The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn

Mark Twain

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Sample extract from *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* includes:

INTRODUCTION BY
DARREN SHAN

I have to admit that I struggled with *Huckleberry Finn* when I was a kid. There was a great TV show of it, which I loved, so I read the book when I was about ten years old. I enjoyed it, but found the different accents a bit difficult. The book's set in the nineteenth century, in America's Deep South, and Mark Twain tried to make it as realistic as possible. That was fine for nineteenth-century readers, but it's a bit of a challenge for us twentieth- or twenty-first-century folk!

But it's a challenge worth taking. I was amazed, reading it twenty years later, by how much of it I remembered. Even though some of the phrases shot over my head when I was a kid, I was obviously able to follow the story, because as I was reading it this time I kept thinking ahead with excitement, 'Oh yeah! I know what's going to happen next! This bit's going to be great!'

One trick I used this time, which helped me through some of the more dialect-heavy passages, was to put on

an American accent. That might sound weird, but try it and you'll be surprised how well it works!

Even if you have trouble understanding everything, don't worry, the story will suck you right in. *Huck Finn* has been delighting readers for over 120 years, because it's a gem of a tale. Huck starts off fighting civilization. He's in a tight corner, being forced to dress neatly and go to mass and school. He hates it and at first doesn't mind too much when his drunken pap kidnaps him and holds him captive. He finds life pretty sweet, doing nothing except a bit of fishing and hunting.

But then he starts worrying that pap might pass out, or be jailed, or simply forget about him, leaving Huck locked up in a cabin to starve. So Huck plots his escape and sets off down the mighty Mississippi river. He's not as keen on adventure as his best friend, Tom Sawyer, but he finds himself swirling from one to another regardless, in the company of runaway slave Jim.

The relationship between Huck and Jim is the heart of the story. Huck comes from a time when slavery was accepted. He was brought up to believe that black people were inferior to whites. In fact, he thought it was against the will of God to treat a black like an equal, or to help a slave escape to freedom.

Over the course of the book, Huck changes. It's not a simple, preachy sort of change. It's a much subtler, slyer kind of enlightenment. Huck never stops believing he's

doing wrong by helping Jim – but, dagnab it, he helps him anyway! He doesn't care if he's going against God, the law and the ways of civilized folks. Something chews away at Huck inside and, even though he feels bad for doing it, he defies society and risks all for Jim's sake.

It's this ignorant nobility which I found most touching. It makes the point, quietly and masterfully, that we all have the ability to change and take the right path in life. It doesn't matter if we've been reared to believe a falsehood, to walk the wrong way – if our hearts are pure, like Huck's, we can see through injustice and instinctively obey a greater law than any misdirected man's.

But the best thing about this book is that, as strong as its message is, it never gets in the way of the story. And what a story! Huck fakes his death and sets sail with Jim. A steamboat rolls over them. They get shipwrecked with murderous, gambling thieves. Huck finds himself in the middle of a clan war and watches with horror as a boy his own age winds up a victim of it. A drunken loudmouth is shot dead in the street, then his assassin calmly faces down a lynch mob.

The book's full of scenes which would easily form the climax of most novels – yet here they just keep coming as Huck and Jim roll along from one town and spot of trouble to another.

Of course, no introduction would be complete without special mention of his lordship the king, and his grace

the duke. These two bumbling, wicked, soulless scoundrels are, in a way, the stars of the book. You should hate them for the way they dominate Huck and Jim, take over their raft, use Huck to toady for them, and sell Jim out. Yet, like Huck, you can't help but feel sorry for them. They have an air of tragedy, and you know that as low and twisted as they are, they're bound for a sticky end. Twain could have easily invited us to mock them when they run out of luck and fall foul of their own schemes, but instead it becomes an oddly moving scene.

That's the thing about Huck Finn. He can see the good in everyone, from his nasty pap to the beery king and duke, to the men who casually knock Jim around. He hates no one, passes judgement on nobody, thinks himself superior to no man. He's one of the honestest, true-hearted travelling companions I've ever had in a book, and I know I'm going to make that long, meandering, beautiful, scary, exciting journey down the river with him a few more times before I light out for the Territory beyond this world. It's the trip of a lifetime. Millions have made it before you, and millions will after you, but for the moment it's *your* turn to climb on board the raft with Huck and Jim, kick off your shoes and the clinging wraps of civilization, and drift along into mystery, horror, fun and adventure. Enjoy the ride, and don't forget – if you take it too seriously, by order of the author you *will* be shot!!!

