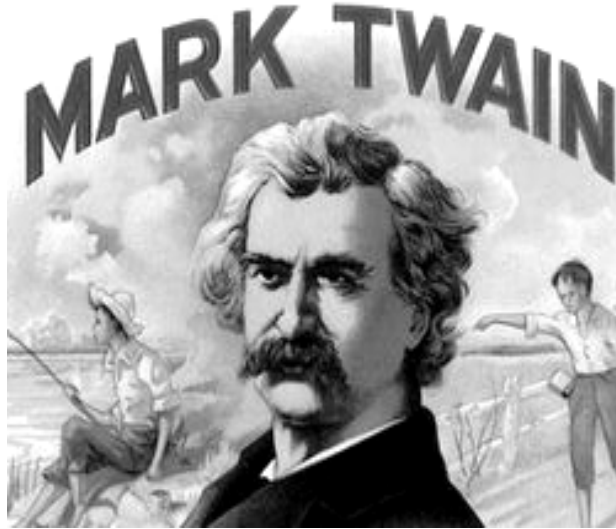


# American Tall Tales!

featuring



Directed and Adapted by Katie McCrary

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Study Guide Created by The Will Power Ensemble

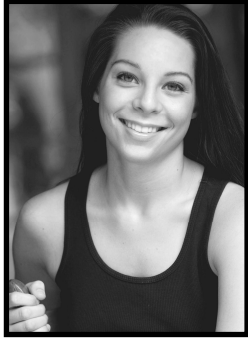
Edited by

Allen O'Reilly, Education Director

Katie McCrary, Education Coordinator

Sarah Robinson, Development Manager

## The Will Power Ensemble



**Ann Marie Gideon** is delighted to be joining Georgia Shakespeare this season! Most recently she participated in the 61st annual National Players tour (*Much Ado About Nothing/Hero* and *Lord of the Flies/Sam*). She graduated with a BFA in Acting from the University of Memphis and completed a semester of training at the Accademia dell'Arte in Arezzo, Italy. So much love to my amazing family!



**Brian Harrison** is originally from the Atlanta area. He has recently performed at New Stage Theatre in Jackson, MS, having played Reverend Sykes in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and Willie/Young Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol*. Brian is a graduate of Ball State University.



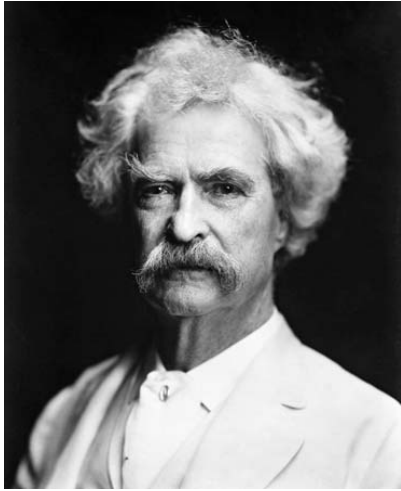
**Casey Hoekstra** graduated this May with a BFA in Acting from the UMN Guthrie Theater Actor training program. Last summer he interned here at Georgia Shakespeare and particularly enjoyed playing Demetrius in *Titus Andronicus* and Mustardseed the Fair in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. He's very excited to have been invited back and is looking forward to creating some theater with the Will Power Ensemble! Casey is also thrilled to have some time to pluck at the guitar and read anything that isn't a textbook.



**Caitlin McWethy** is a recent graduate of Drew University. Most recently she directed her senior thesis production of *As You Like It* on the stage of the Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey. She has performed Off-Broadway with the 52nd Street Project (*King Lear/Goneril*), Manhattan Theatre Club, and The 9th Avenue Theatre Project. Educational credits include *Easter* (Leah), *Talking With...* (Twirler), and *101 Humiliating Stories* (Lisa). She spent last summer wielding broadswords with the amazing Colleen Kelly (former Society of American Fight Directors vice-president) at the American Shakespeare Center.

