

Mark Twain A to Z: The Essential Reference to His Life and Writings (Literary A to Z)

R. Kent Rasmussen

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R. Kent Rasmussen : Mark Twain A to Z: The Essential Reference to His Life and Writings (Literary A to Z) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Mark Twain A to Z: The Essential Reference to His Life and Writings (Literary A to Z):

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. IndispensableBy Steve Vranal have been teaching "Adventures of Huckleberry Finn" in the classroom for nearly thirty years and this book (along with Michael Patrick Hearn's "The Annotated Huckleberry Finn) are indispensable. Not so much for the exploration of themes in this great American novel, but in understanding the the references and influences that are unfamiliar to readers born in the 20th Century."Mark Twain A-Z" is 552 pages of invaluable information. There are literally hundreds of entries with an easy to use 21-page index and dozens of illustrations and photos. The book begins with a U.S. map of Twain's travels, followed by a detailed 15-page chronology of Twain's life.Here are just a handful of items that I found helpful regarding "Adventures of Huckleberry Finn." There are individual entries for all characters--even minor ones like Mrs. Judith Loftus, Ben Rogers, Jim Turner, and even Huck's aliases like Adolphus. And in the case of Ben Rogers, a comparison is made between his appearance in "Tom Sawyer" and "Huck Finn."There are also listings for historical figures(Henry Clay, David Garrick, Shakespeare), literary influences (The Arabian Nights, "Romeo and Juliet"), and places--both real and fictional--(Booth's Landing, Bricksville, Jackson's Island).In addition, there is a 14-page section

on "Adventures of Huckleberry Finn," including a chapter-by-chapter summary. All told, this is a fascinating read covering the entirety of Twain's personal and literary life. An indispensable resource. VERY HIGHLY RECOMMENDED 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. This book is the best reference I have ever used. By Mike Harman This book is the best reference I have ever used. No matter how much I learn about Twain, this book takes me a little farther. It is very useful for deciding what editions of old books to look for. For example, getting a later edition with original illustrations is important to me. Mark Twain understood the value of humorous illustrations, and he took time to hire good artists for the job. I use this book a lot! 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Keeps you Twain reading straight. By David Allen Holmes This companion work is essential for serious Twain scholars - or just fans!

Comprising over 1250 entries enhanced with rarely published photos, this is the most authoritative reference to one of America's most acclaimed authors. His classic works include *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn*.

From Library Journal Amazingly a one-man work, this unobtrusively cross-referenced encyclopedia of Twainiana focuses not on the whys and hows but rather on the myriad whos, whats, and whens of Twain's life. From three lines to several pages, each detail-packed entry is a comprehensive piece of a prodigious life. Readers who want to know the origin of the term blatherskite (and precisely where Twain uses it in his fiction) or need a synopsis of every chapter in *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (and its background and publication history) will find it here. Twain's literary characters, every fiction large and small, childhood friends in Hannibal, adult business associates, riverboats Twain piloted, inventions he tinkered with—all are covered. A fascinating and unique volume recommended for every library with a Twain collection. [The publisher also offers other "A to Z" encyclopedias on literary figures, most recently James Joyce and Virginia Woolf.—Ed.]—Charles C. Nash, Cottey Coll., Nevada, Mo.—Charles C. Nash, Cottey Coll., Nevada, Mo. Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Booklist As the excitement generated by the recent publication of a previously unknown episode written for *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* demonstrates, Samuel Langhorne Clemens (a.k.a. Mark Twain) continues to enjoy a wide and devoted audience. The proliferation of Twain sources on the Internet further reflects the intensity of contemporary scholarly and popular interest in this colorful, intriguing, and enigmatic writer. Obviously a labor of love (Rasmussen indicates that he has read each of Twain's works at least four times), this compilation covers Twain's life and publications in painstaking detail, beginning with the steamboat *A.B. Chambers*, which Twain once piloted, and ending with the French novelist Emile Zola, on whom Twain penned a critical essay. Rasmussen, formerly an associate editor of the Marcus Garvey papers at UCLA, notes that his intention is to provide factual information rather than analysis and interpretation. Consequently, the nearly 1,300 entries are devoted primarily to proper names relating to Twain, including titles of all of his major and many of his minor works; characters and fictional locales; his family, friends, and associates; places he lived or visited; publishers and illustrators of his works; and periodicals in which he published. Only a small percentage of entries is more general in nature, such as those pertaining to motifs in Twain's works (Dueling, Haunted Houses), literary devices (Frame-Story, Soliloquy), or subjects that had a significant impact on Twain's life (Cholera, Steamboats). The most extensive entries are those devoted to Twain's more widely read works. Each of these provides an introduction to the work (including a word count), a chapter-by-chapter synopsis, and a publication history. Cross-references within entries guide users to other pertinent articles. Approximately 130 black-and-white illustrations, including photographs of Twain and illustrations from his works, appear near relevant entries throughout the text. Among other useful features are a full-page map of the U.S. that reflects the places where Twain lived and traveled, an extensive chronological chart that juxtaposes personal and professional details about each year of Twain's life with major historical and literary events, and bibliographies of first editions of Twain's works and selected secondary sources. The 21-page index is remarkable for its degree of detail and its precision. Not only does it include the customary entries for titles, names, and subjects, but it also provides access to a variety of collective categories. For example, the heading trial scenes lists characters involved in such scenes and works in which they appear, while the heading unfinished works lists all titles that fall into that category. This is a particularly valuable feature since the entry headers in the encyclopedia itself are so specific. In his introduction, Rasmussen observes that a single reference book about Mark Twain "cannot encompass everything about him that one might wish to know." Ostensibly, he is explaining any omissions in his own work, but he could also be rationalizing its publication so soon after the well-received *Mark Twain Encyclopedia* [RBB O 15 93]. While there is considerable overlap between the two works, each has its own unique features and strengths. Containing fewer entries, but offering a more integrated approach, the MTE is particularly valuable for its inclusion of numerous topical essays that address such matters as Twain's literary style, his political and social views, and recurrent themes in his works. On the other hand, *Mark Twain A-Z* provides more thorough coverage of specific works and of both fictional and real people and places. Large libraries will want both volumes, but smaller libraries may need to choose which approach would better serve the needs of their users. "Magisterial....Extraordinary....Unprecedented in its reach and scope....A landmark work of scholarship that is also,

remarkably, a pleasure to read."--Shelley Fisher Fishkin, general editor of the forthcoming series *The Oxford Mark Twain*"Provides...thorough coverage of specific works and of both fictional and real people and places. The twenty-one-page index is remarkable for its degree of detail and its precision."--*Books Bulletin*