WHO'S WHO IN *HUCKLEBERRY FINN*

Huckleberry Finn – The narrator and main protagonist. Thirteen-year-old Huck has spent much of his life fending for himself and has a strong adventurous streak, which means he favours life as a runaway, taking his luck on a raft in preference to being 'sivilized' and made to live in a house.

Tom Sawyer – Huck's best friend and often partner in crime. Creator of fantastical schemes, Tom has a wild imagination – but the difference between him and Huck is that he comes from an advantaged background and will always rely on society's safety net.

Jim – One of Miss Watson's household slaves. In a bid for freedom, he escapes and accompanies Huck on his journey down the Mississippi. A big-hearted man whom Huck has much to learn from, he is always at the mercy of others but is uncomplaining in even the most humiliating of circumstances.

Widow Douglas – A kindly town lady who takes Huck in and tries to 'sivilize' him.

Miss Watson – Much stricter than her sister, Widow Douglas, she tries to tame Huck through religion and discipline.

Judge Thatcher – The local town judge who looks after the money that Huck and Tom found (in *The Adventures of Tom*

Sawyer). When pap tries to claim Huck's money for his own, Judge Thatcher safeguards it from him.

Pap – Huck's father: a drunk and a vagabond who shows interest in his own son only when there is some gain in it for him. This time he reappears in an attempt to steal Huck's money. He beats him and locks him up until Huck hatches a plot to escape and get his father off his back once and for all.

The duke and the king – Two conmen (claiming to be the Duke of Bridgewater and the heir to the French throne) who hook up with Huck and Jim and travel with them on their raft, pulling off increasingly wicked cons. Huck is shocked by their utter lack of morality and steps in to stop the Wilkses' downfall but is not quite able to make the split from them until they commit the worst betrayal of all in handing over Jim for a reward.

The Grangerford family – Well-to-do eccentric family that takes in Huck when the raft is hit by a steamboat and he and Jim are separated. The family have an ongoing feud with the Shepherdson family which becomes explosive when Sophia Grangerford runs off with Harney Shepherdson. Sadly, most of the family is killed in the resulting battle.

The Wilks family – Victims of the duke's and king's biggest swindle. The two conmen hear of wealthy Peter Wilks's death and pose as his long-lost brothers (taking Huck along as

manservant). The three nieces are well and truly taken in until Huck, who has a crush on Mary Jane, reveals the scam.

Sally and Silas Phelps – The aunt and uncle of Tom Sawyer: an essentially decent, good-natured couple that Huck becomes embroiled with in his bid to rescue Jim. They bought Jim from the king and are keeping him imprisoned until they find his rightful owner. Tom and Huck hatch an elaborate plan to free Jim and keep up a deceit that Huck is Tom and Tom is Sid (one of his brothers).

Aunt Polly – Tom Sawyer's aunt and guardian and sister to Sally Phelps. She ultimately reveals the boys' true identity and confirms the news that Jim is a free man as Miss Watson released him from servitude in her will.

NOTICE

PERSONS attempting to find a motive in this narrative will be prosecuted; persons attempting to find a moral in it will be banished; persons attempting to find a plot in it will be shot.

BY ORDER OF THE AUTHOR

per

G. G., CHIEF OF ORDNANCE

EXPLANATORY

In this book a number of dialects are used, to wit: the Missouri Negro dialect; the extremest form of the backwoods South-Western dialect; the ordinary 'Pike-County' dialect; and four modified varieties of this last. The shadings have not been done in a haphazard fashion, or by guess-work; but painstakingly, and with the trustworthy guidance and support of personal familiarity with these several forms of speech.

I make this explanation for the reason that without it many readers would suppose that all these characters were trying to talk alike and not succeeding.

THE AUTHOR

Contents

1

Civilizing Huck – Moses and the 'Bulrushers' – Miss Watson – Tom Sawyer waits

You don't know about me, without you have read a book by the name of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, but that ain't no matter. That book was made by Mr Mark Twain, and he told the truth, mainly. There was things which he stretched, but mainly he told the truth. That is nothing. I never seen anybody but lied, one time or another, without it was Aunt Polly, or the widow, or maybe Mary. Aunt Polly – Tom's Aunt Polly, she is – and Mary, and the Widow Douglas, is all told about in that book – which is mostly a true book; with some stretchers, as I said before.

