

## **Introduction**

What better way to teach students to write than at the hands of a master? That's what happens in the video Mark Twain--Teaching Our Children to Write. Students are transported to a place where literature, writing and life are blended together. Mark Twain, himself, orchestrates the action. The lead character, a girl named Angie, learns that writing can be fun and that literature can come to life.

This video teaches specific writing skills. There are the descriptive skills of the five W's--Who, What, Where, When and Why. Students are taught to search for the W's in situations and places, and to put that information into writing. Students are taught about metaphors, personification and onomatopoeias. There are opportunities to learn other figures of speech like alliteration and similes.

This video inspires students to write. The action in the video is dramatic. The situations are spellbinding. Students are drawn into the emotion of literature, and in turn encouraged to express their own emotions and ideas in writing.

This video teaches students integrity in writing. Angie, the lead character, faces the choice of cheating or writing her own work. The choice she makes and the dramatic results of that choice can have a lasting impact on students of all ages.

But this video is also about Mark Twain. There are those who say that Mark Twain invented modern American literature. Hemingway thought that American writing began with *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Mark Twain caught the imagination of a nation and the world. He was an American with a soul in the heartland. He was a humorist who could show us ourselves and spot the wonderful inconsistencies of human nature. Who would be better than Mark Twain to teach our students to write!

## **Using The Video**

This dramatization is a springboard to launch a whole study in writing--word skills, creative descriptions, and plot development. The teaching ideas and exercises included in this book are available to supplement your study.

# The Life of Mark Twain

Mark Twain was a great writer. He is arguably one of the greatest figures of American literature.

He was a great lecturer. His speeches and sketches were delivered in eloquent and humorous style.

He was a great traveler. Although Mark Twain is a truly American writer, his adventures spanned the globe. He was a man of America--he was a man of the world.

- **Born**--He was born Samuel Clemens, later to be known as Mark Twain, in Florida, Missouri in 1835.

*I was born the 30th of November, 1835, in the almost invisible village of Florida, Monroe County, Missouri. . . The village contained a hundred people and I increased the population by 1 per cent. It is more than many of the best men in history could have done for a town.*

- **Hannibal**--In 1839, his family moved to nearby Hannibal, Missouri on the Mississippi River. This is where the young Mark Twain spent his boyhood. His family was poor. His father died when he was eleven. One of his first jobs was setting type for his brother Orion's newspaper in Hannibal.

*In the small town of Hannibal, Missouri, when I was a boy everybody was poor but didn't know it; and everybody was comfortable and did know it.*

- **Teenage traveler**--At the age of 18, in 1853, Twain left home for a year. He traveled to the East finding work as a printer in St. Louis, New York City and Philadelphia. In 1854, he returned to work for his brother Orion who was then living in Iowa.
- **The Mississippi**--It was in 1857 that Mark Twain entered one of the most formative periods of his life. He became a cub pilot on Mississippi river boats. In the fall of 1856, he moved to Cincinnati. The next spring he boarded a riverboat to New Orleans. He was headed for adventure in South America, but on the way down the river he persuaded the pilot, Horace Bixby, to teach him to be a pilot. In two years he had his pilot's license. He continued to work the river until the Civil War ended the river traffic in 1861.

*When I got to New Orleans I inquired about ships leaving for Pará [in South America] and discovered that there weren't any and learned that there probably wouldn't be any during that century. It had not occurred to me to inquire about these particulars before leaving Cincinnati, so there I was. I couldn't get to the Amazon. I had no friends in New Orleans and no money to speak of. I went to Horace Bixby and asked him to make a pilot out of me.*

- **Nevada Territory**--In 1861, Orion Clemens was appointed Secretary of the Nevada Territory. Mark Twain and Orion left for the West by stagecoach. It was there he began as a writer.

*I was in New Orleans when Louisiana went out of the Union, January 26, 1861, and I started north the next day. . . In June I joined the Confederates in Ralls County, Missouri, as a second lieutenant under General Tom Harris and came near having the distinction*

*of being captured by Colonel Ulysses S. Grant. I resigned after two weeks' service in the field, explaining that I was "incapacitated by fatigue" through persistent retreating.*

- **"Josh"**--He began to write humorous stories of his western adventures which landed him a job with the Territorial Enterprise in Virginia City, Nevada. At first he signed his stories with the pen name "Josh." In a story to the Enterprise on February 2, 1863, he used the name Mark Twain for the first time. The term was used by pilots on the Mississippi to indicate two fathoms of depth.
- **San Francisco**--In 1864, Mark Twain was involved, somewhat reluctantly, in a dueling incident--an incident that like much in Twain's life was part comedy. However, dueling had just become illegal in Nevada, so he left the territory rather quietly and quickly and landed in San Francisco. There he worked as a reporter.

