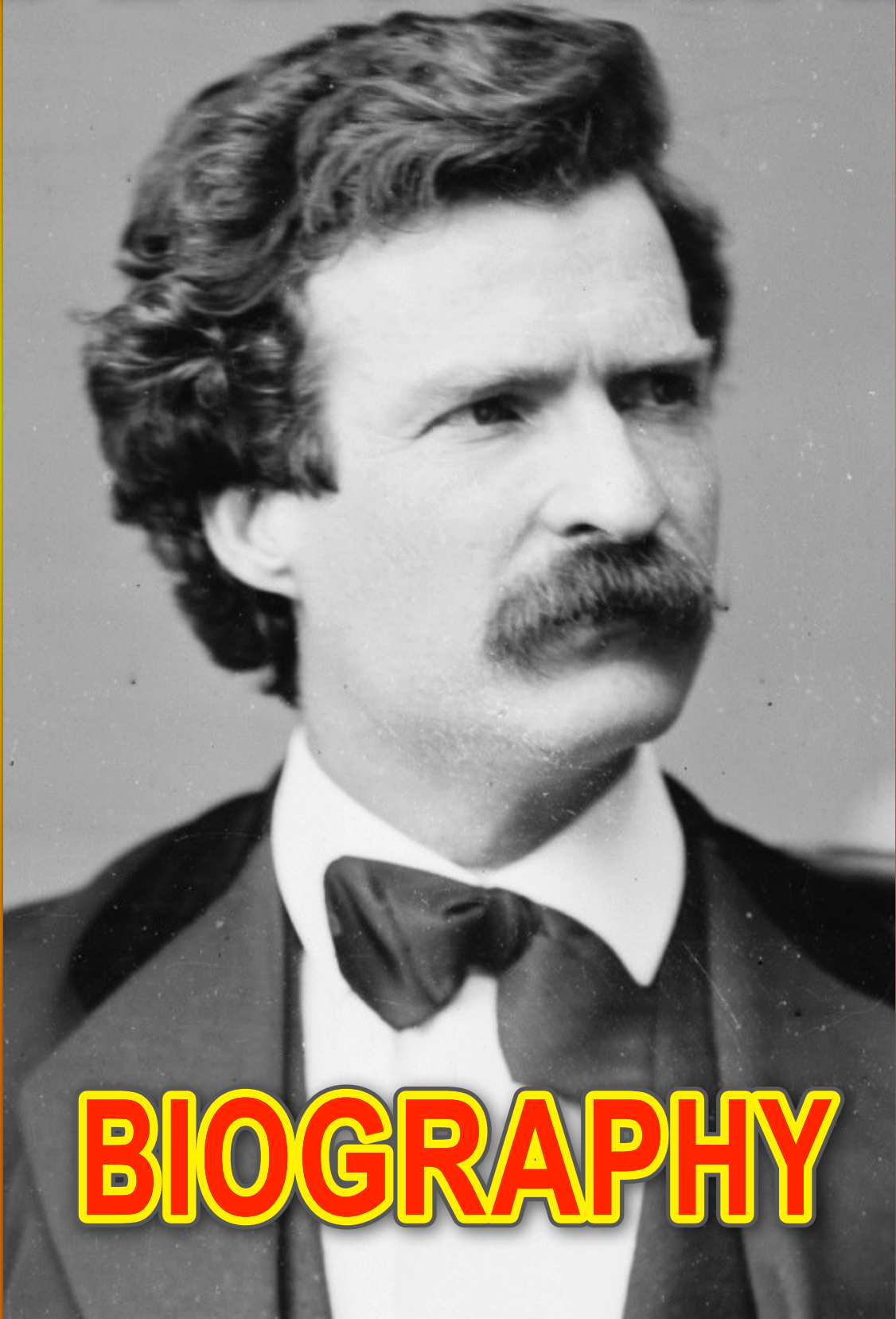


MARK TWAIN



BIOGRAPHY

MARK TWAIN

Mark Twain's real name was Samuel Langhorne Clemens. He was born in Florida, Missouri on November 30, 1835, but he grew up near the Mississippi River. Twain's father died when he was still young, and the family fell into poverty. Twain left school aged 12, and then he found work for a local newspaper.