Now the way that the book winds up, is this: Tom and me found the money that the robbers hid in the cave, and it made us rich. We got six thousand dollars apiece – all gold. It was an awful sight of money when it was piled up. Well, Judge Thatcher, he took it and put it out at interest, and it fetched us a dollar a day apiece, all the

year round – more than a body could tell what to do with. The Widow Douglas, she took me for her son, and allowed she would sivilize me; but it was rough living in the house all the time, considering how dismal regular and decent the widow was in all her ways; and so when I couldn't stand it no longer, I lit out. I got into my old rags and my sugar-hogshead again, and was free and satisfied. But Tom Sawyer he hunted me up and said he was going to start a band of robbers, and I might join if I would go back to the widow and be respectable. So I went back.

The widow she cried over me, and called me a poor lost lamb, and she called me a lot of other names, too, but she never meant no harm by it. She put me in them new clothes again, and I couldn't do nothing but sweat and sweat, and feel all cramped up. Well, then, the old thing commenced again. The widow rung a bell for supper, and you had to come to time. When you got to the table you couldn't go right to eating, but you had to wait for the widow to tuck down her head and grumble a little over the victuals, though there warn't really anything the matter with them. That is, nothing only everything was cooked by itself. In a barrel of odds and ends it is different; things get mixed up, and the juice kind of swaps around, and the things go better.

After supper she got out her book and learned me about Moses and the Bulrushers; and I was in a sweat to find

out all about him; but by-and-by she let it out that Moses had been dead a considerable long time; so then I didn't care no more about him; because I don't take no stock in dead people.

Pretty soon I wanted to smoke, and asked the widow to let me. But she wouldn't. She said it was a mean practice and wasn't clean, and I must try to not do it any more. That is just the way with some people. They get down on a thing when they don't know nothing about it. Here she was a-bothering about Moses, which was no kin to her, and no use to anybody, being gone, you see, yet finding a power of fault with me for doing a thing that had some good in it. And she took snuff too; of course, that was all right, because she done it herself.

Her sister, Miss Watson, a tolerable slim old maid, with goggles on, had just come to live with her, and took a set at me now, with a spelling-book. She worked me middling hard for about an hour, and then the widow made her ease up. I couldn't stood it much longer. Then for an hour it was deadly dull, and I was fidgety. Miss Watson would say, 'Don't put your feet up there, Huckleberry'; and, 'Don't scrunch up like that, Huckleberry – set up straight'; and pretty soon she would say, 'Don't gap and stretch like that, Huckleberry; why don't you try to behave?' Then she told me all about the bad place, and I said I wished I was there. She got mad, then, but I didn't mean no harm. All I wanted was to go somewheres; all

I wanted was a change, I warn't particular. She said it was wicked to say what I said; said she wouldn't say it for the whole world; *she* was going to live so as to go to the good place. Well, I couldn't see no advantage in going where she was going, so I made up my mind I wouldn't try for it. But I never said so, because it would only make trouble, and wouldn't do no good.

Now she had got a start, and she went on and told me all about the good place. She said all a body would have to do there was to go around all day long with a harp and sing for ever and ever. So I didn't think much of it. But I never said so. I asked her if she reckoned Tom Sawyer would go there, and she said, not by a considerable sight. I was glad about that, because I wanted him and me to be together.

Miss Watson she kept pecking at me, and it got tiresome and lonesome. By-and-by they fetched the niggers in and had prayers, and then everybody was off to bed. I went up to my room with a piece of candle and put it on the table. Then I set down in a chair by the window and tried to think of something cheerful, but it warn't no use. I felt so lonesome I most wished I was dead. The stars was shining, and the leaves rustled in the woods ever so mournful; and I heard an owl, away off, who-whooing about somebody that was dead, and a whippowill and a dog crying about somebody that was going to die; and the wind was trying to whisper

something to me and I couldn't make out what it was, and so it made the cold shivers run over me. Then away out in the woods I heard that kind of a sound that a ghost makes when it wants to tell about something that's on its mind and can't make itself understood, and so can't rest easy in its grave and has to go about that way every night grieving. I got so downhearted and scared, I did wish I had some company. Pretty soon a spider went crawling up my shoulder, and I flipped it off and it lit in the candle; and before I could budge it was all shrivelled up. I didn't need anybody to tell me that that was an awful bad sign and would fetch me some bad luck, so I was scared and most shook the clothes off of me. I got up and turned around in my tracks three times and crossed my breast every time; and then I tied up a little lock of my hair with a thread to keep witches away. But I hadn't no confidence. You do that when you've lost a horse-shoe that you've found, instead of nailing it up over the door, but I hadn't ever heard anybody say it was any way to keep off bad luck when you'd killed a spider.

