

# Mark Twain and the Homesick Connecticut Yankee

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

Mark Twain published *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* in 1889. It's the story of Hank Morgan, a 19th century Connecticut man, who suffers a blow to the head and is transported back centuries to the time of King Arthur. Once there he has many adventures while he struggles to apply 19th century American ideas to medieval England.

In the passage below, Hank has been named Arthur's chief minister. A chromo is a chromolithograph, or a type of color printing of a picture.

## A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court Chapter VII

I was given the choicest suite of apartments in the castle, after the king's. They were aglow with loud-colored silken hangings, but the stone floors had nothing but rushes on them for a carpet, and they were misfit rushes at that, being not all of one breed. As for conveniences, properly speaking, there weren't any. I mean little conveniences; it is the little conveniences that make the real comfort of life. The big oaken chairs, graced with rude carvings, were well enough, but that was the stopping place. There was no soap, no matches, no looking-glass—except a metal one, about as powerful as a pail of water. And not a chromo. I had been used to chromos for years, and I saw now that without my suspecting it a passion for art had got worked into the fabric of my being, and was become a part of me.

It made me homesick to look around over this proud and gaudy but heartless barrenness and remember that in our house in East Hartford, all unpretending as it was, you couldn't go into a room but you would find an insurance-chromo, or at least a three-color God-Bless-Our-Home over the door; and in the parlor we had nine. But here, even in my grand room of state, there wasn't anything in the nature of a picture except a thing the size of a bedquilt, which was either woven or knitted (it had darned places in it), and nothing in it was the right color or the right shape; and as for proportions, even Raphael himself couldn't have botched them more formidably, after all his practice on those nightmares they call his "celebrated Hampton Court cartoons." Raphael was a bird. We had several of his chromos; one was his "Miraculous Draught of Fishes," where he puts in a miracle of his own—puts three men into a canoe which wouldn't have held a dog without upsetting. I always admired to study R.'s art, it was so fresh and unconventional.



*Miraculous Draught of Fishes by Raphael, 1515*

## Questions: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What are "misfit rushes"?
2. Explain the simile "as powerful as a pail of water."
3. What does Hank find wrong with Raphael's "Miraculous Draught of Fishes"?
4. What does "upsetting" mean in the passage?
5. Hank seems to miss the "chromos" most of all. If you were transported back to King Arthur's day, what would you miss most?

# Mark Twain and the Homesick Connecticut Yankee

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ **Key**

Mark Twain published *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* in 1889. It's the story of Hank Morgan, a 19th century Connecticut man, who suffers a blow to the head and is transported back centuries to the time of King Arthur. Once there he has many adventures while he struggles to apply 19th century American ideas to medieval England.

In the passage below, Hank has been named Arthur's chief minister. A chromo is a chromolithograph, or a type of color printing of a picture.

## A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court Chapter VII

I was given the choicest suite of apartments in the castle, after the king's. They were aglow with loud-colored silken hangings, but the stone floors had nothing but rushes on them for a carpet, and they were misfit rushes at that, being not all of one breed. As for conveniences, properly speaking, there weren't any. I mean little conveniences; it is the little conveniences that make the real comfort of life. The big oaken chairs, graced with rude carvings, were well enough, but that was the stopping place. There was no soap, no matches, no looking-glass—except a metal one, about as powerful as a pail of water. And not a chromo. I had been used to chromos for years, and I saw now that without my suspecting it a passion for art had got worked into the fabric of my being, and was become a part of me.

It made me homesick to look around over this proud and gaudy but heartless barrenness and remember that in our house in East Hartford, all unpretending as it was, you couldn't go into a room but you would find an insurance-chromo, or at least a three-color God-Bless-Our-Home over the door; and in the parlor we had nine. But here, even in my grand room of state, there wasn't anything in the nature of a picture except a thing the size of a bedquilt, which was either woven or knitted (it had darned places in it), and nothing in it was the right color or the right shape; and as for proportions, even Raphael himself couldn't have botched them more formidably, after all his practice on those nightmares they call his "celebrated Hampton Court cartoons." Raphael was a bird. We had several of his chromos; one was his "Miraculous Draught of Fishes," where he puts in a miracle of his own—puts three men into a canoe which wouldn't have held a dog without upsetting. I always admired to study R.'s art, it was so fresh and unconventional.



*Miraculous Draught of Fishes by Raphael, 1515*

**Questions:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Student's answers will vary; examples of correct answers:**

1. What are "misfit rushes"?

**Different types of dried grasses on the floor**

2. Explain the simile "as powerful as a pail of water."

**Water is a "weak" drink, so the mirror was very weak.**

3. What does Hank find wrong with Raphael's "Miraculous Draught of Fishes"?

**One of the canoes is overloaded.**

4. What does "upsetting" mean in the passage?

**Tipping over**

5. Hank seems to miss the "chromos" most of all. If you were transported back to King Arthur's day, what would you miss most?

**Student's choice**