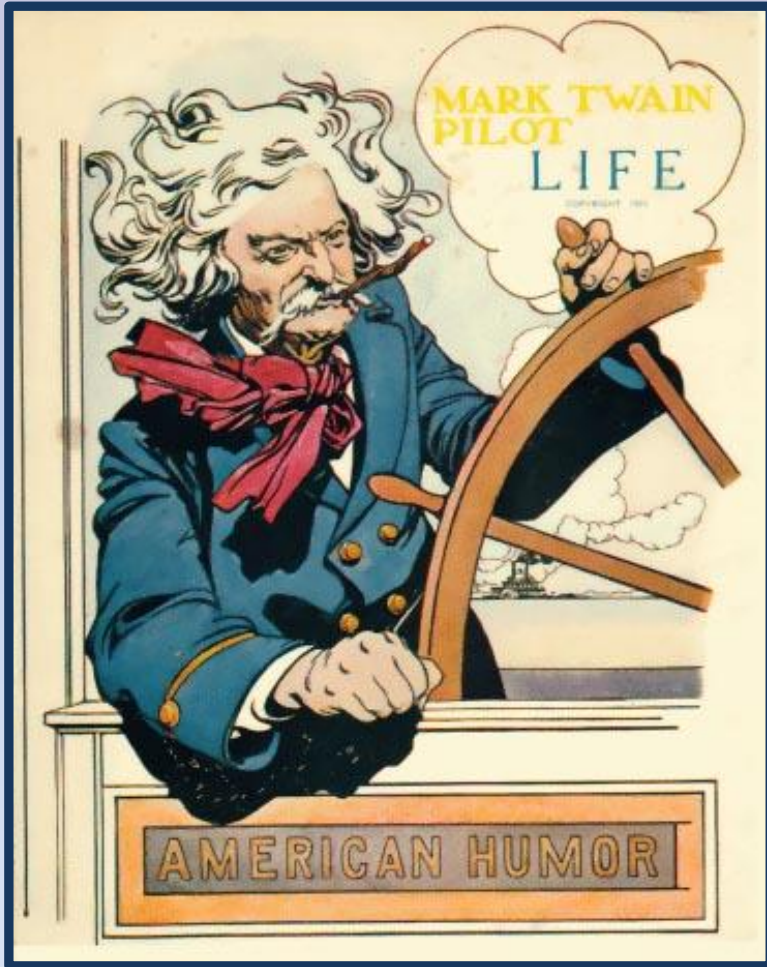


Mark Twain

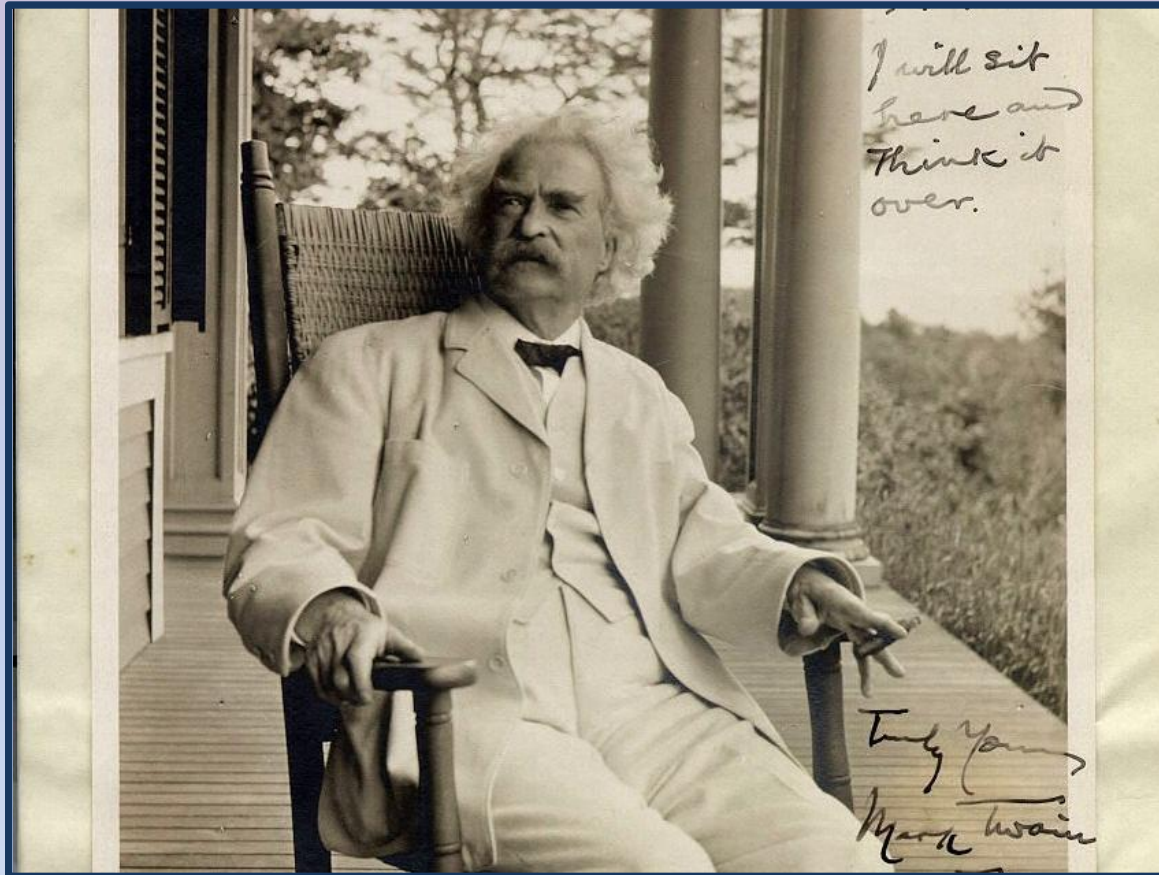
[Samuel Langhorne Clemens]

