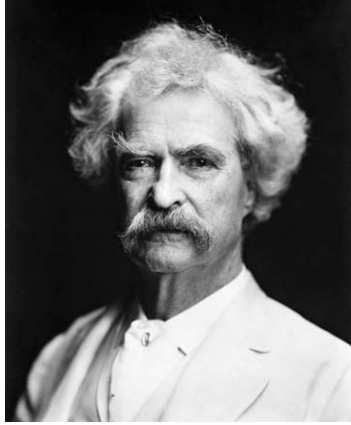


# A CONNECTICUT YANKEE IN KING ARTHUR'S COURT

by Mark Twain



## THE AUTHOR

Mark Twain was the pen name of Samuel Langhorne Clemens (1835-1910), who grew up in Hannibal, Missouri. After the death of his father, he left school and was apprenticed to a printer on the local newspaper at the age of twelve. He later worked as a typesetter in various places, worked as a riverboat pilot, served in the Civil War for two weeks before deserting, traveled westward and worked as a prospector and newspaperman (he first adopted his famous pen name, based on a navigational term, in 1863 while working on the newspaper in Virginia City, Nevada), and later traveled extensively abroad. His first book was *Innocents Abroad* (1868), which was a commercial success but not a literary one, but which was followed later by the works for which he is best known, *Roughing It* (1872, published while living in Connecticut with his wife and children), *Tom Sawyer* (1876), *The Prince and the Pauper* (1882), and *Huckleberry Finn* (1885). In his later years he became increasingly cynical, as the last of his prominent novels, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (1889), illustrates.

Twain's last great novel was initially stimulated when a friend gave him a copy of *Le Morte D'Arthur* by Thomas Malory in 1884 (the book contains numerous lengthy quotations from Malory's classic), and received mixed reviews when it was first published. The British detested it because it ridiculed the greatest tale in English folklore. Many criticized it because of its stylistic inconsistencies - is it a tall tale for children, a piece of light humor, or a bitter social satire? In fact, it is all of these things, and for that reason readers tend to find in it what they are looking for. Movie versions have tended to focus on the children's tale, while serious literary critics have given greater attention to the ridicule of social injustice and the anti-technology themes of the story. In the end, the novel speaks volumes about the disillusionment and bitterness felt by Mark Twain toward the end of his life. The great promises of technology had produced nothing but injustice and destruction, and he saw little hope for the future of mankind.

## PLOT SUMMARY

The story begins with the narrator visiting Warwick Castle, where he meets a stranger, Hank Morgan, who seems unusually familiar with the artifacts and events described by the guide. That night, the stranger visits the narrator's hotel room and tells him his story. After being hit on the head with a crowbar in his factory in Connecticut in the year 1879, he awakes to find himself in the England of King Arthur. He wakes up under a tree, and soon is captured by a knight and brought to the castle at Camelot. He at first thinks he is in an insane asylum, but soon discovers he has traveled back to the year 528. He decides that he will use his superior knowledge to make himself boss of the country within a matter of months. He meets a page by the name of Clarence, who tells him the knight who has just captured him is Sir Kay, Arthur's foster brother. He is then taken into the banquet hall as Sir Kay's prisoner, soon to be dispatched to the dungeon to await ransom. Here he observes boorish knights bragging about pointless duels they had won, and listens to a doddering old man named Merlin tell the tale of the Lady in the Lake for the umpteenth time. After Sir Dinadan tells a series of very stale jokes, Sir Kay rises and lies through his teeth about the circumstances under which he had captured Hank, complete with a coterie of thirteen knights and magic clothes that allowed him to leap to the tops of trees. Hank is soon separated from his clothes and sent naked to a dank dungeon to await execution two days later; by some coincidence, this is the same day when he knows a solar eclipse is to occur - five minutes after Hank is to die. When Clarence comes to see how he is doing, he tells the boy he is a great magician, and sends him to tell the king that he will prove it by sending a great calamity upon the kingdom - he will turn off the sun and throw the whole world into darkness forever at precisely 12:05 the following day. Hank is wakened from a sound sleep and hauled off to the castle to be burned at the stake; Clarence assures him that he had arranged for the execution to be moved up so that Hank could show his powers sooner. Hank thinks he is now doomed, since he would now miss the eclipse. Much to his surprise, the eclipse begins just before the fire is lighted. The king begins to negotiate with the purported magician for the return of the sun, and Hank not only wins his freedom, but becomes the king's chief advisor and earns the right to one percent of any excess profit he is able to bring to the kingdom.

