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A collaborative project assembled by scholars who have played crucial roles in the recent explosion of Twain criticism, *The Cambridge Companion to Mark Twain* offers new and thought-provoking essays on an author of enduring preeminence in the American canon. Accessible enough to interest both experienced specialists and students new to Twain criticism, the essays examine Twain from a wide variety of critical perspectives and include timely reflections by major critics on the hotly debated dynamics of race and slavery perceptible throughout his writing.

The volume includes a chronology of Twain's life and a list of suggestions for further reading, to provide the student or general reader with sources for background as well as additional information.

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*Continued on page following Index*

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EDITED BY  
FORREST G. ROBINSON  
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Published by the Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge  
 The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RP  
 40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA  
 10 Stamford Road, Oakleigh, Melbourne 3166, Australia

© Cambridge University Press 1995

First published 1995

*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

The Cambridge companion to Mark Twain / edited by Forrest G. Robinson.

p. cm. - (Cambridge companions to literature)

Includes bibliographical references (p. ) and index.

ISBN 0-521-44036-X. - ISBN 0-521-44593-0 (pbk.)

I. Twain, Mark, 1835-1910 - Criticism and interpretation.

I. Robinson, Forrest G. (Forrest Glen), 1940- . II. Series.

PS1338.C36 1995

818'.409 - dc20

94-24658  
CIP

A catalog record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN 0-521-44036-X Hardback

ISBN 0-521-44593-0 Paperback

Transferred to digital printing 2003

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Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

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FOR EMMA-CHAN

## CONTENTS

	<i>List of Contributors</i>	ix
	<i>Preface</i>	xiii
	<i>Chronology of Twain's Life</i>	xvii
1	Mark Twain as an American Icon LOUIS J. BUDD	I
2	The Innocent at Large: Mark Twain's Travel Writing FORREST G. ROBINSON	27
3	Mark Twain and Women SHELLEY FISHER FISHKIN	52
4	Mark Twain's Civil War: Humor's Reconstructive Writing NEIL SCHMITZ	74
5	Banned in Concord: <i>Adventures of Huckleberry Finn</i> and Classic American Literature MYRA JEHLLEN	93
6	Black Critics and Mark Twain DAVID LIONEL SMITH	116
7	Mr. Clemens and Jim Crow: Twain, Race, and Blackface ERIC LOTT	129
8	Speech Acts and Social Action: Mark Twain and the Politics of Literary Performance EVAN CARTON	153
9	How the Boss Played the Game: Twain's Critique of Imperialism in <i>A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court</i> JOHN CARLOS ROWE	175

Cambridge University Press  
0521445930 - The Cambridge Companion to Mark Twain  
Edited by Forrest G. Robinson  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

## CONTENTS

IO	Mark Twain's Travels in the Racial Occult: <i>Following the Equator</i> and the Dream Tales	193
	SUSAN GILLMAN	
II	Mark Twain's Theology: The Gods of a Brevet Presbyterian	220
	STANLEY BRODWIN	
	<i>Further Reading</i>	249
	<i>Index</i>	251



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 0521445930 - The Cambridge Companion to Mark Twain  
 Edited by Forrest G. Robinson  
 Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

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SUSAN GILLMAN is Associate Professor of Literature at the University of California, Santa Cruz. She is the author of *Dark Twins: Imposture and Identity in Mark Twain's America* (University of Chicago Press, 1989) and co-editor, with Forrest G. Robinson, of *Mark Twain's "Pudd'nhead Wilson": Race, Conflict, and Culture* (Duke University Press, 1990). She is currently working on a book entitled *The American Race Melodramas, 1877–1915*.

MYRA JEHLLEN is Board of Governors Professor of Literature at Rutgers University. Among her writings are *The Literature of Colonization* in the new Cambridge Literary History of the United States and *American Incarnation: The Individual, the Nation and the Continent* (Harvard University Press, 1986). She is also editor, most recently, of *Melville* in the series *New Century Views*.

ERIC LOTT teaches American Studies at the University of Virginia. He is the author of *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (Oxford University Press, 1993), and his work on the racial politics of culture has appeared in *American Quarterly*, *Representations*, the *Village Voice*, and the *Nation*.

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JOHN CARLOS ROWE teaches the literatures and cultures of the United States and contemporary critical theories at the University of California, Irvine, where he is also the Director of the Critical Theory Institute. He is the author of *Henry Adams and Henry James* (Cornell University Press, 1976), *Through the Custom House* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), and *The Theoretical Dimensions of Henry James* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1984). He has co-edited, with Rick Berg, *The Vietnam War and American Culture* (Columbia University Press, 1991).

