

Twain Trivia

Don't think you know a lot about Mark Twain? Think again! Twain is everywhere, from literature to popular culture. See how many questions your group can get right! Who knows, you might even learn something on the way to the museum!!

Q. What comet was in the sky the day Samuel Clemens was born and died?

A. Halley's Comet

When Mark Twain was born on November 30, 1835, Halley's Comet was visible in the sky over Florida, Missouri. Aware throughout his life that he was born when Halley's Comet was visible, Mark Twain predicted in 1909 that he would die when it returned: "I came in with Halley's Comet in 1835. It is coming again next year, and I expect to go out with it.... The Almighty has said, no doubt: 'Now here are these two unaccountable freaks; they came in together, they must go out together.'" He was right. When Mark Twain died on April 21, 1910, Halley's Comet was once again visible in the sky.

Q. Mark Twain was among the very first American authors to use what writing invention?

A. Typewriter

Twain once remarked "I was the first person in the world that ever had a telephone in his house...and I was the first person in the world to apply the typemachine to literature." Indeed, Twain did purchase a typewriter in 1874 and when he turned in his typewritten manuscript for *LIFE ON THE MISSISSIPPI* in 1882, it was thought to be the first in American publishing history. Twain mentioned his experiences with the machine in an autobiographical essay in 1901. Typewriter manufacturer Remington, lost no time in claiming the association on advertisements.

Q. This actor, who won 2 Oscars and is perhaps best known for his roles in the 1952 movie "Death of a Salesman", portrayed Samuel Langhorne Clemens (Mark Twain) in the 1944 movie *The Adventures of Mark Twain*. Name the actor (Hint: his Oscars were for The Best Years of Our Lives (1946) and Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (1931))

A. Fredric March

The movie, *The Adventures of Mark Twain*, was a dramatized life of Samuel Langhorn Clemens, or Mark Twain. The movie was nominated for the following Oscars: Best Art Direction-Interior Decoration, Black-and-White, Best Effects & Special Effects, and Best Music, Scoring of a Dramatic or Comedy Picture.

Q. Harriet Beecher Stowe, author of this famous anti-slavery book, was Twain's neighbor in Hartford, Connecticut – what was the book?

A. Uncle Tom's Cabin

Twain built his dream house in Hartford, Connecticut in 1873 and 1874. The neighborhood, known as Nook Farm, was a thriving intellectual settlement. Across the

lawn lived author Harriet Beecher Stowe and her large family. Stowe had published UNCLE TOM'S CABIN in 1851 and was one of the most famous women in America. Twain and his family lived in their Hartford home until 1891, when near bankruptcy compelled Twain to move to Europe. The house, which holds many of the family's original furnishings, is now a museum.

Q. True or False: Mark Twain was the inventor of the self-pasting scrapbook.

A. True

Mark Twain was an inventor as well as a writer and humorist. Three of Twain's inventions were even patented: an automatically self-adjusting vest strap, a history game meant for improving memory, and a self-pasting scrapbook.

Q. Laura Hawkins Frazer was the inspiration for what character in Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*.

A. Becky Thatcher

Laura Hawkins Frazer, the inspiration for Becky Thatcher in Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. She and Samuel Clemens (Twain's real name) were childhood sweethearts in Hannibal (pop. 17,757). You'll be visiting the home of Laura Hawkins during your self-guided tour of the museum.

Q. This popular island singer is also an avid Twain fan! In fact, he's written several songs mentioning Twain and/or his works. I guess he must enjoy reading in Margaritaville.....

A. Jimmy Buffett

Buffett has written three songs based on Twain's book, *Following the Equator* (That's What Livin' is to Me, Take Another Road, Remittance Man) and has paraphrased Twain in other songs. He also gives Twain a nod in his own literature, most notably by naming a main character's horse Mr. Twain.

Q. When his books first became published, Mark Twain did not sell his books in book stores, like elite Eastern literary critics would want from 'respectable' authors. He chose this method instead. What was this method? Hint: remember those encyclopedia salesman?

A: Mark Twain sold his books door-to-door by subscription.

Few, if any of us have had the experience of reading one of Mark Twain's books for the first time as it was originally published for the subscription book trade. Instead of selling his books through book stores, as the elite Eastern literary culture demanded of "respectable" authors, Mark Twain chose the more lucrative option of having them sold door-to-door by subscription. Subscription sales would begin before publication. Book

agents were recruited, given a specific territory to cover, and provided with a [book agent's kit](#) that suggested ways to sell the book.

Q. From which prestigious English University did Twain receive an honorary doctorate?

A. Oxford University

Twain received an honorary doctorate from Oxford University in 1907. He was so proud of the robe he received with the degree, he wore it to his daughter's wedding! You will see Twain's Oxford robe in the Museum Gallery, which is part of your tour.

Q. Which of Mark Twain's books begins with the following preface?

"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."

A. Adventures of Huckleberry Finn

Q. This "Odd Couple" star took on the odd role of 'The King' in the 1960 movie adaptation of Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

A. Tony Randall

Q. What book describes Twain's journey out West with his brother Orion?

A. *Roughing It*

Twain traveled with his brother to Nevada, working in newspaper offices and even prospecting for silver. These experiences would later provide the basis for his volume *Roughing It*.

Q. How many books did Mark Twain publish through his career?

A. 30

Bonus points if you can name them all! Just kidding.....