



A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court

by Mark Twain



image from wikipedia

I am an American. I was born and reared in Hartford, in the State of Connecticut -- anyway, just over the river, in the country. So I am a Yankee of the Yankees -- and practical; yes, and nearly barren of sentiment, I suppose -- or poetry, in other words. My father was a blacksmith, my uncle was a horse doctor, and I was both, along at first. Then I went over to the great arms factory and learned my real trade; learned all there was to it; learned to make everything: guns, revolvers, cannon, boilers, engines, all sorts of labor-saving machinery. Why, I could make anything a body wanted -- anything in the world, it didn't make any difference what; and if there wasn't any quick new-fangled way to make a thing, I could invent one -- and do it as easy as rolling off a log. I became head superintendent; had a couple of thousand men under me.



Classic Text Reading Comprehension

Well, a man like that is a man that is full of fight -- that goes without saying. With a couple of thousand rough men under one, one has plenty of that sort of amusement.

I had, anyway. At last I met my match, and I got my dose. It was during a misunderstanding conducted with crowbars with a fellow we used to call Hercules. He laid me out with a crusher alongside the head that made everything crack, and seemed to spring every joint in my skull and made it overlap its neighbour. Then the world went out in darkness, and I didn't feel anything more, and didn't know anything at all -- at least for a while.

When I came to again, I was sitting under an oak tree, on the grass, with a whole beautiful and broad country landscape all to myself -- nearly. Not entirely; for there was a fellow on a horse, looking down at me -- a fellow fresh out of a picture-book. He was in old-time iron armor from head to heel, with a helmet on his head the shape of a nail-keg with slits in it; and he had a shield, and a sword, and a prodigious spear; and his horse had armor on, too, and a steel horn projecting from his forehead, and gorgeous red and green silk trappings that hung down all around him like a bedquilt, nearly to the ground.

“Fair sir, will ye just?” said this fellow.

“Will I which?”

“Will ye try a passage of arms for land or lady or for --”

“What are you giving me?” I said. “Get along back to your circus, or I'll report you.”

Now what does this man do but fall back a couple of hundred yards and then come rushing at me as hard as he could tear, with his nail-keg bent down nearly to his horse's



Classic Text Reading Comprehension

neck and his long spear pointed straight ahead. I saw he meant business, so I was up the tree when he arrived.

He allowed that I was his property, the captive of his spear. There was argument on his side -- and the bulk of the advantage -- so I judged it best to humor him. We fixed up an agreement whereby I was to go with him and he was not to hurt me. I came down, and we started away, I walking by the side of his horse. We marched comfortably along, through glades and over brooks which I could not remember to have seen before -- which puzzled me and made me wonder -- and yet we did not come to any circus or sign of a circus. So I gave up the idea of a circus, and concluded he was from an asylum. But we never came to an asylum -- so I was up a stump, as you may say. I asked him how far we were from Hartford. He said he had never heard of the place; which I took to be a lie, but allowed it to go at that. At the end of an hour we saw a far-away town sleeping in a valley by a winding river; and beyond it on a hill, a vast gray fortress, with towers and turrets, the first I had ever seen out of a picture.

“Bridgeport?” said I, pointing.

“Camelot,” said he.



Retrieval

1) What jobs did the narrator have before he worked at the arms factory?

Blacksmith and horse-doctor

2) Why was the narrator asleep before he woke up under the oak tree?

He had been knocked out (hit on the head) by a man who worked for him.

3) What agreement did the narrator and the knight come to?

The narrator would go with the knight and the knight wouldn't hurt the narrator.

Vocabulary

4) *I was born and reared in Hartford.*

What does the word **reared** mean in this sentence?

Brought up



Classic Text Reading Comprehension

5) *Then I went over to the great arms factory and learned my real trade.*

What does the word **trade** mean in this sentence?

Business or occupation

6) *At last I met my match and I got my dose.*

Explain in your own words what this means.

It means that the narrator came up against someone as strong as him, who was able to beat him in a fight.

7) **Find** and **copy** a phrase which means the same as **woke up** or **regained consciousness**.

Came to

8) Look at the paragraph starting; *When I came to again...*

Find and **copy** one word which means the same as **extremely great in size**.