1835-1910



‘Create myself down south
Impress all the women
Pretend I'm Samuel Clemens
Wear seersucker and white
Linens’

“Down South”, Tom Petty



Mark Twain in Dublin, New Hampshire 1906

The only film footage of Twain we have was filmed by Thomas Edison in 1909. See:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mqaSOw1WhjI>

Identities:

Samuel L. Clemens & Mark Twain



Handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Mark Twain" or "Samuel Clemens".



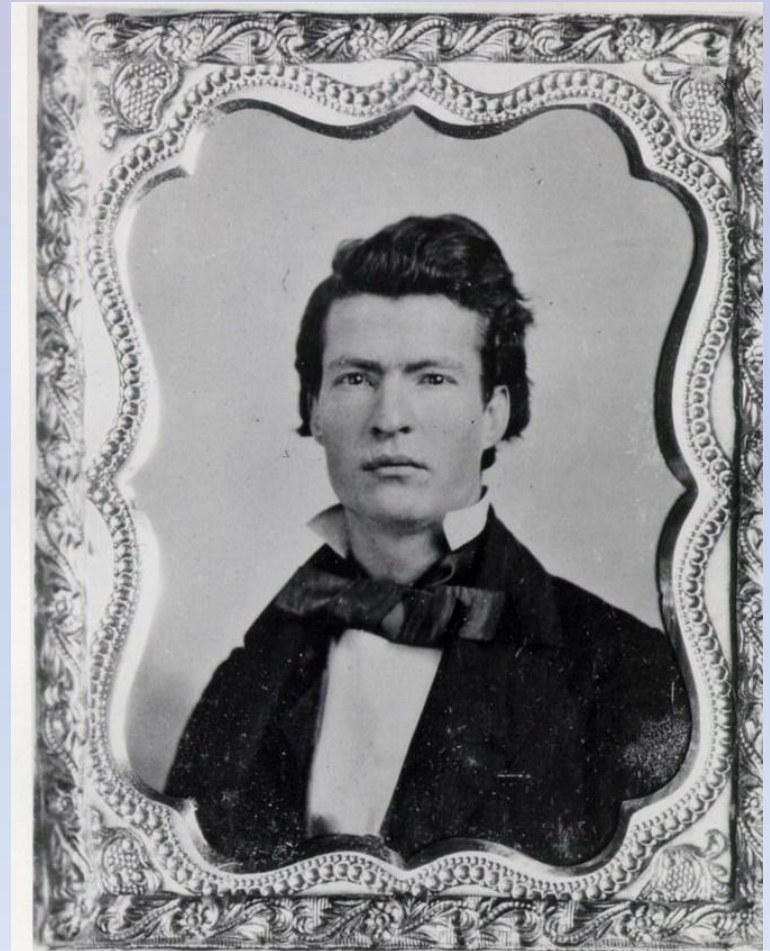
MISSOURI was a young state, admitted to the Union in 1821

- **Samuel Langhorne Clemens** was born on November 30, 1835 in the village of Florida, **Missouri**
- But he grew up in the larger river town of **Hannibal**, Missouri.
- Hannibal = **St. Petersburg**, home to Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn
- His mother: Jane Lampton Clemens, had a dry sense of humour and a deep love for literature
- His father: a justice of peace, unsuccessful clerk and shopkeeper. He died when Twain was only 12



**Twain's childhood house in Hannibal, Missouri
(picture taken in 1902)**

- From that moment on Twain worked to support himself and the rest of his family...
- His father's death marked the end of Twain's short boyhood
- Twain became an APPRENTICE in a printer's shop



- 1851: he worked for his brother, Orion who had become a publisher in Hannibal
- 1853-1856: three years of travel (St. Louis, New York, Philadelphia, Cincinnati etc...) working as a printer hired by the day
- 1856: on his way to New Orleans he changed his mind and decided to become an apprentice as a **Mississippi riverboat pilot**
- After becoming a pilot, he started a lucrative business until 1860 (Civil War)



Steamboat on the Mississippi

Going WEST

- **1861:** Twain went West with his brother Orion, appointed secretary of the Nevada territorial government
- Twain began writing for newspapers such as *Territorial Enterprise*, the *Californian*...
- Twain: the **humorist, lecturer, journalist and author**
- Friendships with western writer Bret Harte, the lecturer and comic Artemus Ward and the amateur raconteur Jim Gillis
- ‘The Notorious Jumping Frog of Calaveras County’ 1865 (a retelling of the popular tall tale)

- **1870** : Twain married Olivia Langdon, genteel daughter of a wealthy coal dealer from Buffalo, New York
- It was a happy marriage
- 'Livy' supported him and read his manuscripts...





Twain with wife and daughters...



Twain's house in Hartford, Connecticut from 1874-1891

A series of unfortunate events...

