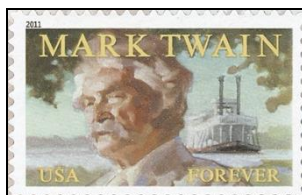


Samuel Langhorne Clemens (1835-1910)

Janice F. Byrne



Of all the American writers depicted on stamps of the world, perhaps the most well known is Samuel Longhorn Clemens, or Mark Twain. Author of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Twain came about his *nom de plume* from an incident in his childhood. As he described it in *Life on the Mississippi* "When I was a boy, the one permanent ambition among my comrades. . . was to be a steamboatman." When his parents finally allowed him to sign on as a cub riverboat pilot to learn the river, young Sam bungled the instruction he was given until one bright day when the crew played a trick on him. While he was at the wheel, they pretended that the boat was headed toward dangerously shallow water as they called out false soundings: mark five, mark four, mark three, mark twain, the depth at which the boat would run aground. The boy panicked but learned his lesson about paying attention.

As an adult, Twain continued to love the Mississippi River. He used it as a trope in his fiction as have the designers of several of the stamps in this exhibit.

