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A
Connecticut
Yankee in
King Arthur's
Court

SAMUEL
CLEMENS



Samuel Clemens

Samuel Langhorne Clemens, an American novelist, wrote under the pen name of Mark Twain. He is known as one of the major authors of American fiction and the greatest humorist in American literature. He was born in 1835 in Florida, Missouri. His family moved to Hannibal, Missouri, a village on the Mississippi River in 1839. His father died in debt in 1847, and Samuel Clemens went to work for a newspaper and printing firm.

He had little formal education, learning what he needed to know while working in the printing business. In 1857, Clemens decided to become a riverboat pilot. His pen name, *Mark Twain*, comes from a riverboat term meaning *two fathoms* (a depth of 12 feet, or 3.7 meters).

In 1861, the Civil War stopped commercial boat traffic on the Mississippi, and Clemens left the river.

He wrote many books, among them, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, which was a sequel to *Tom Sawyer*, and *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* that raise questions about certain values in the American culture of his time.

Samuel Clemens died in 1910.

Samuel Clemens

*A Connecticut
Yankee in
King Arthur's Court*



Sandy



Clarence



Hank Morgan
"A Connecticut Yankee"



King Arthur



Merlin the Magician



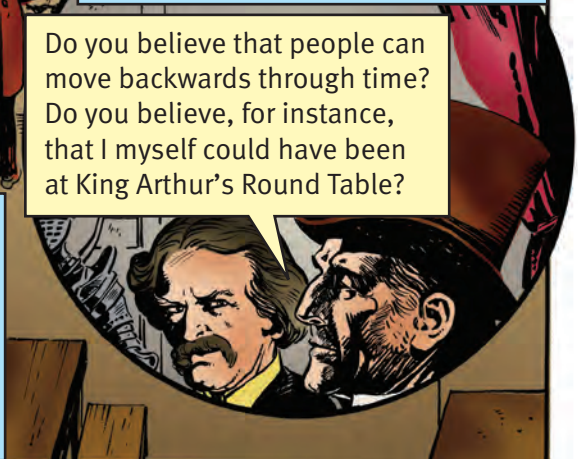
It was in Warwick, Castle, an old building in England, that I, Mark Twain, met the stranger whose story you are about to read. We were at the very edge of a group taking a tour of the castle when he began speaking to me.



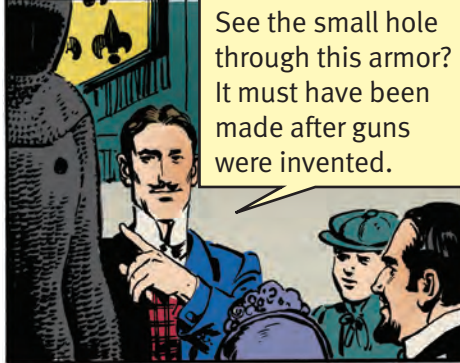
He turned to me and said something strange. He spoke as simply about this as someone else might have talked about the weather.

Do you believe that people can move backwards through time? Do you believe, for instance, that I myself could have been at King Arthur's Round Table?

As he talked, he seemed to drift in and out of this world and time. He spoke as though he had known Sir Lancelot, Sir Galahad, and all the other great men of King Arthur's court.



Before I could answer, the tour guide spoke up.



See the small hole through this armor? It must have been made after guns were invented.

The illustration shows a man in a blue suit pointing to a small hole in a piece of armor. A woman in a green hat and a man in a black suit are looking on. The background features a yellow wall with a fleur-de-lis.

My friend smiled a strange smile.



Believe it or not, I saw it happen!

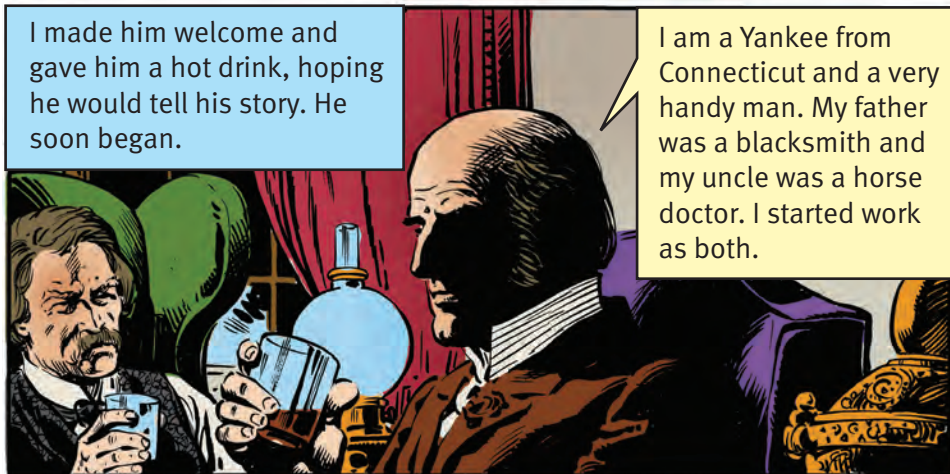
The illustration shows a man in a brown coat and hat smiling. A man with a mustache and a black suit is looking at him. A speech bubble points from the man in the brown coat to the man in the black suit.

