

2.3 Mark Twain

Warming up!

Hold a classroom conversation about the students' favourite authors known for their wit and humour. They may talk about authors writing in Marathi and other Indian languages.

Chit-Chat

- Who is your favourite comedian?
- What do you like better – to listen to a joke, or to tell a joke?
- Do you like cartoons and cartoon films? Which one do you like best?



Quick Thinkers

- Within one minute, write as many meaningful phrases as possible using the numbers given below. Do not repeat the ideas.

One : *one man*

Two : *two roads*

Three : *three lamps*

Four : *a four wheeler*

Five : *five frogs*

Six : *six kites*

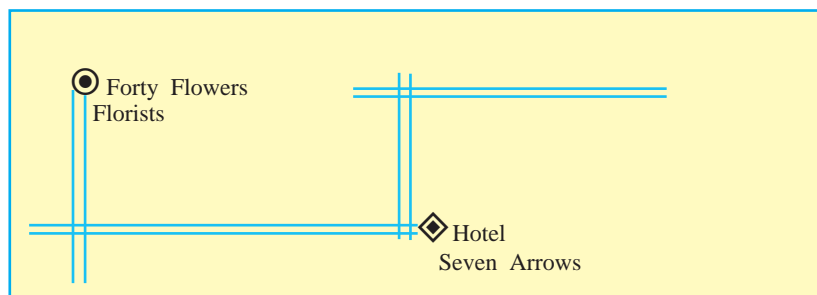
Seven : *seven arrows*

Forty : *forty flowers*

A hundred : *a hundred dots*

- Try to imagine a situation/context where all the above items fit in. Describe it in 8-10 lines.
- Think of a title for your passage.
- Try to draw a map incorporating your phrases in a meaningful way. (Two examples are given below.) Write a key/index for your map.

The 'Quick Thinkers' activity may be done individually, in pairs or by forming groups. Let the students decide how they want to do it.



Mark Twain

Mark Twain was the pen name of Samuel Langhorne Clemens, a popular American writer. He was famous for his humorous stories, novels and other writings. His ready wit shone through everyday conversations. Many anecdotes related to Mark Twain are told and enjoyed even today.

It should be noted that he was a great defender of human values like liberty, equality and fraternity. He opposed wars and imperialism and supported the cause of labourers and of the black people in his country, America. Given below are some anecdotes from his life and some quotations from his speeches and writings.

Some Anecdotes

One day during a lecture tour, Mark Twain entered a local barber shop for a shave. This, Twain told the barber, was his first visit to the town.

“You’ve chosen a good time to come,” he declared.

“Oh?” Twain replied.

“Mark Twain is going to lecture here tonight. You’ll want to go, I suppose?”

“I guess so...”

“Have you bought your ticket yet ?”

“No, not yet.”

“Well, it’s sold out, so you’ll have to stand.”

“Just my luck,” said Twain with a sigh.
“I always have to stand when that fellow lectures !”

Mrs Stowe was leaving for Florida one morning, and Clemens (the young Mark Twain) ran over early to say goodbye. On his return Mrs Clemens regarded him disapprovingly:

“Why”, she said, “you haven’t on any collar and tie.”

He said nothing, but went up to his room, did up these items in a neat package, and sent it over to Mrs Stowe by a servant, with a line:

‘Herewith receive a call from the rest of me.’

◆ What was Mark Twain’s real name?

◆ Where else are the human values of liberty, equality and fraternity mentioned in the book? Find and copy the page in a beautiful hand.

• Mrs Stowe : Harriet Beecher Stowe was a famous writer. ‘Uncle Tom’s Cabin’ is her most renowned book. Mrs Stowe and Mark Twain were neighbours for many years.

Think and answer :

♦ Why did Henry Irving ask Mark Twain if he had heard the story before?

♦ Can you think of other examples of irregularities in English Spelling.

♦ Try to write a few sentences according to the improvements suggested for each year.

• anomaly : irregularity

• redundant : unnecessary, no longer required

• dodderers : weak, old men who cannot do things right.

One day Henry Irving, in the midst of telling Mark Twain a humorous story, abruptly stopped and examined his friend's face. "You haven't heard this, have you?" he asked. Twain assured him that he had not.

When, some time later, Irving again paused, and again posed the question, Twain again reassured him. Then, approaching the climax, Irving broke off once more. "Are you quite sure you haven't heard this?" he demanded suspiciously.

"I can lie once," Twain finally replied. "I can lie twice for courtesy's sake, but I draw the line there. I can't lie the third time at any price. I not only heard the story, I invented it!"

Mark Twain once proposed a 'Plan for the Improvement of English Spelling':

For example, in **Year 1** that useless letter 'c' would be dropped to be replaced either by 'k' or 's,' and likewise, 'x' would no longer be part of the alphabet.

