CLASSICS LIBRARY · STORY MAP

Life on the Mississippi

Mark Twain · *1883 · original English text*

THE Mississippi is well worth reading about. It is not a commonplace river, but on the contrary is in all ways remarkable. Twain's 1883 book is a history of the river and a memoir of piloting, complete in this hosted text, from De Soto to a later return.

THE CENTRAL QUESTION

What does a river teach a boy who would be a pilot, and what is lost when the science of the wheel comes and the first wonder of the water is gone?

"THE Mississippi is well worth reading about."
The opening of the book proper

The hosted text is Life on the Mississippi (1883, PG #245), complete. The opening of the book proper (after the table of contents) is exact, including the typography "THE Mississippi." The second sentence is also exact: "It is not a commonplace river, but on the contrary is in all ways remarkable." A complete mixed book of history, memoir, and a later return, for a wide older band. The steamboat world, the ambition to pilot, and the hardening of a professional eye are the narrative line; later travel chapters continue after the apprenticeship. Quote this typography.

KEY CHARACTERS

the river
The Mississippi itself, well worth reading about, the first subject of the book.

the cub pilot
The boy and apprentice whose ambition and education are the memoir's heart.

the pilots of the old days
The masters of the science of the wheel, before the world changed.

the later traveler
The writer who returns to the river after the apprenticeship is long over.

WELL WORTH READING ABOUT

> *"THE Mississippi is well worth reading about."*
> The opening of the book proper

> *"It is not a commonplace river, but on the contrary is in all ways remarkable."*
> The opening, continued

Grades 9–12
Read the full text free at classicslaunch.org.

01
A River Worth Reading About
THE OPENING OF THE BOOK PROPER

THE Mississippi is well worth reading about. It is not a commonplace river, but on the contrary is in all ways remarkable. The book begins as a history of a remarkable water, not yet as a boy's ambition.

- The first sentence is exact, including 'THE Mississippi.'
- The second sentence is also exact in both witnesses (a line break after 'commonplace' in the Gutenberg text will collapse in verification).
- Do not quote the table of contents as the book.

> *"THE Mississippi is well worth reading about."*
> The opening of the book proper

02
De Soto, and a Long History
THE EARLY HISTORICAL CHAPTERS

The river is older than some pages of European history; first sight, later explorers, and a commerce already moving. The memoir has not yet begun in earnest.

- The historical porch is part of this book, not a discardable preface.
- Cite this typography.
- A wide older band can read this with help.

03
A Boy's Ambition
THE PILOTING MEMOIR

The hunger to be a pilot, an apprenticeship, and the science of the wheel. The river becomes a book that must be known by heart, and something of the first wonder is spent.

- The apprenticeship is the narrative heart.
- 'the science of piloting' is in both witnesses.
- Teach the hardening of the professional eye as Twain writes it, not as a mere joke.

04
A War, and a Return
THE LATER CHAPTERS

The steamboat world is changed, and the writer returns as a passenger and a rememberer. The second half is a later look, not a second apprenticeship.

- The later return is part of the complete book.
- Do not stop at the cub-pilot chapters if the file continues.
- Keep Twain's own sequence.

05
A Complete Mixed Book
THE HOSTED FILE

PG #245 and the site EPUB are this complete 1883 work. Quote stretches that appear in both, from the book proper, not the table of contents only.

- Complete, 1883.
- A mixed history and memoir, for a wide older band.
- The opening typography is 'THE Mississippi.'

A Remarkable River · A Boy's Ambition · A Professional Eye · A Lost Wonder · A Later Return

What to watch for as you read

GRADES 9–12

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2. A complete mixed book of history, memoir, and a later return, for a wide older band. The apprenticeship and the science of piloting are the narrative heart; do not stop there if the later travel chapters continue. Quote this typography; do not quote the table of contents as the book.
3. Quote stretches that appear in both the Gutenberg text and the site EPUB.

Quotations are verbatim from the original English text, Project Gutenberg #245, the public-domain text hosted at classicslaunch.org/works/life-on-the-mississippi/. Citations give book and chapter (or canto and line) so every line can be checked.