*After leaving Nevada I was a reporter on the Morning Call of San Francisco. I was more than that--I was "the" reporter. There was enough work for one and a little over, but not enough for two--according to Mr. Barnes's idea, and he was the proprietor and therefore better situated to know about it than other people.*

- **The Celebrated Jumping Frog**--While in San Francisco, Twain also wrote for a number of magazines. In November, 1865, his story "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County" appeared in the New York Saturday Press . From this he gained a national reputation.
- **A start as a lecturer**--In all, Mark Twain spent five years in the West. He made a voyage to the Pacific where he reported on the sugar interests of the Hawaiian Islands. He returned after 4 or 5 months and was talked into giving a lecture series by Thomas McGuire who owned several theaters. This was the beginning of Twain's career as a lecturer.
- **An Innocent Abroad**--In 1867, he left for a cruise on the Quaker City to Europe and the Holy Land. He wrote humorous accounts of the trip in letters to newspapers. Later these letters were brought together into a travel book The Innocents Abroad, which brought him instant national popularity.

*I was very young in those days [when writing "Innocents Abroad"], exceedingly young, marvelously young, younger than I am now, younger than I shall ever be again, by hundreds of years. I worked every night from eleven or twelve until broad day in the morning, and as I did 200,000 words in the sixty days, the average was more than 3,000 words a day--nothing for Sir Walter Scott, nothing for Louis Stevenson, nothing for plenty of other people, but quite handsome for me.*

- **A cameo romance**--It was on his cruise on the Quaker City that he met Charles Langdon who showed him an ivory miniature of his sister in Elmira, NY. It was love at first sight. He met her in December, 1867. She was 22 years old. The courtship was long and frustrating for Twain. He proposed a number of times, but was rebuffed. He invented reasons for coming to her home. At one time he was thrown by a horse in front of her house as he was leaving after a visit. He was not injured, but he feigned injury for three days to be near her and to forward his proposal. She finally consented. In February, 1870, they were married.

*She was slender and beautiful and girlish--and she was both girl and woman. She remained both girl and woman to the last day of her life. Under a grave and gentle exterior burned inextinguishable fires of sympathy, energy, devotion, enthusiasm and absolutely limitless affection. She was always frail in body and she lived upon her spirit,*

*whose helpfulness and courage were indestructible.  
(Mark Twain writing about his wife)*

- **The Hartford Years**--Mark Twain and his family moved to Hartford, Connecticut in 1871. They built a fabulous house with some features that suggested a Mississippi River steamboat. This is where they lived there for the next 20 years. Their four children were Susy, Clara and Jean, and a son Langdon who died in infancy. These were Twain's formative years when he wrote much of his best material. Tom Sawyer was Published in 1876, and the Adventures of Huckleberry Finn was first published in 1884.

*It was by accident that I found out that a book is pretty sure to get tired along about the middle and refuse to go on with its work until its powers and its interest should have been refreshed by rest and its depleted stock of raw materials reinforced by lapse of time.*

- **The world tour**--In 1895, Mark Twain made a grand world lecture tour to pay debts from business losses. The tour was highly successful, and restored Twain's financial stability.
- **Deaths in the family**--In 1904, his wife, Olivia, died. Her health had never been good. She had fallen on ice when she was a teenager and had never fully recovered her physical strength after the accident. His daughter Susy, his favorite, had died while he was on tour in 1895-1896. In 1909, the youngest daughter, Jean, died.

*Sunday Evening, June 5, 1904--11:15 o'clock. She has been dead two hours. It is impossible. The words have no meaning. But they are true; I know it without realizing it. She was my life, and she is gone; she was my riches and I am a pauper.  
(Mark Twain at his wife's death)*

- **The final bitter years**--Twain became bitter toward the end of his life. He had lost his loved ones. He had invested in numerous business schemes that had gone bad. As a result of all of this his health began to decline.
- **Death**--Mark Twain died April 21, 1910. He was buried in Elmira, New York.

(Italicized insets are from the Autobiography of Mark Twain.)