By the time I got over my surprise at what he had said, he was gone. But later that night he came to see me.



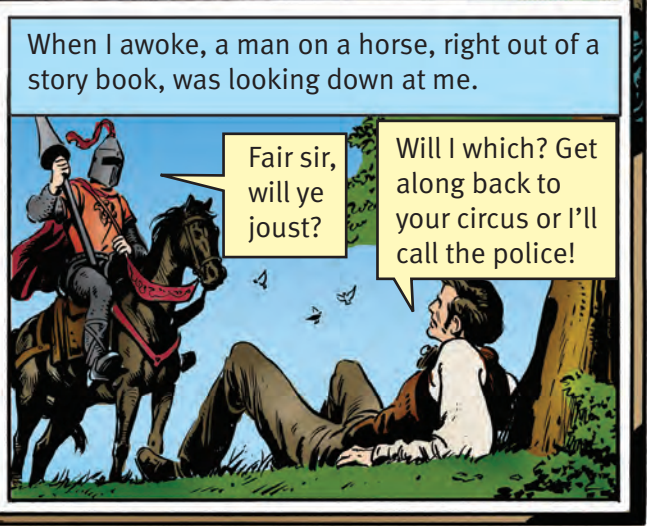
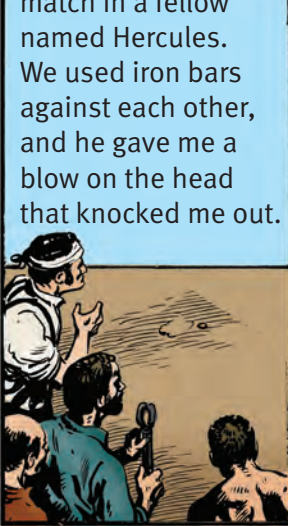
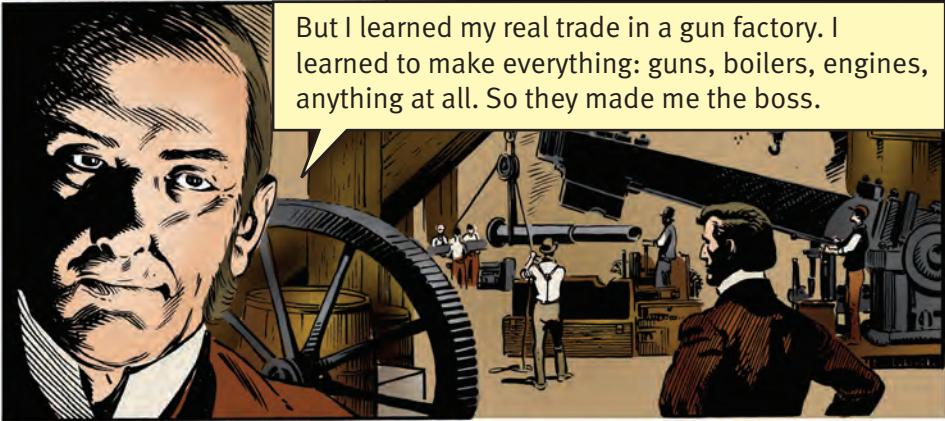
The illustration is split into two panels. The left panel shows a man with a mustache sitting in a green armchair, reading a book titled "LAURELOT" by a fire. The right panel shows a man in a brown coat standing in a doorway, looking towards the left.

