

Publishers' Bindings Online, 1815-1930: The Art of Books
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Sample Lesson Plan: Mark Twain
Grades K-5

Objectives:

- Students will learn about the childhood and early adulthood of Samuel Clemens, including why he started using the pen name "Mark Twain."
- Students will learn about the children's/young adult books for which Mark Twain is famous.
- Using some of Twain's books as examples, students will learn that one book can take on a variety of appearances.
- The lesson will be completed with the aid of the PBO database and includes a creative classroom activity.

Materials:

- 1) A computer with an Internet connection and a large screen or other capability to display the teacher's actions to the entire class.
- 2) Twain's story "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County." (Full text available at <http://etext.virginia.edu/railton/projects/price/frog.htm>.)
- 3) Enough blank paper for each student.
- 4) Crayons, markers, or colored pencils (either for each student or to share).
- 5) Corkboard and tacks or other capability to display student artwork (such as spreading it out on a large table or taping it to the wall).

Lesson

Introduction

Ask students if they ever have heard of a man named Samuel Clemens. What about Mark Twain?

These two names actually belong to the same person. A man who lived in the 1800s and early 1900s was born with the name Samuel Langhorne Clemens. But when he wrote stories, he used a different name, which is called a pen name. His pen name was Mark Twain.

Mr. Clemens was born in 1835 in a town called Hannibal, Missouri. When he was born, Missouri was as far west as the United States went. It was part of the "wild west" back then. People lived in log cabins and traveled by horses and horse drawn wagons. When things were sent far away, they went by river, on steamships. Mr. Clemens lived near the great Mississippi River, and he always wanted to work on a steamship. He got to do that for a little while, but for most of his life, he made a living writing for newspapers and writing books.

Mr. Clemens had a lot of adventures while he was a child in Missouri, and later on as a pioneer in the far west. He traveled by wagon to Nevada when it became a new territory, and later he moved to California. While Mr. Clemens was writing for a newspaper in Nevada, he decided to

use the name Mark Twain for his fictional stories. He took that name from his steamboat days; it means the line between safe and dangerous waters.

Mark Twain's stories

[Teacher's Note: You will locate various book covers for by going to <http://bindings.lib.ua.edu/sitesearch.html>, selecting the "Search by Keyword" link, and clicking on "Guided Search" at the top of the page. For the first book, type pbw01005 in the first search box, and then click "Search." Click on the thumbnail, and enlarge the image by clicking on the largest of three boxes under it.]

Mark Twain had a lot of stories published in newspapers and magazines, and he also published a lot of books. He published many books about his travels, throughout the United States and other countries. He wrote several serious stories that adults would like to read. But Mark Twain was known best for some of the funny stories he wrote, as well as adventure stories that are fun for young people to read.

The very first book Mark Twain had published was called "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County." It had a number of different stories in it, but the one from the title was taken from folklore about the Gold Rush in California. This is a funny story, which I will read to you later. This book first was published in 1867, but this cover is from an edition of the book published in 1903, more than 45 years later. People liked this book so much that they kept publishing it for more than 100 years. You can even buy it today. That happened with a lot of Mark Twain's books.

[Click on "Guided Search" at the top of the page. Type pbw00967 in the first search box and click "Search." Click on the thumbnail.]

Another story that Mark Twain wrote was called "The Prince and the Pauper." It was first published in 1881, which is the year this edition was published. The story is about a poor boy named Tom and a prince named Edward, who look so alike that they switch places as a joke. Then no one believes them when they want to switch back.

[Click on "Guided Search" at the top of the page. Type pba02266 in the first search box and click "Search." Click on the thumbnail.]

Mark Twain also wrote a story called "A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court." Published in 1889, the same year this edition was published, this story later was made into a movie. It is about a man from Twain's time who ends up in England in the year 528 and has many adventures. He also introduces new inventions from his time, such as the typewriter and electricity, into a time when those things were unknown.

Book Covers

Mark Twain's most famous books are about two boys from the Missouri frontier. Although the characters Huckleberry Finn and Tom Sawyer are based on boys Mr. Clemens knew as a child, the adventures Mark Twain writes about are made up. These stories are so famous, they have been published for many years, like the story about the frog. Even though the different editions

have the same stories on the inside, their covers all look different. It also is possible for editions published at different times to look the same.