NEIL SCHMITZ is Professor of English at the State University of New York, Buffalo. He is the author of *Of Huck and Alice: Humorous Writing in*

Cambridge University Press  
0521445930 - The Cambridge Companion to Mark Twain  
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Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

## CONTRIBUTORS

*American Literature* (University of Minnesota Press, 1983). Recent essays on Abraham Lincoln, Black Hawk, and Gertrude Stein have appeared in the *Arizona Quarterly*, *American Literary History*, and *American Literature*. He is completing a book on Civil War writing.

DAVID LIONEL SMITH is Professor of English and Chair of Afro-American Studies at Williams College. He has published articles on literary theory, the black arts movement, Southern literature, and Mark Twain. He is co-editor, with Jack Salzman and Cornel West, of *The Encyclopedia of African-American Culture and History*, forthcoming from Macmillan, and he is completing *Racial Writing, Black and White*, a study of how American writers have constructed accounts of racial identity.

## PREFACE

In the 1939 Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer production of *Huckleberry Finn*, starring Mickey Rooney in the title role, much is made of the fact that Jim (played by Rex Ingram) conceals from Huck that pap is dead. When Jim asks what he would do in the event of his father's death, Huck replies that he would return to St. Petersburg and that he would take the runaway slave back with him. Jim's worst fears are thus confirmed. The white boy's sole motive for fleeing downriver is fear of his father. Jim is acceptable as a companion, but Huck is hardly an abolitionist and would dutifully restore the slave to Miss Watson were the way clear to his doing so. Later, when Jim at last tells the truth about pap, Huck calls him an ungrateful "thing" and runs away in anger. Though we are finally brought around to the obligatory happy ending, this old movie nonetheless brings us closer to tragedy than any of the more recent popular productions of the story.

It took the critics almost thirty years to catch up with Mickey Rooney. The prevailing view of *Huckleberry Finn* until the mid-1960s cast the boy-hero as a figure of "instinctive humanity" who without hesitation joins Jim in his "quest for freedom."<sup>1</sup> James M. Cox, in *Mark Twain: The Fate of Humor* (1966), was the first to challenge consensus, arguing that "a quest is a positive journey, implying an effort, a struggle to reach a goal. But Huck is escaping. His journey is primarily a negation, a flight *from* tyranny, not a flight toward freedom." Huck "is certainly not a rebel," Cox adds. "The role of Abolitionist is not comfortable nor comforting to him and in turning over to Tom Sawyer the entire unpleasant business of freeing Jim, Huck is surely not acting out of but remarkably *in* character."<sup>2</sup>

Cox's sharp break with critical tradition gave rise to a major overhaul of accepted opinion on America's favorite novel. The image of Huck has been transformed. He is more uncertain and troubled, more divided against himself, than he used to be. Jim has also become more complex. We are readier now than in the past to glimpse a mingled array of feelings and motives behind the mask of the docile slave that he presents to the world.

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 Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

## PREFACE

Jim has fears and desires that he does not share with anyone, not even Huck – who scorns abolitionists, plays dirty tricks, and wavers terribly when the chips are down. Such major interpretive shifts have in turn drawn attention to the dynamics of audience response. How is it that we have overlooked so much for so long? How has it served our cultural and ideological agendas to settle for such partial and incomplete readings? Other, related questions have arisen in tandem with those that attach directly to *Huckleberry Finn*. We are now more than ever alert to Mark Twain's attitudes toward women, and to the female characters in his work. His later writings, concerned as they are with major social and political issues, and fascinating as studies in the thematics of form, are also very much with us in this lively – if also rather sobering – reassessment of our leading author and national icon.

*The Cambridge Companion to Mark Twain* faithfully mirrors the trajectory of recent developments in the field. This is true in good part because most of the scholars represented in the volume have had a role in the formation of the broad new critical consensus. I was also guided in my selection of topics by an ambition to provide responsible coverage of the subjects currently of most interest to students of Mark Twain. Several essays address aspects of race and slavery in his work. Others deal directly with women, religion, humor, and class. The travel writing, strategies of performance, and Mark Twain's enduring popularity are also discussed. In all, we have approached our materials with a wide-ranging audience of specialists and nonspecialists in mind. I have urged the contributors to proceed with freshness and originality as their leading objectives. Throughout it has been our goal to be lively and thought-provoking, not merely comprehensive or somehow standard.

As editor, I have been the happy beneficiary of no little support and cooperation. The contributors – a stellar company of scholars – were generous in consenting to undertake this work, very able in its commission, and unfailingly tolerant of my appeals for brevity, clarity, and what Mark Twain must have referred to somewhere as promptitude. I am grateful to Eric Sundquist for asking me to serve as editor and for his valuable counsel along the way. Julie Greenblatt and T. Susan Chang, humanities editors at Cambridge University Press, have been superb colleagues, patient with my inexperience, and always ready with advice and good humor. Finally, I count as chief among my blessings a large, loving family. Special thanks as always to Colleen, Grace, Renate, Emma (to whom the book is dedicated), and Marie for their unflagging support of my many and curious enterprises.