When he was 21 years old, Twain trained as a steamboat pilot. For four years, Twain worked on the boats, which he enjoyed. But when the Civil War started in 1861, fewer people used boats on the river, and Twain ran out of work. During the war, Twain briefly volunteered for the Confederate Army.

After that Twain wanted to make money, and so he decided to head west in search of gold, as so many others were doing at the time. Twain first tried prospecting for gold and silver in Nevada, but he had no luck with it. So he became a reporter for the Territorial Enterprise newspaper, and took on the name Mark Twain.

Twain developed a humorous writing style that proved popular with readers. A story about a jumping frog brought him to a national audience. He later wrote 'The Gilded Age: A Tale of Today', which was about how corrupt he thought America was at the time. The term Gilded Age is now used to describe the late 19th century in America.

In 1876, Twain published one of his most famous books –The Adventures of Tom Sawyer. He followed it with The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, which took him years to finish. Although he was living in Connecticut, the books drew on what he had seen and experienced as a child growing up on the Mississippi River. His childhood had been filled with steamboats and entertainers, but also violence and slavery.

Though Huckleberry Finn was successful after it was published in 1884, Twain still felt driven by a desire to make money. In 1885 Twain tried his hand at publishing by releasing Ulysses S. Grant's memoirs. They were bestsellers, but Twain did not manage to follow this with more success. His publishing firm soon went out of business.

But despite these troubles, Mark Twain remained a hugely popular public figure. After a troubled period towards the end of his life, Mark Twain died in Redding, Connecticut on April 21, 1910.

Understanding words

Before we can understand a story we have to know what all of the words mean. Let's try one...

a Write the sentence in which you found the word 'poverty'.

b From that sentence, suggest what 'poverty' means.

c Write a new sentence using the word 'poverty'.

d Use a dictionary to find words with a similar meaning (synonyms) to 'poverty'.

e Draw a small picture showing what you think 'poverty' means.

Finding key words

Next, we need to find the key words that tell us what the story is about...

Read the story and underline the key words. Write the most important of these key words in a list like the one below. Write next to it a word that means a similar thing (a synonym). You don't have to use all the spaces, but you should not use more.

Key word	Synonym (similar word)
Example: briefly	for a short time

Sequencing

Sequencing means getting the events in the right order. Write these sentences in the correct order, so they make sense.

In 1884, Twain published *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, his most famous novel.

But Twain was unsuccessful, so he became a reporter instead.

Twain grew up on the Mississippi River.

Mark Twain was born Samuel Langhorne Clemens in 1835.

As Twain published more works, he became more and more famous as a humorous writer.

Later on, Twain went to Nevada to look for gold.

As a young man, Twain worked on steamboats on the river.

Get to the facts

1 What was Mark Twain's real name?

2 Which river did Twain grow up near?

3 Where did Twain look for gold?

4 When was Huckleberry Finn published?

5 Whose memoirs did Twain publish?

Make a story...

When you read a description it often gives you ideas about how the event might be described differently.

Prospecting for gold

Imagine you have gone west in search of gold in the mid-1800s. Write a diary entry for the day you arrive at the place where you think there is gold.

Below is a plain text version for printing:

Understanding words:

- a Write the sentence in which you found the word 'poverty'.
- b From that sentence, suggest what 'poverty' means.
- c Write a new sentence using the word 'poverty'.
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Finding key words:

Read the story and underline the key words. Write the most important of these key words in a list. Write next to it a word that means a similar thing (a synonym).

For example:

Key word – briefly

Synonym – for a short time

Sequencing:

Write these sentences in the correct order, so they make sense:

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