As Hank takes on his new job, he is given all the perquisites of the position - a spacious set of rooms in the castle, fine clothing, and the awe and respect of the entire population. He does face several problems, though - no conveniences whatsoever, admirers who keep treating him like a tourist attraction, and the continuing efforts of Merlin to undermine his position. He decides to deal with two of the three by announcing that he will do one more miracle to satisfy the curiosity seekers, but then will do no more on demand. His miracle will be to blow up Merlin's tower. After he confines the old sorcerer to the same dungeon in which he himself had been kept, he plants blasting powder all over the magician's tower, installs a lightning rod, and waits for the next thunderstorm; nature soon obliges, and the crowds are cowed into obedience and Merlin is rendered at least temporarily ineffective. Hank soon begins to be referred to as "The Boss" by everyone in the kingdom - while not a noble title by any means, it certainly indicates a certain measure of respect. He considers himself vastly superior to all around him in intelligence and know-how, and soon begins to make changes in the kingdom, instituting a patent office, a school system, industry, and a newspaper. The only thing he really fears is the Roman Catholic Church, with its superstitions and its power over the people.

One day a girl named Alisande arrives in Camelot and speaks of forty-five damsels imprisoned in a castle by three ogres who are desperately in need of being rescued. King Arthur entrusts the quest to Hank, who is reluctant to go into the forest alone with a girl because he is already engaged to Puss Flanagan of Hartford, Connecticut, and who quickly finds that Alisande is totally unable to give him any coherent directions to the castle in question. He reluctantly prepares to take her with him, and struggles into the bulky armor that the task is thought to require. He quickly discovers that armor is the most uncomfortable body covering ever invented. Even with the help of Sandy (his nickname for Alisande) he finds it unmanageable. Soon they meet a group of freemen, whose miserable lives rise above those of slaves only negligibly, and talks to them about democratic government, of which they understand nothing. He does, however, send the brightest of them to be trained by Clarence in his Man Factory in Camelot. After leaving the freemen, Hank and Sandy are set upon by a group of seven knights who charge them all in a group. When they get close enough to attack, Hank lights his pipe; when the smoke comes through the vents of his helmet, the knights think he is a dragon and surrender immediately, and sends them back to Clarence for training. They continue riding onward, and Sandy begins an interminable tale with no seeming point or connection to what had just occurred.

Soon they arrive at a castle from which a knight is just leaving. On questioning the knight, Hank discovers he is peddling soap - one of Hank's ideas to clean up the countryside and, in the long run, render the whole idea of knighthood ridiculous. He tells them that the castle belongs to Morgan Le Fay, the great sorceress. They gain entrance, and find her both beautiful and bloodthirsty. After dinner, they hear screaming coming from the dungeon and descend to find a man on the rack. He had killed one of the king's stags, but refused to confess because if he did, his wife and child would be deprived of their property and sustenance. Hank frees him and sends the whole family to his Factory. The next morning, Hank asks to visit the prisoners in the dungeon, and Morgan Le Fay reluctantly agrees. There he finds a pathetic collection of men and women, entombed in darkness for minor offenses or no offenses at all. He releases all but one of them, but when the pitiful procession leaves the castle, he wishes out loud that he might photograph them. Morgan cheerfully offers to do it herself, and while Hank puzzles over her response, she sets upon them with an ax.

Hank and Sandy then continue their journey, and after a few days arrive at the ogres' castle that was their destination. It turns out to be a pigsty watched over by three swineherds (Sandy insists the pigs are princesses and the swineherds are ogres). Hank obligingly buys the pigs from the swineherds and they herd them back to a castle, Sandy all the while insisting that Hank cannot see their true nature because they are enchanted. The next morning Sandy tells Hank that she doesn't know to whom the castle belongs, but that the "princesses" are to remain there until their friends arrive to take them safely home. Hank and Sandy then set out again for Camelot. On the way, they meet several of Hank's knights who have become traveling salesmen, and also encounter some pilgrims on the way to the Valley of Holiness, where monks, nuns, hermits, and foundlings have gathered around a miraculous fountain of water. They pass a group of slaves, chained and beaten, then encounter another of Hank's knights, who tells them that the magic fountain in the Valley of Holiness has dried up (as it had done once before when the monks had the temerity to bathe in it), and Sir Boss' help is desperately needed. Merlin has already been there for three days and has been able to accomplish nothing. When Hank arrives at the Valley of Holiness, he finds monks, nuns, foundlings, and hermits (Twain's description makes them sound suspiciously like some of the more bizarre anchorites from the fourth century, including a stylite whom Hank

