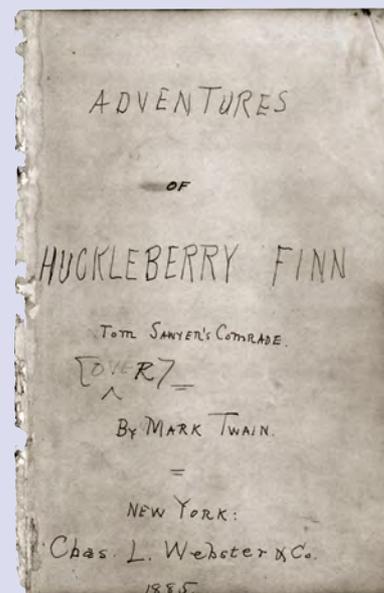
- ★ During the course of his life, Twain lived in the Midwest, the West and New England. Each part of the country helped shape his experiences. You might hold an **"imaginary journey" day**, in which maps and books about geography and travel are prominently displayed. Kids and their parents can "book" their own future trips—at least on paper—by using available resources at the library. You might invite a travel expert, an adventurer who has achieved a degree of local celebrity, or someone who has fascinating slides from a trip they took, to address patrons as a special travel event.



JANUARY 14 AND 15 ON PBS

- ★ Sponsor **"Tom Sawyer Days"** in which the flavor of the era pictured in Twain's book is recreated at the library, complete with foods that reflect Americana of that time, the library staff dressed in costume of the day, etc.
- ★ Create **"Character Parades"** where youngsters come to the library for prizes, games, etc., dressed as their favorite Twain characters. Culminate the day by having one or more prominent members of your community read aloud from their favorite Twain works.
- ★ Sponsor **art contests** in which kids and teens bring their best renderings of Mark Twain portraits, scenes or characters from his books to be displayed and judged at the library.
- ★ Hold a **Trivia Bee** in which patrons are quizzed on the details of Twain's life and achievements.

- ★ When *Huckleberry Finn* was first published, it was banned from many libraries because of its



Buffalo and Erie County Public Library

Mark Twain's handwritten title page for *Huckleberry Finn*.

rough language and poor grammar, and because it celebrated the life of a youngster who lived by his own rules. It remains controversial in some parts of this country today because of its portrayal of blacks. Have patrons locate and discuss other famous



Sam and Livy Clemens on the porch of their house in Hartford. 1885

The Mark Twain House, Hartford

works that have been banned, such as *To Kill a Mockingbird*, etc., using the American Library Association's list of most challenged books of the last decade as a start.

★ Invite **senior citizens** to come for an event where they read the first two chapters of *Tom Sawyer*. Discuss the details that they think Samuel Clemens might have drawn from his boyhood memories in Hannibal. Encourage them to read the remainder of the book on their own and to write their own short stories or memories of their childhood.

★ Have a **journalists' forum**, inviting local newspaper writers and editors to lead a discussion about Twain, the journalist. Begin the discussion by explaining how in Twain's day, newspapers provided the only mass means of sharing information. Have young people research the history of publishing through resources about the subject found in the library. If applicable, they also might compare how major stories have been treated on page 1 of various newspapers you maintain on file or on microfiche.

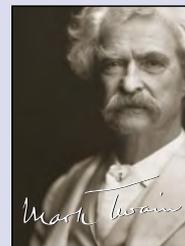
★ Stage an **American Humorist event**. Have patrons bring in and read their favorite humorists. Then ask students to read about one period of Twain's career compared to his private life at that time. Can they see a connection through his writings? Have them find a book written by or about a comic or humorist they admire and see if they can find a similar comparison.

★ Older student groups can locate **books in the library that reflect changes in race relations** in America since the days of *Huckleberry Finn* and *Tom Sawyer*.

Contact the English teachers in your area and invite in school groups or arrange after-school activities focused on Twain. Here are some suggestions:

★ Invite students to find as many books as possible by authors who have analyzed **Mark Twain's contribution to society** as an author and his impact on other writers.

★ Hand out a sheet with prominent **quotes attributed to Mark Twain**, and have students find a book that is related in theme to a particular quote; for example, "It is curious that physical courage should be so common in the world and moral courage so rare" (books about courage), or "The human race has one really effective weapon, and that is laughter" (books that are funny).

