



Chapter Eight - by Kay Hively

All afternoon Sam told about his adventures on the riverboat. His stories were filled with tales of river pirates, steamboat races, monsters floating in the river, gunfights on the upper deck and Indian attacks. The characters in his stories included riverboat gamblers, dance hall girls, runaway slaves and pickpockets.

Emily knew that Sam's stories were not true, but they were exciting because he was such a wonderful storyteller. Every story was filled with excitement and fun.

At one point, between his fabulous stories, Sam told Emily that he was having trouble deciding what he really wanted to be. He still wanted to be a river pilot, but he also wanted to be a writer. Emily said if he worked hard maybe he could have both his dreams.

Then Sam said that because his stories were wild and outrageous, he was afraid he would embarrass his family if they were ever published. So, he had decided to take a pen name. Emily thought that was a good idea. She even offered to help him think of a name to use for his stories and books. But Sam said he had already chosen a pen name.

While he was on Captain Todd's boat, he had heard the leadsman calling out "Mark Twain" while he was measuring the depth of the water. The leadsman told Sam that "Mark Twain" meant the water was two fathoms deep. That was safe enough to let the riverboat pass.

Sam said he liked the sound of "Mark Twain," so he chose that for his pen name. Emily agreed that Mark Twain was a nice name for a writer.

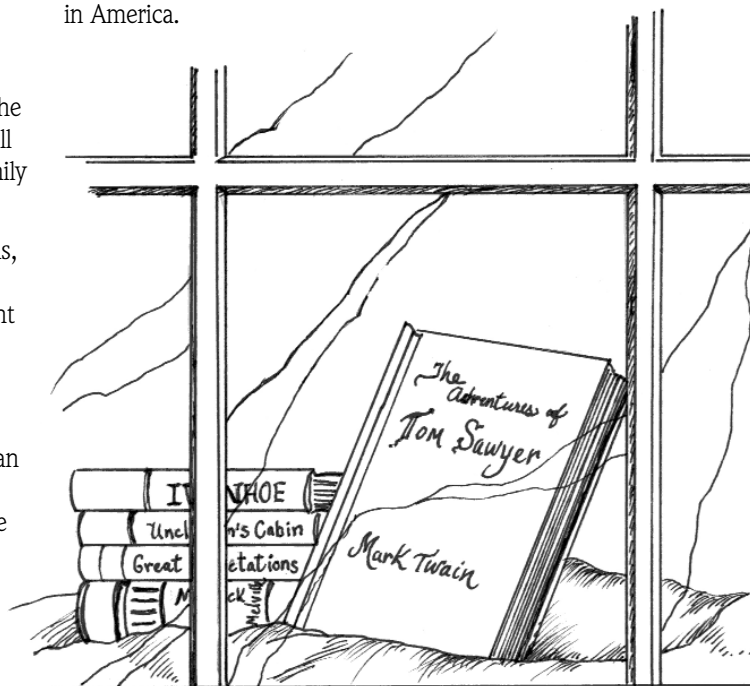
As Emily and Sam talked about the pen name, Captain Todd came down the steps from the pilothouse and said it was time to go home. Emily said good-bye to Sam and thanked him for his wonderful stories.

Emily never talked to young Sam Clemens again. A few times over the next year or two, she walked past the newspaper office where he worked with his brother. Seeing him inside, Emily waved to Sam. She could see smudges of black ink on his face, but he always flashed a big smile as he waved back.

Many years later, when she was a grown woman with several children, Emily went Christmas shopping in Hannibal. As she passed a store window, she saw a new book for sale. The title of the book was "Tom Sawyer," and the author was Mark Twain.

Emily bought that book to read to her children. For Emily, the best part of the book was when Tom Sawyer and his friend, Becky Thatcher, became lost in a cave.

As the years passed, more books were published under the name of Mark Twain. Emily collected every one of Mark Twain's books. And when she read them, she remembered the funny young boy from Hannibal who grew up to become the best storyteller in America.



*Author Kay Hively and Illustrator Billie Gofourth-Stewart are both of Neosho, Missouri.
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Things to Think About and Do

- What is a fathom? If the river water is two fathoms deep, how deep is that in feet and inches? Make a list of 10 words that are used in measurements.
- What was Sam's full name before he changed it to Mark Twain? Visit a library and see how many books you can find that were written by Mark Twain. Look for and read one of Mark Twain's short stories.