

MAKING NEW WORDS YOUR OWN

Lesson 10 | CONTEXT: Amazing Nature

Mark Twain's Mighty Mississippi

The *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain (1835–1910) tells the story of a boy living near the Mississippi River before the Civil War. Like Huck, Mark Twain, whose real name was Samuel Clemens, grew up along the Mississippi. He worked for a time as a riverboat pilot, but he is most famous for his writing.

In the following exercises, you will have the opportunity to expand your vocabulary by reading about Mark Twain's Mississippi. Below are ten Vocabulary Words that will be used in these exercises.

conviction	gossip	license	ransom	suspicion
flammable	jeopardy	pry	stray	toll

EXERCISE 1 *Wordbusting*

Directions. Follow these instructions for this word and the nine words on the next page.

- Figure out the word's meaning by looking at its **context**, its **structure**, and its **sound**. Fill in at least one of the three CSS boxes. Alternate which boxes you complete.
- Then, look up the word in a dictionary, read all of its meanings, and write the meaning of the word as it is used in the sentence.
- Follow this same process for each of the Vocabulary Words on the next page. You will need to draw your own map for each word. Use a separate sheet of paper.

1.

conviction

In *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Huck pretends to be Tom Sawyer. In real life, a person pretending to be someone else could face conviction and spend time in jail.

Context:

Structure:

Sound:

Dictionary:

2.

gossip

When he was a boy, Twain loved to hear people **gossip**. He especially enjoyed rumors and tall tales told by people who had traveled on the Mississippi.

3.

license

Twain longed to work on a steamboat. He felt that working on the river would give him the **license** to be free and independent.

4.

pry

While traveling down the Mississippi River, Twain managed to convince a pilot to teach him how to steer a steamboat. However, it was not easy to **pry** the knowledge out of the pilot.

5.

flammable

Mississippi steamboats were powered by boilers. **Flammable** materials, such as wood or coal, were burned in the boilers.

6.

toll

After the Civil War, steamboats were replaced by the railroad. The change took a **toll** on the small riverside towns, which lost money because they depended on the steamboats for trade.

7.

stray

When he was eighteen, Mark Twain decided that he wanted to wander for a while. He **strayed** from Missouri to New York and Philadelphia and then finally returned to the Mississippi River.

8.

jeopardy

Twain's finances were in **jeopardy** when he lost a great deal of money in investments between 1881 and 1894.

9.

ransom

Twain also lost money when his publishing company failed in 1894. He was left with a debt that seemed as high as the **ransom** for the release of a king.

10.

suspicion

Toward the end of his life, Twain developed a strong **suspicion** of people. He seemed to believe that people in general were greedy and untrustworthy.

EXERCISE 2 *Context Clues* 

Directions. Scan the definitions in Column A. Then, think about how the boldface words are used in the sentences in Column B. To complete the exercise, match each definition in Column A with the correct Vocabulary Word from Column B. Write the letter of your choice on the line provided. Finally, write the Vocabulary Word on the line before the definition.

COLUMN A

_____ 11. word: _____:
v. to wander from a place; to fail to concentrate; *adj.* wandering; lost; lone;
n. person or thing that wanders or is lost

_____ 12. word: _____:
n. in danger; at risk

_____ 13. word: _____:
n. a charge for; a fare; an amount lost or taken; *v.* to ring a bell slowly

_____ 14. word: _____:
n. formal permission; a legal document giving formal permission; *v.* to give permission formally

_____ 15. word: _____:
v. to raise or move by force; to obtain with difficulty; to peer or snoop; *n.* a tool for raising or moving something

_____ 16. word: _____:
n. the act of suspecting guilt; tending to cause others to believe or suspect guilt

_____ 17. word: _____:
n. holding strongly to a belief; convinced; being found legally guilty of a crime

_____ 18. word: _____:
n. a person who spreads rumors; idle talk or rumors; *v.* to spread rumors

_____ 19. word: _____:
n. the price paid for the release of a hostage; *v.* to pay money for such a release

_____ 20. word: _____:
adj. easily set on fire

COLUMN B

(A) Twain received his pilot's license in 1859. This permit gave him permission to operate steamboats.

(B) Steamboats were made out of wood. This means that they were **flammable** and burned easily.

(C) During the years that Mark Twain was a riverboat pilot, lives were often in **jeopardy** due to steamboat boiler explosions.

(D) To make river travel less dangerous, the government sent boats to **pry**, or remove, obstacles from the water.

(E) The **toll** for traveling on the river was low when Twain was alive. Now it costs much more.

(F) The Mississippi River is badly polluted today. Many people have a **suspicion** that some industries are dumping dangerous materials into the river illegally.

(G) Twain became a **stray** again after the Civil War began in 1861. He wandered all over the United States and Europe.

(H) Twain was a humorous **gossip** who loved to tell stories about his years on the Mississippi.

(I) Twain held a **conviction** about humor. He deeply believed that humor could illustrate certain human qualities and actions.

(J) In *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, Tom and Huck discover a treasure. They find enough money to **ransom** a dozen hostages.

EXERCISE 3***Like Meanings and Opposite Meanings***

Directions. For each item below, circle the letter of the choice that means the same, or about the same, as the boldface word.

21. putting lives in **jeopardy**
 (A) comfortable surroundings
 (B) an unsafe situation
 (C) a safe situation
 (D) order

24. to ransom the captives
 (A) kidnap
 (B) injure seriously
 (C) pay to release
 (D) frighten terribly

22. a license to operate a boat
 (A) permission
 (B) training
 (C) desire
 (D) request

25. to toll a bell
 (A) study
 (B) ring
 (C) cast out
 (D) repair

23. to express a **conviction**
 (A) doubt
 (B) desire
 (C) belief
 (D) promise

Directions. For each item below, circle the letter of the choice that means the opposite, or about the opposite, of the boldface word.

26. a flammable fuel
 (A) expensive
 (B) fireproof
 (C) smelly
 (D) hot

29. the **stray** cat that begs for food
 (A) lost
 (B) beautiful
 (C) unhappy
 (D) homebound

27. the **gossip** about life on the river
 (A) serious discussion
 (B) bad news
 (C) rumors
 (D) idle talk

30. a suspicion that it will rain
 (A) knowledge
 (B) guess
 (C) worry
 (D) bet

28. to pry into personal affairs
 (A) ask about
 (B) stay out of
 (C) fall
 (D) snoop