Using Gilded Age Hartford to Understanding Mark Twain’s Literature

2-3 Weeks
High School English, History

DESIRED RESULTS:

What are the “big ideas” that drive the lesson?

Great writers reflect their own time, place, and culture in their literature, and this was especially true of Mark Twain. To appreciate his work, students must understand the historical and cultural context in which it was written. By comparing their own town or city during the same time period as that of Twain’s Hartford (late 19th Century), students will gain an appreciation for the importance of contextual similarities and differences in framing an author’s work and defining his motivation.

What are the “essential questions” that students must answer in order to understand the “big ideas?”

What were the most prominent characteristics (economic, social, political) of Hartford CT in the late 19th century, and how did they reflect the most prominent characteristics of the Gilded Age? How are they different?

What were the most prominent characteristics of your town/city in the late 19th century, and how do they reflect the most prominent characteristics of the Gilded Age? How are they different?

How was the Gilded Age an improvement in the lives of Americans? How did it make American life less tolerable?

What is “progress” and how should it be measured?
NOTE- This assignment is preparatory for reading and understanding the degree to which the characteristics of the Gilded Age are reflected in Mark Twain’s literature i.e. *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court (CYCAK)*, or *The Gilded Age* (GA)

CORE UNDERSTANDINGS:
Identify what students will know and/or be able to do.

Students will understand the meaning of the term: “progress” both in a material and moral sense
Students will appreciate how progressive Hartford was during the late 19th century, and will be able to assess the degree to which their own town/city was progressive during the same period.

SUGGESTED ASSESSMENT(S):

Each student will accurately and fully complete the graphic organizer (see attachments).
Each student will write a compare/contrast essay deemed competent according to the standards of the prescribed rubric (see attachments).

LEARNING EXPERIENCES:
What are the specific activities and sequence of instruction that will be used to engage students in this lesson?

The teacher will assign a preparatory reading from sources readily available to students in the library and/or at home that provide an overview of life in late 19th century American cities sufficient to show that the wealth and material “progress” of the
“Gilded Age” was spurred by industrialization, immigration, and technological innovation.

The teacher will begin this lesson with a discussion of the preparatory reading to elicit from the class the key factors for creating Gilded Age progress, and provide prompts for organized note-taking.

The teacher will distribute copies of Twain’s 1868 letter to the Alta California (see attachments) in which he says Hartford is the “handsomest city” he has ever seen, guide their reading of this letter, and elicit from discussion the reasons they see for why Twain found Hartford to be so attractive, i.e. beautiful streets, homes, landscaping, and people with “steady habits” who made their wealth from insurance, publishing, and machine industries.

The teacher will transition to an independent study assignment in which small student groups are tasked with creating a photo essay, perhaps using PowerPoint, that depicts a comparison of various aspects of Gilded Age Hartford and their own town/city as manufacturing, financial, and commercial centers (or perhaps agricultural centers or transportation hubs) or depicting a comparison of the cities' leading civic, religious, and social institutions. One group will be asked to make a photo essay of Mark Twain’s Hartford home as compared to a prominent home in their own community at that time (see attachments).

Each group will present their photo essay to the whole class, allowing all students time to complete the compare and contrast graphic organizer (see attachments).

Once each student has completed the graphic organizer, they will be assigned to write a compare/contrast essay on the degree to which Hartford and their town/city typified the Gilded Age.
“COMMON CORE” CONNECTIONS:

CCSS. Literacy. SL. 9-12. 4 Present information, findings, and support evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed, and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to the purpose, audience, and range of tasks.

MATERIALS AND/OR ATTACHMENTS:

Photographs of Hartford and text from “Hartford, CT as a Manufacturing, Business and Commercial Center…” by The Hartford Board of Trade, 1889; http://www.quinnipiac.edu/media/abl/etext/hartford/hartford.html; an online resource sponsored by Quinnipiac University
Local library/historical society resources for period photographs and textual material
Graphic organizer
“Samual Clemens to the Alta California
Essay rubric

Procedure:
The teacher will also show photographs of Twain’s home from the book *Mark Twain House*, edited by Henry Darbee (1995), and
Compare and Contrast Chart Graphic Organizer

Item #1 ___________________________ Item #2 ___________________________

How are they alike?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

How are they different?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
### Comparison and Contrast Essay