The only case in which 'c' would be retained would be the 'ch' formation, which will be dealt with later.

Year 2 might reform 'w' spelling, so that 'which' and 'one' would take the same consonant, while **Year 3** might well abolish 'y' replacing it with 'i' and **Year 4** might fix the 'g/j' anomaly once and for all.

Generally, then, the improvement would continue year by year with **Year 5** doing away with useless double consonants, and **Years 6-12** or so modifying vowels and the remaining voiced and unvoiced consonants. By **Year 15** or so, it would finally be possible to make use of the redundant letters 'c,' 'y' and 'x' — by now just a memory in the minds of old dodderers — to replace 'ch,' 'sh,' and 'th' respectively.

Finally, when, after some 20 years of orthodox reform, we would have a logical, coherent spelling in use throughout the English-speaking world.

One day during his tenure as the editor of a small Missouri newspaper, Mark Twain received a letter from a reader who had found a spider in his paper. He wondered whether this portended good or bad luck.

“Finding a spider in your paper,” Twain replied, “is neither good luck nor bad. The spider was merely looking over our paper to see which merchant was not advertising so that he could go to that store, spin his web across the door, and lead a life of undisturbed peace ever afterward.”

Mark Twain’s birth in November 1835 was heralded by the return of Halley’s comet. Twain, who often remarked upon this curiosity, came to think of himself and the comet as ‘unaccountable freaks,’ cosmically linked: having come in together, he declared, they would go out together.

In fact, Twain was proven right. On the night of his death in April 1910, Halley’s comet once again blazed through the sky...

Some Quotations

- ✂ April Fool’s Day – This is the day upon which we are reminded of what we are on the other three hundred and sixty-four.
- ✂ A man cannot be comfortable without his own approval.
- ✂ A person with a new idea is a crank until the idea succeeds.
- ✂ Age is an issue of mind over matter. If you don’t mind, it doesn’t matter.
- ✂ All generalizations are false, including this one.
- ✂ Be careful about reading health books. You may die of a misprint.
- ✂ Be careless in your dress if you will, but keep a tidy soul.
- ✂ ‘Classic’ – A book which people praise and don’t read.

- portended: indicated, foretold

- ◆ Which episode shows that Mark Twain did not believe in superstitions?



- prodigious : very great

♦ Can you think of any events in your own or someone else's life to support the quote—

‘If you tell the truth, you don't have to remember anything.’

What is likely to happen if you don't tell the truth?’

- ✎ Humour is mankind's greatest blessing.
- ✎ I am an old man and have known a great many troubles, but most of them never happened.
- ✎ I must have a prodigious quantity of mind; it takes me as much as a week sometimes to make it up.
- ✎ If you tell the truth, you don't have to remember anything.
- ✎ It is better to deserve honours and not have them than to have them and not deserve them.
- ✎ It is better to keep your mouth closed and let people think you are a fool than to open it and remove all doubt.
- ✎ It's no wonder that truth is stranger than fiction. Fiction has to make sense.
- ✎ Whenever you find yourself on the side of the majority, it is time to pause and reflect.
- ✎ Why is it that we rejoice at a birth and grieve at a funeral? It is because we are not the person involved.
- ✎ Thousands of geniuses live and die undiscovered - either by themselves or by others.
- ✎ Thunder is good, thunder is impressive; but it is lightning that does the work.
- ✎ When I was younger I could remember anything, whether it happened or not.
- ✎ When your friends begin to flatter you on how young you look, it's a sure sign you're getting old.

References : www.anecdote.com www.twainquotes.com
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mark_Twain



1. Answer the following questions :
 - (a) Did Twain tell the barber who he was?
 - (b) Was Twain particular about how he dressed when he was visiting friends?
 - (c) Was Twain particular about what words he used?
 - (d) Do you think Twain approved of spelling reforms? Give reasons for your answer.
 - (d) How did Twain explain the spider in the paper? What did he want to highlight?
2. Read the following and write the two meanings of ‘mind’ and ‘matter’ :
 ‘Age is an issue of mind over matter. If you don’t mind, it doesn’t matter.’
3. **Enact** any one anecdote in the classroom.
4. **Translate** any five of the quotations you like.
5. Form groups of four to six.
 Discuss whether and how you can improve English spelling.
6. **Arrange a ‘Jokes’ session** in the classroom where each student tells a joke. The jokes must be told in English.



Language Study

7. Many actions involve two people/things – one that performs the action and one that is affected by the action. Example : *Sonali ate the mango.*

Here, the action of eating involves Sonali (who eats) and the mango (which gets eaten). Sonali is the subject and ‘mango’ is the object of the verb ‘eat’. When you want to talk about **who performed** the action, the **doer** of the action is the **subject**.