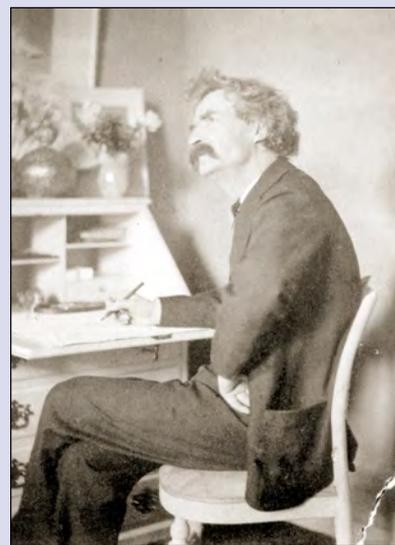


JANUARY 14 AND 15 ON PBS

★ Ask students to locate books by **other prominent American authors** who lived during Twain's era. How similar or different are their writing styles and the subjects they wrote about in comparison to those of Twain?

★ Have students review **books written in the 19th century** and discuss various aspects of life then as compared with how we live in 21st-century America today.

★ Travel on the Mississippi in Twain's day was an important part of commerce. Have students locate **books on various types of transportation**—planes, trains, boats and automobiles—and compare the influences they have had on American transportation patterns and even on how and where cities have been established.



The Mark Twain Project, Bancroft Library, Berkeley, CA

Mark Twain c. 1884

★ Twain had several careers in his life as a young man before he became a full-time writer. Hold a **"job fair"** for students in which they identify occupations they might want to pursue, and then use the library's resources to get more information about them.

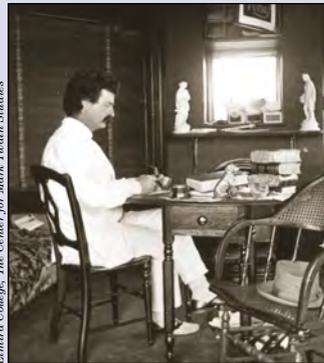
★ Twain's family was extremely important to him. Ask students to draw a family tree and then use library resources to get more information either about the **study of genealogy** itself or about the historical context in which their ancestors lived; for example, if a grandfather headed west during the Gold Rush, the student could find a book about that period in American history.



Young Sam Clemens around age 14 as a printer's apprentice.



The Clemens home on Farmington Avenue in Hartford, Connecticut.



Mark Twain at the writing desk in his study at Quarry Farms in Elmira, NY 1874

RESOURCES

BOOKS

- ★ A companion book to the film directed by Ken Burns, *Mark Twain*, written by Geoffrey C. Ward and Dayton Duncan with an introduction by Ken Burns, is scheduled for publication by Alfred A. Knopf in November 2001.
- ★ *Dangerous Water: A Biography of the Boy Who Became Mark Twain*, by Ron Powers. New York: Perseus Books Group, 1999.
- ★ *The Jim Dilemma: Reading Race in Huckleberry Finn*, by Jocelyn Chadwick-Joshua. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1998.
- ★ *The Quotable Mark Twain: His Essential Aphorisms, Witticisms & Concise Opinions*, edited by R. Kent Rasmussen. Chicago: Contemporary Books, 1997.
- ★ *Was Huck Black? Mark Twain and African American Voices*, by Shelley Fisher Fishkin. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.

VIDEO

- ★ "Hal Holbrook Presents Mark Twain Tonight" (VHS video or DVD). Kulture Video, 1999.
- ★ "Mark Twain" (VHS video or DVD). Warner Home Video, 2001.

WEB SITES

- ★ Great Books Index – Mark Twain (includes links to e-texts of *Tom Sawyer*, *Huckleberry Finn*, *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, and more) <http://books.mirror.org/gb.twain.html>
- ★ Twain Electronic Texts (includes links to e-text of "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County") http://www.boondocksnet.com/twainwww/writings_c.html
- ★ *Mark Twain* <http://www.pbs.org/marktwain>
- ★ Mark Twain in His Times Homepage <http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/railton/index2.html>
- ★ The About.com Guide to Mark Twain <http://www.marktwain.about.com>
- ★ Mark Twain: A Biography http://marktwain.miningco.com/library/biography/bl_paine_bio_chapters.htm?pid=2734&cob=horr
- ★ The Mark Twain House, Hartford <http://www.marktwainhouse.org>
- ★ Peter Salwen's Mark Twain Page <http://www.salwen.com/pstwain.html>



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