

As an undergraduate and then a graduate student majoring in contemporary literature, I had the opportunity to read a number of Mark Twain books and short stories, including The Tragedy of Puddin'head Wilson and A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court. Next, as a college English instructor, I would include a lengthy classroom discussion of banned books, among them the work often removed from school library shelves and omitted from the lower grade curricula—The Adventures of Tom Sawyer and/or Huckleberry Finn. Then, just recently, I was called to help a student read one of the lesser known or less often academically included Mark Twain books: The Mysterious Stranger.

What a literary delight! The Mysterious Stranger was evidently the last of the Mark Twain books and is supposedly unfinished. Granted, the ending does not give readers closure, per se, other than to offer the "cop-out" dues ex machine solution of all of the events and the visit by Satan having been a DREAM. But the subtext, the underlying themes, and the traditional and classic Twain humor are irrefutably wonderful. There is an implication of doubling—a device Twain perfects in numerous books—and concepts regarding power, hypocrisy, and the most metaphysical of all, free will and choosing.

Other Mark Twain books are equally involved and involving, are engaging narratives with subtle morality lessons, and still other Mark Twain books, which are STILL misunderstood, point the basest of human qualities and goals...such as friendship, love, justice, and fate.

I would be, however, hard pressed to recommend just one or two Mark Twain books, and will instead give you a short reading list so you and/or yours can decide for yourselves. While my list is incomplete, though, keep in mind you can go to a number of sites online where you can not only get a summary and/or a brief critiques but where you can find the full online text of many if not most of Mark Twain's books.

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn
The Adventures of Tom Sawyer
The American Claimant
A Burlesque Autobiography
A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court
Carnival of Crime in CT
Curious Republic of Gondour
A Dog's Tale
A Double-Barreled Detective
Extracts from Adam's Diary
Following the Equator
The Gilded Age

How to Tell a Story and Others
The Innocents Abroad
Life on the Mississippi
The Man that Corrupted Hadleyburg and other Stories
The Mysterious Stranger
The Prince and the Pauper
Roughing It
The Stolen White Elephant
The \$30,000 Bequest
Tom Sawyer Abroad
Tom Sawyer, Detective
A Tramp Abroad
The Tragedy of Pudd'nhead Wilson