**\*The Will Power Ensemble is made possible through the generous support of The Goizueta Foundation.**

## About Mark Twain



Samuel Clemens was born on November 30, 1835, in the small town of Florida, Missouri as the sixth child to John and Jane Clemens. When he was four years old, the family moved to Hannibal Missouri, right on the banks of the great river that would influence so much of his imagination and later writing, the mighty Mississippi.

Samuel's father died when he was 12, from pneumonia, and shortly after young Samuel dropped out of school to work as a printer's apprentice for his brother's newspaper. It was during this job that Samuel discovered his love of language and grew interested in writing.

When Samuel was 17, he moved to St. Louis to be a printer. He also took on the job of a river pilot's apprentice in order to explore the Mississippi River he had learned to love as a child. He enjoyed navigating the river's currents and soon became a licensed river pilot himself in 1858. It was on the Mississippi that Samuel Clemens took up the name Mark Twain, which he would use as a pseudonym in his writings. Mark Twain is a boatman term meaning two fathoms (or 12 feet of water). If the depth of water a boat was in was "Mark Twain" or a full 12 feet of water, then the pilot knew it was safe to take the boat there. Mark Twain means "safe water".

The Civil War brought the river boat trade on the Mississippi to a crashing halt. Samuel Clemens, now armed with his new name, Mark Twain, went back to work as a printer and writer for a local newspaper. It was during this time that Twain began to write the stories that have become American Classics, such as *The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County* in 1865, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* in 1876, and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* in 1885. Twain wrote 28 books in all, as well as numerous short stories, essays, and letters that are still read to this day.

Mark Twain passed away in April 21, 1910, but he is remembered to this day by those who continue to read his stories, visit his boyhood home in Hannibal, and attend the annual jumping frog festival in Calaveras County, California.

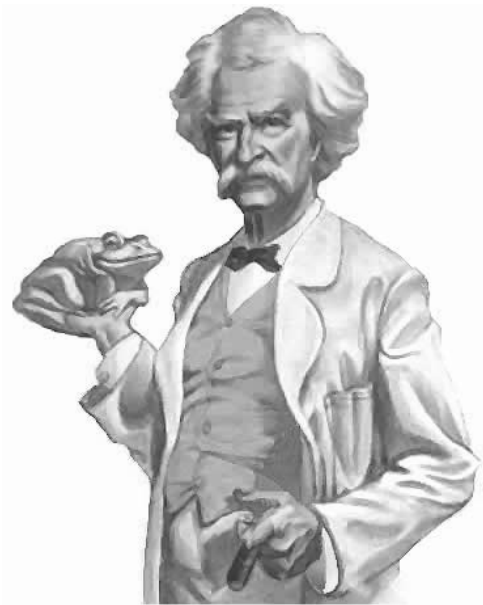
**"Humor is mankind's greatest blessing." - Mark Twain**

# ABOUT THE PLAY

Georgia Shakespeare's *American Tall Tales! Featuring Mark Twain* is an adaptation of a series of stories, fables, and anecdotes by the classic American writer, Mark Twain.

## The Notorious Jumping Frog of Calaveras County

The first story we visit is told by the long-winded story teller, Simon Wheeler. In one of his ramblings, he tells the tale of the "enterprising vagabond", Jim Smiley, and his affinity for gambling. Smiley would bet on anything! One day, upon meeting a stranger, Smiley decides to bet that his frog, Dan'l Webster, can jump higher than any other frog. The stranger agrees to this challenge, but when Smiley isn't looking, the stranger pours "quail shot" into the frog's mouth. This weighs the frog down so much that it can't jump, and Smiley is surprisingly outsmarted.