Sometimes, you want focus on the object – the thing affected by the action. Then you make it the subject of that sentence. Example : *The mango was eaten.*

You **may or may not mention the doer** – here, Sonali or the person who ate it. This is **passive construction** or **passive voice**. In this type of construction, the thing affected by the verb is the **subject** of the sentence, the verb is in the **passive form (be + past participle)**, and the **‘doer’** of the action **may or may not be mentioned**.

In the following examples of passive voice, the ‘doer’ of action is not mentioned.

- Examples :
- The plants are **pruned**.
 - A cup of tea **is offered** to any guest ...
 - Many anecdotes related to Mark Twain **are told** ...

If we wish to mention the ‘doer’ in passive sentences, we mention it by adding ‘by’ before it. Examples :

This pen *was given* to me *by* my Aunt.

Note that only transitive verbs can be used in the passive voice.

8. Refer to the Language Study pages and read the entries ‘irony’ and ‘pun’. Find one example of each from the passage or the quotations.



8. Activity : **Live English : Customer Care**

(a) Read the following conversation.



- Vaishali** : Mother, how's your new Zap3 mobile working?
- Mother** : Oh! It's a fantastic piece and I've got a Bhramar simcard free with this mobile but somehow the internet is not working.
- Vaishali** : Go to the settings and see if the mobile data is switched on.
- Mother** : Yes, dear, I've done that so many times, but still I am not getting connected.
- Vaishali** : Let's contact the customer support at Bhramar and take their help. Look, the number is given on the back of the simcard packet.
- Mother** : Yes. I'll contact them immediately.
- Vaishali** : Put your mobile on speaker phone so that I can guide you.
(*Mother dials Bhramar Telecom customer care.*)
- Bhramar CC** : Hello. This is Bhramar customer care service. For information in English, press 1; for Hindi, press 2, for Marathi, press 3, to talk to our customer care executive, press 4.
(*Mother presses 1.*)
- Bhramar CC** : For information regarding bills and your account, press 1; for internet queries and offers, press 2; for other services, press 3; to talk to our customer care executive, press 4.
(*Mother presses 2.*)
- Bhramar CC** : For different internet plans, press :1; to talk to our customer care executive, press 2.
(*Mother presses 2.*)
- Bhramar CC** : How can I help you?
- Mother** : I bought a new Bhramar SIM yesterday. I have opted for the 349 rupees unlimited plan.
- Bhramar CC** : Yes, it is reflected against your number.
- Mother** : But I am not getting connected to the internet.
- Bhramar CC** : Go to 'Settings' and in APN type internet and save it. After that just switch off the phone and then switch it on again. The internet will start working. Any other queries, Madam?
- Mother** : No, thank you. If I have any problem, I will call you back.
- Bhramar CC** : Thanks for calling Bhramar Customer Care service. (*Hangs up.*)
- Vaishali** : See, Mummy, it's quiet simple.

(b) You have purchased some games CDs online through ChalaShikuya.com (CSY). You are not able to access the CD. It is published by Chhuttigames. When you contact the customer care service of Chhuttigames, what questions will you ask?

(c) Find out who the service provider is for your parent's mobile. With your parents' permission, call the customer care service to get information regarding the active plans on your number. (For example, SMS plan, internet plan, etc. and share this information in your classroom.)

(d) Prepare simple telephone conversations using the expressions below.

Some useful 'telephone' phrases

- **Hold on, please. (Wait)** : Could you hold on for a moment please?
- **Put (a call) through (Connect)** : I will just put you through to our expert.
- **Get through (Get connected)** : I can't get through to him at the moment, could you call back later, please?
- **Hang up (End the call)** : I think the operator has hung up.
- **Call back** : I'll check your plan and call you back in some time.
- Pick up • Answer the phone • Call • Give a ring

Making a complaint

- I'm calling to complain about...
- I'm sorry, but I'm not satisfied with...
- Unfortunately, there's a problem with...
- I am very unhappy with the service I received.
- It really isn't good enough.
- I'd like to know why...
- I'd like an explanation for...
- It's shocking that you cannot replace the product.
- I'll have to go to the press.
- If you can't deliver on time, you must at least inform your customers. So that we can find other suppliers.

Dealing with the Complaints

- I'm sorry to hear that ...
- Yes, I see what you mean.
- I apologise for ...
- I understand you're upset about ...
- Could you give me some details, please?
- What happened exactly?
- What seems to be the problem?
- It's not our policy to replace items.
- It's not our fault that it hasn't arrived.
- I'm afraid that's not quite right ...
- I'm sorry, there's nothing I can do.
- Ok, I'll look into it right away.
- I'll check the details and get back to you.