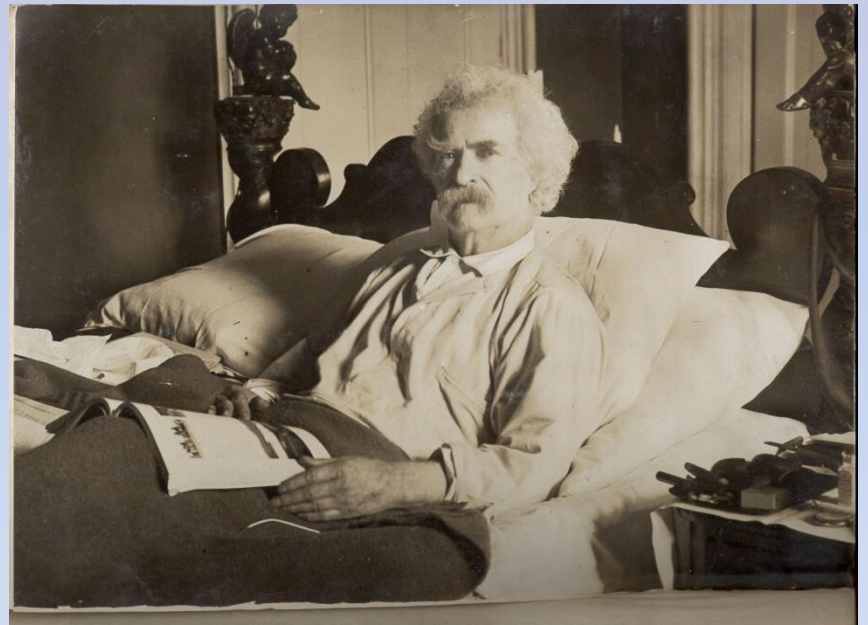
- Twain's health became bad
- He went bankrupt
- Jean, his youngest daughter was diagnosed as epileptic
- Susy, his oldest one, died of meningitis
- Livy 's health declined as well...
- **BLEAK PESSIMISM** which emerged in his last works...

‘Mark Twain is dead at 74’

The New York Times April 21, 1910

- ‘Handin Garland, novelist, in Chicago: “Mark Twain’s death marks the exit of a literary man who was as **distinctly American as was Walt Whitman**. The work of most writers could be produced in any country, but I think we, as well as everybody in foreign lands will look upon Twain’s work as being as closely related to this country as the Mississippi river itself [...]”’

- According to **Howells** : “Clemens was sole, incomparable, the **Lincoln** of our literature”



- 'The Notorious Jumping Frog of Calaveras County' 1865
- *Innocents Abroad* 1869
- *Roughing it* 1872
- *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* 1876
- *Life on the Mississippi* 1883
- *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* 1884
- *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* 1889
- *The Tragedy of Pudd'nhead Wilson* 1894
- *Following the Equator* 1897
- *The Mysterious Stranger* about 1916
- *Letters from the Earth* (unpublished in his lifetime)

‘Mark Twain!’

- Clemens’s pen name...
- Riverboat term meaning **‘mark two’**. ‘Two’ referring to ‘two fathoms deep’, used to signal either safe waters or a hazardous territory for riverboats.
- A fathom= 6 feet
- 2 fathoms= 12ft=3,7 meters