### Cast

Simon Wheeler/Stranger	Ann Marie Gideon
Jim Smiley	Casey Hoekstra
Dan'l Webster/Parson Walker	Brian Harrison
Parson Walker's Wife	Caitlin McWethy

## The Capitoline Venus

The next tale is about "Twain's" history of the famous Capitoline Venus statue in Rome. A young American sculptor is troubled because he cannot make any money by selling his beautiful statue and, thus, cannot marry his true love. His boyhood friend, John, intervenes, shockingly destroying the beautiful statue, and declares that he can raise the money that the young artist needs in six months. Six months later, the young artist becomes rich and famous and marries his true love, all because of a silly scheme that would fool the Pope himself!

### Cast

George Arnold	Casey Hoekstra
Mary/ Mary's Father	Caitlin McWethy
John Smitthe	Brian Harrison
The Statue	Ann Marie Gideon



## The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn



[SEE PAGE 78]

*"My hands shook, and I was making a bad job of it."*

Our excerpt from one of Twain's most renowned stories follows young Huck Finn at the beginning of his journey down the Mississippi River. Huck is fed up with being "sivilized" and decides to run away from home. Upon his first night away, he stumbles upon a runaway slave, named Jim, but promises Jim that he won't tell anybody. Jim and Huck become fast friends. One day Huck decides to disguise himself as a girl in order to find out the gossip of the town. He learns that the people of the town think that Huck is dead and that Jim had something to do with it. Suddenly, Huck realizes he and Jim need to get out of there fast before he's discovered, and that the only way to save both of them would be to run away together.

### Cast

Huckleberry Finn	Ann Marie Gideon & Casey Hoekstra
Jim	Brian Harrison
Mrs. Judith Loftus	Caitlin McWethy

## A Fable

In our final story, an artist paints a lovely picture and places the picture in front of a mirror, thinking the reflection is prettier than the painting itself. His cat attempts to explain the painting to all of the other animals, but when each animal goes to inspect the painting, they wind up standing in front of the mirror and seeing *themselves*! While all the animals disagree as to what the picture really is, the cat gives us a timeless moral we can all apply to our everyday lives.

### Cast

The Cat	Brian Harrison
Artist/The Ass	Casey Hoekstra
The Bear	Caitlin McWethy
The Cow/The Elephant, Haithi	Ann Marie Gideon



## Defining Twain's World

- **Pseudonym:** a fictitious name used by an author to conceal his or her identity; pen name (ex. Samuel Clemens, aka "Mark Twain")
- **Notorious:** widely and unfavorably known
- **Calaveras County:** county in California between Yosemite and Lake Tahoe ( The city of Angel's Camp still has a jumping frog contest each May to honor its inclusion in Twain's tale.)
- **Compliance:** cooperation and obedience
- **Garrulous:** especially talkative, usually about trivial matters
- **Append:** add onto as a supplement
- **Conjectured:** formation of opinion or theory; guesswork; speculation
- **Reminiscence:** recalling past events
- **Dilapidated:** fallen into partial ruin or decay from wear, age, and neglect
- **Interminable:** without end; having no limits
- **Transcendent:** beyond ordinary limits; surpassing; superior
- **Flume:** an artificial channel for conducting water, used to transport logs or provide water power
- **Consumption:** the act of consuming with use, decay, or destruction
- **Cavorting:** to prance and caper about; to behave in a high spirited or festive manner
- **Quail-shot:** a size of lead shot used in shotgun cartridges, usually the preferred size for hunting quail.
- **Vagabond:** a person who wanders from place to place without a set home
- **Callate:** to decide
- **Brillat-Savarin:** (bree-YAH sah-vah-RAHN) French lawyer and politician who gained fame as an epicure and gastronome - developed the gastronomic essay
- **Delmonico:** (del-mon-i-koh): founded first luxury French restaurant, Delmonico's, in New York City
- **Capitoline:** hill between the Roman Forum and the Campus Martius; largest and most important of the 7 hills of Rome
- **Obdurate:** unmoved by persuasion or feelings; stubborn
- **Arrears:** in debt
- **Fragmentary:** in pieces
- **Grotesque:** odd or unnatural in shape, appearance, or character.
- **Via Quirinalis:** important road in Rome that leads from Capitoline Hill to Quirinal Hill (*via* means road in Italian)
- **Duns:** repeated and insistent demands, especially for payment
- **Propitious:** presenting favorable conditions
- **Campagna:** small region in southern Italy
- **Excavations:** where digging has taken place on an archeological site.

