

Mark Twain, the Classic American Writer

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Christened as Samuel Langhorne Clemens, Mark Twain was born on November 30, 1835 in the small river town of Florida, Missouri. He was the sixth child to John Marshall Clemens and Jane Lampton. Twain grew up amid small-town life in Florida until the age of four, when his family relocated to Hannibal in hopes of an improved living situation. He is considered to be one of the major authors of American fiction. Twain's varied works include novels, travel narratives, short stories, sketches, and essays. His writings about the Mississippi River, such as *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, *Life on the Mississippi*, and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, have been especially popular among modern readers (Gribben: *Boyhood and Travels*).

Twain's formal schooling ended after the age of 12, when his father passed away. First learning as an apprentice in a printer's shop, and then working under his brother, Orion, Twain quickly became familiar with the newspaper trade. Twain indulged in the frontier humor that flourished in journalism at the time: tall tales, satirical pranks, and jokes. However, Twain was restless due to his inability to save his wages, and ultimately switched professions after realizing an old boyhood dream of becoming a river pilot. The

profession of riverboat piloting paid well and brought Twain much attention, which he enjoyed. His piloting experiences also allowed him to observe the many kinds of people who traveled aboard the steamboats. He later reported that "in that brief, sharp schooling, I got personally and familiarly acquainted with about all the different types of human nature that are to be found in fiction, biography, or history." He first began publishing under his p...

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...ber of the literati, honored by Yale, the University of Missouri, and Oxford with literary degrees. Perhaps more than any other [classic](#) American [writer](#), [Mark Twain](#) is seen not only as an author, but also as a personality that defined an era (Encarta Mark Twain).

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