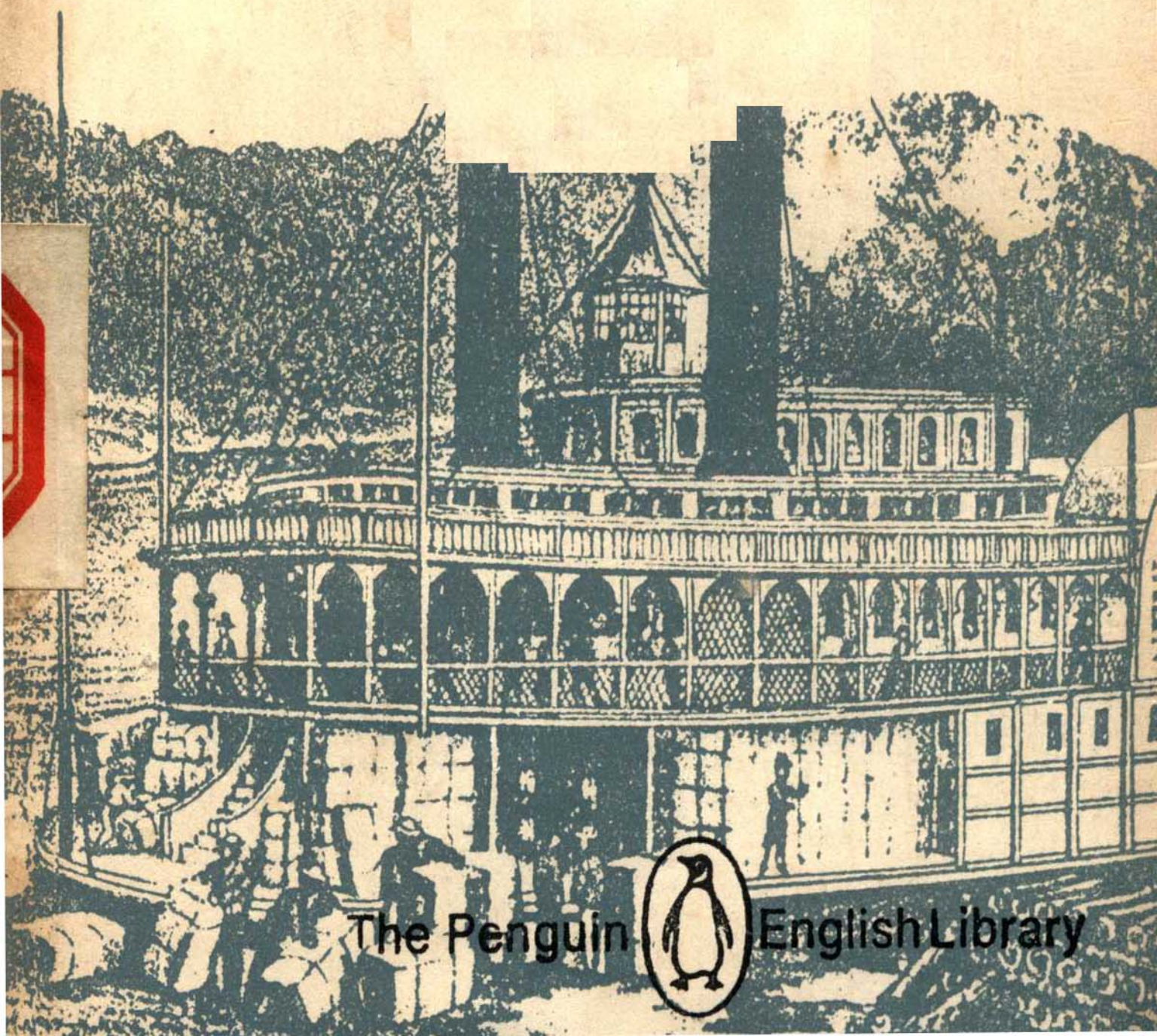


MARK TWAIN

THE ADVENTURES  
OF HUCKLEBERRY FINN



The Penguin



English Library



# The Adventures of HUCKLEBERRY FINN

MARK TWAIN

Edited with an Introduction by  
Peter Coveney



PENGUIN BOOKS

Penguin Books Ltd, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England  
Penguin Books, 625 Madison Avenue, New York, New York 10022, U.S.A.  
Penguin Books Australia Ltd, Ringwood, Victoria, Australia  
Penguin Books Canada Ltd, 2801 John Street, Markham, Ontario, Canada L3R 1B4  
Penguin Books (N.Z.) Ltd, 182-190 Wairau Road, Auckland 10, New Zealand