I set down again, a-shaking all over, and got out my pipe for a smoke; for the house was all as still as death, now, and so the widow wouldn't know. Well, after a long time I heard the clock away off in the town go boom – boom – boom – twelve licks – and all still again – stiller than ever. Pretty soon I heard a twig snap, down in the

dark amongst the trees – something was a-stirring. I set still and listened. Directly I could just barely hear a '*me-yow! me-yow!*' down there. That was good! Says I, '*me-yow! me-yow!*' as soft as I could, and then I put out the light and scrambled out of the window on to the shed. Then I slipped down to the ground and crawled in amongst the trees, and sure enough there was Tom Sawyer waiting for me.

2

The Boys escape Jim – Jim! –Tom Sawyer's Gang – Deep-laid Plans

We went tip-toeing along a path amongst the trees back towards the end of the widow's garden, stooping down so as the branches wouldn't scrape our heads. When we was passing the kitchen I fell over a root and made a noise. We scrouched down and laid still. Miss Watson's big nigger, named Jim, was setting in the kitchen door; we could see him pretty clear, because there was a light behind him. He got up and stretched his neck out about a minute, listening. Then he says:

'Who dah?'

He listened some more; then he come tip-toeing down and stood right between us; we could a touched him, nearly. Well, likely it was minutes and minutes that there warn't a sound, and we all there so close together. There was a place on my ankle that got to itching but I dasn't scratch it; and then my ear begun to itch; and next my back, right between my shoulders. Seemed like I'd die if I couldn't scratch. Well, I've noticed that thing plenty of

times since. If you are with the quality, or at a funeral, or trying to go to sleep when you ain't sleepy – if you are anywheres where it won't do for you to scratch, why you will itch all over in upwards of a thousand places. Pretty soon Jim says:

'Say – who is you? Whar is you? Dog my cats ef I didn' hear sumf'n. Well, I knows what I's gwyne to do. I's gwyne to set down here and listen tell I hears it agin.'

So he set down on the ground betwixt me and Tom. He leaned his back up against a tree, and stretched his legs out till one of them most touched one of mine. My nose begun to itch. It itched till the tears come into my eyes. But I dasn't scratch. Then it begun to itch on the inside. Next I got to itching underneath. I didn't know how I was going to set still. This miserableness went on as much as six or seven minutes; but it seemed a sight longer than that. I was itching in eleven different places now. I reckoned I couldn't stand it more'n a minute longer, but I set my teeth hard and got ready to try. Just then Jim begun to breathe heavy; next he begun to snore – and then I was pretty soon comfortable again.

Tom he made a sign to me – kind of a little noise with his mouth – and we went creeping away on our hands and knees. When we was ten foot off, Tom whispered to me and wanted to tie Jim to the tree for fun; but I said no; he might wake and make a disturbance, and then they'd find out I warn't in. Then Tom said he hadn't got

candles enough, and he would slip in the kitchen and get some more. I didn't want him to try. I said Jim might wake up and come. But Tom wanted to resk it; so we slid in there and got three candles, and Tom laid five cents on the table for pay. Then we got out, and I was in a sweat to get away; but nothing would do Tom but he must crawl to where Jim was, on his hands and knees, and play something on him. I waited, and it seemed a good while, everything was so still and lonesome.