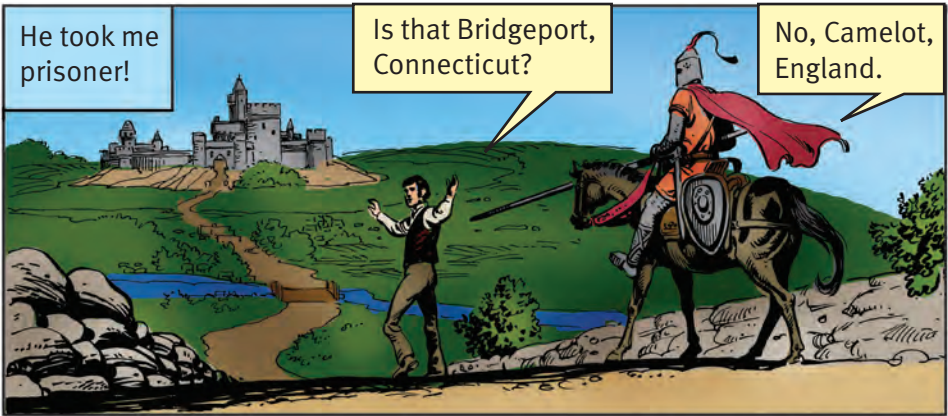
I made him welcome and gave him a hot drink, hoping he would tell his story. He soon began.



I am a Yankee from Connecticut and a very handy man. My father was a blacksmith and my uncle was a horse doctor. I started work as both.

The illustration shows a man with a mustache drinking from a glass. A man in a brown coat is standing next to him, holding a glass. A speech bubble points from the man in the brown coat to the man with the mustache.

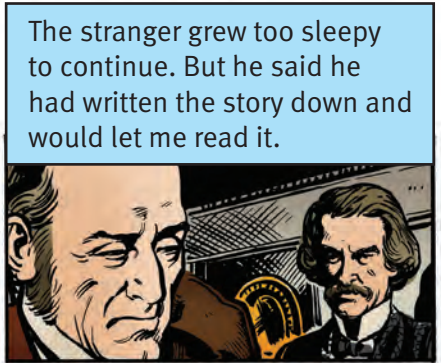




He took me prisoner!

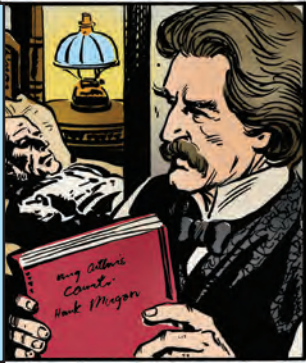
Is that Bridgeport, Connecticut?

No, Camelot, England.

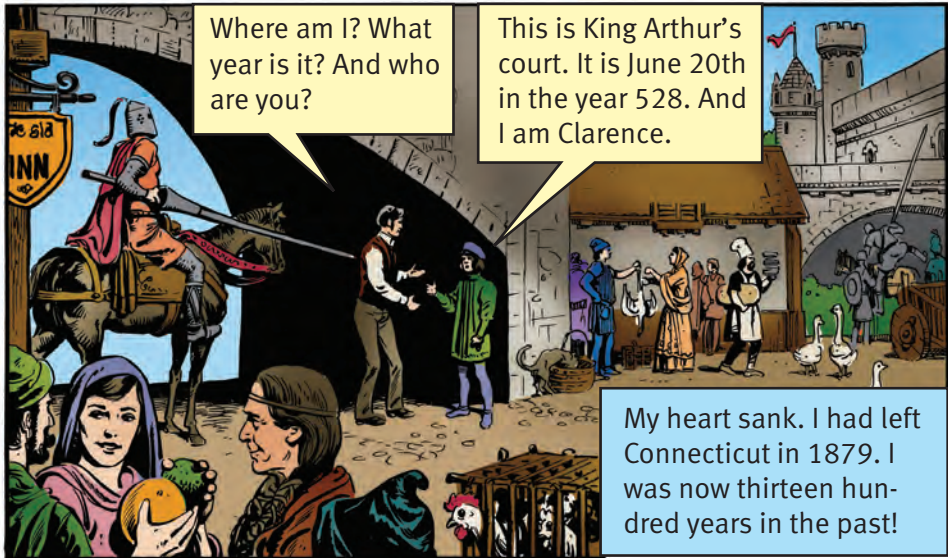


The stranger grew too sleepy to continue. But he said he had written the story down and would let me read it.

After taking him to his room and helping him to bed, I returned to my own room with the story. I began reading as follows:




The knight took me to a castle where we entered a huge paved court. I spoke to a young lad standing near me.



Where am I? What year is it? And who are you?

This is King Arthur's court. It is June 20th in the year 528. And I am Clarence.

My heart sank. I had left Connecticut in 1879. I was now thirteen hundred years in the past!



