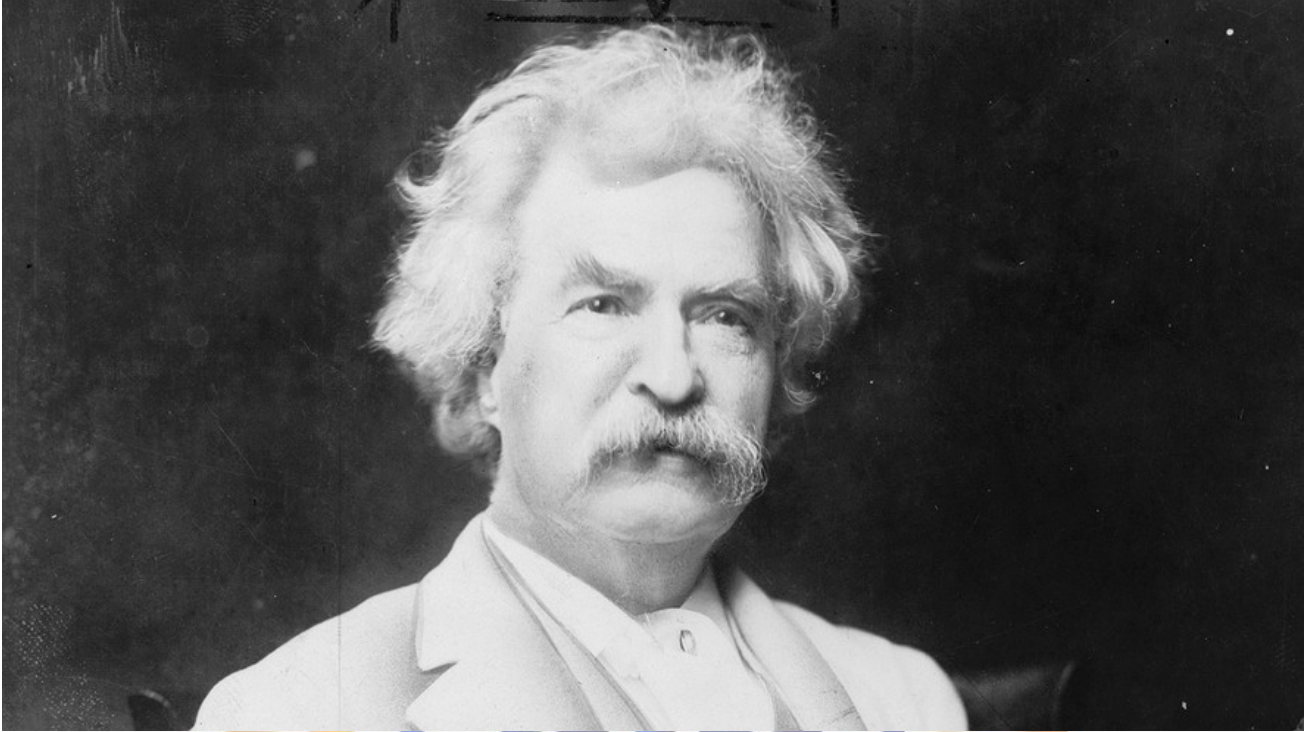


Authors: Mark Twain

By Biography.com Editors and A+E Networks, adapted by Newsela staff on 08.11.16

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Mark Twain seated with cigar in hand, 1907. A.F. Bradley, New York. Available from the U.S. Library of Congress' Prints Division.

Synopsis: Samuel L. Clemens was born on November 30, 1835. His birthplace was Florida, Missouri. The world knows him as Mark Twain, the name he used to write his books. He wrote two of the most famous books in America. They are "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer" and "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn." He also worked as a riverboat pilot, reporter, businessman and inventor. Twain died on April 21, 1910, in Redding, Connecticut.

Early Life

Samuel Langhorne Clemens was born on November 30, 1835, in Florida, Missouri. His parents were John and Jane Clemens. When he was 4 years old, his family moved to Hannibal, Missouri, on the Mississippi River. This town later inspired the setting in several of his books.

His father died in 1847, leaving the family very poor. Clemens left school when he was 12 years old to earn money for his family. At age 15, he got a job as a printer, writer and editor at a newspaper.

In 1857, Clemens began learning to pilot, or steer, a steamboat on the Mississippi River. The job was exciting and paid well. His career ended in 1861. The Civil War between the North and the South broke out. He joined the South's army but did not serve for very long.

Heading West

In 1861, he climbed on a stagecoach and went to Nevada and California. He tried looking for silver and gold. But by the middle of 1862, he was broke and needed a different job.

That September, he went to work for a newspaper. He used the name Mark Twain, which was a term for 12 feet of water used by boats on the Mississippi River.

Twain became one of the best-known storytellers in the West. His writing was friendly and funny. He liked to make fun of people who thought they were too important. He got a big break in 1865. A story about life in a mining camp was printed in newspapers and magazines around the country. It was called "Jim Smiley and His Jumping Frog."

At 34 years old, Twain was one of the most popular and famous writers in America.

Family And Career

In 1870, he married Olivia Langdon. The couple moved to Buffalo, New York, and had four children.

He began writing "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer." It was printed in 1876 and people loved it. Soon after, he began writing another book about Tom Sawyer's friend. This book was called "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn." It was finally finished in 1884.

Twain wrote how real people spoke. He was the first American writer to use everyday language to write great books.

Twain wanted to be very rich, so he started different businesses. They all failed, and he never achieved the wealth he wanted.

Later Years

Twain was known and admired all over the world. But life also brought him sadness. Three of his children died, and in 1904, his wife also died after a long illness. He did not get along well with the daughter who was his only living child.

Twain became bitter when he got older. He could be rude and selfish to friends and family. He continued writing, but did not finish most of his projects. He spent much of his time smoking cigars, reading in bed and playing pool and cards.

Twain died on April 21, 1910, at his home in Redding, Connecticut. He was 74 years old.