harnesses to a rope to operate a sewing machine), and an ordinary well that has run dry because some of the stonework has collapsed and the water is leaking into a fissure. Merlin, of course, has been able to do nothing with his incantations. Hank sees the chance to stage a “miracle” that will both enhance his own reputation and make a fool out of Merlin, so he announces that in a few days hence he will apply his magic to the problem, but only if the monks and other onlookers evacuate the area. He soon has his men repair the well, then he attaches a pump to the water to make it come up out of the ground inside the church, and sets up fireworks on top of the building. After spouting considerable mumbo-jumbo, the water bursts forth and the fireworks go off, much to the amazement of the crowd and much to the consternation of Merlin. Hank then convinces the monks that taking baths is not sacrilegious, and builds a pool in the basement of the chapel.

One day on a walk in the valley, he finds in a cave one of his men who has hooked up a telephone line. He discovers that Arthur is on his way to visit the site of the great miracle. When he returns to the monastery, he finds a magician who claims to be able to tell what is going on anywhere in the world. Hank soon debunks his scam by proving that he cannot even tell what Hank is doing behind his back. Hank then announces that the king is riding, and will arrive in the valley in three days. When Arthur indeed arrives, Hank’s reputation is strengthened even further. Hank had advised Arthur to form a standing army, but the king had done so without seeking Hank’s approval as to how such a thing was to be done. He thus chose as officers only incompetent nobles while rejecting Hank’s well-trained “West Pointers.” Hank then got around this problem by suggesting the formation of two armies, one to do the fighting and another to act like officers and do as they pleased. Meanwhile, Clarence back in Camelot had published the first printed newspaper.

Hank then decided to travel incognito among the common people to get a better sense of what the kingdom was really like. Arthur insisted on accompanying him, though Hank had to take a great deal of time to get Arthur to act enough like a peasant to pass unnoticed. In their travels, the two came upon a hut whose inhabitants were dying of smallpox. The woman speaks of the injustices they had suffered at the hands of the lord of the manor, and Arthur bravely takes in his arms the children who had died or were on the verge of death. The next night a fire breaks out - the old woman’s sons escaped from the dungeon, murdered the lord and set fire to his manor. The other peasants hunt down all the relatives of the culprits and hang them, but one old man, Marco, the cousin of the murderers, is assured by Hank that they had done right and that he should not fear reprisals. Arthur, however, is furious with the young men. While his anger cools, Hank and Marco talk a walk to a nearby village, where Marco introduces Hank to a prosperous blacksmith named Dowley. Hank insists on inviting him and several of his friends to dinner at Marco’s home and paying for the whole thing. He also gets Marco and his wife Phyllis new clothes, which he insists were secretly being paid for by his companion “Jones” - the name he is using for the disguised King Arthur. When Dowley and his friends arrive for dinner, the blacksmith spends much time bragging about his humble origins and his ostentatious wealth, but is humiliated when the dinner is brought out and the grocer submits the bill, which Hank offhandedly pays in the princely amount of four dollars. Marco and Phyllis, meanwhile, are flabbergasted at the generosity of their newfound friends. After Marco, Phyllis, and “Jones” retire, Hank and the others discuss wages and prices, and he again humiliates Dowley by getting the best of him in an argument on the subject when he, after arguing that the pillory should be abolished as a means of punishment, reminds them that they all deserve the pillory, since Dowley paid his workers more than the minimum wage and the others failed to report him. This suddenly makes Hank dangerous

in their eyes, and when Arthur returns and starts rambling about agricultural matters about which he knows nothing, the men jump the two and sell them as slaves at the nearest market.

