

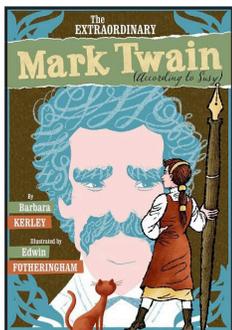


CRUCHLEY'S COLLECTION

Diana Cruchley is an award-winning educator and author, who has taught at elementary and secondary levels. Her workshops are practical, include detailed handouts, and are always enthusiastically received.

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THE EXTRAORDINARY MARK TWAIN (ACCORDING TO SUSY)

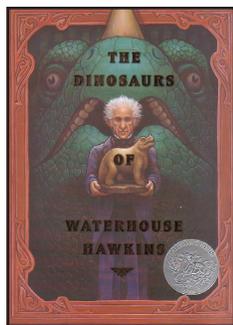


A collection of anecdotes about the “real” Mark Twain who lives at home with his family, as told by his beloved daughter Susy.

Barbara Kerley, Scholastic, ©2010, ISBN 978-0-545-12508-6

BARBARA KERLEY'S BOOKS

Barbara Kerley has a website describing the approximately 8 books she has written, including lesson ideas for most of them. My favourite of these is *The Dinosaurs of Waterhouse Hawkins* (a Caldecott winner) the story of the Victorian man who first assembled and displayed the bones of dinosaurs.



FUN WITH STRAIGHT PENS

Acquire a class set of straight pens and nibs, and a supply of ink so that students can try to write a journal entry using the materials that Susy would have used. Remind students that children in BC schools in the 1950's started with pencils, and in about grade 3 were allowed to “graduate” to the straight pen if their writing was neat enough.

PERSONAL WRITING

A springboard from a picture book to personal writing should provide at least three topics if possible. Here are some ideas:

1. What my parents appreciate about me, with anecdotes as examples.
2. What I appreciate about my parents with anecdotes as examples.
3. My “secret” private places. (Susy hides her diary under her pillow.)
4. My writing method (when, where, how, proofreading, e-mail, etc.)

VOCABULARY

This picture book has some terrific vocabulary words in it to explore with students: *quirky, billiards, pronouncement, drought, ferocious, inspiration, distracted, leaves of a book, quarry, procession, anchored, incessantly, deficiency, mugwump, chronicled, correspondent, impressive, manuscript, irksome, in good trim, despite, and expurgate, anecdote, prominent, copyright, gait, balk, octagonal, and manuscript.* These *might* be all of them...but then again.

SPINAL MENINGITIS

Susy died at age 24 in 1886 of spinal meningitis. This could be a time to ask students in groups to create a rapid writing assignment and an oral presentation on various diseases that attack neurologically:

- spinal meningitis
- multiple sclerosis
- Parkinson's
- epilepsy
- dementia

SPELLING MISTAKES

Mark Twain says that his daughter's spelling was “*frequently desperate*”. Give students her spellings and ask them to spell them correctly - time them if you want to add some pressure. Add 5 seconds for every word they still misspell.

Her incorrect words are: *discribed, incorrectly, mustache, exept, extrordinary, sute, doute, Misouri, in good trimm, varius, chreatures (for creatures), expergate, donky, prosession.*

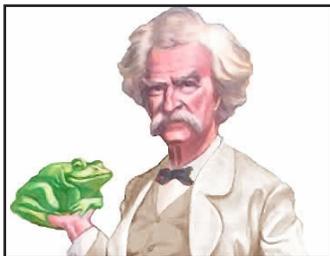
The first English dictionary was written by Samuel Johnson in 1755. The first American dictionary was Noah Webster's in 1806. After this spelling began to “solidify” into “correct” and “incorrect” spelling. Susy was writing in 1885.

EXTRAORDINARY MARK TWAIN, p. 2

WORDS FOR AUTHORS

There are many words peculiar to being an author which students could learn as part of a mini-themed vocabulary unit. Many of these words appear in this picture book. Some sample words might be:

- *draft*
- *manuscript*
- *editor*
- *proofreader*
- *publisher*
- *copyright*
- *expurgate*
- *chronicle*
- *biography*
- *memoir*
- *autobiography*
- *leaves of a book*
- *bind*
- *index*
- *glossary*
- *spine*



THE CELEBRATED JUMPING FROG OF CALAVERAS COUNTY

Find and read this short story to your students. It is the first piece of writing of Mark Twain (Frances Longhorne Clemens) that made him famous across the USA and was published in 1865. Calaveras County has held a jumping frog contest/festival every year since 1928. Show the students a YouTube of the contest in action. This way students can appreciate how funny Mark Twain is and perhaps seek out other writings of his.

A BOOK “IN THE STYLE OF..”

This book has a particular style. For the most part it is a kind of story of Susy’s foray into biography. However, glued into place in the book are miniature excerpts from Susy’s actual words. In Social Studies this could take the form of the story of an explorer (for example) with inserted pages from his “diary” commenting on the events described on that page. In Science, it could be the story of a whale’s life (for example) with interspersed diary items from the whale. In art, a research report on a particular artist, with short imaginary diary inserts on occasion. Be sure they realize the diary entries need only be 2-3 sentences long.

WRITING AN EXTRAORDINARY BIOGRAPHY

In the last page of the book, Barbara Kerley, provides a 6 step approach to writing a biography. Students select someone they admire to write a biography of (a parent?). As you read the book aloud, ask students to make note of the methods that Susy uses to write her biography and then write theirs using the same system. This is a good listening skill and they are likely to note the following:

- a description of the person
- quirks and not so fine qualities
- anecdotes
- what the person says about themselves
- the early years
- public and private life (wife/husband/children)
- daily routine
- achievements

Duplicate Barbara Kerley’s page and discuss with students prior to them trying their hand at biography. Tell them you want an “authorized” biography (which means discussing it with the person they are writing about.)

MARK TWAIN AND COPYRIGHT

Mark Twain was particularly interested in copyright that protected an author’s intellectual property. In 1906 he was the final and featured speaker before a government inquiry into the proposed copyright legislation. It mattered to him as a source of income through his lifetime, his wife’s, and that of his children. Read the quote to the students. If they are old enough, they may be interested in the entire speech at bpmlegal.com/cotwain/html or by googling *Mark Twain on Copyright*.

Discuss the issue of copyright with students. How long? For whom is the benefit? What about their own potential violations of copyright from the internet?

I am interested particularly and especially in the part of the bill which concerns my trade. I like that extension of copyright life to the author's life and fifty years afterward. I think that would satisfy any reasonable author, because it would take care of his children. Let the grand-children take care of themselves. That would take care of my daughters, and after that I am not particular. I shall then have long been out of this struggle, independent of it, indifferent to it.