# Mark Twain's Major Works

- **The Innocents Abroad** (1869) is the story of a cruise to Europe and the Holy Land in 1867. Mark Twain wrote humorous accounts of the trip in letters to newspapers. Later these were brought together into this travel book. The book is insightful, funny, witty and tireless. It satirizes the timeless cultures of such places as Italy and Egypt, and offers insights that remain fresh even today.
- **Roughing It** (1872) has the recollections of Mark Twain's life in the West in the 1860s. He lived and worked in Nevada and San Francisco during that time. A large portion of the book covers a trip he made to Hawaii during this time. The narrative is also an important social history on the mining camps and towns in this part of the country.
- **Tom Sawyer** (1876) is a story of the Adventures of Tom Sawyer, his friend Huckleberry Finn, and his girlfriend Becky Thatcher in the small Mississippi River town of St. Petersburg, Missouri. The novel is considered autobiographical because the characters and setting were based on Mark Twain's boyhood experiences. The main plot developed when Tom and Huck witnessed a murder in the cemetery. Tom revealed that the murderer was Injun Joe. Later Tom and Becky were lost in a cave where Injun Joe was hiding. Tom Sawyer is one of Mark Twain's best loved novels.
- **A Tramp Abroad** (1880) told of travel by Twain and his family in Europe in the 1870s. The book is humorous, but was not as well received as some of his other creations.
- **The Prince and the Pauper** (1881) is the story of a prince and a poor boy who switched places. Set in England in the 1500s, this novel is a satire on the social norms and pretensions of the time. The main characters were Edward VI, a boy who was king of England, and Tom Cauty. The two were quite similar in appearance.
- **Life on the Mississippi** (1883) was written as a part of a Mississippi River cruise by Mark Twain and friends in 1882. For background material Twain also had his years as a pilot on the Mississippi in the years before the Civil War. Life on the Mississippi was well received and showed Twain to be more than a humorist. Material gathered for the book led to The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, which has been considered by many to be Twain's greatest work.
- **The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn** (1884) is a story of young Huckleberry Finn and a runaway slave named Jim. They floated down the Mississippi River from Missouri and had numerous adventures. Huckleberry was running from his drunken father and also Widow Douglas who had tried to teach him manners. The story is a social commentary on pre-Civil War life along the Mississippi River valley. It shows the moral choices that face a young boy. During the course of the novel, Jim and Huckleberry slowly grow to respect each other and develop a strong bond of friendship. This is arguably Mark Twain's best novel, and is considered by some to be the greatest American novel.
- **A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court** (1889)--The story of a man from Connecticut who travelled back in time to the court of King Arthur in England. The book was an attempt to contrast the harsh living conditions of the poor with the pettiness and snobbery of the aristocrats of that time. The story is humorous and insightful about the human condition. The Connecticut Yankee played the master manipulator. He patronized the foolish knights and knaves while building an empire of technology under their very noses.
- **Pudd'nhead Wilson** (1894) was the story of a murder trial in Missouri in the 1830s. The work is significant in that it deals with slavery and the damage it causes to the human spirit.
- **Following the Equator** (1897) was the record of a lecture tour around the world in the 1890s. Both the lecture tour and book helped to pay debts from business losses by Mark Twain.

# Vocabulary

- **Alliteration**--A phrase with sequential syllables having the same sound. For example, "Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers."
- **Allusion**--A passing or casual reference. In many theater scripts there are allusions to occurrences in other shows or plays.
- **Colloquialism**--A speech pattern from common, informal talk. "You done good." is a colloquialism used in some parts of the United States.
- **Dissident**--A person who disagrees, particularly in opinions or attitudes. The dissident argued with his friend on even the smallest matters.
- **Irony**--As a figure of speech, a statement in which the ordinary meaning of the words is the opposite of the truth. For example, a tall man might be called "shorty" by his friends.
- **Metaphor**--A statement in which one thing is compared to another to suggest they are similar. For example, "He's a wolf in sheep's clothing."
- **Onomatopoeia**--The use of words that imitate sounds. Onomatopoeia is different from alliteration in that the sounds for onomatopoeia create an image of the meaning of the words, as with hiss, murmur, clash or crunch.
- **Personification**--Representing an animal, a thing or an idea as a person. For example, "Justice hung her tired head."
- **Plagiarism**--Copying another person's work without their permission. The boy copied his friend's term paper and was guilty of plagiarism.
- **Satire**--Caustic wit used to attack or expose human folly. His sarcastic description of the king was a satire on the man's false pride.
- **Setting**--In drama, the place and/or time of a play or story. The setting of the play was in Missouri in the 1800s.
- **Simile**--A figure of speech in which dissimilar things are compared using the words "like" or "as." For example, "The gravestone was like a sentinel, indistinct in the dark night."
- **Symbolism**--Using objects, ideas or actions to represent something else in a meaningful way. The key to the locked door was a symbol of Angie's freedom.
- **Tone**--The general color, quality or atmosphere of a piece of literature. The graveyard scene had a frightening tone.

# Books

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- North, Sterling. *Mark Twain and the River*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1961.
- Welland, Dennis. *Life and Times of Mark Twain*. New York: Crescent Books, a division of Randon House, 1991.

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## Disclaimer

The movie *Mark Twain's Tragedy in the Graveyard* is a fictionalized account of historical events and persons. Some characters have been changed and others added for dramatic effect.

It is important to remember that the handbook and the video are part of interdisciplinary and multi-cultural studies of history, biography, literature, geography, tolerance, and intolerance and should be included in the broader scope of any curriculum.