[Click on “Guided Search” at the top of the page. Type “Adventures of Tom Sawyer” in the first search box, select “As a phrase” from the first drop-down menu, and select “Title” in the second drop-down menu. Select “Displayed in Gallery” from the drop-down menu to the right of the word “Records” near the bottom of the page. Click “Search.”]

“The Adventures of Tom Sawyer,” which first was published in 1876, was the first book about these two boys. The escapades of a boy named Tom Sawyer are the subject, with Huckleberry Finn as a sidekick. The three book covers you see here were published at different times. *What do you notice about them?* (Allow students to answer before talking about the covers.)

You can see that the two covers on the ends look very similar. [Click on the first thumbnail.] These two book covers are blue, and they have writing and designs on them in black and gold. This one was published in 1891. The other one that looks like it was published in 1901, 10 years later. They both were published by the same publisher, which was called American Publishing Company. [Click on “Results.” Then click on the center thumbnail.] This one also was published by American Publishing Company. *How is it different?* (Allow students to answer before talking about the cover.) It is a light brown color instead of blue. The writing is in dark brown instead of gold, and it has a picture of a boy on it rather than designs.

[Click on “Guided Search” at the top of the page. Type “Adventures of Huckleberry Finn” in the first search box, select “As a phrase” from the first drop-down menu, and select “Title” in the second drop-down menu. Select “Displayed in Gallery” from the drop-down menu to the right of the word “Records” near the bottom of the page. Click “Search.”]

This is a book that focuses on Tom Sawyer’s friend Huck. It was published in 1885, which is when both of these editions were published. These two were published by the same publishing company, called Charles L. Webster. This was a company that Mr. Clemens actually owned. *What do you notice about these two books?* (Allow students to answer before talking about the covers.) They look very similar, don’t they? They both have the same style of writing, and they have the same picture. They also have gold in the same places: on the fence behind the boy, on the big H and F in the title of the book, and in the letters that make up Mark Twain’s name. But they also are a little different. One is green and the other is blue.

[Click on “Guided Search” at the top of the page. Type “Tom Sawyer” in the first search box, select “As a phrase” from the first drop-down menu, and select “Title” in the second drop-down menu. Select “Displayed in Gallery” from the drop-down menu to the right of the word “Records” near the bottom of the page. Click “Search.”]

Tom Sawyer became a character in several other stories that Mark Twain wrote. You can see here the three book covers we already saw, as well as two others from books about Tom Sawyer. *What do you notice about the new covers we see here?* (Allow students to answer before talking about the covers.) [Click on the last thumbnail in the top row.] This book is called “Tom Sawyer Abroad,” and it is about the boy’s adventures in different countries. It was published in

1894 by Charles Webster, the same company that published “The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn.” You can see that this cover is grey with gold lettering, and it has a picture in black and orange.

[Click the right arrow near the right-upper corner of the screen, next to the word “Record.”] This cover is from a book published in 1925, which was 15 years after Mr. Clemens died. It combines several stories Mark Twain wrote about Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn in one book, with pictures. This is a very colorful cover, isn’t it? *What colors do you see?* (Answer: Green, red, blue, yellow, white, black.) This cover is very different from the other covers because of how it is made, too. This cover is made out of paper, and the others were made out of cloth. The other covers had letters and designs stamped onto them. This one is printed. That is because the technology changed a lot from the time Mark Twain published his first book in 1867 to when this book was published, 58 years later. Technology has changed even more since 1925, so the cover of books look a lot different today.

Activity

We have seen that the same book can have many different covers. In fact, a book can have as many different covers as there are students in this classroom. I am going to read you a story that Mark Twain wrote—the story about the frog that we talked about earlier. Then you will draw a picture, as if it were going to be the cover of a book with this story in it.

[Read the story, and then distribute drawing materials.]

Remind students that they will now draw a picture to go with the story. Encourage creativity.

[After students complete their work, display the covers so students can see all of their classmates’ designs.]