As soon as Tom was back, we cut along the path, around the garden fence, and by-and-by fetched up on the steep top of the hill the other side of the house. Tom said he slipped Jim's hat off of his head and hung it on a limb right over him, and Jim stirred a little, but he didn't wake. Afterwards Jim said the witches bewitched him and put him in a trance, and rode him all over the State, and then set him under the trees again and hung his hat on a limb to show who done it. And next time Jim told it he said they rode him down to New Orleans; and after that, every time he told it he spread it more and more, till by-and-by he said they rode him all over the world, and tired him most to death, and his back was all over saddle-boils. Jim was monstrous proud about it, and he got so he wouldn't hardly notice the other niggers. Niggers would come miles to hear Jim tell about it, and he was more looked up to than any nigger in that country. Strange niggers would stand with their mouths open and look him all over, same

as if he was a wonder. Niggers is always talking about witches in the dark by the kitchen fire; but whenever one was talking and letting on to know all about such things, Jim would happen in and say, 'Hm! What you know 'bout witches?' and that nigger was corked up and had to take a back seat. Jim always kept that five-center piece around his neck with a string, and said it was a charm the devil give to him with his own hands and told him he could cure anybody with it and fetch witches whenever he wanted to, just by saying something to it; but he never told what it was he said to it. Niggers would come from all around there and give Jim anything they had, just for a sight of that five-center piece; but they wouldn't touch it, because the devil had had his hands on it. Jim was most ruined, for a servant, because he got so stuck up on account of having seen the devil and been rode by witches.

Well, when Tom and me got to the edge of the hill-top, we looked away down into the village and could see three or four lights twinkling, where there was sick folks, maybe; and the stars over us was sparkling ever so fine; and down by the village was the river, a whole mile broad, and awful still and grand. We went down the hill and found Jo Harper, and Ben Rogers, and two or three more of the boys, hid in the old tanyard. So we unhitched a skiff and pulled down the river two mile and a half, to the big scar on the hill-side, and went ashore.

We went to a clump of bushes, and Tom made

everybody swear to keep the secret, and then showed them a hole in the hill, right in the thickest part of the bushes. Then we lit the candles and crawled in on our hands and knees. We went about two hundred yards, and then the cave opened up. Tom poked about amongst the passages and pretty soon ducked under a wall where you wouldn't a noticed that there was a hole. We went along a narrow place and got into a kind of room, all damp and sweaty and cold, and there we stopped. Tom says:

'Now we'll start this band of robbers and call it Tom Sawyer's Gang. Everybody that wants to join has got to take an oath, and write his name in blood.'

Everybody was willing. So Tom got out a sheet of paper that he had wrote the oath on, and read it. It swore every boy to stick to the band, and never tell any of the secrets; and if anybody done anything to any boy in the band, whichever boy was ordered to kill that person and his family must do it, and he mustn't eat and he mustn't sleep till he had killed them and hacked a cross in their breasts, which was the sign of the band. And nobody that didn't belong to the band could use that mark, and if he did he must be sued; and if he done it again he must be killed. And if anybody that belonged to the band told the secrets, he must have his throat cut, and then have his carcass burnt up and the ashes scattered all around, and his name blotted off of the list with blood and never mentioned again by the Gang, but have a curse put on it and be forgot, for ever.

Everybody said it was a real beautiful oath, and asked Tom if he got it out of his own head. He said, some of it, but the rest was out of pirate books, and robber books, and every gang that was high-toned had it.

Some thought it would be good to kill the *families* of boys that told the secrets. Tom said it was a good idea, so he took a pencil and wrote it in. Then Ben Rogers says:

'Here's Huck Finn, he hain't got no family – what you going to do 'bout him?'

'Well, hain't he got a father?' says Tom Sawyer.

'Yes, he's got a father, but you can't never find him, these days. He used to lay drunk with the hogs in the tanyard, but he hain't been seen in these parts for a year or more.'

They talked it over, and they was going to rule me out, because they said every boy must have a family or somebody to kill, or else it wouldn't be fair and square for the others. Well, nobody could think of anything to do – everybody was stumped, and set still. I was most ready to cry; but all at once I thought of a way, and so I offered them Miss Watson – they could kill her. Everybody said:

'Oh, she'll do, she'll do. That's all right. Huck can come in.'

Then they all stuck a pin in their fingers to get blood to sign with, and I made my mark on the paper.

'Now,' says Ben Rogers, 'what's the line of business of this Gang?'

'Nothing only robbery and murder,' Tom said.

'But who are we going to rob? Houses – or cattle – or –'

'Stuff! Stealing cattle and such things ain't robbery, it's burglary,' says Tom Sawyer. 'We ain't burglars. That ain't no sort of style. We are highwaymen. We stop stages and carriages on the road, with masks on, and kill the people and take their watches and money.'

'Must we always kill the people?'