# Life Lessons from the Video

In *Mark Twain's Tragedy in the Graveyard*, the lead character, Angie, dealt with a number of important lessons about life. She had asked another girl to do her term paper for her. As a consequence, Angie had to learn about tough choices. She also learned about the value of literature and reading.

- **Integrity**--You can have a discussion with your students about Angie's truthfulness. Discussion questions are included here [Answers are in brackets]. These can also be used for essay topics.
  - *How was Angie handling her class report? Why? [She was having someone else do it for her.]*
  - *What were the consequences if Angie did not turn in a report on time? [She would receive a failing grade.]*
  - *How did the librarian help her learn a valuable lesson? [He helped direct her to an imaginary land where literature came alive and she learned the value of the truth.]*
  - *What did she decide to do at the end? [She decided to be honest and write her own paper. She decided that accepting the consequences of her mistake--receiving the failing grade--was better than living a lie.]*
  - *Why did she make this decision? [Through Mark Twain's literature she learned the value of writing and the value of being honest. Other more specific answers will vary.]*
  - *How do you feel about Angie's actions? [Have students write their answers in a personal journal or diary.]*
- **Plagiarism**--Plagiarism is a major problem confronting librarians and teachers. Discuss plagiarism with your students. As a part of this section, have a lesson about the proper use of library resources.
  - *What is plagiarism? [Plagiarism is copying another person's work without their permission.]*
  - *How does plagiarism hurt us in the long run. [We do not learn to think for ourselves.]*
  - *Was Angie hurting herself when she had someone else do her paper? Explain. [Yes, she was not learning.]*
  - *How can you use the resources of the library to do your work? [This is an opportunity for teachers to discuss library research skills.]*

Many students plagiarize because they do not know how to properly paraphrase and quote. Teach students these writing skills. Emphasize that paraphrasing and quoting are appropriate uses of library resources.

- **Peer pressure**--There was another young lady in the play--Maria--who was subjected to peer pressure from Angie.
  - *How did Maria feel about writing the term paper for Angie? [She had written it, but had second thoughts when it came time to deliver.]*
  - *How did Angie trick Maria? [She spilled some papers on the floor to distract her and grabbed the paper.]*
  - *Have you ever been in a similar situation? [Have students write their answers in a personal journal or diary.]*



- **One small deception leads to another**--The librarian confronted Angie and asked about her paper. He knew what she had done so he asked leading questions. Angie had to tell one lie after another to cover herself.
  - *What things did Angie tell the Librarian about the term paper she held in her hands? [She said that the information was from her father's library, etc.]*
  - *Why did she have to keep making up lies? [She had to cover her previous lies.]*
  - *What would she have had to do to keep from telling lies? [She would have had to do her own term paper.]*
- **My teacher doesn't like me**--Angie uses the excuse that her teacher doesn't like her when it comes to explaining why she needs to have someone else do her term paper.
  - *Why do you think that Angie perceives that the teacher does not like her? [The teacher is concerned about Angie's actions. This can easily be misinterpreted by students.]*
  - *Who has the problem here, the teacher or Angie? [Angie has the problem. Angie needs to be truthful.]*
  - *How does it feel when someone doesn't like you? [Answers will be personal comments.]*
- **The value of reading and writing**--When Angie traveled to Mark Twain's world, literature came alive. What value does this have? Use the following questions to discuss this with students.
  - *Why do we have libraries?*
  - *Why do people read books? Why do people write books?*
  - *Rank the following in importance: books, radio, television or movies? Explain your choice.*
    - *What problems would we have if we had to rely totally on radio and television for our information?*

# The Five W's

The five W's are a tool for writing. They are a common journalistic and research technique for describing situations or events. For writers of fiction they are an excellent exercise in observation--learning to break scenes into their parts and meanings. For reporters on newspaper staffs, they are a way to gather the facts and convey information in simple terms. These are the Five W's.