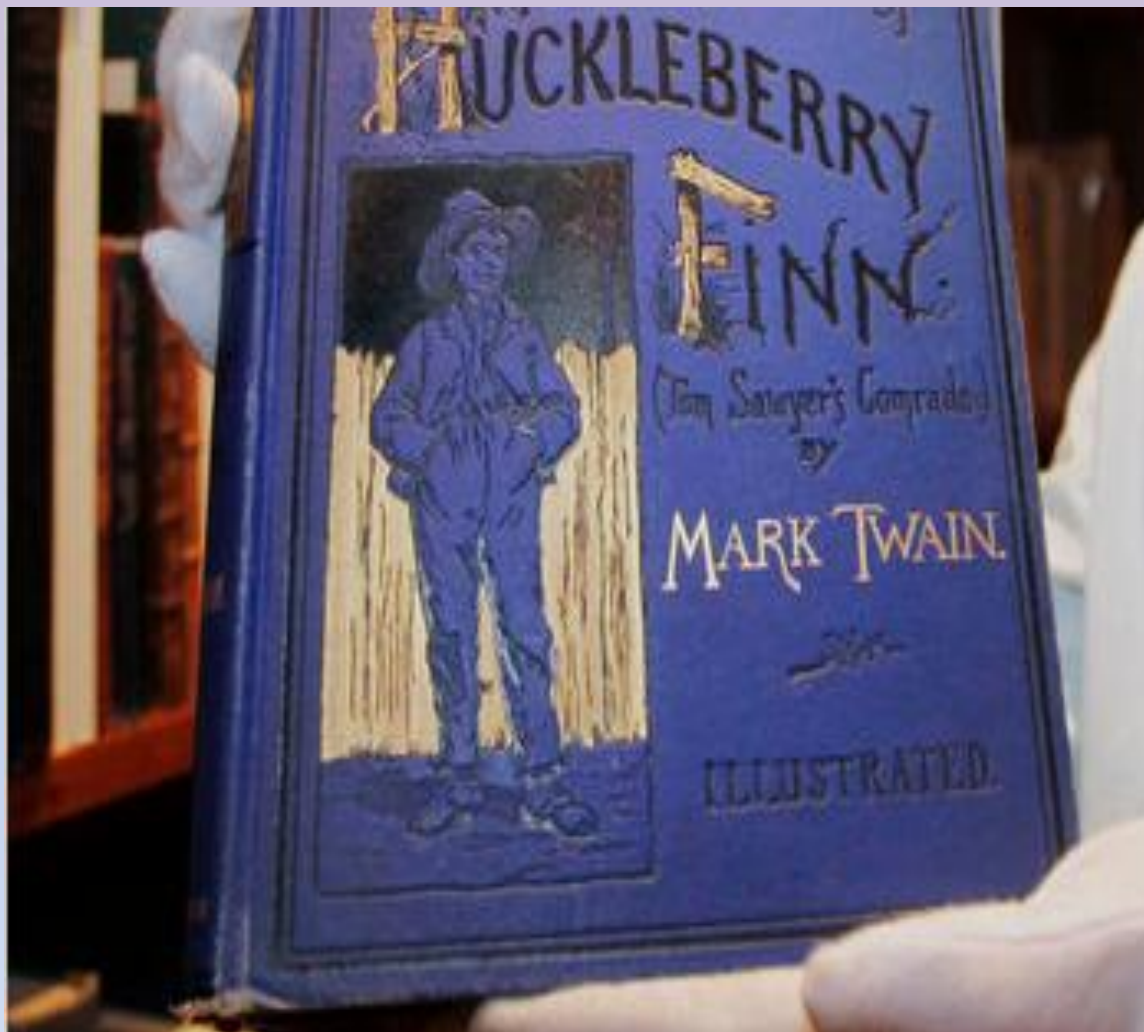




Falk

949 BROADWAY, N. Y.

A revered public figure...

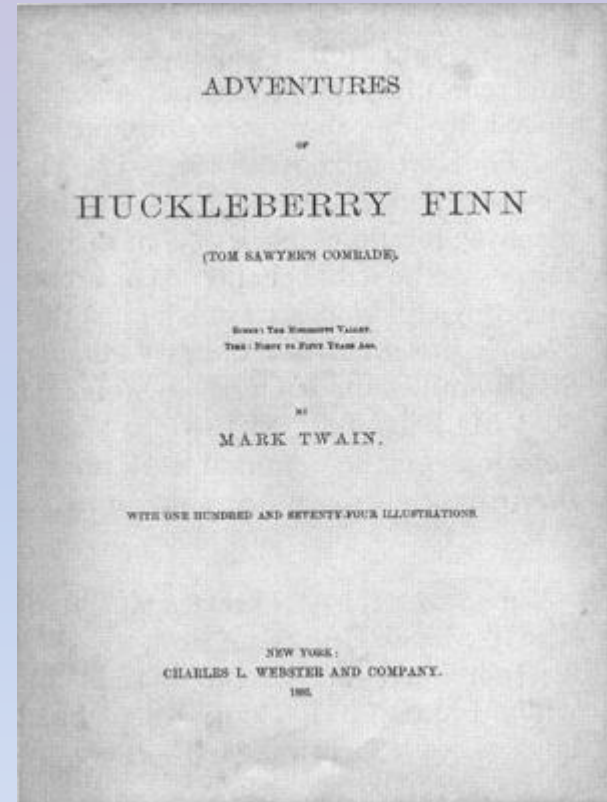


***The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* was first published in England in December 1884; the first American edition was published in 1885**

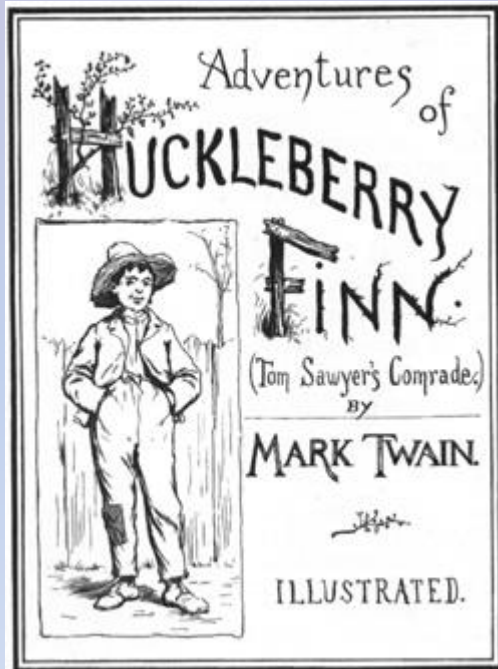
From the manuscript (left) and title page from the first American edition

786


Tom's most well,
now, + got his bullet around
his neck on a watch-guard
^{is always seeing what time it is, and so}
for a watch, ^{there ain't}
nothing more to write about,
+ I'm ^{rather} ~~glad~~ ^{glad} of it,
because if I'd a knowed
what a trouble it was to
make a book I wouldn't
a tackled it + ain't a going
to ^{any} more. But I reckon
I got to light out for the Ter-
ritory ahead of the rest, be-
cause ^{my} ~~they~~ ^{Sally's} going to adopt



Advertising the book...



MARK TWAIN'S NEW WORK,
"Adventures of Huckleberry Finn."
(Tom Sawyer's Comrade.)
—
APPEARS FEBRUARY 18th,
Prospectuses now ready.
—
Fine Heliotype of the au-
thor in each book.
—
AGENTS WANTED. SPLENDID TERMS!
CHARLES L. WEBSTER & CO., Publishers,
658 BROADWAY, NEW YORK CITY.