While in captivity, Hank and Arthur are beaten and brutalized, but this at least has the good effect of convincing the king that slavery ought to be abolished. During their travels, they witness a poor woman being burned at the stake as a witch and another being hanged because she stole a small piece of cloth to sell to feed her infant after her family had been deprived of all income when her husband had been seized and impressed into the navy. Hank determines to escape, and succeeds briefly. When he does so the slavemaster begins to beat the other slaves, and they gang up on him and pummel him to death, at which point all of them, chained together, are sentenced to death by hanging as soon as the fugitive is caught. Hank evades capture long enough to send a telegram to Clarence in Camelot asking him to send Launcelot at the head of five hundred knights to rescue him and Arthur, but when he is recaptured he discovers that the executions are to occur before the knights can possibly arrive. The time for the hangings arrives, and the first three slaves are set to dangling. As the sheriff slips the noose around Arthur's neck, who should appear but Launcelot and his five hundred knights, accompanied by Clarence and all riding bicycles (which allowed them to make better time because they didn't have to stop to change horses during the trip)! They quickly set matters to right, and the king, who had been the source of mockery to the crowd moments before, now stood before them, with each man and woman cowering in fear.

Back in Camelot, Hank finds himself challenged to a joust by Sir Sagramor, whom he had insulted shortly after his arrival in the kingdom. By a new law, combatants in a tournament are permitted to choose their own weapons. Hank astounds the crowd by appearing clad only in a thin skin-tight outfit and riding a small but quick and maneuverable horse. Sir Sagramor charges him three times and Hank easily evades him each time, embarrassing the big knight, who then loses his temper and starts recklessly chasing Hank around the field. At the next pass, Hank lassoes him and brings him tumbling to the turf. Hank is then challenged by seven other knights, including the great Sir Launcelot himself, and all suffer a similar ignominious fate. As Hank drags Launcelot to the reviewing stand, Merlin somehow manages to steal his lasso. Sir Sagramor then challenges him again, this time bearing a sword instead of a lance against what he thinks is an unarmed Sir Boss. As the lumbering knight approaches with murder in his eye, Hank calmly pulls a revolver and shoots him through the heart. He is then set upon by five hundred knights at once, but they retreat in confusion when nine more of their number suffer the same fate. Knight-errantry is destroyed in the kingdom of Camelot.

After three years, Hank has completely revolutionized the kingdom. He has introduced telephones, telegraphs, factories, schools and colleges, steam, electricity, and publishing. Slavery has been banned, and the knights have all turned to business, many as traveling salesman or engineers on trains, and some higher-ups like Launcelot in charge of the stock market. Hank is dreaming of the day when he can abolish the Catholic Church and introduce Protestantism, with its merry confusion of sects of which none has the preeminence. He is also plotting to introduce democracy and make Camelot a republic after Arthur's death, though Clarence thinks a constitutional monarchy would be better - even if the ruling family consisted of cats, who would be far less harmful than their human predecessors. Hank has also introduced baseball as a means of occupying the competitive drives of the kings and aristocrats, though they insist on wearing armor while they play and murdering the umpire if they don't like his decisions. One day, Sandy, who is by now Hank's wife (she insisted that she belonged to him because, since he had defeated

all the knights, no one was left who could challenge him and take her away from him), runs tearfully to him and tells him that their daughter, Hello-Central, is desperately ill. Hank quickly diagnoses the disease as membranous croup, and the proper precautions are taken, including a long sea voyage and a stay on the coast of France. After weeks of constant care, the baby turns the corner, but suddenly Hank and Sandy realize that the ship that was supposed to pick them up is dreadfully late.