Prodigious



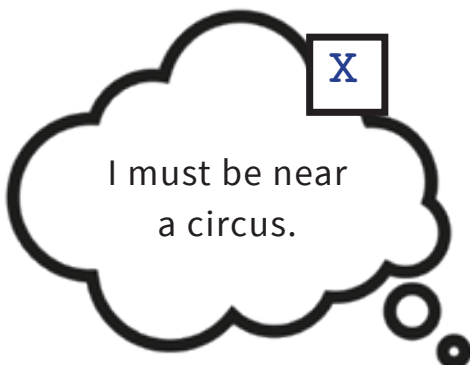
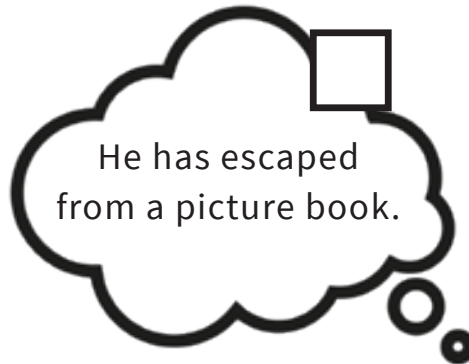
Inference

9) Why do you think the worker was called Hercules?

Hercules is a hero from Greek mythology, who was known for being extremely strong, like the worker.

10) What is the narrator thinking when he sees the knight?

Tick **one** thought.





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11) What impressions do you get of the narrator in this extract?

Give **two** impressions. Refer to the text in your answer.

Answers will vary, but must make reference to the text. For example:

He is sensible - he says that he is practical and not sentimental

He is good with his hands - he can make anything quickly and easily

He is boastful - he talks about all his achievements

.....



Summary

What do you think the narrator will do next?

Answers will vary, but must make reference to the text. For example:

I think he will challenge the knight to a fight, because he is used to fighting and doesn't trust him.



The Prince and the Pauper

by Mark Twain



image from wikipedia

At each side of the gilded gate stood a living statue-- that is to say, an erect and stately and motionless man-at-arms, clad from head to heel in shining steel armour. At a respectful distance were many country folk, and people from the city, waiting for any chance glimpse of royalty that might offer. Splendid carriages, with splendid people in them and splendid servants outside, were arriving and departing by several other noble gateways that pierced the royal enclosure.

Poor little Tom, in his rags, approached, and was moving slowly and timidly past the sentinels, with a beating heart and a rising hope, when all at once he caught sight through the golden bars of a spectacle that almost made him shout for joy. Within was a comely boy, tanned and brown with sturdy outdoor sports and exercises, whose clothing was all of lovely silks and satins, shining with jewels; at his



Classic Text Reading Comprehension

hip a little jewelled sword and dagger; dainty buskins on his feet, with red heels; and on his head a jaunty crimson cap, with drooping plumes fastened with a great sparkling gem. Several gorgeous gentlemen stood near--his servants, without a doubt. Oh! he was a prince--a prince, a living prince, a real prince--without the shadow of a question; and the prayer of the pauper-boy's heart was answered at last.

Tom's breath came quick and short with excitement, and his eyes grew big with wonder and delight. Everything gave way in his mind instantly to one desire: that was to get close to the prince, and have a good, devouring look at him. Before he knew what he was about, he had his face against the gate-bars. The next instant one of the soldiers snatched him rudely away, and sent him spinning among the gaping crowd of country gawks and London idlers.

The soldier said,--"Mind thy manners, thou young beggar!"

The crowd jeered and laughed; but the young prince sprang to the gate with his face flushed, and his eyes flashing with indignation, and cried out,--"How dar'st thou use a poor lad like that? How dar'st thou use the King my father's meanest subject so? Open the gates, and let him in!"

You should have seen that fickle crowd snatch off their hats then. You should have heard them cheer, and shout, "Long live the Prince of Wales!"

The soldiers presented arms with their halberds, opened the gates, and presented again as the little Prince of Poverty passed in, in his fluttering rags, to join hands with the Prince of Limitless Plenty.

Edward Tudor said--"Thou lookest tired and hungry: thou'st been treated ill. Come with me."



Classic Text Reading Comprehension

Half a dozen attendants sprang forward to--I don't know what; interfere, no doubt. But they were waved aside with a right royal gesture, and they stopped stock still where they were, like so many statues. Edward took Tom to a rich apartment in the palace, which he called his cabinet. By his command a repast was brought such as Tom had never encountered before except in books. The prince, with princely delicacy and breeding, sent away the servants, so that his humble guest might not be embarrassed by their critical presence; then he sat near by, and asked questions while Tom ate.