---

First published 1884  
Published in Penguin Books 1966  
Reprinted 1968, 1970, 1970, 1971, 1972 (twice), 1973, 1974,  
1975, 1976 (twice), 1977, 1978 (twice)

---

Introduction and notes copyright © Peter Coveney, 1966  
All rights reserved

---

Made and printed in Great Britain  
by Richard Clay (The Chaucer Press) Ltd,  
Bungay, Suffolk  
Set in Monotype Bembo

Except in the United States of America,  
this book is sold subject to the condition  
that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise  
be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated  
without the publisher's prior consent in any form of  
binding or cover other than that in which it is  
published and without a similar condition  
including this condition being imposed  
on the subsequent purchaser

## CONTENTS

Mark Twain	7
Introduction by Peter Coveney	9
Note on the Text	45
HUCKLEBERRY FINN	47
Appendix. 'The raft passage'	371
Notes	385



PENGUIN ENGLISH LIBRARY

THE ADVENTURES OF  
HUCKLEBERRY FINN

Peter Coveney is a lecturer in the History Department of Nottingham University. He is the author of *The Image of Childhood* (a Peregrine Book), and has edited George Eliot's *Felix Holt* for the Penguin English Library.



# The Adventures of HUCKLEBERRY FINN

MARK TWAIN

Edited with an Introduction by

Peter Coveney



PENGUIN BOOKS







## CONTENTS

Mark Twain	7
Introduction by Peter Coveney	9
Note on the Text	45
HUCKLEBERRY FINN	47
Appendix. 'The raft passage'	371
Notes	385





## MARK TWAIN.

SAMUEL LANGHORNE CLEMENS was born in Florida, Missouri, on 30 November 1835; his father, John Marshall Clemens, a lawyer, originating from Virginia; his mother, Jane Lampton, from Kentucky. When he was four, his family moved to Hannibal, Missouri, a small township on the Mississippi, where he continued to live until the age of eighteen. His formal education ended soon after his father's death in 1847, when he became a printer's apprentice, working for a time on the *Missouri Courier*, under the editorship of his elder brother, Orion. From 1853, he travelled widely, as a journeyman printer, in the Eastern States and in the West. As a result of a steamboat journey down the Mississippi, he met Horace Bixby, the captain of the boat, and turned to a career on the river. After an apprenticeship of one and a half years, he became a licensed pilot in 1859. He left the Mississippi at the outbreak of the Civil War, and became, in swift succession, an army volunteer, a gold prospector in Nevada, a timber speculator and a journalist. He met Artemus Ward and Bret Harte during this time and turned increasingly towards a professional literary career. While working for the *Virginia City Enterprise*, he adopted the pseudonym 'Mark Twain', the cry of a boatman taking soundings, and meaning two fathoms, i.e. twelve feet. The choice of name may have been characteristically ironic, since two fathoms was presumably an uncomfortable depth for a large steamboat. His first book, *Jumping Frog*, appeared in 1865. Assignments as a travelling reporter to the Sandwich Islands and then to the Mediterranean and Middle East brought him success as a public lecturer and also material for his first major literary success, *Innocents Abroad* (1869). He married Olivia Langdon the following year, and in 1871 established himself, as a

