

# **No. 44, The Mysterious Stranger Study Guide**

## **No. 44, The Mysterious Stranger by Mark Twain**

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# Introduction

Mark Twain's posthumously published story "No. 44, The Mysterious Stranger" is a bizarre tale of supernatural and dreamlike events that take place at the dawn of the age of modern printing in Europe is the last major work of fiction by one of the greatest American authors of the nineteenth century.

"No. 44, The Mysterious Stranger" is narrated by August Feldner, a sixteen-year-old printer's apprentice living in a remote Austrian village in the late fifteenth century. The print shop in which he works is located in a run-down old castle, which houses over a dozen people, including the print master, his family, and the various men who work in the shop, as well as a magician. August relates the magical events that occur in the castle after the arrival of a strange boy who says his name is "Number 44, New Series 864,962." Twain's central themes in this story include dreams and the imagination, as well as ideas, knowledge, and thought.

The publishing history of Twain's "No. 44, The Mysterious Stranger," subtitled "Being an Ancient Tale Found in a Jug, and Freely Translated from the Jug," is almost as interesting as the story itself. In 1916, six years after his death, Twain's editors published a story entitled "The Mysterious Stranger," which they attributed to Twain's authorship. However, it was discovered during the 1960s that the story as it was originally published had been significantly altered by the editors in a manner that was clearly not Twain's intent. Thus, the story that passed for "The Mysterious Stranger" for over 50 years is now considered to be illegitimate. In 1969, the authoritative version of the story, "No. 44, The Mysterious Stranger," based on Twain's original manuscript, was published for the first time. The following entry is based on a reading of the latter version of the story, which will be referred to in shorthand as "The Mysterious Stranger."



## Author Biography

Mark Twain is the pen name of Samuel Langhorne Clemens, who was born November 30, 1835, in Florida, Missouri, the youngest of six children. The family eventually moved to nearby Hannibal, Missouri, which Twain later described as an ideal place for a boy to grow up. When he was eleven years old, his father died, and Twain was made to find work in order to help support the family. At thirteen, he ended his formal education and became a full time printer's apprentice, an experience that formed the basis of the print shop described in his posthumously published story "No. 44, The Mysterious Stranger."

During the early 1850s, Twain worked intermittently for various newspapers founded by his brother Orion, and traveled throughout the United States, contributing humorous travel sketches to popular periodicals. In 1856, Twain met the riverboat pilot Horace Bixby, who inspired him to learn to pilot steamboats traveling up and down the Mississippi River. Twain's experiences as a "cub" pilot apprenticed to Bixby, and later as a licensed pilot, are recounted in his autobiographical novel *Life on the Mississippi* (1877). With the advent of the Civil War, however, river trade between North and South was suspended, and Twain was compelled to find work elsewhere.

During the 1860s, Twain traveled extensively throughout the western United States and Europe, building his reputation as the author of humorous travel sketches published in a variety of journals and newspapers. He first published under the pen name Mark Twain in 1863, at the age of 27, based on the phrase "mark twain" used by riverboat pilots to designate areas of the river deep enough to ensure safe passage. His first great success came with the publication of the tall tale "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County" in 1865, which brought him critical attention and national recognition.

Twain married Olivia Langdon in 1870, and the couple moved to Hartford, Connecticut, where they resided for some 20 years. Many of Twain's most highly regarded works were published during the 1870s and 1880s, including *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876) and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884), considered to be his masterpiece and a landmark in American fiction.

In his final decades, Twain met with personal tragedy and financial ruin. Despite international success as one of America's preeminent authors, Twain went bankrupt during the early 1890s. He worked diligently giving lecture tours throughout Europe, Africa, and Asia, in order to pay off his debts. During this period, the eldest of his three daughters died of meningitis. In 1904 his wife died, and a few years later another one of his daughters died as a result of an epileptic seizure. Not long after, his one remaining daughter became mentally ill. Twain died in Connecticut, on April 21, 1910.



# Plot Summary

"The Mysterious Stranger" is narrated by August Feldner, a sixteen-year-old printer's apprentice. The events of the story take place in 1490, in the small village of Eseldorf, Austria.

August lives and works in a run-down old castle where the print shop is located. Heinrich Stein, a man in his mid-50s and the master of the print shop, is referred to throughout the story as "the master." The master lives in the castle with his wife, Frau Stein, and her seventeen-year-old daughter from a previous marriage, Marie Vogel. The master's sister, Frau Regen, and her seventeen-year-old daughter Marget Regen also live there. In addition to August, there are six other men who work in the print shop and live in the castle: Adam Binks, Gustav Fischer, Moses Haas, Hans Katzenhammer, Barty Langbein, and Ernest Wasserman. A magician by the name of Balthasar Hoffman lives in the castle as well.

One day, a boy of about sixteen or seventeen shows up at the castle, dressed in rags and begging for food. When he is asked his name, he tells them it is "Number 44, New Series 864,962." On hearing this unusual name, most of the members of the household protest that he should be turned out. However, Katrina, the old cook, comes to his defense, and insists that he be taken in. The master agrees to allow Number 44 to work in the castle doing chores.

Soon, the master offers Number 44 a position as apprentice in the print shop. Most of the men working in the shop take an immediate disliking to Number 44, and do everything they can to overwork and humiliate him. August feels sympathy for Number 44, but knows that if he says anything in Number 44's defense, he will be ostracized by the others. The inhabitants of the castle begin to believe that Number 44 has magical powers, and they assume that the magician, Balthasar, has given him these powers.

Eventually, August secretly befriends Number 44. Number 44 explains that, although Balthasar did give him some magic power, he already had magical powers before he arrived. Number 44 states that he wishes to promote the idea that his powers come from Balthasar, so as to bolster the magician's reputation. Number 44 teaches August to make himself invisible. August also learns that Number 44 can read his thoughts.

The men who work in the print shop demand that Number 44 be turned out, but the master refuses to do so. Finally, they decide to go on strike until Number 44 is gotten rid of. The print shop is supposed to complete the publication of an order of Bibles, but the work cannot get done as long as the men are on strike. Upset by these events, the master becomes ill and takes to his bed.

In the midst of this crisis, the itinerant printer Doangivadam arrives at the castle. Upon learning of the situation, Doangivadam immediately takes sides with Number 44 against the other print shop workers. One night, they all go up to the shop and find that invisible



workers are magically printing the Bibles. By morning, the Bible order is complete and the crisis is over, though the men are still on strike.

The men of the shop determine that Balthasar has given Number 44 the magical powers to complete the Bible printing without them. They threaten to have Balthasar burned as a heretic unless he promises to prevent Number 44 from performing any more magic. Balthasar states that, if Number 44 performs any more magic, he will cast a spell that will reduce the young man to ashes.

One night, the men are all eating together, and suddenly each man finds that his Duplicate has appeared in the room. The Duplicates, who look exactly like their Originals, explain that they are willing to work in the print shop, and give their wages over to their Originals, who will be able to get paid without working. Once this is agreed to, the Duplicates and the Originals live together in the castle, the Duplicates doing all the work and the Originals lounging around.

Seeing that Number 44 has performed magic in causing the Duplicates to appear, Balthasar turns him to ashes right before everyone's eyes. They hold a funeral and bury Number 44's remains—but when August returns to his room that night, Number 44 is sitting in a chair, alive and well. No one but August knows that Number 44 is not really dead.

Meanwhile, word has gotten out that Balthasar magically killed Number 44. The local priest, Father Adolf, determines that Balthasar is possessed by the Devil, and orders that he be burned at the stake. However, Balthasar cannot be found anywhere. Father Adolf then determines that the Duplicates are evil spirits, and condemns them to be burned at the stake. But each time he captures one of them, the Duplicate disappears before he is burned, and reappears in the print shop. One day, Number 44 magically disguises himself as Balthasar, and is seen in the town. Father Adolf, believing that he is Balthasar, arranges to have him burned at the stake, but he magically escapes before he is burned.

August realizes that he is in love with Marget, the master's niece. He discovers, however, that she is only in love with him in her dreams, when she is sleeping. August is able to make himself invisible and come to Marget in her dreams, during which her Dream-Self believes that her name is Elisabeth von Arnim and his name is Martin von Giesbach. But when she wakes up, she has no memory of this, and simply ignores August. During her waking hours, when she is her Day-Self or Waking-Self, she is in love with August's Duplicate, who calls himself Emil Schwarz.

One night, August sneaks into Marget's bedroom. When Marget, her maid, and her mother, Frau Regen, see him there, they scream and tell him to leave. The women believe it was his Duplicate, Emil, and not August, who snuck into the room. When the master learns of this, he orders that Emil must now marry Marget. Meanwhile, Marget's maid is about to tell one of the other maids about this incident, and thus spread a rumor that will ruin Marget's reputation.



August tries to come up with a scheme to prevent Marget's marriage to Emil, and calls on Number 44 to help him. They decide to magically transform the maid into a cat, so that she cannot spread any rumors about Marget. Once the maid is turned into a cat, Number 44 gives August the power to understand cat language. The cat then explains to them that she much prefers being a cat to being a maid, because as a maid she was constantly having to work and wait on other people. August and the cat agree that she will be his pet, and he names her Mary Florence Fortescue Baker G. Nightingale.

Emil comes to August's room and, much to August's surprise, says that he doesn't care if he marries Marget or not. He explains that he is a Dream-Being from the Empire of Dreams. He explains further that he is August's Dream-Self, the part of him that travels throughout space and time while August is sleeping. Emil hates being trapped in a physical body, in the form of August's Duplicate, and begs to be released from imprisonment in this body. Number 44 arrives, disguised as Balthasar, and grants Emil's wish, causing his physical form to dissolve into thin air so that he may return to the Dream-World.