“What is thy name, lad?”

“Tom Canty, an' it please thee, sir.”

“’Tis an odd one. Where dost live?”

“In the city, please thee, sir. Offal Court, out of Pudding Lane.”

“Offal Court! Truly ‘tis another odd one. Hast parents?”

“Parents have I, sir, and a grand-dam likewise that is but indifferently precious to me, God forgive me if it be offence to say it--also twin sisters, Nan and Bet.”

“Then is thy grand-dam not over kind to thee, I take it?”

“Neither to any other is she, so please your worship. She hath a wicked heart, and worketh evil all her days.”

“Doth she mistreat thee?”

“There be times that she stayeth her hand, being asleep or overcome with drink; but when she hath her judgment clear again, she maketh it up to me with goodly beatings.”

A fierce look came into the little prince's eyes, and he cried



Classic Text Reading Comprehension

out--“What! Beatings?”

“Oh, indeed, yes, please you, sir.”

“BEATINGS!--and thou so frail and little. Hark ye: before the night come, she shall hie her to the Tower. The King my father”--

“In sooth, you forget, sir, her low degree. The Tower is for the great alone.”

“True, indeed. I had not thought of that. I will consider of her punishment. Is thy father kind to thee?”



Retrieval

1) What did Tom want to do when he first saw the prince?

He wanted to get close and look at him.

2) When did the prince notice Tom?

When the crowd started laughing at him (after he was pushed aside by a soldier).

3) Name two people who live with Tom.

Any two of: father, mother, grandmother (grandmother), Nan and Bet (twin sisters)

Language

4) **Find** and **copy one** word which shows that Tom is nervous when he goes to look at the prince?

Timidly

5) *You should have seen that fickle crowd snatch off their hats then.*

What does the word **fickle** mean in this sentence?

It means they are changeable, or not loyal



Classic Text Reading Comprehension

6) *Half a dozen attendants sprang forward to--I don't know what; interfere, no doubt.*

The word **sprang** suggests the attendants moved...

Tick **one**.

respectfully

quickly

silently

violently

7) *The little Prince of Poverty passed in, in his fluttering rags, to join hands with the Prince of Limitless Plenty.*

Explain in your own words what the phrases **Prince of Poverty** and **Prince of Limitless Plenty** mean.

Prince of Poverty means someone who is very poor;
Prince of Limitless Plenty means someone who is extremely rich.

8) *By his command a repast was brought such as Tom had never encountered before except in books.*

What does the word **repast** mean in this sentence?

A meal



Inference

9) Why does the prince call the rich apartment a cabinet?

Because it is where he keeps himself, like in a cupboard; because he feels safe there.

10) Why does the prince think that Tom's name and address are strange?

Because he is used to hearing the names and addresses of rich people.

11) What impressions do you get of the prince in this extract?

Give **two** impressions. Refer to the text in your answer.

Answers will vary, but must make reference to the text. For example:

He is kind - he is angry when he hears Tom is mistreated

He is generous - he takes Tom into his house and feeds him

He wants to change things - he plans action when he hears Tom's troubles

He is impulsive - Tom has to remind him that the Tower isn't for poor people



Summary

What do you think the prince will do next?

Answers will vary, but must make reference to the text. For example:

I think the prince will let Tom stay in his palace, because he is kind and generous.



The Celebrated Jumping Frog Of Calaveras County

by Mark Twain



Well, thish-yer Smiley had rat-tarriers, and chicken cocks, and tom-cats, and all of them kind of things, till you couldn't rest, and you couldn't fetch nothing for him to bet on but he'd match you. He ketched a frog one day, and took him home, and said he cal'klated to edercate him; and so he never done nothing for three months but set in his back yard and learn that frog to jump. And you bet you he did learn him, too. He'd give him a little hunch behind, and the next minute you'd see that frog whirling in the air like a doughnut -- see him turn one summerset, or may be a couple, if he got a good start, and come down flat-footed and all right, like a cat. He got him up so in the matter of ketching flies, and kept him in practice so constant, that he'd nail a fly every time as far as he could see him. Smiley said all a frog wanted was education, and he could do most anything -- and I believe him.