1. **Who**--Who are the characters?
  2. **What**--What is the situation or the action?
  3. **Why**--Why is there a conflict?
  4. **Where**--Where is the setting?
  5. **When**--When does the action occur?
- **Story search**--Have students read a short story and then write a paragraph on each of the 5 W's for the story. The purpose is to improve student comprehension skills. For exercising student creativity, simply read a single sentence or a short passage (as in the examples below) and have students supply their own 5 W's.
  - *It was a steamboat that had killed herself on a rock. We was drifting straight for her. The lightning showed her very distinct. She was leaning over, with part of her upper deck above water, and you could see every little chimbley-guy clean and clear, and a chair by the big bell, with an old slouch hat hanging on the back of it when the flashes came. (from The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn)*
  - *Why, I've seen him set Dan'l Webster down here on this floor--Dan'l Webster was the name of the frog-- and sing out, "Flies, Dan'l, flies!" and quicker'n you could wink he'd spring straight up and snake a fly off'n the counter there, and flop down on the floor ag'in as solid as a gob of mud . . . (from The Notorious Jumping Frog of Calaveras County)*
  - **Situations**--For each of the following situations, have the students invent their own setting and story. Have them write a creative paragraph using their W's.
  - *A girl in a drug store.*
  - *A dog and a bone.*
  - *A girl injured in an accident involving a shark.*
  - *A boy at a crucial football game.*
  - *An old man running.*
  - *A hippopotamus in Texas.*
  - *Underwater with fish.*
  - *A boy and girl explore the moon.*
  - *A boy and girl in the past.*
  - *A boy and girl in the future.*
  - **Newspaper search**--Have the students test the abilities of reporters in your area newspaper. Take any news article and have the students identify the 5 W's in the issue or event discussed. The students can underline relevant sentences or words. News reporting should have this type of coverage. A reporter describing an accident or a world crisis should cover the who, what, why, where and when. If one of the W's are left out of the news report, have the students include an analysis of whether it was important.
  - **Report a student event**--Take a recent student event and ask the students to list information on each of the five W's for that event. They can then take that information and write a short report. Student events can be ball games or club-type activities, or for fun, they can be non-events in the hallway (Susie went to her locker, took out her books, etc.). Some humor can be added to the simplest of situations. This type of project can also be done with a science experiment or a school trip.

- **Advertisements**--Advertisements often have many of the five W's. Have the students write their own ads with 5 W-type information. Have them use their own graphic designs. They can choose any product or service. Make a list of items advertised in your local newspaper and then have students choose from the list. The "who" in an ad may be the person using a product, the "why" is why it's needed; the "where" and "when" may be the places and times it's used.

Note that this need not be limited to newspaper-type ads. The students can write TV or radio spots. The ads can be read in front of the class in a makeshift TV studio or radio sound booth (use simple props--desks, tables, dividers--to set a stage).

- **Tradeoff descriptions**--This can be done in groups or with student pairs. Have each student or group draw a picture. Then have them trade the pictures with another group or person and write the five W's about the picture.

## Metaphors

A metaphor is a statement in which one thing is compared to another to suggest they are similar. The comparison adds description or meaning.

Metaphors are one of the most beautiful ways to enrich writing. Some examples of metaphor:

- *This is a wild-goose chase.*
  - *She thinks a thousand dollars is chicken feed.*
  - *He's a wolf in sheep's clothing.*
  - *He's a fish out of water.*
  - *They pulled strings to get things done.*
  - *He has his head in the clouds.*
  - *That's a piece of cake.*
  - *It's raining cats and dogs.*
  - *That's the root of the matter.*
  - *The senator is a lame duck.*
- **Pictures**--Have students draw a picture of the image created in their mind from a metaphor. Use the examples above. Take time to discuss the pictures. For example, with the metaphor "It's raining cats and dogs." many students will draw pictures of cats and dogs coming down in a rain storm. Once you have praised them for their picture, ask them what raining cats and dogs means. Have any of them been in a rain that was falling so hard that it might seem like it was raining cats and dogs? This exercise is excellent for any age student.
  - **Silly John stories**--Tell the students about "silly John" who takes metaphors seriously.
  - *When silly John's mother told him to "put out the light," he took the light bulb and put it out in the yard.*
  - *When silly John's mother told him "dress the chicken for dinner," he put clothes on a chicken meant for baking.*
  - *Can any of the students think up silly things that Silly John might do. Use some of the examples above or ask the students for input.*

- **Similes**--Similes can be similar to metaphors, in that they make a comparison between unlike things. However, similes typically use the words like or as to make the comparison. The comparison is meant to enhance meanings. For example:
- *He's as mean as a bear.*
- *She runs fast like a fox.*
- *Glory is like a circle in the water. (William Shakespeare)*

Have students complete each of the following as similes.

- *Hot pizza tastes like . . .*
- *The skin of a peach feels like . . .*
- *Jumping into cold water on a hot day feels like . . .*
- *Trees in autumn look like . . .*
- *Being lost in a fog looks like . . .*
- *The dog is as big as . . .*
- *The horse runs as fast as . . .*
- *Rain on a roof sounds like . . .*

To teach the difference between metaphors and similes have the students compare the following. Have them identify which is the simile and which the metaphor. Ask the students the main difference between the two in these examples.

- *He's a fox. He's like a fox.*
- *He's as mean as a bear. He's a mean bear.*
- *He's a wolf in sheep's clothing. He's sneaky like a wolf in sheep's clothing.*
- *He's clumsy and uncomfortable like a fish out of water. He's a fish out of water.*
  - *"All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players." [William Shakespeare] In life we seem to follow a script like actors on a stage.*

## Onomatopoeia

Onomatopoeia is the use of words that imitate sounds. These include words like hiss, murmur, clash or crunch. Onomatopoeia is often used in poetry to create images from sounds. Consider these lines from Tennyson:

*The moan of Doves in immemorial elms and murmuring of innumerable bees.*

It can be great fun teaching about onomatopoeia.