Meanwhile, Father Adolf, Katrina, and a small army of men from the village have congregated in the castle, threatening to capture Balthasar and have him burned at the stake. Number 44, still disguised as Balthasar, steps into their midst, then suddenly makes himself disappear in a flash of blinding light, while simultaneously causing an eclipse to occur, which darkens the sky outside.

Back in August's room, Number 44 comes to visit August, and congratulates himself on the trick he played on the others. Number 44 decides to make time go backwards twenty-three hours. Then he arranges an Assembly of the Dead who form a Procession of thousands and thousands of skeletons of deceased people from throughout history, including such famous figures as King Arthur, Cleopatra, and Noah.

Number 44 then tries to explain to August who and what he is. He asserts that time and space, as well as life and death, mean nothing to him, and that he is capable of traveling throughout the universe and throughout history at his whim. Number 44 states that his existence is beyond the bounds of what any human being could conceive of. He explains that "Life itself is only a vision, a dream," and that his existence is "pure Thought," without physical matter. Number 44's parting words to August are:

It is true, that which I have revealed to you: there is no God, no universe, no human race, no earthly life, no heaven, no hell. It is all a Dream, a grotesque and foolish dream. Nothing exists but You. And you are but a Thought . . . wandering forlorn among the empty eternities!

In the closing line of the story, August states, "He vanished, and left me appalled; for I knew, and realized, that all he had said was true."





# Chapters 1 and 2

## Chapters 1 and 2 Summary

*The Mysterious Stranger* is the story of the fantasy events and magical occurrences in a print shop in a castle in Austria in 1490. The novella, which was published posthumously in 1916, 6 years after Mark Twain's death, addresses the issues of religion and self-discovery.

As the story begins, it is winter in Austria in the year 1490. Austria is tucked away geographically and socially and is still a very strict Catholic country. The story is told by 16-year-old August Feldner, who is a printer's apprentice at Rosenfeld Castle in Eseldorf, Austria.

August finds Austria to be the ideal location for boys because schooling is not emphasized and religion takes priority. Original thought is frowned upon in the village, and the local priest, Father Adolf, maintains his rounds to make sure that the unspoken rule is followed. Father Adolf is both feared and respected because he has no fear of the Devil and takes every opportunity to malign the satanic creature at every possible opportunity.

August lives in Rosenfeld Castle and is in the employ of a printing master named Heinrich Stein. The art of printing is relatively new to Europe and virtually unknown in Austria, making the craft highly valued and apprenticeships coveted. Although this new art form is gaining in importance, it is viewed suspiciously by the Catholic Church, which frowns on the dissemination of information to the masses. The priests let it be known that putting a little bit of knowledge in the heads of people who do not know how to manage it is just asking for trouble.

Heinrich is a portly, benevolent man married to Frau Stein, a skinny, parsimonious woman with a devilish tongue and stingy manner. Frau Stein's daughter from a previous marriage, 17-year-old Marie Vogel, also lives in the castle. Joining them are Heinrich's sister, Frau Regen, and her daughter, Marget, also 17.

Frau Stein has situated a magician named Balthasar Hoffman in the house to entertain her with talk of the constellations and magical occurrences. The remaining occupants of the castle include the men who work the print shop under Heinrich's guidance. The men include Adam Binks, a 60-year-old bachelor; Hans Katzenhammer, a 36-year-old man who likes his drink; Moses Haas, a 28-year-old malcontent; Barty Langbein, a 15-year-old crippled boy who does odd jobs around the print shop; Ernest Wasserman, a 17-year-old apprentice and a braggart; Gustav Fischer, a 27-year-old printer of higher caliber than any of his colleagues; and finally, 16-year-old August, the youngest apprentice in the shop.

## Chapters 1 and 2 Analysis

Twain uses these chapters to establish the geography and culture of Austria in this time period. This is important so that the events that follow may be viewed in context. Austria is very inaccessible and isolated, and it is a primarily Catholic country with very strict rules governing how people should lead their lives.

The religious leaders rule through fear and guilt, and the people still live in the "dark ages" even though the other countries in Europe are awakening to the arts, sciences, and new religious ideas. It is within this restrictive environment that Heinrich Stein bravely operates his print shop and provides works for universities and other scholars in other countries. The invention of the printing press occurred around 1450 when Johann Gutenberg first printed the Bible. Twain's story takes place just a few years later, and the craft is still relatively new in Europe and particularly in backward Austria.



# Chapters 3 and 4

## Chapters 3 and 4 Summary

August describes the scope of the castle as being so big that 1,000 people could easily live there. This expanse allows each occupant his choice of spacious accommodations extending from the main rooms of the kitchen and the great room where all the occupants (called the tribe) gather for relaxation before the roaring fireplace. The print shop is also located in the castle in an upper level of one of the towers. This location was selected to hinder visitors, who are not welcome in this inner sanctum.

On a cold day after lunch in the great room, the tribe is interrupted by the appearance of a forlorn-looking boy of about 16 or 17. This timid creature, dressed in rags, is looking only for food and a place to rest for a short while. Frau Stein wants the boy thrown out, but Old Katrina, who manages the kitchen, calls the boy to her for a meal.

Heinrich is summoned to settle the matter, and he takes compassion on the lad and offers to take him on to do odd jobs in the castle. The boy is overwhelmed with gratitude and when prompted, tells Heinrich that his name is Number 44, New Series 864,962. Heinrich is puzzled, and the rest of the men assume the number is a prisoner identification, but Katrina takes pity on the boy and provides some food.

The others are baffled by the boy's beauty and kind nature, and Frau Stein takes every opportunity to humiliate the boy. In one instance, Frau Stein orders the boy to take out the dog, which is particularly surly and does not allow anyone to touch it. Amazingly, the dog follows the boy at the gentlest nudge, and the tribe is baffled again because the dog has never before allowed a stranger to get that close.

The tribe's only explanation is that Balthasar Hoffman has put a magic spell on the boy to provide him with such invisible power.

## Chapters 3 and 4 Analysis

Twain inserts No. 44 into the tribe to show the group dynamics of fear and the need to destroy anything that is different or unknown. No. 44 is obviously not a troublemaker and even goes out of his way to create goodwill, and still the others try to make his life difficult by assigning him arduous tasks and by ostracizing him.

No. 44 symbolizes the introduction of new ideas and behavior into the Austrian lifestyle. The boy is so different that he does not even have a regular name but is called by a number. The very basic fundamental belief system of the tribe cannot possibly understand this concept, let alone No. 44's strange demeanor. The tribe has no other possible explanation than the magician has cast a spell on No. 44.

Anything that represents unconventional behavior patterns must be the result of conjuring, according to the tribe, but this is normally how enlightenment begins. Ultimately, No. 44 represents new ideas, and he will challenge their old beliefs through pacifism, virtually unknown at this period in time.



# Chapters 5 and 6

## Chapters 5 and 6 Summary

The men continue to ostracize No. 44 and call him a Jail-Bird because he never denied being in prison. Some others call No. 44 a milksop because of his pacifist ways in breaking up and preventing fights among the others.

Katrina has taken No. 44 under her wing and provides him new clothing. No. 44 is extremely grateful and comes to consider Katrina like his own mother.

August is in a quandary about how to relate to No. 44 because any friendly gestures on his part will make August's life very difficult, yet August feels terrible about the improper treatment No. 44 receives from most of the tribe.

None of the ill treatment fazes No. 44 as he continues his strange ways, which are always attributed to the resident magician. One day, No. 44 unchains the surly dog and commands the canine to address Heinrich with respect, and to bow and retreat as if Heinrich were royalty. The dog does each of these things with finesse as if he had been practicing the maneuvers all his life.

This amazing act by the dog brings the tribe to its knees in front of Balthasar, whose reputation is enhanced each day with every new act performed by No. 44. Now the tribe begins to envy the boy for being the instrument of the magician, and August himself wants to know No. 44 better. He would like to receive some attention from the magician as well.

August determines to befriend No. 44 privately to see whether No. 44 can help him achieve his goals. August decides to wait for No. 44 in his room, and finally, No. 44 arrives a few hours past midnight. He takes August's hands in joy and beams at his new friend without saying a word.

No. 44's confessions of loneliness make August feel bad, but he does not verbally express this yet. No. 44 seems to know what August is thinking and responds to unspoken questions. August and No. 44 share some wine, and soon August must leave for fear that the rest of the tribe discovers this new friendship and make August's life miserable. August returns to his own room and finds a lit candle and a roaring fire where he had left none.

## Chapters 5 and 6 Analysis

No. 44's appearance in the tribe raises the issue of envy, a sin according to the Catholic Church. The notoriety and attention No. 44 receives as a result of his magic actions fills August with jealousy and the desire to have the same powers. No. 44 has capitalized on



August's compassionate nature by befriending him to take advantage of him, which will soon become apparent.

There is some foreshadowing in the lit candle and the roaring fire in August's room after his visit to No. 44's room after midnight, which helps to explain No. 44's essence and mission within the tribe's midst.



# Chapters 7 and 8

## Chapters 7 and 8 Summary

August awakes the next morning thinking that his meeting with No. 44 had been just a dream, but an encounter with No. 44 soon after verifies the reality of the night before. No. 44 asks August to come again and urges him not to make their friendship public so that August does not suffer for it. August admits that he wishes he had more spirit, but No. 44 tells him not to feel bad for August did not create himself and is not to blame.

After breakfast that morning, Heinrich promotes No. 44 to the position of apprentice, an act which infuriates the rest of the tribe because of No. 44's evident lack of training. Heinrich then asks No. 44 whether he has studied any of the ancient languages or sciences, topics of great importance to those in the printing arts. No. 44 can reply only that he has not studied them and, in fact, has studied nothing. Heinrich is buoyed by the opportunity to educate this newcomer.

The men in the tribe make No. 44's first day as an apprentice very difficult and do not bestow on him any of the honors due a young man with the title. No. 44 is left to fend for himself with no instruction when August's sympathies rise for his new friend. August remembers that No. 44 can read August's thoughts, so he instructs No. 44 mentally. No. 44 performs admirably, to the amazement of the tribe.