'Oh, certainly. It's best. Some authorities think different, but mostly it's considered best to kill them. Except some that you bring to the cave here and keep them till they're ransomed.'

'Ransomed? What's that?'

'I don't know. But that's what they do. I've seen it in books; and so, of course, that's what we've got to do.'

'But how can we do it if we don't know what it is?'

'Why blame it all, we've *got* to do it. Don't I tell you it's in the books? Do you want to go to doing different from what's in the books, and get things all muddled up?'

'Oh, that's all very fine to *say*, Tom Sawyer, but how in the nation are these fellows going to be ransomed if we don't know how to do it to them? That's the thing *I* want to get at. Now, what do you *reckon* it is?'

'Well, I don't know. But per'aps if we keep them till they're ransomed, it means that we keep them till they're dead.'

'Now, that's something *like*. That'll answer. Why

couldn't you said that before? We'll keep them till they're ransomed to death – and a bothersome lot they'll be, too, eating up everything and always trying to get loose.'

'How you talk, Ben Rogers. How can they get loose when there's a guard over them, ready to shoot them down if they move a peg?'

'A guard. Well, that *is* good. So somebody's got to set up all night and never get any sleep, just so as to watch them. I think that's foolishness. Why can't a body take a club and ransom them as soon as they get here?'

'Because it ain't in the books so – that's why. Now, Ben Rogers, do you want to do things regular, or don't you? – that's the idea. Don't you reckon that the people that made the books knows what's the correct thing to do? Do you reckon *you* can learn 'em anything? Not by a good deal. No, sir, we'll just go on and ransom them in the regular way.'

'All right. I don't mind; but I say it's a fool way, anyhow. Say – do we kill the women, too?'

'Well, Ben Rogers, if I was as ignorant as you I wouldn't let on. Kill the women? No – nobody ever saw anything in the books like that. You fetch them to the cave, and you're always as polite as pie to them; and by-and-by they fall in love with you and never want to go home any more.'

'Well, if that's the way, I'm agreed, but I don't take no stock in it. Mighty soon we'll have the cave so cluttered up with women, and fellows waiting to be ransomed, that

there won't be no place for the robbers. But go ahead, I ain't got nothing to say.'

Little Tommy Barnes was asleep, now, and when they waked him up he was scared, and cried, and said he wanted to go home to his ma, and didn't want to be a robber any more.

So they all made fun of him, and called him cry-baby, and that made him mad, and he said he would go straight and tell all the secrets. But Tom give him five cents to keep quiet, and said we would all go home and meet next week and rob somebody and kill some people.

Ben Rogers said he couldn't get out much, only Sundays, and so he wanted to begin next Sunday; but all the boys said it would be wicked to do it on Sunday, and that settled the thing. They agreed to get together and fix a day as soon as they could, and then we elected Tom Sawyer first captain and Jo Harper second captain of the Gang, and so started home.

I clumb up the shed and crept into my window just before day was breaking. My new clothes was all greased up and clayey, and I was dog-tired.

AUTHOR FILE

NAME: Samuel Langhorne Clemens, nicknamed Sam
BETTER KNOWN AS: Mark Twain
BORN: 30 November 1835, in Missouri
DIED: 21 April 1910, in Connecticut
NATIONALITY: American
LIVED: Hannibal, Missouri, and all over America and Europe
MARRIED: Olivia (Livy) Langdon in 1870
CHILDREN: A son, Langdon, and three daughters, Olivia Susan, Clara Langdon and Jane Lampton (sadly, only Clara outlived Twain)

What was he like?

Mark Twain was famous for his wit and humour, which were strongly reflected in his writing. His life was defined by his adventurous spirit causing him to travel widely and undertake get-rich-quick schemes, which latterly resulted in his family's bankruptcy. He was a superstitious man and, having been born when Halley's Comet was passing the Earth, firmly believed that he would die when it returned. His prophecy turned out to be correct!

Twain was also known to be impulsive and moody. He unfortunately suffered many personal losses in his lifetime – one brother died at a young age and he outlived three of his children. Deeply in love with his wife (who was said to have tamed his impulses and kept him on an even keel), Twain was most affected by her death, and during the remaining six years of his life his temperament became increasingly bleak.

However, he is remembered as a warm-hearted, fair man and a strong supporter of the anti-slavery movement.

