

Who am I?

WORKSHEET 1

I was born in Florida, Missouri, in November 1835. In the month when I was born, a famous comet made an appearance in the night sky.

I am most famous as a writer, but I had a number of jobs during my life. I lost the job I really loved doing when I was twenty-five because of events which happened in my country.

My parents named me Samuel Langhorne Clemens, but when I wrote I used a different name - you probably know me best by that name.

I have many happy memories of my childhood days on the banks of the river I loved so much. When I was older I wrote stories about the river and the children who had their adventures on it. One of the stories is about a black slave who has escaped and makes friends with the book's main character. The book was later made into a Disney film.

I travelled a lot during my life and visited a lot of countries. Of course, I love travelling but for many years I didn't really have a choice - I had to travel and live abroad for a while!

I passed away peacefully in 1910, just as the famous comet made its regular 75-year visit again. People say that I am one of the most important American writers of the nineteenth century - what do you think? Have you read any of my books? If not, you should try one. By the way, do you know who I am?

Can you answer any of these questions?

1. What was the name he used as an author?
2. What was the name of the comet which appeared in the month of his birth?
3. Apart from writer, can you name one other job that he had?
4. What 'events' happened in his country in 1861?
5. Where did he take his writing name from?
6. What was the name of the river he loved so much?
7. Can you name at least one story which he wrote?
8. Which book tells the story of the boy who makes friends with the escaped slave?
9. Can you name at least one other country that he lived in during his life.
10. Why does he say he *had to* travel?

Mark Twain

WORKSHEET 2

You probably know me as Mark Twain, but I was born Samuel Langhorne Clemens on November 30th, 1835 in the state of Missouri, U.S.A. In the month when I was born, a comet named after an English astronomer called Halley passed through the night sky.

When I was a boy, I used to love playing on the banks of the Mississippi river and I knew then that my life would always be connected to this river in some way. I started working at the age of 13 as an apprentice to a printer. A little later on, I worked as a journalist, writing short pieces for my brother's newspaper. But the river was my true love and, at the age of 23, I got my pilot's licence. Finally, I was a steamboat captain! I spent a few years doing the job I loved so much until, in 1861, the Civil War started. Steamboat traffic was halted and I lost my job.

After leaving the Mississippi, I moved to Nevada and became a miner. Gold had been discovered there and I was hoping to strike it rich. I travelled around the region but never found the fortune I dreamed of. However, the experience provided me with good material for my writing career.

I went back to my career in journalism and enjoyed some success writing humorous travel letters for a newspaper in Virginia. I signed these letters with the name *Mark Twain* – even that was a joke – *Mark Twain* was actually a boatman's call. When I worked as a captain on the Mississippi the leadsmen would call out *Mark Twain!* to tell me when the water was only two fathoms deep, the minimum for safe navigation. I decided to use the name in all my writing work for the next 50 years.

I moved to San Francisco at the age of 30 and I arranged to be a correspondent for the *San Francisco Alta California* aboard the ship *Quaker City*, which was departing for a voyage to Europe, Russia and the Middle East. Just before leaving, my first book *The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County* was published. The book and the letters I sent from aboard the *Quaker City* were both well-received back home. I was becoming a celebrity!

I married my dear wife Olivia when I was 35. We settled down in Connecticut where I wrote and Olivia brought up our girls. This time was certainly good for my writing; I wrote *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876), *A Tramp Abroad* (1881), *The Prince and the Pauper* (1882), *Life on the Mississippi* (1883), *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885) and *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (1889). Things were looking very optimistic indeed.

The 1890s were not so good though. I lost nearly all my money on some bad investments and was forced to sell my house. We had to move to Europe and we lived in France, Germany, Switzerland and Italy over the next five years. In 1895, I set off on a round the world tour, visiting New Zealand, Australia, India and South Africa. On my return, I paid off all my debts. We moved to New York City but in the early years of the 20th century Olivia became ill. She went to live in Florence, Italy for her health, but died in 1904. I always said I would 'go out with the comet' and, sure enough, 75 years after Halley's Comet had made its first appearance in my life, it passed overhead again, in April 1910. I died in the same month.