The tribe accuses No. 44 of being an old printer who has acquired skills and actually has studied the important subjects mentioned this morning. No. 44 clarifies the issue by telling the tribe that he has not studied the subjects but has learned them on his own. The tribe decides to test No. 44 on his knowledge, and the boy passes with the help of August, who provides the technical guidance via his thoughts.

Unfortunately, August's attentions to saving No. 44 have diminished his own work, and the tribe suspects August of helping the new apprentice. August is able to escape the wrath of the other printers and hides in a lonely part of the castle all night. In the morning, August seeks Katrina's help in obtaining the prayers of the Sisters of the Perpetual Adoration, whose function mirrors the order's name with unending prayers for those who request special intentions.

August needs 50 coins to pay the Sisters for their prayers but has only 48, and Katrina offers the two coins needed. It is only when August finds 50 coins in his room that Katrina realizes that a small miracle has taken place on behalf of her own prayers for the situation.

The tribe makes life difficult for August and No. 44 by ruining their trays of set type, putting ice down their backs and throwing objects at them among other things. One night Moses trips No. 44, who is carrying a tray of type for a Latin Bible, and the whole thing must be completed overnight, an impossible task for even the most skilled printer.



Amazingly, the job is completed by the next morning, and the tribe goes out on strike in outrage. Heinrich is under deadline to finish a huge printing project for the University of Prague and knows that the work cannot be completed in time if the men refuse to work. To make matters even worse for Heinrich, the tribe demands that No. 44 be evicted from the castle, an act that the compassionate master cannot do.

Heinrich takes to his bed with anguish over keeping No. 44 vs. completing the order for the university. The tribe is content that they have Heinrich in the position where they want him because surely no man can forego a profit for the sake of protecting a strange boy.

## Chapters 7 and 8 Analysis

The author introduces the theme of integrity through the actions of both August and Heinrich, who stand up to the tribe for their own personal convictions. Both August and Heinrich have compassion for No. 44 and put themselves at personal risk for taking a stance on his behalf.

The theme of religion becomes more important in this section, not only because Heinrich risks financial and personal ruin for in the name of compassion, but also in August's reliance on the ministrations of the Church, especially the intentions offered up in prayer by the Sisters of the nearby order. It is interesting to note that Heinrich turns inward for solace while August turns to the outside mechanisms of the Church for help.

No. 44 continues his superhuman feats by easily completing the all-night job and, although it is not stated, by providing the two extra coins, which magically appear in August's room.





# Chapters 9, 10 and 11

## Chapters 9, 10 and 11 Summary

The castle echoes more than usual with the shutdown of the printing shop, and August switches his perpetual prayer intentions from his own concerns to that of the appearance of the master's old colleague and wandering printer named Doangivadam. Many stressful days pass, and finally Doangivadam arrives and, learning of Heinrich's predicament, sets straight to work.

While the men discuss the situation of the university job deadline, Ernest returns from the print shop to report that invisible workers are completing the job. The men race to the print shop to see the work conducted without human intervention and stand frozen in their places when eight cold entities brush past them on their way out of the room.

## Chapters 9, 10 and 11 Analysis

Twain introduces some of his legendary sense of humor with the introduction of the character of Doangivadam, whose characteristics are as laid back as his name, which phonetically makes him "Don't Give a Damn." Doangivadam wanders the cities and towns of Europe working on projects without long-term commitments and no personal investments. Ironically, though, it is Doangivadam who comes to Heinrich's rescue. He is able to discern the unhappy situation facing his old colleague, and he begins to set matters straight.



# Chapters 12, 13 and 14

## Chapters 12, 13 and 14 Summary

The tribe is only temporarily mesmerized by the spectral workforce and surmises that the magician has put his powers to work against their strike. The unwitting Balthasar is threatened with being burned at the stake unless he promises not to conduct any more magic and to stop No. 44 from doing the same. Grateful to have escaped the fate at the stake, Balthasar states that he will reduce No. 44 to ashes should the boy try anything magical again.

The next day, the men still refuse to work, and the university job needs to be packed and loaded on wagons when the people come from Prague to pick it up. Doangivadam and Katrina offer to pack and load the entire print job themselves so that the master will not lose the income. Doangivadam reports to Heinrich that the commitment will be met and that the wagons will be loaded while Heinrich plays hosts to the university visitors. Heinrich is extremely grateful and offers to keep the guests overnight to provide Doangivadam more time in which to complete the task.

Unfortunately, the job proves to be too much for Doangivadam and Katrina, who realize they must ask for help. After August and No. 44 finish their evening meal, they go outside to where the wagon stands waiting to be loaded and cannot believe their eyes when they see the members of the tribe each carrying one of the huge freight cartons to the wagon.

The university visitors leave with their loaded wagon at dawn the next morning and Heinrich assembles the tribe in the great room to offer his gratitude. After a few minutes, Katzenyammer yells out that the tribe does not know what Heinrich is talking about; none of the men from the print shop had loaded any cartons onto the wagon last night and had made arrangements with local men not to accept the job until the tribe receives back pay for their strike period.

The tribe is in further disbelief when Heinrich reports that he has been paid and the wagon with all its contents is long gone. It is only after the men go out to the drive and see that the wagon is no longer there that they realize that some magic had been at work. Storming back into the great room, the tribe demands to see Balthasar and begins to carry him away to the church for burning until the magician offers a confession.

Balthasar blames No. 44 for using the magician's tricks against him, and the tribe immediately calls for No. 44 to be killed. Heinrich and Doangivadam intervene on No. 44's behalf and redirect the blame to Balthasar, who has the power to revoke No. 44's powers should he choose to do so. Doangivadam suggests that Balthasar be held accountable and turned over to the Church should No. 44 lapse again.



Balthasar agrees and puts a curse on No. 44 vowing to reduce the boy to ashes should he try to inflict any more damage in the name of magic. Everyone in the castle is moved by the magician's wrath except No. 44, which only increases the level of intrigue about the strange boy. Katrina implores everyone in the castle to pray that No. 44 not be tempted to work any more magic so as to avoid a hideous fate.

## Chapters 12, 13 and 14 Analysis

Twain uses the element of fantasy in this section with the invisible workmen who finish printing the university job, as well as the unknown men who load the wagon. It is humorous to imagine the fun Twain had in constructing the scene of the print shop, which comes alive with not a human being in sight. There is also humor and fantasy in how the workers who carry the heavy freight cartons exactly resemble the members of the tribe who have sworn not to load the truck. Twain creates a question for the reader: are the figures ghostly creatures, or do they stem from the perspective of religious zealots?

Twain also wants to point out the dangers of mob hysteria in a crisis situation when the tribe is much too eager to turn the magician over to be burned at the stake just because they can find no other explanation for the spectral events.

Doangivadam is once again, ironically, the voice of reason in the conflict and persuades the tribe to employ logic and rationale. In this context, Doangivadam symbolizes the beginning of rational thought and enlightenment in the Dark Ages.



# Chapters 15, 16 and 17

## Chapters 15, 16 and 17 Summary

No. 44 is not concerned about his possible fate and resists all of August's attempts to convert him. Actually, No. 44 is in a very good mood. He pulls a harmonica from his pocket, begins playing it, and then dances around the room without ever getting tired. August wonders how No. 44 can be so casual about the fact that the magician may reduce him to ashes, and No. 44 says that "at home" things like that don't matter. August would like to know more about this, but No. 44 disappears again in a flash.

The next time No. 44 appears, he is dressed in gaudy clothes like a dandy. Katzenyammer cannot tolerate No. 44's arrogant demeanor and slaps the boy, after which No. 44 warns the tribe that within a few hours they will all see that it is not wise to offend the master. A cloud of fear passes over the group, and it is almost midnight when No. 44's threat is realized. The tribe is still awake in the great room when a Duplicate Katzenyammer appears in the room followed by a Duplicate of each of the men in the print shop.

Fights break out between the Original of each man and his own Duplicate, and the days that come are filled with tension as the Originals and Duplicates battle for position in the castle. The Duplicates can work endlessly and tirelessly without the need for food or rest, and the Originals fear for their jobs.

The worst outcome is realized when Balthasar understands that No. 44 has performed this trickery and puts a spell on the boy, reducing him to a pile of ashes just as promised. August goes invisible for several days to avoid discussing the horrible incident with anyone else in the castle. No. 44's ashes are buried in shame at midnight in a faraway field, and August returns to his room with a heavy heart only to find No. 44 sitting and waiting for him.

## Chapters 15, 16 and 17 Analysis

Twain introduces the concept of duality in human beings with the introduction of the Duplicates. As in the human psyche, the two sides battle as represented by the fights between the Originals and Duplicates. It is not clear yet whether Twain wants the reader to understand the concept of good vs. evil, physical vs. spiritual, or even flaws vs. perfection. One other possible explanation is that the Duplicates represent the dreaming state while the Originals represent reality.

Twain also uses anachronisms in the story with one example when No. 44 pulls a harmonica from his pocket explaining to August "it's a jew's-harp - the niggers use it." There are certainly no harmonicas in 1490 Austria, and it's probably safe to say that the word "nigger" is not a common one in Austrian dialogue at this time in history.



Twain continues to insert humor to keep the writing enjoyable as in No. 44's sarcastic statement when August tries to explain the concept of God. "I get the idea; it will be a Firm, with its headquarters up there and its hindquarters down here."

Another instance is when the townspeople are searching for the wizard and two summonses have been issued so that he may appear before a commission to explain his killing No. 44. Twain writes, "Then a second summons was posted, admonishing him to appear within twenty-four hours or remain subject to the pains and penalties attaching to contumacy. It did not seem to us likely that he would accept either of these invitations, if he could get out of it." This tongue-in-cheek style is characteristic of Twain's legendary wry sense of humor.