- **Sound images**--Have the students create onomatopoeia by writing a sentence about each of the following situations. The sentence should have words with sounds that imitate the action.
- *The sawing of a board.*  
(For example, *"The saw buzzed, burred, whizzed and whirred as the wood was split and sliced in two."*)
- *The sounds made by the person who is sawing the board.*
- *The smell of the resin in the wood as the board is being cut.*
- *The feel of the hot sun on the sawyer's back.*

- *Sounds of students in the school hallway.*
- *Sounds of students in a play yard or in a game.*
- **Sentences from Words**--Write a sentence or a phrase using onomatopoeia with each of the following words (one sentence for each word).
- *shout*
- *broken*
- *bunch*
- *snap*
- *moon*
- *crunch*
- *gallop*
- *giggle*
- *hiss*
- *sizzle*
- *murmur*
- *bubble*

For example, the following sentence is built around the word "sizzle": "The steaks sizzle sweetly over hot hissing coals."

- **Nonsense words**--Have the students create nonsense words that imitate sounds. For example, the sound of a lump of clay thrown against a wall could be flump or wholp. The nonsense word can be a real word with the spelling slightly changed to create a new sound. Here are some sound creation situations:
- *The sucking sound of a man walking step-by-step through deep mud, with the mud pulling at his rubber boots.*  
(For example--*schlumpk, whuclk, wkhulp.*)
- *A person clearing his or her throat.*
- *The swishing sound of corduroy pants on a person walking down a hallway.*
- *The grating sound of chalk squealing on a chalkboard.*
- *The sound made by a buzzing (or ringing) alarm clock at 5:00 in the morning.*
- *The sound of a dentist drill working on your mouth.*
- *The taste of the tooth debris in your mouth after the dentist's drilling is done.*
- *The smell of burning toast.*
- *The sound of someone chomping on gum with an open mouth.*
- *The sound of someone biting their fingernails,*
- *The sound of a car being started.*
- **Curves and angles**--Which of the following nonsense words describes a curved object and which an angular object? Ask the students to explain why.
- *taketa*
- *naluma*
- *arumala*
- *flakatak*

## Personification

Personification is giving human qualities to an animal, a thing, or an idea. Examples of personification are:

- *The wind moaned through the trees.*
- *Justice hung her head.*
- *The grandfather clock droops its wooden shoulders.*

- **Objects to people**--Find an object in your classroom and personify it. Use the name of the object as the subject of a sentence. Then add a verb and a predicate that describes an action a human would take. For example:
  - *he pen walks across the paper.*
  - *The words in the book dance from the page.*
  - *The chalk talked on the board.*

Items in a classroom that students could personify include:

- *desks*
- *lights*
- *posters*
- *a pointer*
- *lab equipment*
- *books*
- *pens*
- *notebooks*
- *a hole punch*
- *the door*
- *tables*
- *a stapler*
- *a window*
- *thumb tacks*
- *chairs*
- **Animal talk**--Have your students give a human character to animals such as: cat, rat, elephant, hippopotamus, fox, prairie dog, owl, wolf, eagle, sheep, turkey, goat, lion, cow, chicken, etc. For example, "The cat sat on his throne in command of his kingdom." Alternately, you can name a human characteristic and have students name an animal that exhibits that characteristic. For example, "wisdom" connotes an owl. Use words such as smart, cunning, stubborn, strong, proud.
- **Outdoor people**--A good outdoor activity is to have students see human qualities in the world around them. Sitting in a circle on a grass lawn or on a hike, ask each student to personify one of the objects in their surroundings--a tree, a bird, the sky, etc. For younger students ask them, "Do you see anything that looks like a person?" and then have them describe it to you.
- **Cloud study**--While outside, or looking out the window of your classroom have students find human features in the clouds.
- **Why do we use personification?**--Why do we tend to want to make animals or things seem human? Discuss this with your class or have students write a short essay.

## Other Classroom Activities

The following activities can be adapted to a range of age levels. In all of these activities, the objective is to make students participants in their learning experiences rather than just being observers.

- **Allusions**--There are allusions in the Mark Twain video to other shows or situations. The video has numerous take-offs on the Wizard of Oz. For example, as soon as Angie pops up in the fantasy world she says "We're not in Kansas any more." When she says good-bye, the scene is reminiscent of Dorothy leaving her friends in Oz. Angie follows the golden key which is similar to Dorothy following the yellow brick road.