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Purpose and Supporting Details</strong></th>
<th><strong>1 pts</strong></th>
<th><strong>2 pts</strong></th>
<th><strong>3 pts</strong></th>
<th><strong>4 pts</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The paper compares or contrasts, but does not include both. There is no supporting information or support is incomplete.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Organization and Structure</strong></th>
<th><strong>1 pts</strong></th>
<th><strong>2 pts</strong></th>
<th><strong>3 pts</strong></th>
<th><strong>4 pts</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Many details are not in a logical or expected order. There is little sense that the writing is organized.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Transitions</strong></th>
<th><strong>1 pts</strong></th>
<th><strong>2 pts</strong></th>
<th><strong>3 pts</strong></th>
<th><strong>4 pts</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The transitions between ideas are unclear or nonexistent.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Grammar and Spelling (Conventions)</strong></th>
<th><strong>1 pts</strong></th>
<th><strong>2 pts</strong></th>
<th><strong>3 pts</strong></th>
<th><strong>4 pts</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Writer makes more than 4 errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>References (Sources)</strong></th>
<th><strong>1 pts</strong></th>
<th><strong>2 pts</strong></th>
<th><strong>3 pts</strong></th>
<th><strong>4 pts</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very few references are correctly documented and paper has 4 or more errors with the APA format, either in the paper and/or on the reference page.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The paper compares and contrasts items clearly, but the supporting information is incomplete. The paper may include information that is not relevant to the comparison or contrast.

The paper breaks the information into whole-to-whole, similarities-to-differences, or point-by-point structure, but some information is in the wrong section. Some details are not in a logical or expected order, and this distracts the reader.

The paper breaks the information into whole-to-whole, similarities-to-differences, or point-by-point structure but does not follow a consistent order when discussing the comparison and contrast.

The paper breaks the information into whole-to-whole, similarities-to-differences, or point-by-point structure. It follows a consistent order when discussing the comparison and contrast.

Some transitions work well, but connections between other ideas are fuzzy.

The paper moves from one idea to the next, but there is little variety. The paper uses comparison and contrast transition words to show relationships between ideas.

The paper moves smoothly from one idea to the next. The paper uses comparison and contrast transition words to show relationships between ideas. The paper uses a variety of sentence structures and transitions.

Writer makes 3-4 errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.

Writer makes 1-2 errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.

Writer makes no errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.

References are correctly documented in the text of the paper and on the reference page at the end of the paper. Writer follows the APA style.
Image from Norton 3rd edition of *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*
Image from Norton 3rd edition of *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*
“AND ASKED ME IF I LIKED HER.”

Image from Norton 3rd edition of *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*
WASHINGTON, February 1st

"Home Again"

The new sensational play -- A Glimpse of Haitiord -- Sunny Connecction Signs -- Charter Oak

[Special Correspondent of the Alta California]

MARK TWAIN ON HIS TRAVELS.

San Francisco Alta California, March 3, 1868

Home Search Links
They showed us the new battery from which electrical signals are transmitted. The signals pass through a network of wires and are detected by sensors placed at various locations. This allows us to know where power is being used. It is a system of six to ten power sources that can be turned on and off depending on the needs of the facility. The signals are then transmitted to the control center where they are analyzed and processed. This allows us to have a centralized control of the power system. It is a system that is able to adapt to changes in demand.
Home Again

Prosperity, and a knowledge of how to live -- just if

Hartford has a population of 40,000 souls, and the most of them live in shacks. That is a sign of

forever.

"Now, where is your name" and he said, "Charter Oak. Johnson. This was sufficient for a silhouette.

Who let me a moment to admire myself with their little hole. I am in aフリー, managed way.

How have we that to know that here is a Charter Oak. Truly, and when he invited me to go

to contrast it. I am the beginning to get a little wear of Charter Oak. Truly.

I mean what for a joke. But how was he to know that being a stranger? He took me around and

"Well" I said, "now let us go and see some Charter Oak, for a change."

"Charter Oak," he said.

I intimated him and said, "Never mind -- we'll bunch the whole lumber yard and call it --"

The Charter Oak.

I started off. I took the road. I looked at the Grandma. From there came an overarched, "Maiden from the Commonwealth, from whom came an overarched, beauty."

beautful carved chair in the Senate Chamber, where the bearded and animal-hoofed old-time

beautful carved chair in the Senate Chamber, where the bearded and animal-hoofed old-time

The Charter Oak.

You may have heard of the Charter Oak. It used to stand in Hartford. The Charter of the State of

Mark Twain on His Travels
Return to Table of Contents

write a hand that will pass for Chinese in Peking or anywhere else in the world. Men need to go fighting for my secretaryship. I am the only man that can fill the bill. I am able to

shall follow him out there as soon as I can. They, anyhow, if he is sent and so none of you newspaper

I go back. Present engagements will keep me in the East for five or six months yet; but no matter, I

 distinguishing me when I see a chance to serve my country without damaging my health by working

position on this subject in case he goes to China, and I have accepted, with that promise, which so

and consequently entitled to high honors; and also because he has kindly invited me to take a lucrative