# Chapters 18, 19, 20 and 21

## Chapters 18, 19, 20 and 21 Summary

August regains his composure when No. 44 tells him that he is alive and not a ghost. No. 44 tells August that he has just come back from America, a country that will be discovered next fall. No. 44 has visited America many times in the past, present, and future and has brought a duck for dinner from nineteenth-century America.

No. 44 inquires about the Duplicates, and August honestly tells his friend that the Duplicates have become a problem. No. 44 suspected this would happen because the Duplicates are not real people but rather the Dream Selves of the Originals, alike in many ways but without the encumbrances of flesh and worldly needs.

August struggles with this concept and No. 44 promises to explain more later and gives August a gift of a silver service, one piece engraved with the words "America Cup" and on the smaller pieces, "New York Yacht Club, 1903." August soon files off the words and sells the silver for a nice sum.

In the town, the efforts to find Balthasar are accelerating, driven by Father Adolf, who is sure that the magician does the devil's work and must burn for it. Father Adolf also tries to burn the Duplicates for the same reason, but each time the Duplicates are ready to be torched, they escape into thin air only to return to the castle and the work in the print shop.

No. 44 takes August on a journey to the past to show a time when Father Adolf is a younger man and falls through the ice and is rescued by another young man. No. 44 also shows the devastating impact of this event not only on the young man, who becomes partially paralyzed for life, but also for the young man's sisters, who give up their hopes for love and happiness to care for their brother.

Another incident shows a woman about to be burned at the stake, and No. 44 does not intervene although he easily could have. No. 44 also shows a glimpse of the woman's soul consumed by the fires of hell, and August's faith is temporarily shaken.

## Chapters 18, 19, 20 and 21 Analysis

Twain provides more anachronisms in this section in the form of the mention of the discovery of America expected next fall and the gifts from the 1903 New York Yacht Club presented by No. 44 to August. This makes for interesting reading, but Twain also wants to exhibit the point that No. 44 has the capability of traveling both backward and forward in time and appreciating each time for its own merits.

As No. 44 has explained, the Duplicates are the Dream Selves of each of the men. Father Adolf's failed attempts to kill them make Twain's point that no one can destroy an individual's dream, no matter how inappropriate or impossible it may seem.

The revelations shared with August have an eerie resemblance to Dickens' ghostly scenarios in *A Christmas Carol* although the ones that No. 44 reveals are much more dreadful in scope.



## Chapters 22, 23, 24 and 25

### Chapters 22, 23, 24 and 25 Summary

No. 44 attempts to explain the concept of infinity to August, who has a hard time comprehending this idea as well as the one that no man can originate any thought in his head. Each man merely observes outside forces and combines them in his head to form ideas and opinions.

August leaves this realm of discovery temporarily and focuses on the physical aspects of her humanness and falls in love with Marget. August encounters Marget while he is in invisible mode and realizes that she can sense his presence and loves what she feels around it. Unfortunately, Marget has no interest in the physical August and virtually ignores him.

August pushes the boundaries of the relationship and comes to understand that Marget's Dream Self, named Elisabeth von Arnim, is in love with August's Dream Self, named Martin von Giesbach. To complicate matters even more, Marget's Waking Self is in love with August's Duplicate named Emil Schwarz.

August's invisible self is jealous of Emil and, consumed by thoughts of Marget, enters the girl's bedroom one night causing much commotion among Marget, her mother, and her maid who think that August is Emil. August thinks that this will end the relationship between Marget and Emil, and that he will have a chance with Marget. Unfortunately, Heinrich forces Emil to marry Marget after the incident.

### Chapters 22, 23, 24 and 25 Analysis

Anything is possible in dreams, and Twain uses his characteristic story style to illuminate that point. Marget rebuffs August in person, yet he is able to love her and receive love in return through his Dream Self. The story becomes a bit convoluted, but that mirrors the path taken by the heart and soul in love, and Twain likes to have fun with his readers.

There is also a serious side to this section in that No. 44 tries to explain the concept of infinity and the limits that human beings try to place on ethereal elements. No. 44 gets easily frustrated with August's inability to grasp the concept of "no beginning, no end" and does not understand why August must put limits on concepts. This is Twain's way of opening the topic of life as humans conceive it as opposed to a spiritual world that exists outside of this reality, yet is connected to it at the same time. Twain lived in a period of transcendentalist thinking, which holds that each person has a spiritual state that is not bound by physical limitations and allows for limitless possibilities of thought and experiences. It is this line of thinking that No. 44 attempts to explain to the still-earthbound August.





# Chapters 26, 27 and 28

## Chapters 26, 27 and 28 Summary

August is consumed with misery at the prospect of being uncovered as the real perpetrator in Marget's bedroom and cowers in fear in his dark room. Suddenly, the silence is broken by a spectral figure approaching August's room. It comes inside and begins singing "Buffalo Gals, Can't You Come Out Tonight." The minstrel man introduces himself as the Negro slave of a South Carolina colonel living in the year 1840.

The minstrel man has come to make August feel better and begins to play a banjo and August tries to imagine the scenes the man sings about in some place called "de Swanee River." Soon, the man disappears in a cloud and is replaced by none other than No. 44, delighted with his latest trick that shows August the limitless bounds of time and space.

August shares his latest predicament involving the episode in Marget's room, and No. 44 suggests that the key to halting any problems is to silence the maid who witnessed the event, thus saving Marget's reputation.

No. 44 transforms the maid into a cat and allows August to understand language so that he can listen in on the conversation No. 44 has with the new feline. The transformed creature is happy with her new form because her life as a maid had been too demanding. Now she can live life at a slower pace, cuddled up in No. 44's room.

No. 44 casts a spell on August so that he falls asleep. August wakes to find himself in his own room where Emil, August's Duplicate, has arrived. August finds himself staring at Emil and thinking that he, himself actually, is quite handsome. The voice does not seem to be the voice August would define as his own, but knows that it must be. August asks Emil to turn so that he can see him from all vantage points as other people must see him.

August must remind himself that although Emil is his Duplicate, he is not the same person because the Duplicate is not burdened with real flesh or emotions like humans are. August considers himself to be superior to Emil in every way, with the exception of mental capabilities, of which Emil's know no bounds compared to August's limited knowledge and experiences.

Emil shares the reason for his visit to August's room as Heinrich's being upset that Emil had violated the privacy of Marget's bedroom. Emil cannot understand the uproar over the situation and does not want to marry Marget. Emil admits that he had courted Marget and had loved her, but right now it does not matter. August cannot believe his ears and asks Emil whether anything matters right now. Emil replies that there are things that are important, just not these trivial matters.



Emil cannot even remember whether he is to marry Marget today as August reminds him. August does not understand Emil's indifference in the situation, and Emil admits that, of course, he does not care whether he marries Marget or not. Emil is just as baffled by August's remarks and finally tells August the real reason for his visit.

Emil wants August to set him free from the bonds of the flesh that hold him and begs August to beseech Balthasar to let his spirit fly free again. Human existence is too burdensome for someone of Emil's Dream State personality. Emil is exasperated to think that August, through Emil, had come to discuss Marget when there are real issues, like slipping the bonds of human form, with which to contend.

Emil explains that he comes from the Empire of Dreams where all the Dream creatures live in beauty and leave things like morals, principles, disgrace, and crime to those in the Waking world. August vows to intercede on Emil's behalf to return him to his Dream world.

Toward bedtime, the cat who used to be a maid enters August's room and thinks to herself that she cannot tell August from his Duplicate and does not know how the ladies in Marget's bedroom could have differentiated him, either. Then the thought comes to the cat that the Duplicate has no sense of remorse from the situation and that is how to distinguish him from the Original August.

August tells the cat that the magician has named her Mary Florence Fortescue Baker B. Nightingale, and the cat is very pleased with her new moniker. The cat explores the room for awhile before announcing that she needs to sleep and settles down in her four-poster bed.

## Chapters 26, 27 and 28 Analysis

Twain makes the point that a person's dream state allows more freedom than would be acceptable in a waking state. The Duplicate has no qualms admitting that he had courted Marget and said he loved her, but he can back out of the marriage with no remorse. The Duplicate comes from a world where no rules or law interfere with original thought, which is quite acceptable in that environment, but Twain makes the point that the same perspective from a waking person on earth would be disastrous, as evidenced by August's reactions.

Twain introduces anachronistic humor again to insert some levity into the serious topics of religion and spirituality. No. 44, disguised as a minstrel man from 1840's South Carolina, is amazing to August on many levels as the man announces in his Southern Negro accent, "Bress yo' soul, honey, I ain' no dread being. I's Cunnel Bludso's nigger fum Souf C'yarlina, en I's heah th'ee hund'd en fifty year ahead o' time, caze you's down in de mouf en I got to 'muse you wid de banjo en make you feel all right en comfy agin. So you jist lay whah you is, boss, en listen to de music; I gwineter sing to you, honey, de way de po' slave-niggers sings when dey's sol' away fum dey home en is homesick en down in de mouf." There is no possible way that August can interpret this meaning, both

from content and dialect perspectives, but it is Twain's way of having fun with his readers by introducing something completely out of context to create interest.



# Chapters 29 and 30

## Chapters 29 and 30 Summary

While August and Emil wait for No. 44 to arrive, Emil continues to inform August about the difference between the Dream State and the Waking State. Emil tells August that he has no concept of time but puts his experiences in terms that will help August understand. Each night as soon as August falls asleep, Emil leaves for adventures that take him millions of miles and thousands of years away in all directions. August presses Emil to share some of the experiences, but Emil feels that sharing these types of thoughts with humans is like "emptying rainbows down a rat-hole."