The advertisement for the book features a central illustration of a woman wearing a wide-brimmed hat and a long dress, standing in a natural setting. To the right of the illustration, the text provides details about the book's release, including the date and the publisher's information. The overall layout is clean and professional, typical of late 19th-century book advertising.

“I suppose it would help sell the book”

Twain to Webster, September 8, 1884

- The ‘double’ frontispiece of the book
- On the right an illustration by **Edward Windsor Kemble** depicting the character of Huck
- On the left a photograph of a plaster casting of a clay bust sculpted from life by Karl Gerhardt
- Twain himself suggested the frontispiece to his publisher Charles L. Webster





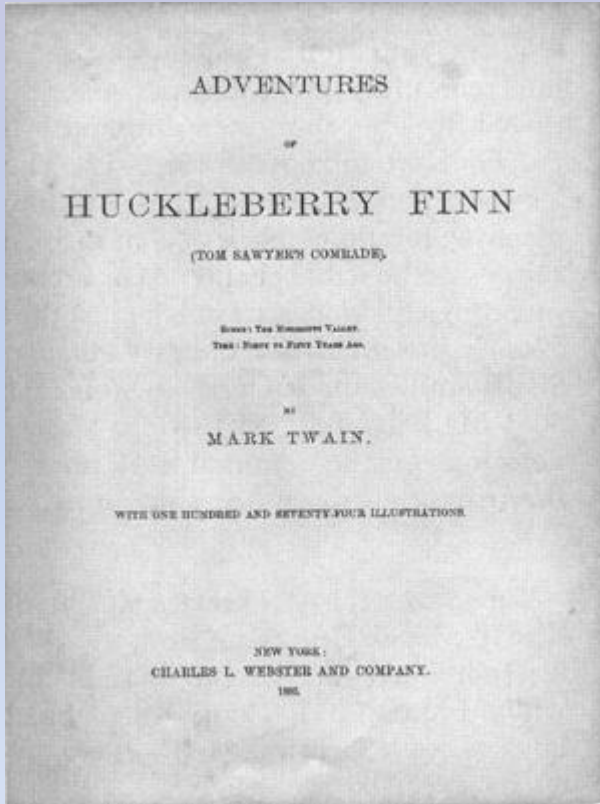
‘Huck’ by Edward Windsor Kemble (1861-1933)

The young cartoonist was chosen by Twain to illustrate his book in early April 1884. But Twain was not completely satisfied with the drawings Kemble began to submit after getting the job...

“the pictures will do- they will just barely do-& that is the best I can say for them”
(Twain complaining to Webster about the drawings)

Twain's memories of Hannibal

‘Huck Finn is drawn from life’ (preface to the Adventures of Tom Sawyer)



- According to Twain, Huck was based on **Tom Blankenship**, a boy (four years older than Twain) in Hannibal whose father was the official town drunk...
- Twain, in a letter dated 8 March, 1906:
 - ‘ I have replied that “Huckleberry Finn” was Tom Blankenship. . . . Tom’s father was at one time Town Drunkard, an exceedingly well defined and unofficial office of those days. . . .In “Huckleberry Finn” I have drawn Tom Blankenship exactly as he was. He was ignorant, unwashed, insufficiently fed; but he had as good a heart as ever any boy had. His liberties were totally unrestricted. He was the only really independent person—boy or man—in the community, and by consequence he was tranquilly and continuously happy, and was envied by all the rest of us. We liked him; we enjoyed his society. And as his society was forbidden us by our parents, the prohibition trebled and quadrupled its value, and therefore we sought and got more of his society than of any other boy’s. ‘

What's in a name?

- **'Finn'** = last name borrowed from Jimmy Finn, another town drunkard
- **'Huckleberry'** =
 1. the glossy blackish berry of any of the various shrubs related to the blueberries (**The American Heritage Student dictionary**)
 2. A plain, common fruit, not requiring cultivation in order to flourish, often signifying something backward or rural (**Colwell**)
 3. An unimportant person (derogatory meaning)



Huckleberry Finn

‘Shortly Tom came upon the juvenile pariah of the village, Huckleberry Finn, son of the town drunkard. Huckleberry was cordially hated and dreaded by all the mothers of the town, because he was idle, and lawless, and bad—and because all their children admired him so, and delighted in his forbidden society and wished they dared to be like him. Tom was like the rest of the respectable boys, in that he envied Huckleberry his gaudy outcast condition, and was under strict orders not to play with him’