- **Remuneration:** reward or pay for service
- **Commission:** an authoritative order or charge; a given task to accomplish
- **Sugar-hogshead:** a large barrel used for holding and storing sugar
- **Fantod:** (fan-todd) a state of extreme nervousness or restlessness
- **Calico:** a plain woven, cotton textile
- **Tolerable:** capable of being endured
- **Powder-horn:** powder flask made from cow/ox horn
- **Sesquipedalian:** a person given to using very long words (very much like Mark Twain himself)



## Themes

### Deception and Trickery

Mark Twain's stories are full of deception and little tricks that the characters play on each other. Some of the tricks are playful and cause no real harm, while others (such as Huck faking his own death) are very dangerous. Twain enjoys tricksters and how characters are able to fool each other. Often in his stories, those who play tricks for fun and with good intentions will come out alright in the end, while those who play malicious or nasty tricks will usually get caught.

Questions:

1. When did characters in the stories fool each other?
2. Do you think there is a difference between fooling someone for fun and playing a mean trick on someone?
3. When have you played a trick on someone for fun or with good intentions?

### Race---and Morality

*The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is set in the Pre-Civil War South, when slavery separated people of different races. In the story, Jim is a runaway slave trying to escape to freedom in the North. The law tells Huck he should turn Jim over and back into slavery, but Huck's own morals tell him this would be wrong.

Questions:

1. Do you think Huck should have turned Jim in because it was the law, or did Huck do the right thing in accepting Jim as a friend and not turning him in?
2. If there were a law that you believed was unjust and immoral, do you think you would obey the law or do what *you* think is right?

Mark Twain didn't think slavery was right, so when he wrote Jim into the story of Huck Finn he wanted people to think about the effect on slaves, slave owners, and the people like Jim who are given the chance to decide. At one point in the story, Huck actually dresses up as a girl to go into town and find out what the news is about the escaped slave, Jim. Huck sneaks about, lies about who he is, and even steals in order to help Jim.

### Questions:

1. Do you think that Huck is right when he lies about who he is to help keep Jim out of slavery? Why or why not?
2. What would you have done?

### Perspective

Twain loves to create complex characters that see the world very differently. Smiley sees the world as a game of chance that he can bet on, George and Mary see the world full of obstacles for their love, and Huck Finn's world is a playground full of games that end in difficult decisions. Twain likes to ask us to look at the world from multiple perspectives and understand why people might act the way they do depending on how they see the world.

### Questions:

1. What's one way you could describe the world as you see it? Is it hard or easy? Fun or difficult? Is it adventurous or routine?
2. Why do you think it might be important to understand how other people see the world? How does it help us understand and appreciate them?

### Exercise:

1. Have everyone write an idea about how they might see the world (ex: a mountain to climb, a playground to have fun on, a party) Give them possible examples to spark their imagination and tell them it can be anything.
2. Give the students the option of drawing a picture of the world they see.
3. Ask if anyone would like to share what they've drawn and written and explain it to the class.
4. Compare differences in what was written/drawn, "the world is all of these things that we've drawn and written, because we all see different pieces of the world and all of us bring our own unique perspective."
5. Why might it be important to understand how other people see the world that we all have to share?