Fortunately, No. 44 arrives still dressed as the magician, and Emil enters his plea to be released from his earthly body. No. 44 is amenable to the idea and tells Emil to stand up and melt. August watches Emil stand and sees his clothes thin out and fall away like vapors on the air so that his naked body is soon visible. Then Emil's skeleton appears neat and trim after the flesh vaporizes, and finally, the bones disappear, leaving only a soap bubble shape of the former creature that soon pops. Emil is forever dissipated.

At this point, the cat enters the room with news that the townspeople have spotted No. 44 in the persona of the magician and are coming for him to exact their revenge for the death of No. 44. No. 44 declines to don a disguise and plans to have fun with the imminent situation. The cat also informs No. 44 and August that the Originals plan to do battle with the Duplicates and are making signs so they can tell each other apart. August chooses to go to his invisible state and joins No. 44 and the cat headed out into the conflict.

## Chapters 29 and 30 Analysis

Throughout the novella, Twain uses the literary techniques of metaphors and similes such as one in this section that states that sharing ethereal dream thoughts with humans is like "emptying rainbows down a rat-hole." This provides a visual image of the concept instead of merely saying that the dream thoughts are magical and may as well be thrown away if you put them into the heads of mere humans.

Twain's premises from Emil are very enlightened positions about the capacity of the human brain and soul and symbolize the separation of logic and creativity. There is certainly a strong religious theme throughout the novel, too, because some of the statements made by Emil project an infinity that was created by a loving God who places no boundaries on the spirits not confined to earth. These are lofty concepts, but they are in line with the transcendental thinking of the time period in which the book was written.



# Chapters 31, 32, 33 and 34

## Chapters 31, 32, 33 and 34 Summary

No. 44 delights in the cold, gloomy morning and adds an eclipse into the mix, declaring such miserable conditions perfect for the day's events. As No. 44, still dressed as Balthasar, descends the castle's staircase, flanks of townspeople raging and surging forward surround him. The most noticeable person is Katrina, who still grieves for the loss of her beloved No. 44, whom she believes was reduced to ashes by Balthasar.

As Katrina lunges at the disguised No. 44 with a knife in hand, a brilliant light flashes over the entire area blinding everyone in the room for a few moments. When the light begins to return to normal, the youthful No. 44 stands in the place where the image of Balthasar had been just a few moments ago.

Katrina crawls to No. 44, who kisses the old woman and then instantly vanishes into another blast of intense light. August thinks that No. 44 had been brilliant in creating the eclipse because these luminary effects are spectacular on the dark canvas of sky. August realizes that it will be several hours before the people regain their wits, and he retires to his room for a nap.

Before long, No. 44 reappears in August's room dressed again like Balthasar, and he is miffed because there are many important people like Adam and Eve who cannot attend his grand event on such short notice. It is then that No. 44 gets the grand idea to turn back time to allow people to make plans to come to the event. No. 44 thinks that they should go back in time at least a week to allow people like Henry I and Robert Bruce to make arrangements.

The clock begins to strike, and each strike rings out 1 hour earlier than the previous one. No. 44 even begins to talk backwards as the time regresses. This is too much for August to comprehend, so No. 44 grants him the privilege of just observing this monumental event without any responsibility. August can see the transformation ceremony held earlier occurring in reverse with Katrina getting up off the floor and taking her original position of standing, ready to lunge with a knife in her hand.

Eventually, the time regresses with more fluidity and August sees his Duplicate in its bubble form taking human-like shape once more. No. 44 takes August to China where they witness millions of people lying on the ground in fear of the eclipsed sky. All over the world, August can see people who had been killed being killed again; those who had been wounded being wounded again; warships speed backwards with their crews prostrate with fear.

Without any warning, No. 44 summons an Assembly of the Dead in which the skeletons of all people who had ever lived and died rise from their graves and march together. Each skeleton is tagged with a name and brief description and August is amazed to see



Pharaohs, David and Goliath, Adam and Eve, Caesar and Cleopatra, Charlemagne, and so many kings that August could not count them.

August also sees the skeletons of people he had known personally and is touched when they reach out to him in their sadness. August is particularly impressed to see King Arthur and his knights since the print shop had just recently completed setting the tale of the king and the round table. This procession of skeletons continues for several hours until No. 44 waves his hand, and he and August stand together in an empty and quiet place.

No. 44 reveals to August that he is going away much to August's distress. August tries to get No. 44 to commit to seeing him in the next life when No. 44 quite bluntly announces that there is no next life. For a minute, August thinks this must be another of No. 44's tricks but No. 44 is completely serious and cannot believe that this thought had never occurred to August.

No. 44 tells August that life is only a dreamlike vision. Any past or future scenario No. 44 had shared had been only a vision. Nothing exists. There is no God, world, planets, or man; everything is a dream. No. 44 tells August that he feels himself fading and reassures August that he will remain a Thought, free to travel and dream bigger and better dreams than August ever thought possible.

Once more No. 44 is incredulous that this thought had never occurred to August and asks August to consider the ridiculous concept of a God who has the power to create everything good but chooses to create bad. For example, why would a God make any bad children when He could have made them all good? Why would a God create painless lives for angels and inflict humans with unimaginable suffering? Why would a God speak about justice, mercy, and The Golden Rule and then invent hell?

Finally, No. 44 repeats himself so that August understands, "There is no God, no universe, no human race, no earthly life, no heaven, no hell. It is all a Dream, a grotesque and foolish dream. Nothing exists but You. And You are but a Thought - a vagrant Thought, a useless Thought, a homeless Thought, wandering forlorn among the empty eternities."

August is struck by the finality of the words but realizes that everything No. 44 has said is true.

## Chapters 31, 32, 33 and 34 Analysis

Twain cleverly writes sentences backwards to mirror No. 44's demand that time move backwards. No. 44 says about his plan *"again. Eleven striking goes! She There word, my you give I least, the in not least; the in had, I've trouble the mind shan't I that, like picturesque, and showy something or pulverized, or burnt, him get and way, magnificent this in now, completed, it get I when and before; love of labor mere a in felt ever hardly have I as such satisfaction of sense a..."* This is another example of Twain's whimsical



style as he engages the reader in a bit of play. This interjection of humor is welcome in the midst of the spiritual and religious subjects discussed within the novel.

Another technique used by the author is an abrupt ending that is entirely counter to the direction anticipated by the reader by the plot line up to this point. No. 44's lessons about dreams and the beauty of the limitless universe all stop in one sentence when No. 44 tells August that there is no other life. All the things No. 44 had shared had merely been dreams or projected visions. Amazingly, August immediately agrees and accepts the finality of his life and his religious beliefs of the afterlife.

It is possible that Twain is negating structured religious teachings and beliefs but more likely he uses the fantasy and characters in the castle as pawns to represent the importance of dreams, as well as individual thought. The Church is an organization based on obedience and faith, and Twain uses the iconic structure as a forum in which to question the validity of blind trust to the exclusion of original thoughts and aspirations.

It is easy to imagine the author smiling to himself as he completes this clever work of leading the reader to thoughts of infinite beauty and wonders controlled by an all-powerful God and then abruptly changing course to point out that the only thing that exists is the importance of individual dreams and thoughts.



# Characters

## Father Adolf

Father Adolf is the presiding priest in Eseldorf. When he learns of the magician Balthasar's magical powers, Father Adolf determines to have him burned at the stake as a heretic. However, he succeeds only in arresting Number 44, who is magically disguised as Balthasar, and who magically escapes before being burned. Father Adolf then declares that the Duplicates are evil spirits, and condemns them to be burned at the stake. However, every time he arrests one of the Duplicates, the Duplicate magically escapes before being burned, and Father Adolf eventually gives up trying. Father Adolf represents a medieval mentality of superstition, which he uses to justify asserting his power over others.

## Adam Binks

Adam Binks is a sixty-year-old proofreader who lives in the castle and works in the print shop.

## Doangivadam

Doangivadam is an itinerant printer. When the men in the print shop go on strike, August prays for Doangivadam to come and help with the situation. A few days later, Doangivadam arrives at the castle, and immediately takes the side of Number 44 against the other print shop workers. Doangivadam expresses his approval of August for befriending Number 44.

## August Feldner

August Feldner, also known as Martin von Giesbach in Marget Regen's dreams, is a sixteen-year-old printer's apprentice and the narrator of "The Mysterious Stranger." When Number 44 arrives at the castle, August is immediately sympathetic to him. However, he is afraid to show his sympathy, for fear of being ostracized by the other men who work in the print shop. August manages to secretly befriend Number 44, who teaches him how to make himself invisible. He August also learns that Number 44 can hear his thoughts. After the magician Balthasar apparently kills Number 44, August is the only one who knows that Number 44 is still alive. August witnesses many strange and fantastical events in the presence of Number 44, who takes him on various adventures traveling throughout the world and backward in time.

August falls in love with Marget, the master's niece, but finds that she only loves him when she is dreaming and he is invisible. During these dreams, Marget believes that her name is Elisabeth von Arnim and that August's name is Martin von Giesbach.





August finds that he has a rival for Marget's love in his Duplicate, Emil Schwarz, whom Marget is in love with during her waking hours. After Number 44 magically dissolves Emil into thin air, August no longer has a rival for Marget's love.

In the end, Number 44 tells August that nothing in the universe exists, except for pure Thought, and that life is all a dream and an illusion. August concludes the story by stating, "I knew, and realized, that all he said was true." This ending implies that that whole story of "The Mysterious Stranger," as well as all of the characters in it, is a creation of August's imagination. Thus, Number 44's magical powers symbolize the extensive powers of August's imagination.

## **Gustav Fischer**

Gustav Fischer is a twenty-seven-year-old printer who lives in the castle and works in the print shop.

## **Moses Haas**

Moses Haas is a twenty-eight-year-old printer who lives in the castle and works in the print shop.