The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, Chapter 6



**Illustration representing Huck in chapter 6 of
*The Adventures of Tom Sawyer***

NOTICE

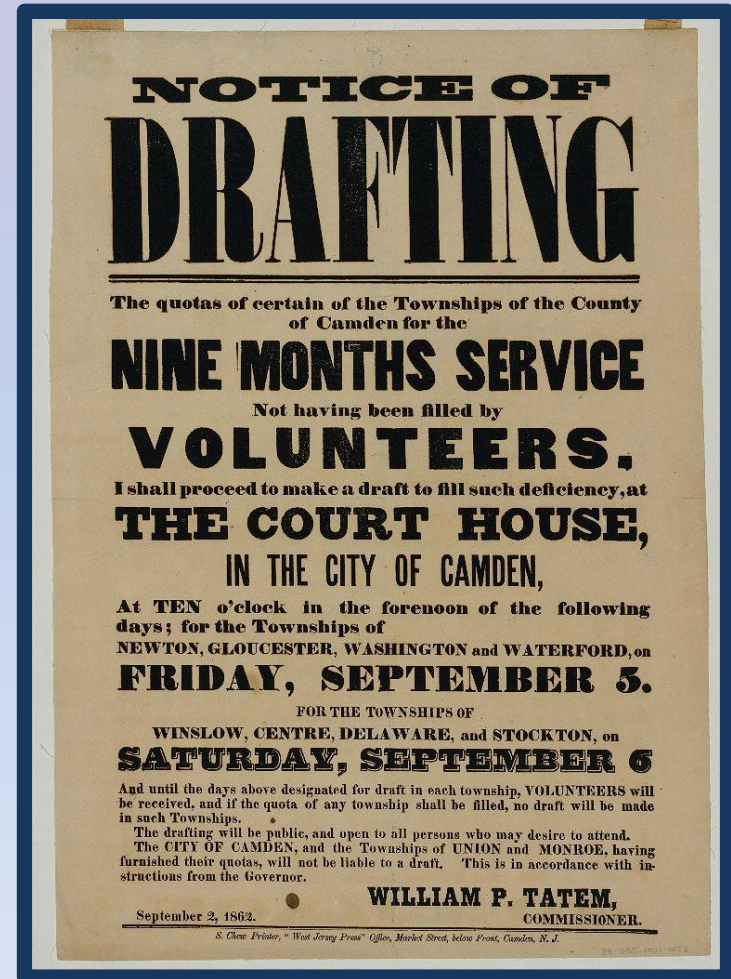
Persons attempting to find a motive in this narrative will be prosecuted; persons attempting to find a moral in it will be banished; persons attempting to find a plot in it will be shot.

By Order of the Author.

Per G. G., Chief of Ordnance.

The Notice

- Evoking Civil War/Reconstruction orders or bills usually put in courthouse squares of occupied Southern cities
- Solemn but also (self) mocking tone: a warning to **the reader...**
- The text disclaims any **authorial intent** in terms of plot and motive
- It also disavows/rejects the very notion of the **high moral righteousness** embedded in narratives [for examples in sentimental novels]



EXPLANATORY

In this book a number of dialects are used, to wit: the Missouri negro dialect; the extremest form of the backwoods South-Western dialect; the ordinary “Pike-County” dialect; and four modified varieties of this last. The shadings have not been done in a hap-hazard fashion, or by guess-work; but pains-takingly, and with the trustworthy guidance and support of personal familiarity with these several forms of speech.

I make this explanation for the reason that without it many readers would suppose that all these characters were trying to talk alike and not succeeding.

The Author.

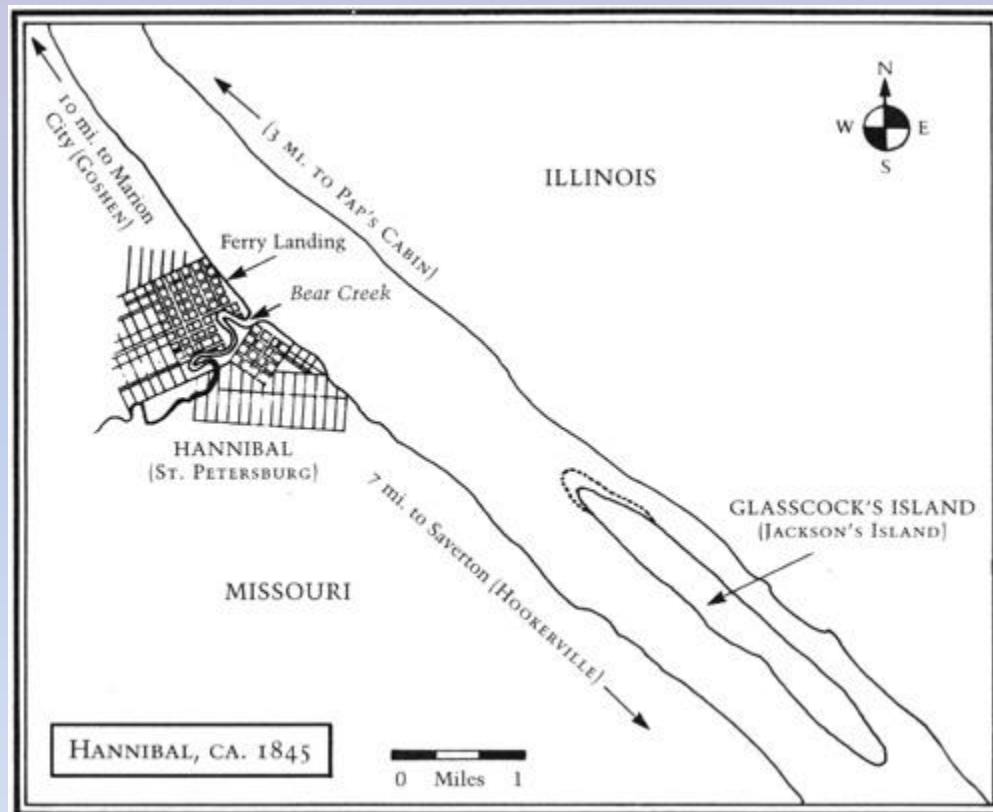
Explanatory

Twain mentions 7 dialects which can be identified with the following speakers:

- “the Missouri negro dialect”: Jim, Jack, Lize, Nat, young ‘Wench’ at Phelps farm
- “the extremest form of the backwoods South-Western dialect: Sister Hotchkiss and others
- “the ordinary ‘Pike county’ dialect”: Huck, Tom, Aunt Polly, Pap Finn, the duke, the Wilks daughters, Judith Loftus...
- and 4 modified varieties of it: a) thieves on the *Walter Scott* b) the king, Tim Collins c) the Bricksville loafers d) Aunt Sally and Uncle Silas Phelps, the Pikesville boy



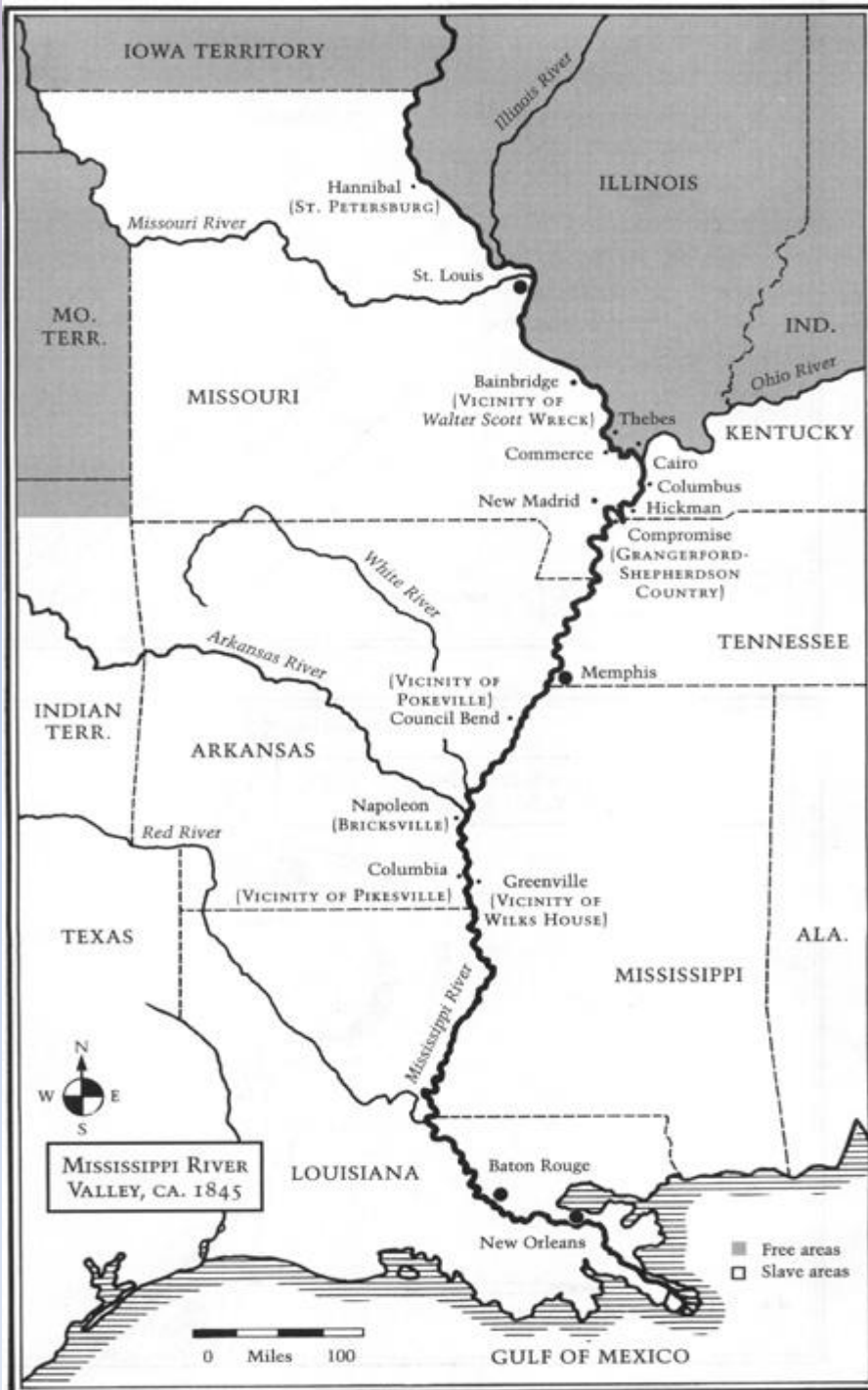
Learning about Moses... (ch. 1)



- "The directors of the Concord Public Library have joined in the general scheme to advertise MARK TWAIN'S new book, 'Huckleberry Finn.' They have placed it on the *Index Expurgatorius*, and this will compel every citizen of Concord to read the book in order to see why the guardians of his morals prohibited it." So reported the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* on 17 March 1885 in one of the earliest newspaper accounts of the first time *Huck Finn* was banned.



