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Mark Twain

Today we're going to talk about Mark Twain...in just a minute.

Mark Twain was born Samuel Clemens in 1835 in Missouri. He was one of the most well known Americans of the 19th century and is widely considered the father of modern American literature.

After time spent as a newspaper printer's apprentice, steamboat pilot, and silver miner, Samuel Clemens became a journalist under the pen name Mark Twain. His early success came as a travel correspondent, sharing detailed and humorous observations from present day Hawaii as well as Europe and the Middle East.

Twain parlayed this success into a career as a public lecturer, then as a novelist. His work was full of social criticism. He called out government corruption and attacked industrial greed in his novel, *The Gilded Age*—a term he coined. He also revolutionized the way American authors wrote, opting to use common dialects in his work. Writing how people actually spoke gave books like *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* an air of authenticity.

His knack for capturing American life was coupled with a biting sense of humor he used to satirize American culture and norms. His novel *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* aimed to expose American hypocrisy when it came to racism, slavery, and the failures of Reconstruction.

Twain died in 1910, but his public persona, humor, and discerning worldview was massively influential in both American literature and life.

Where do you see Mark Twain's influence in modern American society?