## **Balthasar Hoffman**

Balthasar Hoffman is an astrologist and magician who lives in the castle. When Number 44 arrives and seems to display magical powers, everyone assumes it is Balthasar who has bestowed these powers upon him. Later, Balthasar magically reduces Number 44 to ashes. When Father Adolf learns of this event, he declares Balthasar a heretic and condemns him to be burned at the stake. However, no one is able to find Balthasar after this point. Throughout the rest of the story, Number 44 appears magically disguised as Balthasar. Number 44 tells August that he hopes to promote Balthasar's reputation as a magician by arranging things so that the others attribute various magical events to Balthasar's powers.

## **Katrina**

Katrina is a sixty-year-old cook and housekeeper who lives and works in the castle. When Number 44 first arrives, everyone is ready to throw him out, but Katrina rushes to his defense. Throughout the story, Katrina treats Number 44 as if he were her own son, and does everything she can to prevent others from harming him. When Balthasar reduces Number 44 to ashes, and everyone believes him dead, Katrina is distraught.



## **Hans Katzenyammer**

Hans Katzenyammer is a thirty-six-year-old printer who lives in the castle and works in the print shop.

## **Barty Langbein**

Barty Langbein is a fifteen-year-old assistant who lives in the castle and works in the print shop.

## **Marget's Maid**

Marget's maid is present when August sneaks into Marget's room one night, and the maid believes it was August's Duplicate, Emil Schwarz, who sneaked into the room. The maid intends to inform one of the other maids in the castle about this event, and thus start a rumor that will ruin Marget's reputation. However, Number 44 magically transforms Marget's maid into a cat, so that she cannot tell anyone about what happened. After she is turned into a cat, she tells August in cat language (which Number 44 makes it possible for him to understand) that she actually prefers being a cat to being a maid, because as a maid she always had to wait on people. The cat and August agree that she will be his pet, and he names her Mary Florence Fortescue Baker G. Nightingale.

## **Mary Florence Fortescue Baker G. Nightingale**

See Marget's Maid

## **The Master**

See Heinrich Stein

## **Number 44**

Number 44 gives his full name as "Number 44, New Series 864,962." Everyone is astonished by this unusual name, and many of them assume he must be an escaped convict, and that it is his prison number. Number 44, a boy of about sixteen, appears at the door of the castle one night, dressed in rags and begging for food. Heinrich Stein, the master of the print shop, agrees to put him to work in exchange for food and lodging. Soon, the master gives Number 44 a job as an apprentice in the print shop. Number 44 works tirelessly, but the other men working at the print shop do everything they can to humiliate him, insult him, and increase his work load.



August secretly befriends Number 44, and Number 44 slowly reveals to August more and more of his magical powers. Number 44 teaches August to make himself invisible and to fly, as well as demonstrating other magical feats. He states that, while he acquired some of his magical powers from Balthasar, he already had magical powers before he arrived at the castle. Number 44 explains that he wants everyone to think his magic comes from Balthasar, so as to promote the magician's reputation. One night, Balthasar magically reduces Number 44 to ashes. However, the next day August finds Number 44 still alive and well. For the remainder of the story, Number 44 usually appears to August and others disguised as Balthasar. When Father Adolf declares Balthasar a heretic and sentences him to be burned at the stake, Number 44 magically disguises himself as Balthasar, and is arrested and prepared to be burned at the stake. However, he magically escapes before being burned.

In the end, Number 44 does his best to explain to August what he is and where he comes from. In the final lines of the story, he tells August that life is all a dream and that nothing in the universe really exists, except for pure Thought. Number 44 thus implies that he himself is nothing more than a dream or illusion, created by August's imagination.

## Frau Regen

Frau Regen is the sister of Heinrich Stein, the print shop master, and lives in the castle.

## Marget Regen

Marget Regen, the seventeen-year-old daughter of Frau Regen and niece of Heinrich Stein, lives in the castle. Although August is in love with Marget, Marget only loves August when she is sleeping and he appears in her dreams (which he does by making himself invisible). In these dreams, Marget thinks that her own name is Elisabeth von Arnim, and that August's name is Martin von Giesbach. During her waking hours, Marget is in love with August's Duplicate, who calls himself Emil Schwarz. After Emil proposes to Marget's Waking-Self, and she accepts, August/Martin proposes to Marget's Dream-Self (Elisabeth), and they conduct a marriage ceremony in her dream. Later, after Emil is believed to have entered Marget's bedroom at night, Heinrich Stein commands that he marry Marget. However, Emil is soon afterward dissolved into thin air by Number 44, so August no longer has a rival for Marget's love.

## Emil Schwarz

Emil Schwarz is the Duplicate of August Feldner and looks exactly like him. While Marget falls in love with the August who appears in her dreams, during her waking hours she is in love with Emil. August thus regards Emil as his rival for Marget's love. When the master commands that Emil must marry Marget, August hopes to prevent the marriage. However, Emil discusses the situation with August, and admits that he really doesn't care if he marries Marget or not. Emil states that he is August's Dream-Self, and



normally roams freely throughout time and space while August is asleep. Emil begs to be released from the physical body of August's Duplicate, in which he is trapped. Number 44 arrives, disguised as Balthasar the magician, and grants Emil's wish by magically dissolving his body into thin air, so that he can return to the Dream-World.

## **Frau Stein**

Frau Stein is the wife of Heinrich Stein, the print shop master. She has a mean disposition.

## **Heinrich Stein**

Heinrich Stein, a man in his mid-50s, is the master of the print shop. He is referred to throughout the story as "the master." The master is described as "a scholar and a dreamer or a thinker," who loves learning and study. He has a kindly disposition, but is not very effective in asserting himself with his family and employees. The master decides to take Number 44 into the castle and employ him as an apprentice in the print shop. Despite the complaints of the other print shop workers, Stein refuses to send Number 44 away. When the men go on strike just before a large Bible publishing order is due, the master becomes so distraught that he falls ill and takes to his bed. After the Bibles are magically published on time, Stein immediately recovers his health.

## **Marie Vogel**

Marie Vogel is the seventeen-year-old daughter of Frau Stein from a previous marriage, and lives in the castle. Like her mother, she has a mean disposition.

## **Elisabeth von Arnim**

See Marget Regen

## **Martin von Giesbach**

See August Feldner

## **Ernest Wasserman**

Ernest Wasserman is a seventeen-year-old apprentice who lives in the castle and works in the print shop.



# Themes

## Dreams and the Imagination

In "The Mysterious Stranger," Twain uses magic as an allegory for the realm of dreams and the imagination. In the Dream-World of our imaginations, he suggests, we can do and be anything, as if by magic.

Twain fills his tale with numerous magical occurrences. Some of the magical elements of "The Mysterious Stranger" are directly associated with the realm of dreams. The Duplicates who appear in the castle one night turn out to be the embodiment of the Dream-Selves of the men they resemble. August's Duplicate, who calls himself Emil Schwarz, explains that he is August's Dream-Self, and that he comes from the Dream-World. Emil further explains that the Dream-Self comes alive only when the Waking-Self is asleep. The Dream-Self normally has no physical existence, and so is free to roam throughout time and space at will. However, the Dream-Self is dependent on the physical existence of the Waking-Self—it is born with the individual and dies with the individual. Twain thus makes a distinction between the Waking-Self, of Day-Self, which is the physical being who goes to work each day, and the Dream-Self, which emerges when we are sleeping and is free from the constraints of physical existence.

Number 44 performs such magical feats as mind-reading, flying, becoming invisible, time travel, and many other wondrous things. Number 44's extensive magical powers represent the possibilities of the human imagination, the powers of which reach far beyond what humans are capable of in their waking or conscious lives. August is introduced to Number 44's way of perceiving reality, and so his mind is expanded to encompass a greater range of possibilities than he had previously imagined. In the conclusion to the story, Number 44 asserts that everything in the universe is a dream, a creation of the human imagination: "*Nothing* exists; all is a dream. God□man□the world, □the sun, the moon, the wilderness of stars: a dream, all a dream."

## Thought

Thought is also a central theme of "The Mysterious Stranger." The story takes place in a print shop at the dawn of the age of printing in medieval Europe. Historians regard the dawning of the print age as an extremely important development in the history of modern thought. New developments that made mass-publishing possible meant that books could be made available to a much broader segment of the population than ever before. This increased availability of books meant that the spread of knowledge and ideas throughout Europe increased tremendously.

The print shop where August works is a very small operation located in a remote Austrian village, yet it represents a bastion of enlightenment within a community



steeped in superstition and ignorance. As August explains, in 1490 printing was still a new art, and "almost unknown in Austria."

Very few persons in our secluded region had ever seen a printed page, few had any very clear idea about the art of printing, and perhaps still fewer had any curiosity concerning it or felt any interest in it.

August thus stands on the cusp of two different eras in the history of human thought. On the one hand, he was raised in the village and shares the traditional, medieval superstitions and limited viewpoint of the townspeople. On the other hand, working in the print shop, publishing books on a variety of subjects, including math, science, and philosophy, he is exposed to cutting edge advances in knowledge and ideas.

The appearance of Number 44 further expands August's knowledge and understanding of the world. Number 44 frequently makes references to the future, and often offers food to August that comes from time periods and cultures that don't yet exist. Number 44 also takes August back in time, exposing him to a broad-sweeping perspective on human history. August's newly acquired perspective on human civilization helps to expand his mind and further enlighten him to ideas beyond the confines of his remote and backward little village.

Toward the end of the story, Number 44 tells August that he is nothing more than pure Thought, and that Thought is the true essence of human existence.



# Style

## Narrative Point of View

"The Mysterious Stranger" is narrated in the first-person voice by August Feldner, a sixteen-year-old printer's apprentice. Thus, all of the events of the story are related solely from August's point-of-view. This limited first-person narrative point-of-view is central to the story. Toward the end, Number 44 asserts that everything in August's universe is a creation of his own imagination. Because the story is told from August's perspective, it is entirely possible that he has merely imagined these people, places, and events, or even that the entire story is a dream from which he will soon awaken.