It was hard to believe, but I remembered that on June 21, 528, a total eclipse of the sun had taken place.

If I am really back in King Arthur's time, I will be able to tell the future!

As for the Round Table, it looked like a circus to me. The knights were taking turns bragging to the king about all the great things they had done.

Then it was time for Sir Kay to tell his story. He was the knight who had brought me here.

What lies he told! He claimed that he had seen me kill thirteen brave knights before he had captured me.

Before I could speak, the king sentenced me to die at noon on June 21st. My clothes were taken from me.

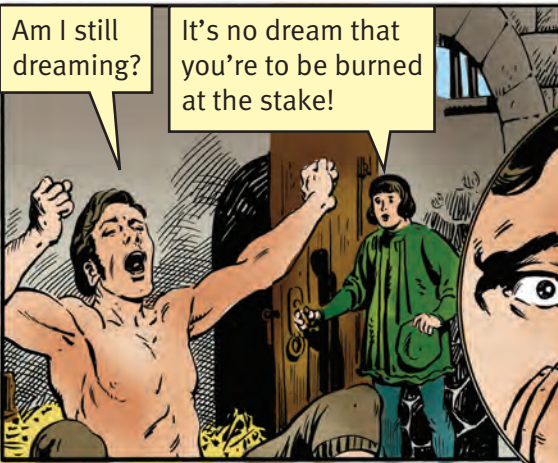


The next moment I found myself in the dungeon with moldy straw for a bed and some rats for company. But I fell asleep in spite of it all.

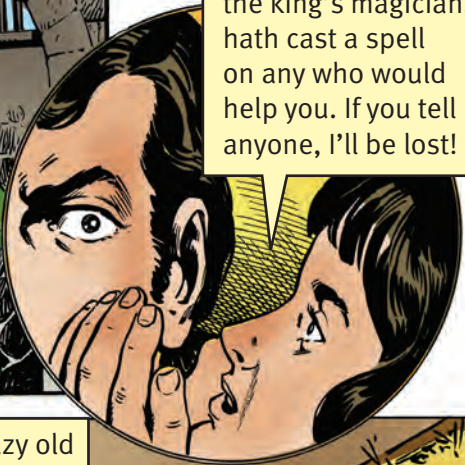


Am I still dreaming?

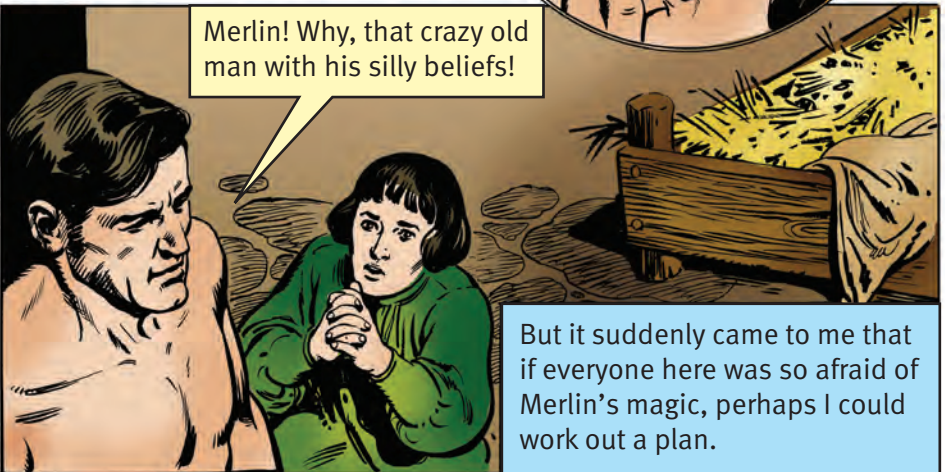
It's no dream that you're to be burned at the stake!



Worse still, Merlin, the king's magician, hath cast a spell on any who would help you. If you tell anyone, I'll be lost!



Merlin! Why, that crazy old man with his silly beliefs!



But it suddenly came to me that if everyone here was so afraid of Merlin's magic, perhaps I could work out a plan.



Tell the king that I, too, am a powerful magician! I will blot out the sun! And if I should die, it will never shine again!

As I stood at the stake the next day, the sun began to darken.

No! Please, fair sir, stop this darkness. Name your terms, but spare the sun!

Well, I figured if I really was in King Arthur's court, I might just as well make the best of it!

I should like to be your highest adviser. I should also like some clothes.

Free him! Dress him like a prince! All shall honor him! He is now the king's right hand!