



*The Mark Twain
House & Museum*



LESSON:
An Observation Exercise

Length: 50 - 75 minutes

Materials: Copies of the Observation Worksheet (enclosed); Five color copies of rooms at the Twain house (enclosed); Notebook paper

Objectives:

- Observe details and present findings in oral form.
- Become familiar with rooms at the Twain house.
- Write a descriptive essay that incorporates the 5 senses.

Procedure:

If you have completed lesson 3, you may skip steps 1, 2 & 3

1. Introduce the idea that Twain was a travel writer and used great detailed descriptions to draw pictures of places for his readers. Explain that students will be using their oral and writing skills to describe rooms at the Twain House to their classmates.
2. Explain the process of being a travel writer – observing details, taking notes, comparing something to something else (what it is similar to or reminds you of), using adjectives and adverbs to draw a picture for the reader.
3. Practice: Divide the class into 5 groups. Assign each group an object in the room to describe without telling the rest of the class what it is. Have each group write a description of the object and then read their description to the class. Have the class guess which object they are describing.
4. The Twain House: Hand out copies of the “Observation Worksheet” and give each group a color picture of a Twain room. Have each group work together to fill out the worksheet.
5. Oral presentations: Have the members of each group stand before the class with their worksheets. Have one student hold up their room picture. Ask the group to give their answers to questions 1-3 from the worksheet. Then have each student read a description of an object in the room. (Since the objects are listed as A-E on the worksheet, you can ask a student to read across row A, for example. You can also have students write 1-2 sentences describing the object before they stand to give their oral presentation.)
6. Discuss students’ descriptions with the class. Can the other students get a picture of these objects in their minds? Do they get a feel for the room? Pass the picture of the room around to the other students.
7. Conclusion: Review the importance of observing details in order to give vivid descriptions. Remind students that they will be seeing these rooms on their field trip to the Twain House. Have students be prepared to view the Twain house as travel writers by observing the details while on their tour. Also have them think about how they would describe their observations in writing.



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LESSON:
An Observation Exercise, cont'd.

Follow up or Homework Assignment:



Depending upon how much class time you want to dedicate to this exercise, students can use the answers from their worksheet to write a descriptive essay of the room they examined.

Here is an example outline you may want to offer students to help them write their essays:

Beginning – introduce the room & how it was used (create sentences from the answers to questions 1-3 on the worksheet)

Middle – describe the objects in the room by using the descriptive words they from the worksheet (have two sentences for each object; one using the descriptive words and one creating a metaphor or simile for the object)

End – give an opinion about the room and explain what is most interesting (I like/dislike this room because _____ or I think this room is _____.)

Have students proofread their first drafts, circling all the descriptive words they have used. Have them add more descriptive words where needed.



OBSERVATION WORKSHEET

See what you can find. You've been given a picture of one of the rooms in the Mark Twain House. Look at it carefully. Observe the details. Then, try to answer the questions below.

NAME OF ROOM: _____

1. What do you think people did in this room?
2. What smells and sounds can you imagine in this room?
3. What is the feel of the room? Is it fancy, fun, cold, bright, dark, big, crowded, comfortable?

Gathering Details: Pick 5 objects you see in the picture and fill in the chart below.

LIST: List 5 objects you see in the picture	COLOR: What color(s) is the object?	TEXTURE: What do you think the object feels like?	LOCATION: Where is the object in the room? What is it near?	COMPARE: Does it remind you of anything? This object looks like a...



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THE ADVENTURES OF MARK TWAIN

Mark Twain was one of America's greatest writers. He wrote books and short stories filled with interesting characters and wild adventures, many of which were based on his own experiences.

Mark Twain's real name was Samuel Clemens and he was born on November 30, 1835 in Florida, Missouri. When Sam was four, his family moved to Hannibal, Missouri. Hannibal was a small town on the banks of the Mississippi River. Here he grew up playing along the riverfront watching steamboats and rafts travel up and down the river. Since the boats stopped at Hannibal to trade goods, Sam was able to meet people from all over the world.