successful writer, in a large mansion in Hartford, Connecticut. He continued to live there for the next seventeen years. It was during this period that his most famous works were written, *Roughing It* (1872), *The Gilded Age* (1873), *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876), *Life on the Mississippi* (1883) and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884/5). He combined his writing with public lecturing and foreign travelling, becoming American ambassador at large, and acquiring an international reputation as humorist-cum-frontier-philosopher. He indulged in frequent financial speculation, particularly in type-setting machinery and the Charles L. Webster publishing house. Although his literary reputation became increasingly secure (he received an M.A. of Yale in 1888), his intellectual pessimism and despair of human nature increased with his success. *The Gilded Age*, written in collaboration with C. Dudley Warner, had already pointed towards his uneasy acceptance of the values of nineteenth-century American society. In the year of *Pudd'nhead Wilson* (1894), he was bankrupted by the failure of both the type-setting and publishing companies, and was compelled to restart his travels to raise the money to discharge his debts. It was during his absence on this voyage that his daughter Susy died. In 1898, the year that he cleared his debts, he wrote three works expressing his acute pessimism, *The Man that Corrupted Hadleyburg* (published 1900), the philosophizing treatise *What is Man?* (published 1906) and *The Mysterious Stranger* (published posthumously in 1916). From this time until his death, he maintained a bitter scepticism, relieved at times by outraged commentary on world affairs, notably on Belgian atrocities in the Congo and American behaviour in the Philippines. His last years were saddened by personal bereavement; his wife dying in 1904 and his daughter Jean in 1909. In 1906 he started preparing material for his *Autobiography*, and in 1907 received an honorary doctorate of Oxford University. He died at Redding, Connecticut, on 21 April 1910, at the age of seventy-five.



## INTRODUCTION

### I

IN the late summer of 1883, at Quarry Farm, high above Elmira in southern New York State, Samuel Langhorne Clemens completed a work which, as he put it in a letter to his brother Orion, he had 'been fooling over for 7 years'. That summer, however, he said, it had been no more trouble to him to write than it had been to lie. Going 'damp from the breakfast table each morning' to the study he had had built at the farm nine years before, he gave his inspirational talent full-rein, 'piling up manuscript in a really astonishing way' – and, incidentally, as his custom was, letting it fall on the floor about him as he wrote. In this way, at the age of forty-eight, 'in the quietest of all quiet places', Mark Twain completed what many would accept as the greatest American novel, and certainly the most important novel of the American nineteenth century, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.

It was indeed seven years earlier, in July 1876, immediately after the publication of *Tom Sawyer*, that he began 'another boy's book'. It was, he wrote, 'more to be at work than anything else'. In a month four hundred pages were written of Huck Finn's Autobiography, as he called it. But then, when he thought it very nearly half done, he decided that he liked what he had written only 'tolerably well', and considered pigeon-holing or burning the manuscript. This rushing at a work and becoming played out was nothing new to his talent. 'As long as a book would write itself,' he once wrote, 'I was a faithful and interested amanuensis . . . but the minute that the book tried to shift to *my* head the labour of contriving its situations . . . I put it away . . . my tank had run dry.' It so happened that this time his 'tank had run dry' at a particularly difficult stage. He stopped composing, probably

for three years, towards the end of what is now Chapter 16. Seven years altogether of working 'by fits and starts' were needed before he could complete the themes established in those first sixteen chapters.

In the summer of 1883, he had little conscious idea of the importance of the work he had created. In a letter to a friend, he called it no more than a 'kind of companion to *Tom Sawyer*'. For all the exhilaration of that summer he remained innocent of the scale of the work his imagination had strangely put together. Very few felt the power behind the picaresque rather untidy story. For respectable America – and the Library Committee of Concord, Massachusetts, was representative – *Huckleberry Finn* was 'rough, coarse and inelegant . . . more suited to the slums than to intelligent, respectable people'. In a phrase, it was the 'veriest trash'. To the less censorious, it seemed no more than a sequel to *Tom Sawyer*, a second boyhood romance, set in the Mississippi valley 'some forty to fifty years ago', written in the tradition of south-western humour, to which from the outset Mark Twain's talents had been recruited. Certainly the essential story is simple enough. A boy of about thirteen or fourteen decides to run away from the cruelties of a drunken father and the 'sivilizing' pressures of respectable St Petersburg society. At the moment of escape, he falls in with Jim, Miss Watson's runaway slave. Together they make their way down the Mississippi on a raft brought down on the 'June rise', travelling over a thousand miles to the Phelps's plantation in Arkansas, where the novel has its ending.