## Local Color Fiction

"Local color" fiction was a new development in American literature in the post-Civil-War era, when much of Twain's writing was published. Local color fiction is characterized by a focus on small communities existing within a specific region of the United States, and exhibiting habits, customs, and cultural practices specific to that region. Twain's fiction often takes place in the American South, among small communities along the Mississippi River. Although "The Mysterious Stranger" takes place in Austria, it shares some characteristics of local color fiction, in that it is set in a small, remote village community in which the inhabitants share many superstitions and many qualities of regional quaintness. Many critics have noted that Twain based his fictional town of Eseldorf, Austria, on his own experiences growing up in the small town of Hannibal, Missouri.

## The Fantastical in Fiction

"The Mysterious Stranger" is a fantastical tale, meaning that it includes elements of magic and supernatural occurrences. By setting his story in a remote time and place, and by infusing it with elements of magic and fantasy, Twain is able to explore themes of dreams and the imagination without limiting himself to the requirements of realist fiction. Through the fantastical character of Number 44, Twain ultimately postulates that the realm of dreams, fantasy, and the imagination are more relevant to human experience than are the experiences we associate with concrete, physical reality.

# Historical Context

## Austria in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries

For many centuries, Austria was not a nation, but a duchy within the Roman Empire. Beginning in the thirteenth century, the Austrian region was ruled by the hereditary House of Habsburg, which lasted until the early twentieth century. The history of Austria in the fifteenth century, when Twain's story takes place, was dominated by the Habsburg ruler Frederik III. Frederik inherited the position of archduke of the Austrian lands in 1424. In 1440 he was elected king of Germany, and in 1452 he was crowned Roman Emperor. Like the magician in Twain's story, Frederik had a strong interest in studying astrology and magic, as well as alchemy.

Upon his death in 1493, Frederik was succeeded by his son, Maximilian I. Like his father, Maximilian I eventually ruled as emperor of Rome, king of Germany, and archduke of Austria. During the sixteenth century, under Maximilian I, the Habsburg dynasty reached the height of its powers, becoming a major European force. By various means, including marriage, military pressure, and treaties, Maximilian added to the Austrian territories the Netherlands, Hungary, Bohemia, Burgundy, Spain, and the Spanish empire, including colonial holdings in the Americas.

## The Dawn of Modern Printing

"No. 44, The Mysterious Stranger" takes place in a printing shop in late fifteenth century Austria, and is based in part on Twain's experiences as a printer's apprentice in mid-nineteenth century America.

The process of modern book printing first developed in Europe over the course of the fifteenth century. Twain thus sets his story at a time when printing was still a relatively new process, and represented a significant advance in the intellectual history of Europe. The development of the printing press made it possible for greater numbers of people to have access to knowledge and ideas through the dissemination of larger quantities of books at lower prices.

The innovation that inaugurated modern printing methods was the invention of moveable type. Moveable type involves individual letters or characters carved or molded out of wood, clay, or metal, which can be arranged to create a text. When ink is applied to these letters, they can be impressed upon a piece of paper in order to reproduce the text. In Asia, various methods of movable type were developed between the 11th and 14th centuries. However, this knowledge did not find its way to Europe, and so European methods of print developed later and along different lines.

The innovations of the German printer Johannes Gutenberg advanced European printing methods by creating a moveable type, inventing a mechanized printing press, and developing an ink compatible with this process. Gutenberg's printing process is



dated from the 1450s; his most significant achievement was the publication of the bible now known as the Gutenberg Bible, the first complete book to be printed in Europe using moveable type. Gutenberg's inventions are regarded as a watershed in European intellectual history, ushering in the dawn of the modern printing age. The printing methods he invented remained essentially unchanged until the nineteenth century, when a number of significant improvements were made to the process.



## Critical Overview

"The Mysterious Stranger," Twain's last major work of fiction, was not published until after his death. In order to appreciate critical reactions to "The Mysterious Stranger," it is important to understand the problems that have arisen regarding the manuscripts on which published versions of the story have been based. Upon his death, Twain left behind three different unpublished manuscripts of three different stories sharing a number of similarities. These manuscripts were entitled, "The Chronicle of Young Satan," "Schoolhouse Hill," and "No. 44, The Mysterious Stranger."

The first published version of a story entitled "The Mysterious Stranger" became available in 1916. However, during the 1960s, scholars came to the conclusion that this version of the story had been significantly tampered with by editors and was not true to Twain's intentions. The editors of this first version, which is now referred to as the "Paine-Duneka text," were Albert Bigelow Paine and Frederick A. Duneka of Harper & Brothers publishing company. Paine and Duneka created this illegitimate text by grafting the ending of one story ("No. 44, The Mysterious Stranger") onto the body of another story Twain had left unfinished ("The Chronicle of Young Satan"), editing out material which they deemed controversial, deleting about one quarter of Twain's words, altering and importing a character from one story into another, and adding several paragraphs of their own writing—all of which they combined into a story which they attributed to Twain without informing the public of the radical changes they had made to his original manuscripts.

In 1969, Twain's original manuscript entitled "No. 44, The Mysterious Stranger" was published for the first time as the authoritative text of the story. Scholars have since agreed that the "Paine-Duneka text" should no longer be regarded as a legitimate work, and that this more recent version is the only one which should be presented to readers as "The Mysterious Stranger," by Mark Twain. William M. Gibson, in an "Introduction" to *Mark Twain's Mysterious Stranger Manuscripts* (1969), referred to the Paine-Duneka text as "an editorial fraud," based on a version of the story which was "cut, cobbled-together, partially falsified." Gibson asserted that Paine, "altered the manuscript of the book in a fashion that almost certainly would have enraged Clemens [Twain]." Sholom J. Kahn, in *Mark Twain's Mysterious Stranger: A Study of the Manuscript Texts* (1978), somewhat more charitably remarked, "Paine's arrogant procedure, however sincere, muddied the waters of Mark Twain scholarship for two generations." Because of this long-running confusion over the text of "The Mysterious Stranger," critical responses to the earlier, "Paine-Duneka text" are no longer applicable to Twain's story.

Understandably, much of the critical discussion of "No. 44, The Mysterious Stranger," since the authoritative text came to light in the 1960s, has focused on ongoing issues and questions regarding the various unpublished manuscripts Twain left upon his death. Critical discussion of the story itself has tended to focus on two central questions: Who is Number 44?; and, What is the meaning of the final chapter?



Critics agreed that the identity of the supernatural character Number 44 is ambiguous. Kahn observed, "the mystery of the stranger's identity is one of the chief cruxes of the plot in 'No. 44.'" Derek Parker Royal, in "Terrible Dreams of Creative Power" (1999) observed:

What is the nature of No. 44? . . . the figure refuses neat critical categorization and eludes the grasp of even the most careful examination. He is simultaneously an impish prankster, a satanic figure, a benevolent fatalist, a childlike innocent, a philosophical pragmatist, a social determinist, a showman and performer, dream substance, and, perhaps most important, an artist and creator.

Critics have explored the implications of the final chapter of "The Mysterious Stranger" from several different perspectives. Many have asserted that the story's conclusion is a celebration of the imaginative mind and the process of artistic creation. Others have examined the philosophical implications of the conclusion, suggesting that it resonates with the philosophy of Plato or Descartes.

Kahn summed up Twain's achievement in commenting that "No. 44, The Mysterious Stranger" represents "the fruits of a truly creative imagination exploring many corners of the human condition in a fresh and profound way."

# Criticism

- Critical Essay #1



# Critical Essay #1

*Brent holds a Ph.D. in American culture from the University of Michigan. In this essay, Brent discusses Twain's use of print shop terminology in "No. 44, The Mysterious Stranger."*

August Feldner, the narrator of Mark Twain's "No. 44, The Mysterious Stranger," works as an apprentice in a print shop. August often describes events, situations, and characters in terms familiar to the printing trade. Thus, throughout the story, he expresses himself through metaphors drawn from printing terminology.

In comparing the personality of Marie Vogel, the step-daughter of the print master, to that of Marget Regen, the niece of the print master, August makes extensive use of metaphors drawn from the printer's trade. He describes Marie Vogel in the following terms:

She was a second edition of her mother—just plain galley-proof, neither revised nor corrected, full of turned letters, wrong fonts, outs and doubles, as we say in the printing-shop—in a word *pi*.

In stating that Marie was "a second edition of her mother," August indicates that, just as the second edition of a published book is almost exactly the same as the first edition, so Marie resembles her mother almost exactly. In describing her as "just plain galley-proof, neither revised nor corrected," August is referring to a preliminary stage in the printing of a book before it has been edited, revised, and corrected. He then lists a variety of errors that can occur in a print text at this stage in the process: "turned letters" are letters that are upside down; "wrong fonts" are letters in the wrong size or design; "outs" are letters that have been accidentally left out of a text; and "doubles" are words that have been accidentally repeated. August sums up his description of Marie in describing her as "*pi*," which is a printer's term referring to a hodge-podge of mixed-up type, such as may result from dropping a form filled with individual letters of movable type. In other words, Marie has an extremely flawed personality, similar to the flawed text of a galley-proof, which contains many errors, or a jumble of individual letters of print type, without order or significance.

In contrast to his description of Marie Vogel, whom he doesn't like, August uses print terminology to express his admiration for Marget Regen, whom he is in love with. He states, "She was a second edition of what her mother had been at her age; but struck from the standing forms and needing no revising, as one says in the printing-shop."

Like Marie, Marget is described as a "second edition" of her mother. However, while Marie is compared to a text that is full of flaws and errors, Marget is compared to a text that is perfect and flawless. Standing forms are trays of type that have already been set and corrected, and can be made available for printing subsequent editions of a book. Thus, in describing Marget as "struck from the standing forms" he implies that, as her mother was also flawless, she in turn inherited her mother's perfect character without



alteration. That Marget "needs no revising" means that, like a text that is without errors, she is without flaws and perfect as is.