When Sam was almost twelve years old, his father died. Since the family was poor, Sam had to quit school after the 5th grade and go to work. His first job was as a typesetter at the local newspaper. Sam had to arrange the letters for every word of every story that was to be printed. The work was hard but by doing it Sam learned the art of newspaper writing. As he got older, he began to *write* articles for the paper as well.



At age 23, Sam decided to do what he always dreamed of; he became a riverboat pilot. He got his pilot license and began steering riverboats up and down the Mississippi River from St. Louis to New Orleans.

When the Civil War broke out river traffic was forced to stop. Suddenly, Sam needed a new job. His older brother was heading west to a job in Nevada. Since the west had a lot of silver mines, Sam believed he would strike it rich if he went to look for silver. So, Sam joined his brother and rode in a stagecoach from Missouri to Carson City, Nevada.

Sam became a silver miner but he was not very good at it. He never struck it rich. So, to make some money, he started writing articles for the local newspaper. He wrote about the people and things that he experienced while working in the mines. People liked his writings so much that, in 1863, he was given a full-time job as a journalist in Virginia City, Nevada. It was then that he began to sign his stories with the pen name, Mark Twain.

Next, Sam moved to San Francisco, California. There he was hired as a travel writer. Since there were no televisions, people relied on descriptive newspaper articles to discover what foreign places looked like. His first important assignment was to travel to the Sandwich Islands, what we now know as Hawaii.





The Adventures of Mark Twain, continued

After the Sandwich Islands, Sam went to New York City and from there he left on a cruise to Europe. He visited Spain, France, Italy, Greece, Russia and the Middle East. And during his trip, he sent back articles describing each new place.



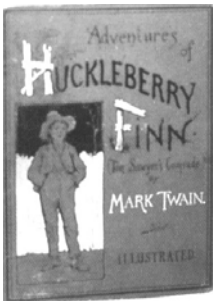
While he was traveling abroad (a term that means traveling outside of his country), Sam met Charlie Langdon. One day Charlie showed Sam a picture of his sister, Olivia. Upon first sight, Sam swore he was in love. When Sam returned to America, he began to court Olivia. In 1870, they were married.

Sam's writings about Europe were so popular that a publisher asked Sam to put them in a book. He did. It was Sam's first book and it was very successful. Soon, his publisher wanted Sam to write more books. Since the publisher lived in Hartford, Connecticut, Sam and Livy (Olivia's nickname) decided to live there too.

In 1874, Sam and Livy moved into their new Hartford home. Here, they raised their three daughters, Susy, Clara and Jean. The girls grew up in the house and between piano lessons, putting on plays, and entertaining friends, the girls made it a lively and active place. Sam liked playing with his children and sometimes the girls or the things they were interested in inspired some of his characters and stories.



The Clemens family lived in their Hartford home for 17 years. During that time, Mark Twain became famous. By turning his own experiences into interesting stories, he became popular with readers from all ages and backgrounds. Some of the books he wrote while living in Hartford include *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, *Life on the Mississippi* and *The Prince and the Pauper*.



When the Clemens family left Hartford, they moved to Europe and lived in several places including Germany and Switzerland. By this time, Mark Twain was so famous that people wanted to hear him tell stories in public. So, in 1895, Mark Twain started a round-the-world lecture tour where he traveled from Vancouver, Canada to the Fiji Islands, Australia, New Zealand, India, South Africa and England. He had such an exciting trip that – you guessed it – he wrote about all his visits in yet another book.

In 1900, after traveling the world, Sam settled in New York City for a few years until moving to Redding, Connecticut. It was there on April 21, 1910, that Sam Clemens died. But through his stories and the characters he created, Mark Twain lives on as millions of people around the world still read and enjoy his books today.