Have the students watch the video a second time to spot allusions. There are comparisons to the Wizard of Oz, but also there are gimmicks from the Groucho Marx show, *You Bet Your Life*, such as a chicken dropping down. Choosing "door number one" is from *Let's Make a Deal*.

Have students write an essay on why we have allusions. Allusions of this type add satire, humor, and extra meaning to a dramatic production. Also, satire and irony can be discussed as other tools of humor.

- **Alliteration**--Alliteration is having sequential syllables starting with the same sound. In a way it is like onomatopoeia, which also has sound repetitions, but in alliteration the sound repetition is just for the style or rhythm of the words. There is alliteration all over our language. Some examples:
  - *leapin' lizards*
  - *jumpin' Jehosephat*
  - *French fries*
  - *bet your bottom dollar*
  - *big bucks*
  - *worrywart*
  - *down and dirty*
  - *mealy mouthed*
  - *wild and wooly*
  - *wishy washy*
  - *shipshape*
  - *day dreamer*
  - *back biting*
  - *willy nilly*
- **Tongue twister contest**--Tongue twisters are an example of alliteration. Try having a tongue twister contest. The student who can say the tongue twister the most number of times in a given time without a mistake wins. A time limit has to be set to discourage kids from talking too slowly. For contest material there are some of the old favorites such as:
  - *Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers.*
  - *How much wood could a woodchuck chuck if a woodchuck could chuck wood?*
  - *She sells seashells down by the seashore.*
  - This is a candidate for the most difficult twister in English:  
*The sixth sick sheikh's sixth sheep's sick.*
- **Colloquialisms**--Colloquialisms are the common, informal speech of individuals. They are local slang, figures of speech and special pronunciations. An example is, "You done

good." Mark Twain mastered the colloquialism. He wrote Huckleberry Finn totally in Missouri dialect.

- *Watch the video a second time and find colloquialisms.*
- *Read portions of Tom Sawyer or Huckleberry Finn and pick out colloquialisms.*
- *Write down some of the colloquialisms used by teens today.*
- **Symbolism**--There are symbols in the video. For example, Angie receives a key--the key to freedom. The Librarian can be considered a symbol of everything we want a librarian to be--witty, humorous, insightful, etc. The librarian is like Mark Twain.
- **"I search" paper**--This is a type of research paper designed to maximize student creativity. "I search" papers are especially appropriate for gifted and talented students. To initiate an "I search" session, give students a name or topic. Then have them find a specified number of facts on that topic. Elementary students can find 3 ideas--older students 5 or more. Have the students write about and explain the ideas. For the most creative results, "I search" topics should be abstract concepts such as freedom, love, justice, friendship, etc. The students can find any creative ideas that fit under the broad frame-work of those concepts. For more creativity, have the students illustrate their ideas. Have them put the ideas into graphic designs.
- **Essays on Mark Twain and his writings**--For research papers, use any of the following suggestions:
  - *Missouri*
  - *Places Mark Twain lived*
  - *Hartford, Connecticut*
  - *Trips Mark Twain took*
  - *The Mississippi River*
  - *Tom Sawyer*
  - *Riverboats*
  - *Huckleberry Finn*
  - *Mark Twain's children*
  - *King Arthur's Court*
  - *Mark Twain's wife*
  - *Mark Twain's travel books*
  - *Virginia City, Nevada*
  - *Mark Twain's humor*

For some longer-term projects consider the following:

- *Mark Twain's books were often autobiographical. Have your students do a paper on the relationship between Mark Twain's life and his books. For background, use the material on Mark Twain's works included in this guide.*
- *Have your students do a biography of Mark Twain using at least three sources.*
- *Have students develop a map of the major places in Mark Twain's life. Try developing a large-scale map on a wall of your room.*
- **Essays and discussion from the video**--Talk to your students about any of the following topics or have them write essays.
  - *What did the boys see in the graveyard? What did they learn about life from seeing this?*
  - *Describe the courtroom scene from the video and describe the lesson Tom learned.*
  - *The title of the cemetery scene was "Tragedy in the Graveyard." Describe the image this title conveys.*
  - *Tom had to decide to break an oath when he told the truth in the courtroom. Why was this the right thing to do?*
  - *If you were Mark Twain, what would you ask Angie?*
  - *What would you like to know about Mark Twain?*



- *There was a curtain call at the end of the video. What was the purpose of this curtain call? [It was to show that the play was a fantasy--it wasn't real.]*
- *The video used developmental images. These are pictures created in the mind by words or simple stage props. Describe some developmental images from the video? Why are we able to visualize settings from just a few stage props?*
- *The library in the video was like a time machine. Is this realistic? Can a library be a time machine? Can literature transport us in our imaginations to other places and times?*
- **Writer's block**--There is a joke in the video in which a block appears and Angie says "What's that?" Mark Twain answers that it is writer's block and if you just ignore it, it will go away. Talk about writer's block with your students. Ask them if they have ever experienced writer's block when they have had writing assignments. How did they manage to overcome that block?
- **Mark Twain's style**--Mark Twain's style was to write in his own language and from his own experience. Many of his works had an element of autobiography and used the colloquialisms of the place and time. Have students write a story about something that happened to them. Have them use colloquialisms and slang. For example, they can write a "rap" song or imitate the speech of a "valley girl."