Later in the story, Doangivadam, an itinerant printer, also uses terminology from the printing trade to express himself metaphorically. When Doangivadam asks Number 44's name, and Number 44 replies, "No. 44, New Series 864,962," Doangivadam asserts: "My word, but it's a daisy! In the hurry of going to press, let's dock it to Forty-Four and put the rest on the standing-galley and let it go for left-over at half rates."

Doangivadam is responding to the fact that Number 44's full name is rather long, and a mouthful to pronounce. He suggests that "in the hurry of going to press," meaning to save time, they shorten his name to Forty-Four. A standing-galley is a place where units of type are stored for reuse; thus he suggests the extraneous letters and digits in Number 44's name ("New Series, 864,962"), be set aside as extraneous material. Further, he jokingly implies that these extraneous elements of Number 44's name could be sold off at half-price for reuse by someone else.

At another point in the story, August tells the old cook Katrina of his experience of Ernest, a fellow printer, exposing him to ridicule and anger from the other men working in the shop. Ernest had found out that August had secretly become friends with Number 44, and he had announced this fact to the other men. August comments that Katrina, who sides with Number 44, "was full of pity for me and maledictions for Ernest, and promised him a piece of her mind, with foot-notes and illustrations."

Here, August uses the book printing concepts of foot-notes and illustrations as a metaphor to indicate that Katrina expressed in graphic terms with detailed explanations her desire to punish Ernest for threatening to harm him.

Through the narration of August, Twain further employs metaphors drawn from printing technology in the introduction of the characters referred to as Duplicates, who are magical copies of the print shop workers, referred to as the Originals. An original in printing refers to an original piece of text, whereas duplicate refers to a printed copy of the original. As in print an original version of a text is regarded as more authentic, so the men referred to as Originals in the story regard themselves as the authentic versions of their bodily forms, while the Duplicates are seen as mere copies.

When, toward the end of the story, Number 44 creates an eclipse to darken the sky, then disappears in a blinding flash of light before the eyes of a crowd of people, August states that the effect of the eclipse made Number 44's dramatic display of magic "grand and stunning just letter-perfect, as it seemed to me." In printing, a text that is letter-perfect has been type set without a single letter out of place. So August expresses his awe and wonder at the spectacle Number 44 has created, regarding it as a magnificent event that was carried off to perfection.

With the stylistic device of employing terminology from the printing process as a basis for metaphorical descriptions in "No. 44, The Mysterious Stranger," Twain skillfully



demonstrates that August's perspective and vocabulary are influenced by his trade, thus creating a narrative voice unique to his story.

**Source:** Liz Brent, Critical Essay on "No. 44, The Mysterious Stranger," in *Short Stories for Students*, Thomson Gale, 2005.

# Adaptations

"The Mysterious Stranger" was adapted to film and released in 1982. Directed by Peter H. Hunt, this film is a loose adaptation, which portrays Twain's tale as the daydream of a printer's apprentice living in nineteenth-century America.





## Topics for Further Study

"No. 44, The Mysterious Stranger" is based in part on Twain's experiences as a printer's apprentice during his youth. Write a research paper on technological developments in the printing process during the nineteenth century.

Read another short story by Mark Twain, which can be found in collections such as *The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County, and Other Sketches* (1867). Write an essay discussing the ways in which Twain uses humor in this story to comment on American society.

The setting of "No. 44, The Mysterious Stranger" in fifteenth-century Austria is based in part on Twain's experiences traveling in Austria in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, during the reign of the emperor Franz Joseph. Write a research paper on the political and social conditions of Austria during this period.

"No. 44, The Mysterious Stranger" is a fantastical tale in which magical and supernatural events occur. Write your own short story involving fantastic, magical, or supernatural occurrences.



# Compare and Contrast

**1490s:** Austria is a duchy within the Roman Empire, ruled by the hereditary Habsburg dynasty. Frederik III is archduke of Austria until his death in 1493, when his son, Maximilian I, succeeds him.

**1900s:** Austria is a part of the Austria-Hungary Dual Monarchy, ruled by Franz Joseph, a descendent of the Habsburg dynasty.

**Today:** Austria is an independent democratic nation with a parliamentary system of government, based on the constitution of 1920 (revised in 1929).

**1490s:** The continents now known as the Americas have been inhabited for centuries by many different peoples with many different languages. After Christopher Columbus's venture to the "New World" is completed in 1492, western European cultures begin to establish settlements in the Americas.

**1900s:** The United States of America is a democratic nation, based on the Constitution of 1776. All adult males have the right to vote. Due to the aggressive policies of the United States government, Native Americans have become a small minority in America, most of them living on reservations.

**Today:** The United States remains a democratic nation. All adults, both men and women, have the right to vote. Most Native Americans still live on reservations, although, since the 1970s, Native Americans have organized to achieve equal civil rights.

**1490s:** Modern book printing techniques are still new to European culture. Printing methods using movable type, developed by Johannes Gutenberg, represent the most advanced printing technology.

**1900s:** Many innovations developed throughout the nineteenth century have resulted in significant advances in the printing process. Among these new technologies are the use of steam engines to mechanize the printing press, advances in the reproduction of multi-color illustrations, the use of cylindrical devices for transferring ink to paper, and the integration of photographic processes. A significant advance made in 1904 is the development of a technique known as "offset" printing. Some aspects of the printing process once performed by individual craftsmen have now been mechanized.

**Today:** Advances in computer technology have significantly altered many aspects of book-printing. Many steps in the printing process once performed by individual craftsmen or mechanical machines are now accomplished through computer technology. Books can even be purchased from retailers on the Internet and printed at home by the consumer.

## What Do I Read Next?

*The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County, and Other Sketches* (1867) is a collection of early short stories by Twain, considered among his best.

*Life on the Mississippi* (1883) is an autobiographical novel based on Twain's experiences as a river boat pilot when he was a young man.

*The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884) is regarded as Twain's masterpiece and as one of the greatest American novels of the nineteenth century. Huck Finn runs away from home along with Jim, an escaped slave, with whom he travels down the Mississippi River on a raft.

*A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (1889), by Twain, is a fantastical novel in which a nineteenth-century American finds himself transported to the royal court of King Arthur in Medieval England.

*Luck of Roaring Camp, and Other Sketches* (1870) is a collection of short stories by Bret Harte, a "local color" author and contemporary of Twain. Harte's tales, set in California mining camps, are both humorous and sentimental.

*The Country of the Pointed Firs* (1896) is a novel by Sarah Orne Jewett, another of Twain's contemporaries and also a "local color" author. Jewett writes of community life in a small maritime village on the coast of Maine.



## Further Study

Dolmetsch, Carl, *"Our Famous Guest": Mark Twain in Vienna*, University of Georgia Press, 1992.

Dolmetsch provides an account of Mark Twain's travels in Austria, discussed in the social and cultural context of Austrian history.

Eisenstein, Elizabeth L., *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge University Press, 1993.

Eisenstein discusses the impact of advances in print technology on social, intellectual, and cultural life in early modern Europe.

Emerson, Everett, *Mark Twain: A Literary Life*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000.

Emerson offers a critical biography of Twain's life and work.

Fishkin, Shelley Fisher, *Lighting Out for the Territory: Reflections on Mark Twain and American Culture*, Oxford University Press, 1997.

Fishkin provides a collection of essays on the significance of Mark Twain to nineteenth-century American literature, culture, and society.

Hindman, Sandra, ed., *Printing the Written Word: The Social History of Books, circa 1450—1520*, Cornell University Press, 1991.

Hindman discusses the impact of advances in print technology and book publishing on fifteenth- and sixteenth-century European culture and society.

Lause, Mark A., *Some Degree of Power: From Hired Hand to Union Craftsman in the Pre-industrial American Printing Trades, 1778—1815*, University of Arkansas Press, 1991.

Lause discusses developments in the working conditions of print shop employees in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century America.

Steinberg, S. H., *Five Hundred Years of Printing*, Oak Knoll Press, 1996.

Steinberg provides a concise historical overview of the history of printing and book publishing from the fifteenth century through the twentieth century.

Ward, Geoffrey C., and Dayton Duncan, *Mark Twain*, Knopf, 2001.

Ward and Duncan offer a pictorial biography of Twain, based on the documentary film biography directed by Ken Burns.

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## **Introduction**

### **Purpose of the Book**

The purpose of Short Stories for Students (SSfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's □For Students□ Literature line, SSfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on □classic□ novels



frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of SSfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

### Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of SSfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel; and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of "classic" novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members—educational professionals—helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

### How Each Entry Is Organized





Each entry, or chapter, in SSfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- **Introduction:** a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- **Author Biography:** this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- **Plot Summary:** a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- **Characters:** an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed—for instance, the narrator in *Invisible Man*—the character is listed as "The Narrator" and alphabetized as "Narrator." If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name "Jean Louise Finch" would head the listing for the narrator of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname "Scout Finch."
- **Themes:** a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- **Style:** this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- **Historical Context:** This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- **Critical Overview:** this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- **Criticism:** an essay commissioned by SSfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).



- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an "at-a-glance" comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

### Other Features

SSfS includes "The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature," a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Short Stories for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the SSfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the SSfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.



Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

### Citing Short Stories for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Short Stories for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from SSfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

□Night.□ Short Stories for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from SSfS (usually the first piece under the □Criticism□ subhead), the following format should be used:

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Short Stories for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335-39.

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of SSfS, the following form may be used:

Malak, Amin. □Margaret Atwood's □The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,□ Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Short Stories for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of SSfS, the following form may be used:

Adams, Timothy Dow. □Richard Wright: □Wearing the Mask,□ in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

### We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editor of Short Stories for Students welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via email at: [ForStudentsEditors@gale.com](mailto:ForStudentsEditors@gale.com). Or write to the editor at:

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