What did he do apart from writing books?
Twain had a remarkable range of jobs and interests. He trained as a printer's apprentice, prospected gold and timber, spent several years as a pilot on the Mississippi riverboats, volunteered as a soldier during the Civil War and worked as a travel journalist and a lecturer.

What did people think of* The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn *when it was first published in the 1880s?
It was banned in 1885 by Concord Public Library on social grounds – they described it as 'trash and suitable only for the slums'. Then it was banned again in 1902 by Brooklyn Public Library on account of the language used. There is, still, obvious controversy over the use of the word 'nigger', considered offensive to African Americans, and some versions substitute Huck's use of this word with 'servant' or 'slave'. However, during the course of the story Twain depicts Huck's growing appreciation of the fact that Jim is not just a slave but also a human being; he becomes immensely fond of him and he risks his neck more than once to maintain his friend's state of freedom.

Despite (or possibly because of) being a controversial novel, *Huckleberry Finn* was immensely popular and Twain became one of the most influential and well-respected writers in American history. Ernest Hemingway said of *Huckleberry Finn*, 'All modern literature stems from this one book.'

***Where did Mark Twain get the idea for* The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn?**

Twain was undoubtedly influenced by his upbringing in the southern state of Missouri – his father owned a slave, and his uncle owned many slaves – and he drew upon this and on his childhood experiences as an outdoor, Tom Sawyer type – i.e., adventurer, prankster and boy gang member. His fascination with the Mississippi river was satisfied further when, as an adult, he spent several years working as a riverboat pilot, and it was during this time that he became so familiar with its geography and the towns that lay along its banks.

Where the idea for the character of Huck came from is debated. During an interview given the year after the book was first published, Twain claimed that he was purely fictional. But later in an autobiographical work he admitted that Huck was based exactly on a boyhood friend named Tom Blakenship – an unwashed, untamed character whom Twain's parents banned him from being friends with.

Where did the pen name Mark Twain come from?

'Mark Twain' is a term used by riverboat pilots to warn of water that is only 2 fathoms (12 feet/3.6 metres) deep.

What other books did he write?

Mark Twain wrote numerous books – novels, short stories, non-fiction, political satire, travel non-fiction, letters, essays. Besides *Huckleberry Finn*, he is most famous for *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *The Prince and the Pauper.*

GLOSSARY

Barlow knife – a penknife with only one blade

black slouch – a felt hat with a wide, floppy brim

bowie – a steel knife approximately forty centimetres in length

buckle – to paddle hard

doggery – a saloon

dog-irons – the iron braces that hold together bundles of firewood

down in de bills – predestined

doxolojer – (doxology); hymn of praise to God

erypsipelas – (erysipelas); an infectious disease that causes skin inflammation and fever

fan-tods – attack of nervous fidgeting

five-center piece – before the nickel, this was the monetary equivalent

forty-rod – cheap whisky

galoot – slang term for ungainly person

gar – needlefish

habob – member of the aristocracy

harrow-teeth – spikes used in ploughing land

hived – robbed

irish potato – common potato (as opposed to a sweet potato)

jackstaff – the iron rod or wooden bar that sails are fastened to on a boat

juice harp – a small musical instrument played by placing it between one's teeth and plucking a protruding metal tongue

liberty pole – a tall flagpole

melodeum – (melodeon); organ with small keyboard

mulatter – (mulatto); a person with one white parent and one black parent

nip and tuck – uncertain outcome as closely contested

palavering – chatting

puncheon floor – a wooden floor made from logs split in half

pungle – to pay

reticule – small fabric bag usually with a drawstring that served as a handbag

sand in my craw – courage

scutcheon – (escutcheon); a shield used to display a coat of arms

seneskal – (seneschal); medieval steward of noble house

skiff – a flat-bottomed rowing boat

slough – a swamp, bog or marsh

smouch – to steal

sold – to be fooled by a scam

soul-butter – flattery

sugar-hogshead – a big barrel used for storing sugar (in *Tom Sawyer*, Huck made one into a bed where they used to hide out)

'sumter' mule – an animal used for carrying packs – i.e., a horse, mule or donkey

the nation – slang term for 'damnation'

the quality – aristocracy

the texas – the structure on a steamboat containing the officers' quarters

tow-head – sandbar covered in thick reeds

trot line – a type of fishing line with several shorter lines coming off it

two bit – monetary equivalent of a quarter

yaller-boys – gold coins