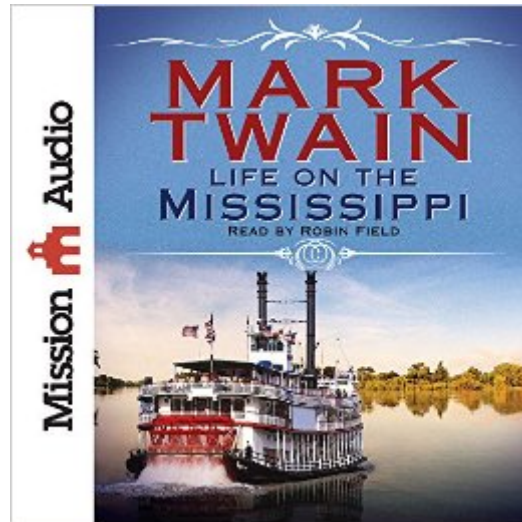


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# Life On The Mississippi



## Synopsis

In *Life on the Mississippi*, the great American humorist Mark Twain recounts his journeys on the mighty Mississippi river. Covering the beginnings of his career as steamboat pilot, Twain entertains us with his wit, anecdotes and wild stories of the myriad characters and adventures he encounters. From a brief history of the Mississippi we are taken on to a recollection of the river life with its rich history and engaging narrative, newcomers and fans of Twain alike.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This book--at times disjointed, rambling, self-referential, and irreverent--is decades ahead of its time. It's an interdisciplinarian's dream as Twain takes on economics, geography, politics, ancient and contemporary history, and folklore with equal ease. Mostly though, one appreciates his knack for exaggeration, the tall tale, and the outright lie. It's a triumph of tone, as he lets you in on his wild wit, his keen observation, and his penchant for bending the truth without losing his credibility as a guide. The book's structure is also modern: He recounts his days as a paddlewheel steam boat "cub," piloting the hundreds of miles of the Mississippi before the Civil War, then, in Part 2, returns to retrace his paddleboat route. Although a few of his many digressions don't work (they sometimes sound formulaic or too detailed) most of the narrative is extremely entertaining. Twain seems caught between admiration and disdain for the "modern" age-but he also rejects over-sentimentality over the past. He writes with beauty and cynicism, verve and humor. Very highly recommended!

I found this to likely be the most interesting book I have ever read. The attention to detail and

description place you within the story. This book is actually, I believe, an autobiography of Mark Twain's (Samuel Clemmons) life as a young man piloting steamboats up and down the Mississippi River. Whether the man, Mark Twain, interests you or not, *Life on the Mississippi*, is an eye opening look at America in an earlier era. In my (humble) opinion this is Mark Twain's best work.

Let me guess: your total exposure to Mark Twain came in high school, when you were forced to read about the antics of Huck Finn or Tom Sawyer, right? Well, now that you've reached adulthood, you should make time to read *Life on the Mississippi*. It's mandatory reading if you live in a state that borders the great river, anywhere from Minnesota down to Louisiana. It's mandatory reading if you have come to that point in life when you can suddenly appreciate American history and post-Civil War stories written by someone who lived through that time. Writing in the first half of the 1870s, Twain retraces the steps of his youth: the watery highway he knew when he trained to be a riverboat pilot nearly 20 years earlier. He speaks of how life *was* along the river, and what life *became*. It's almost a "you can't go home again" experience for him, while the reader gets the benefit of discovering both time periods. I have two favorite parts that I share with others. Chapter IX includes a wonderful dissertation about how learning the navigational intricacies of the river caused Twain to lose the ability to see its natural beauty. And Chapter XLV includes an assessment of how the people of the North and the South reacted differently to the war experience. If I were a social studies teacher, I'd use that last passage in a unit on the reconstruction period. So put this title on your vacation reading list, and don't fret: the chapters are short and are many -- 60! -- but you can stop at any time, and the words go by fast. *Life on the Mississippi* should make you forget all about any Twain trauma and report-writing you may have suffered as a teenager. [This reviewer was an Illinois resident when these comments were written.]

Kudos to for making "Life on the Mississippi" available for free for the Kindle and the iPhone Kindle application! Twain's book is a rambling affair, and in fact, its somewhat quirky form makes it read more like a present-day book than a product of its time. Twain's style is engaging. This might be clearest in the historical sections, where, if you think that all historical narratives are dry and academic, "Life on the Mississippi" will prove you wrong. As many other reviewers note, this is an entirely different view of Mark Twain's work than the novels that tend to find themselves relegated to study in the public schools, and in many ways both more informative and more fun. Thanks again to for making this and other important public domain books available for free download!

This is the book that Mark Twain himself thought to be his greatest. It is basically a memoir in two parts of his life spent on the river with historical sketches, statistics, and other matters thrown in. The first part of the book tells of Twain's early years as a riverboat pilot. He talks about being a cub pilot, about learning about the intricacies of the river and the difficulties of navigating it, and about his mentor Horace Bixby. Twain's love of the river and his pride in "mastering" it are made obvious in these chapters. The second part recounts Twain's return to the river in 1882, mainly to "see it again" in preparation of writing this book. Starting in St. Louis, he first goes south through Baton Rouge to New Orleans. He spends a bit of time there and describes life as he sees it in the city (there's a funny chapter regarding the above-ground cemeteries and an argument about cremation). Then he heads north on the steamboat City of Baton Rouge, piloted by his old mentor Horace Bixby. He stops off in Hannibal for three days, just enough time to see how much the town and some old acquaintances have changed, and then continues all the way to St. Paul, Minnesota. Twain's humor, as he recounts conversations with people, sights seen, reminiscences dredged up, and a myriad of other matters that fill the book, is always evident. It's one of the great books on the mighty river, and whether you are a lover of the works of Mark Twain or interested in the Mississippi River during the time period just before and after the Civil War, you will enjoy this book.

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