Cambridge University Press  
0521445930 - The Cambridge Companion to Mark Twain  
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Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

## PREFACE

## NOTES

- 1 Leo Marx, "Mr. Eliot, Mr. Trilling, and *Huckleberry Finn*," in *Huck Finn Among the Critics*, ed. M. Thomas Inge (Washington: USIA, 1984), p. 115. The essay first appeared in the *American Scholar* 22 (1953): 423–40.
- 2 James M. Cox, *Mark Twain: The Fate of Humor* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1966), pp. 172–3.

## CHRONOLOGY OF TWAIN'S LIFE

- 1835, Nov. 30 Samuel Langhorne Clemens, sixth child of John Marshall Clemens and Jane Lampton Clemens, born in Florida, Missouri.
- 1839 Clemens family moves to Hannibal, Missouri.
- 1847 Father dies.
- 1848 Works as printer's apprentice on the *Missouri Courier*.
- 1849 Finishes education.
- 1851 Serves as journeyman printer and journalist on brother Orion's *Hannibal Journal*.
- 1852 "The Dandy Frightening the Squatter" appears in the Boston comic weekly, the *Carpet-Bag*.
- 1853–6 Leaves Hannibal and works as a printer in St. Louis, New York, Philadelphia, Keokuk (Iowa), and Cincinnati. Serves as a correspondent for brother Orion's *Muscatine (Iowa) Journal* and other local newspapers.
- 1857 Becomes an apprentice ("cub") Mississippi River steamboat pilot under Horace Bixby.
- 1859 Receives pilot's licence; is steadily employed on the Mississippi until the outbreak of the Civil War.
- 1861 Serves briefly in a volunteer Confederate battalion; leaves for Nevada with brother Orion; seeks fortune in mining.
- 1862–5 Works as a reporter and humorous writer for the *Virginia City Territorial Enterprise*, the *San Francisco Daily Morning Call*, the *Golden Era*, the *Californian*, and other newspapers in Nevada and California. Adopts pseudonym "Mark Twain." "Jim Smiley and His Jumping Frog" is published.
- 1866 Serves as a correspondent for the *Sacramento Daily Union* in Hawaiian Islands; begins career as lecturer;

## CHRONOLOGY

- contracts as correspondent for the *Alta California* and leaves for New York.
- 1867 *The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County, and Other Sketches* is published. Works as a correspondent for the *Alta California* in Europe and the Holy Land.
- 1868 In Washington, D.C., serves as secretary to Senator William Stewart of Nevada and correspondent for several newspapers; in California as lecturer, journalist, and travel writer.
- 1869 *The Innocents Abroad* is a great commercial success. Commences friendship with William Dean Howells.
- 1870 Marries Olivia Langdon. Becomes part owner and associate editor of the *Buffalo Express*. Son Langdon is born.
- 1871 Moves to Hartford, Connecticut; goes on extended lecture tour.
- 1872 Daughter Olivia Susan (Susy) is born. Langdon dies. *Roughing It* secures his reputation as America's leading humorist. Makes first visit to England.
- 1873 *The Gilded Age* (co-authored with Charles Dudley Warner) is published. Travels with family in Europe.
- 1874 Daughter Clara is born. Mansion in Hartford is completed.
- 1875 "Old Times on the Mississippi," a series of seven articles, appears in the *Atlantic Monthly*.
- 1876 *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* is published.
- 1878–9 Travels with family in Europe.
- 1880 Daughter Jean is born. *A Tramp Abroad* is published.
- 1881 *The Prince and the Pauper* is published.
- 1882 Travels on the Mississippi.
- 1883 *Life on the Mississippi* is published.
- 1884–5 Goes on lecture tour with George W. Cable. *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is published.
- 1889 *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* is published.
- 1891 Leaves Hartford for a decade (spent mostly in Europe).
- 1892 *The American Claimant* is published.
- 1894 *The Tragedy of Pudd'nhead Wilson* is published. Failure of Paige typesetting machine results in bankruptcy.



## CHRONOLOGY

- 1895–6 Goes on world lecture tour  
 1896 Daughter Susy dies. *Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc* and *Tom Sawyer, Detective* are published.  
 1897 *Following the Equator* is published.  
 1898 Begins work on *The Mysterious Stranger*.  
 1899 “The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg” is published.  
 1900 Returns to the United States; settles in New York City; publicly opposes imperialism.  
 1901 Receives honorary degree from Yale. “To the Person Sitting in Darkness” is published.  
 1904 Wife Olivia Langdon Clemens dies.  
 1906 *What Is Man?* is privately printed.  
 1907 Receives honorary degree from Oxford. *Christian Science* is published.  
 1909 Daughter Jean dies.  
 1910, Apr. 21 Dies in Redding, Connecticut.  
 1916 *The Mysterious Stranger* is published.

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[More information](#)

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