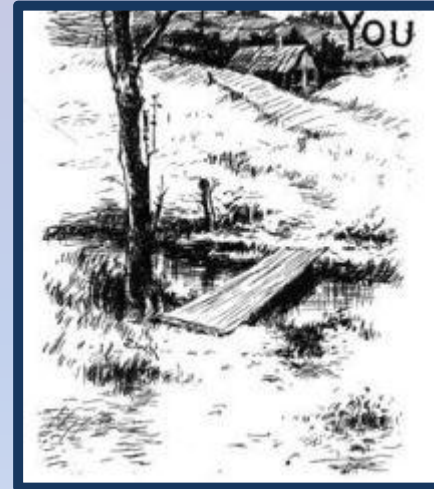
The Mississippi river



The **mighty** Mississippi

A multifaceted river

- “the river looked miles and miles across. The moon was so bright [...] everything was dead quiet, and it looked late, and *smelt* late. “ AHF ch. 6
- “the sky looks ever so deep when you lay down on your back in the moonshine; I never knowed it before” AHF ch.6
- “It was a monstrous big river here, with the tallest and the thickest kind of timber on both banks; just as a solid wall, as well as I could see by the stars” AHF Ch. 15
- **The river** : ambiguous/ambivalent symbol in the story: the watery way/path leading to freedom, but also a place associated with death (drownings, corpses emerging from the river etc...)



SOURCE: Wick, Carl F. *Refiguring Huckleberry Finn*. The University of Georgia press, 2000.

Twain depicts ARISTOCRACY as **cold blooded** and **self-centered** with regard to the RIGHTS of others

Three groups of characters embody Twain's view of aristocracy:

- 1. The King and the Duke (fake aristocrats, but their selfishness is REAL)
- 2. The Grangerford and the Sheperdson families: involved in a bloody and never-ending feud. Ironically their house displays images referring to the Declaration of Independence ...
- 3. Colonel Sherburn who kills poor Boggs taking away his right to life just to defend his honor

SOURCE: Wick, Carl F. *Refiguring Huckleberry Finn*. Ch. 1 'A New Birth of Freedom'

The themes of **re-birth** and **new identity** are intertwined in the novel: death (metaphorical/faked) is followed by the possibility of renewal.

- 1. Pap:** His supposed death according to rumours, but he comes back to town. His failed rebirth into respectable society (the new judge tries to reform him).
- 2. Huck:** he has to fake his own death to escape from Pap
- 3. Jim:** he runs away from his owner in order to be free. Huck and Jim begin their new lives together as two runaways.

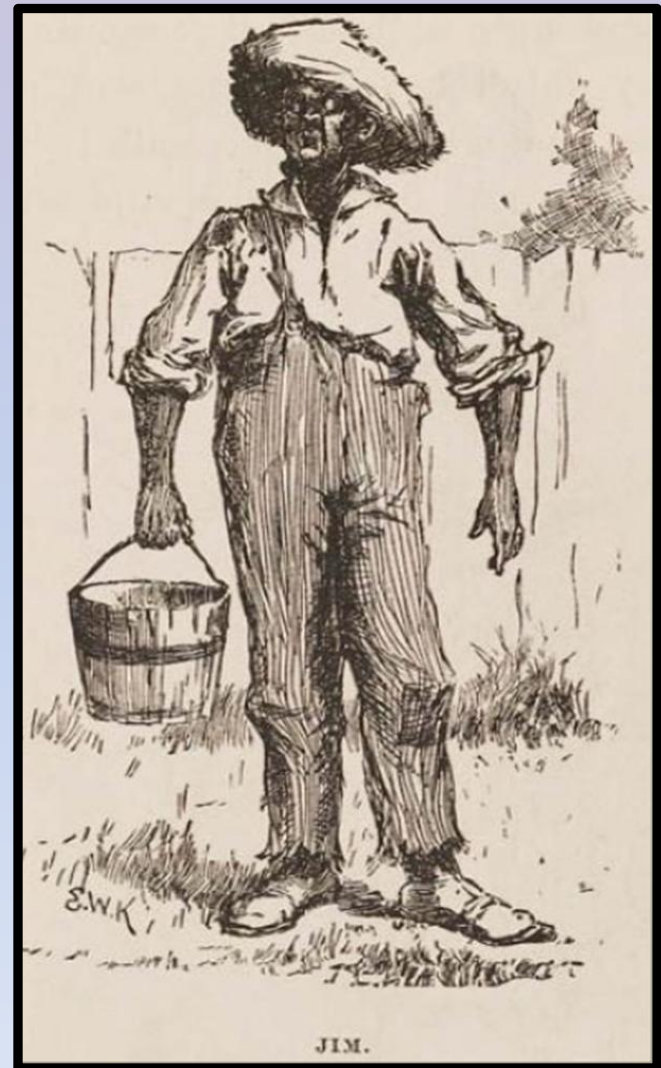
Black-face *minstrel shows*

- The first minstrel show probably occurred in 1843 in New York City
- It became the most popular form of entertainment in America
- White entertainers put on blackface and imitated and caricatured slaves in the South and ex-slaves in the North...
- Imitating their speech, singing, dancing...
- Minstrel show '**coon**' = a racist caricature?



‘Twain’ s personal attitudes toward blacks were **contradictory**. His father and uncle owned slaves, yet his wife was the daughter of a prominent abolitionist. He fought briefly with the confederate army, yet later in life paid a black student’s way through Yale Law School. Though he protested against lynching and discrimination, he loved minstrel shows and nigger jokes.’

(Allen Webb, ‘Racism and Huckleberry Finn: Censorship, Dialogue , and Change’.
English Journal, Nov.1993)



JIM

- It has been argued that Twain depicts Jim's actions and personality (in some chapters) evoking minstrel show routines and characters...
- There is racial uncertainty in Twain, and the issue of the race question in the novel.