## TWAIN Activity-Study Guide

### Exploring how Dialects Reveal Character

*Twain uses dialects in his writing to emphasize specific features about who that character is, where they come from, their customs, education, and history. This is especially true when Twain wants to tell you something about the region that character is from.*

#### Exercise:

2. Have students read for Huck and Jim from the passage that we have selected and "corrected".

**Huck:** Hello, Jim!

**Jim:** "Don't hurt me---don't! I haven't ever done any harm to a ghost. I always liked dead people, and did everything I could for them. You go get in the river again where you belong, and don't do anything to Old Jim. I was always your friend.

**Huck:** Well I didn't take long making him understand that I wasn't dead. I was so glad to see Jim. I wasn't lonely anymore. I told him I wasn't afraid of him telling people where I was. I kept talking, but he only sat there and looked at me, not saying anything. And then I said: let's get breakfast. Make the campfire."

**Jim:** What good is it to make the campfire to cook strawberries and such stuff? But you have a gun don't you? Then we can get something better than strawberries.

**Huck:** Strawberries and such stuff? Is that what you live on.

**Jim:** I couldn't get anything else!

**Huck:** How long have you been on this island Jim?

**Jim:** I came here the night after you were killed.

**Huck:** what? All that time?

**Jim:** Yes indeed.

**Huck:** and you haven't had anything but rubbish to eat?

**Jim:** No sir. Nothing else.

**Huck:** well you must be starving, aren't you?

**Jim:** I think I could eat a horse.

3. This second passage is straight out of Twain's *Huck Finn* and Twain has written the words as he hears the characters speaking. See you is can sound out how Twain's characters spoke.

4. Listen and see if you think Twain's writing changes how you think about Huck or Jim.

**Huck:** "Hello, Jim!"

**Jim:** "Doan' hurt me—don't! I hain't ever done no harm to a ghos'. I alwuz liked dead people, en done all I could for 'em. You go en git in de river ag'in, whah you b'longs, en doan' do nuffn to Ole Jim, 'at 'uz alwuz yo' fren'."

**Huck:** Well, I warn't long making him understand I warn't dead. I was ever so glad to see Jim. I warn't lonesome now. I told him I warn't afraid of him telling the people where I was. I talked along, but he only set there and looked at me; never said nothing. Then I says: "It's good daylight. Le's get breakfast. Make up your camp-fire good."

**Jim:** "What's de use er makin' up de camp-fire to cook strawbries en sich truck? But you got a gun, hain't you? Den we kin git sumfn better den strawbries."

**Huck:** "Strawberries and such truck," I says. "Is that what you live on?"

**Jim:** "I couldn' git nuffn else," he says!

**Huck:** "Why, how long you been on the island, Jim?"

**Jim:** "I come heah de night arter you's killed."

**Huck:** "What, all that time?"

**Jim:** "Yes-indeedy."

**Huck:** "And ain't you had nothing but that kind of rubbageto eat?"

**Jim:** "No, sah—nuffn else."

**Huck:** "Well, you must be most starved, ain't you?"

**Jim:** "I reck'n I could eat a hoss."

## Discussion

1. Which way did you prefer the passage? Why?
2. Do you think about Huck or Jim differently after reading the second passage?
3. Do you have a better idea of who these characters are or where they are from?

### 3. Creating their own way of speaking!

1. Ask the students to think about creating their own character. They can choose where they come from, what the temperature is like there, how old they are, what they look like, anything and everything about that character!
2. Try giving them examples like EX: if the character lives underwater does he gargle when he/she talks? EX: If they are very old does it take them a looooong tiiiiiiiime to saaaaaay thiiiiiiiings?
3. Give them 5-10 minutes to create. Encourage them to try speaking out loud with various voices they are thinking about, and then to each other in various voices that they like the most.
4. Ask if there is anyone who would like to say something to the class in the voice, as simple as EX: "My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and my character is from \_\_\_\_\_. Their favorite food is \_\_\_\_\_."
5. Finally, ask other students what they thought the other students voices told them about the characters they had created. Ask for lots of different opinions on the same voice and see what different students think different voices tell us about character.