Classic Text Reading Comprehension

Why, I've seen him set Dan'l Webster down here on this floor -- Dan'l Webster was the name of the frog -- and sing out, "Flies, Dan'l, flies!" and quicker'n you could wink, he'd spring straight up, and snake a fly off'n the counter there, and flop down on the floor again as solid as a gob of mud, and fall to scratching the side of his head with his hind foot as indifferent as if he hadn't no idea he'd been doin' any more'n any frog might do. You never see a frog so modest and straightfor'ard as he was, for all he was so gifted. And when it come to fair-and-square jumping on a dead level, he could get over more ground at one straddle than any animal of his breed you ever see. Jumping on a dead level was his strong suit, you understand, and when it come to that, Smiley would ante up money on him as long as he had a red. Smiley was monstrous proud of his frog, and well he might be, for fellers that had traveled and ben everywheres, all said he laid over any frog that ever they see.

Well, Smiley kept the beast in a little lattice box, and he used to fetch him down town sometimes and lay for a bet. One day a feller -- a stranger in the camp, he was -- come across him with his box, and says:

"What might it be that you've got in the box?"

And Smiley says, sorter indifferent like, "It might be a parrot, or it might be a canary, may be, but it ain't -- it's only just a frog."

And the feller took it, and looked at it careful, and turned it round this way and that, and says, "H'm -- so 'tis. Well, what's he good for?"

"Well," Smiley says, easy and careless, "He's good enough for one thing, I should judge -- he can out-jump ary frog in Calaveras county."



Classic Text Reading Comprehension

The feller took the box again, and took another long, particular look, and give it back to Smiley, and says, very deliberate, “Well -- I don’t see no p’int about that frog that’s any better’n any other frog.”

“Maybe you don’t,” Smiley says. “Maybe you understand frogs, and maybe you don’t understand ‘em; maybe you’ve had experience, and maybe you ain’t only a amature, as it were. Anyways, I’ve got my opinion, and I’ll resk forty dollars that he can outjump ary frog in Calaveras county.”

And the feller studied a minute, and then says, kinder sad, like, “Well, I’m only a stranger here, and I ain’t got no frog -- but if I had a frog, I’d bet you.”

And then Smiley says, “That’s all right -- that’s all right -- if you’ll hold my box a minute, I’ll go and get you a frog.” And so the feller took the box, and put up his forty dollars along with Smiley’s, and set down to wait.

So he set there a good while thinking and thinking to hisself, and then he got the frog out and prized his mouth open and took a tea-spoon and filled him full of quail shot -- filled him pretty near up to his chin -- and set him on the floor. Smiley he went to the swamp and slopped around in the mud for a long time, and finally he ketched a frog, and fetched him in, and give him to this feller, and says:

“Now if you’re ready, set him alongside of Dan’l, with his fore-paws just even with Dan’l’s, and I’ll give the word.” Then he says, “One -- two -- three -- jump!”



Retrieval

1) How long did it take to train Daniel Webster?

Three months

2) What things did Smiley say might be in the box?

A parrot or a canary.

3) What did Smiley claim Daniel could do that no other frog could do?

Jump the furthest.

Vocabulary

4) *He'd nail a fly every time as far as he could see him.*

The word nail suggests the frog was...

Tick **one**.

loud

slow

accurate

sharp



Classic Text Reading Comprehension

5) Look at the first paragraph. **Find** and **copy one** word which shows that Daniel is not always graceful.

Doughnut

6) *Smiley was monstrous proud of his frog, and well he might be.*

What does the word **monstrous** mean in this sentence?

Extremely

7) **Find** and **copy one** word which shows the stranger is interested by the frog early on.

Particular

8) Look at the section starting: *“Maybe you don’t,” Smiley says...*

Find and **copy one** word Smiley uses to show the stranger he is not certain that he will win the competition.

Studied



Inference

9) Why did the stranger pour quail shot into the frog's mouth?

He wanted to weigh him down, so he couldn't jump very high

10) Why is the stranger first interested in Daniel Webster?

Because he is kept in a special box, so must be special

11) What impressions do you get of Smiley in this extract? Give **two** impressions. Refer to the text in your answer.

Answers will vary, but must make reference to the text. For example:

He is patient - he teaches the frog to jump

He likes to win - he is always taking on bets

He is confident - he is sure his frog will win

He is trusting - he leaves his frog with the stranger



Summary

What do you think will happen in the frog race?

Answers will vary, but must make reference to the text. For example:

I think that Daniel Webster will not be able to jump very far or high, because of the quail shot, and so the stranger's frog will win the race.