Only in this century has the importance of the novel created about this skeleton become generally accepted; that from this tale of the escape of the outcast son of the town drunkard of St Petersburg, Missouri, Mark Twain created a novel which came in time to be recognized as *the American 'classic'*. H. L. Mencken set the tone and scale of much later assessment when he declared it, in 1913, 'one of the greatest





masterpieces of the world', and asserted Twain's essential 'Americanness', seeing him as the 'true father of our national heritage, the first genuinely American artist of the blood royal'. This comes near to Hemingway's famous – and characteristic – testimony that 'all modern American literature comes from one book by Mark Twain called *Huckleberry Finn*. . . . It's the best book we've had. All American writing comes from that. There was nothing before. There has been nothing as good since.' Although this kind of rhetoric doesn't get us very far, it serves to establish the scale of reference within which *Huckleberry Finn* has come to be discussed. Even though it has long been the subject of serious critical and sometimes adverse debate, the central position remains, that any discussion of it, whether of its strength or weakness, begins from an assumption about its greatness. Bernard DeVoto's claim that it has 'a vigor, a depth, and a multiplicity which no other American novel surpasses, if in fact any equals them'; and T. S. Eliot's proposal that the character of Huckleberry Finn is 'one of the permanent symbolic figures of fiction not unworthy to take a place with Ulysses, Faust, Don Quixote, Don Juan, Hamlet and other discoveries which man has made about himself', set the radius of the circle which any account of the novel is called upon to inscribe.

## 2

Mark Twain's vague intention in starting the book was indeed to write a 'kind of companion to *Tom Sawyer*'. From the outset *Huckleberry Finn* was the 'Tom Sawyer's Comrade' of the work's ultimate sub-title. And although the novel became in the course of seven years' writing something entirely other than a sequel to *Tom Sawyer*, Twain never moved away from the theme he first established. The novel was to be about a boy's adventures in the Mississippi valley some 'forty or fifty years ago'. Boyhood and the world of the old Mississippi before the Civil War (1861-5) were the



twin points of concentration for Twain's imagination during the period 1874-83. The recollected image of his own boyhood and adolescence, in the small riverside town of Hannibal, Missouri, had enormous power over his mind. He retained in his memory a 'picture' of it, he said, 'as clear and vivid as a photograph'. It became the source for the St Petersburg of both *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn*. His recollection of the Mississippi was immeasurably entrenched by his experience as a steamboat pilot during four years of his early manhood (1857-61). Hannibal and the Mississippi, with all the complexity and nostalgia of his response to them, became the continuous focus of his work from the time when he was involved in earnest with the writing of *Tom Sawyer*. In that year (1874) he wrote the first instalment of the reminiscing *Old Times on the Mississippi*, and in the year *Tom Sawyer* was completed (1876) he started with *Huckleberry Finn*. Six years later, before that last rush of creativity which saw the end of the novel, he revisited the river valley. It was his first prolonged visit since he left the Mississippi at the outbreak of the Civil War. Out of this spring visit of 1882 came *Life on the Mississippi* and some at least of the great middle section of *Huckleberry Finn*. We now know that it was wrong to suppose that the visit caused him to take up the manuscript of the novel again, since he had already returned to it in the winter of 1879-80. Nevertheless, the visit clarified his attitudes towards the river and made him acutely aware of what had been happening on the Mississippi since he left it in 1861. In itself, the visit is important evidence of his concern with the river during the years he was at work on *Huckleberry Finn*.

Twain knew his own obsessions. He was entirely conscious of the power of boyhood and the Mississippi over his mind. In a letter of 1890, he wrote:

I confine myself to the life with which I am familiar . . . I confine myself to boy-life out on the Mississippi, because that had peculiar charm for me. . . . Now then: as the most valuable capital . . . in the