## Suggested Trips

- **Samuel Clemens Birthplace**--In the Mark Twain State Park in Florida, Missouri. The house is preserved in a stone and glass building and a museum has memorabilia.
- **Hannibal, Missouri**--The boyhood home of Samuel Clemens and a mecca for Mark Twain lovers. This is the setting for Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn. Attractions include the boyhood home itself, the Mark Twain Cave where Tom and Becky were supposedly lost, and various shows, monuments and museums. Check with the local chamber of commerce for information.
- **Elmira, New York**--The home of Mark Twain's wife and a place where the author commonly spent his summers, in southwestern New York. Twain is buried here. Visit the grave site and monument at the north end of Walnut Street. The monument was erected by his daughter Clara. Also, at Elmira College there is the Mark Twain study, built in an octagonal shape like a Mississippi river boat. The study was built for Twain by his sister-in law, Susan Langdon.
- **Hartford, Connecticut**--The home of Mark Twain in the late 1800s is preserved as a memorial to the author. Located at 351 Farmington Avenue, the house has a 19-room Gothic design with a porch and interior stairway built to resemble a Mississippi River steamboat.

# Video Quiz 1

Answer the following after viewing the video *Mark Twain's "Tragedy in the Graveyard."*

Note: Two on-camera Video Quizzes are presented after the closing credits for the video.

Quiz 1 is for younger students; Quiz 2 is for older students. Please make as many copies as needed for class use.

1. As a review, name the five friends of good writing--the five W's.
2. What was the lesson Tom learned?
3. Who is buried in Grant's tomb?

## Video Quiz 2

Answer the following after viewing the video *Mark Twain's "Tragedy in the Graveyard."*

1. As a review, write down the five W's.
2. What are the five W's of the graveyard scene?
  - o a. Who are the characters?
  - o b. What is the situation or the action?
  - o c. When does the action occur?
  - o d. Where is this taking place (the setting)?
  - o e. Why is there a conflict? Why is this happening?
3. a. Define personification.  
  
b. Underline a personification in this excerpt from *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*.

A faint wind moaned through the trees, and Tom feared it might be the spirits of the dead, complaining at being disturbed. The boys talked little, and only under their breath, for the time and the place and the pervading solemnity and silence oppressed their spirits.

4. a. Define metaphor.  
  
b. Underline a metaphor in this excerpt from *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*.

He was boat and captain and engine-bells combined, so he had to imagine himself standing on his own hurricane-deck giving the orders and executing them...

5. a. Define onomatopoeia.  
  
b. Underline the onomatopoeia in the following section.

"Set her back on the stabboard! Ting-a-ling-ling! Chow! ch-chow-wow! Chow!" His right hand, meantime, describing stately circles--for it was representing a forty-foot wheel.

6. What was the life lesson Tom learned in the graveyard scene and why is it important?
7. Who is buried in Grant's tomb?

## Answers to Video Quiz 1

1. Who, What, When, Where, and Why.
2. Tom learned to be truthful.
3. Ulysses S. Grant (note that this type of humorous question is in character for Mark Twain).

## Answers to Video Quiz 2

1. Who, What, When, Where, and Why
2. a. Who-The characters are Tom Sawyer, Huck Finn, Injun Joe, Muff Potter and Doc Robinson.  
b. What-In this situation, Tom and Huck are in the graveyard to get rid of warts using an old dead cat. Injun Joe, Muff Potter and Doc Robinson are in the graveyard to rob a grave.  
c. When-The action occurs in the middle of the night.  
d. Where-This is taking place in a graveyard.  
e. Why-There is a conflict because Injun Joe has an old score to settle with Doc Robinson. As a result, he murders the doctor. There is also a conflict with Tom and Huck because they have a terrible secret that can solve a murder.
3. a. Personification is a figure of speech in which a lifeless object or a quality is spoken of as if alive.  
b. A faint wind moaned through the trees . . .
4. a. A metaphor is a figure of speech which implies likeness by speaking of one thing as if it were another thing.  
b. He was boat and captain and engine-bells combined . . .
5. a. Onomatopoeia is a figure of speech using words or sentences whose sound suggests the sense of those words or sentences.  
b. . . . Ting-a-ling-ling! Chow! ch-chow-wow! Chow! . . .
6. Tom learned to be truthful. Telling the truth is always important.
7. Ulysses S. Grant (note that this type of humorous question is in character for Mark Twain).