Hank quickly borrows a boat to take him back to England, and finds that the country has been placed under interdict. The cause is a war, precipitated by the traditional cause of the fall of Camelot - Mordred and Agravaine denounce Launcelot and Guenevere, Arthur allows them to lay a trap for the couple, Launcelot kills all the knights but Mordred, Guenevere is sentenced to be burned at the stake, Launcelot rescues her at the last minute at the cost of many lives, Arthur and Launcelot go to war, which is finally stopped through the mediation of the church, but meanwhile Mordred has proclaimed himself king and tried to marry Guenevere by force. When Arthur returns to make war on Mordred, both die in the ensuing battle, and Guenevere retires to a convent. The interdict issued by the church is to remain in force until Sir Boss is captured, but meanwhile the Church is busily destroying every aspect of the civilization Hank has built. Clarence, while waiting for Hank to arrive, has fortified Merlin's former cave with electrified fencing, Gatling guns, and land mines. He has also discovered that Hank's stranding in France had been arranged by Church officials to get him out of the way while they regained power. Hank and Clarence then send out an announcement proclaiming the founding of the Republic and head for the cave, ready, with fifty-two boys who had not been tainted by the superstitions of the Church, to defend themselves against the inevitable attack. The peasants hail the Republic for a day or so, then are intimidated by the Church into joining the attack against the newly-formed Republic. When the attack comes, the wave of thirty thousand knights encounters the dynamite, and five thousand are blown to smithereens. Meanwhile, Hank has detonated explosives that destroy all his factories so they cannot fall into the hands of the enemy, who might use his technology against him. That night, the other twenty-five thousand try a sneak attack, but are caught by the electrified fence, a diverted stream that floods the ditch left by the explosion a few hours earlier, and the Gatling guns. By the time the Battle of the Sand Belt is over, thirty thousand knights - all of Britain's chivalry - lie dead, and Hank and his boys are the masters of England.

At this point, Hank's narrative ends and Clarence picks up the pen to finish the story. When Hank and Clarence go out to see if any wounded need attention, the first they find stabs Hank. They carry him back to the cave, where he is nursed by an old woman, who turns out to be Merlin in disguise. He puts Hank under a spell by which he will not wake for thirteen hundred years. Merlin gleefully leaves the cave, and promptly is electrocuted by one of the wires. Clarence and the others soon die from the foul air caused by the rotting corpses outside the cave, and thus comes to an end Hank Morgan's civilizing experiment in Camelot. The narrator concludes the story by telling of visiting Hank's hotel room the next day and finding him in a delirium, moaning incoherently about people named Sandy and Hello-Central, after which he dies.

## MAJOR CHARACTERS

- Hank Morgan (Sir Boss) - The titular Connecticut Yankee, he finds himself in Camelot after being hit on the head by a crowbar in a fight in his factory. He then proceeds to use his good old American know-how to try to transform King Arthur's court, but ultimately fails.
- Clarence - A page boy who befriends Hank upon his arrival in Camelot; he later becomes the foreman of Hank's enterprises.
- Alisande la Carteloise (Sandy) - A young damsel in distress who becomes Hank's traveling companion, and ultimately his wife.
- Hello-Central - Hank and Sandy's baby daughter.
- Merlin - The king's magician, an old humbug who lives on past accomplishments and never tires of telling others stories about them; he initially is a serious threat to Hank's position in the kingdom, and eventually puts a spell on him that sends him back home.
- Morgan Le Fay - Arthur's sister, a beautiful, vicious, and bloodthirsty sorceress.
- King Arthur - He quickly makes Hank his chief advisor, and Hank tries to teach him the principles of just government.
- Marco and Phyllis - An elderly charcoal-burner and his wife who are befriended and helped by Hank and his companion "Jones."
- Dowley - A wealthy blacksmith twice humiliated by Hank who ultimately is responsible for selling Hank and Arthur into slavery.
- Sir Sagamor - A knight against whom Hank is forced to fight a duel to the death. He first defeats him with a lasso, then kills him with a revolver.
- Puss Flanagan - Hank's girlfriend back in Connecticut; she is a telephone operator whom Hank remembers fondly at various points in the narrative.

## NOTABLE QUOTATIONS

"If on the other hand it was really the sixth century, ... I would boss the whole country inside of three months; for I judged I would have the start of the best-educated man in the kingdom by a matter of thirteen hundred years and upwards." (Hank, ch.2, p.23)

"I saw that I was just another Robinson Crusoe cast away on an uninhabited island, with no society but some more or less tame animals, and if I wanted to make life bearable I must do as he did - invent, contrive, create, reorganize things; set brain and hand to work, and keep them busy." (Hank, ch.7, p.47)

“To be vested with enormous authority is a fine thing; but to have the onlooking world consent to it is a finer.” (Hank, ch.8, p.52)

“There you see the hand of that awful power, the Roman Catholic Church. In two or three centuries it had converted a nation of men to a nation of worms.” (Hank, ch.8, p.55)

“I was afraid of a united Church; it makes a mighty power, the mightiest conceivable, and then when it by and by gets into selfish hands, as it is always bound to do, it means death to human liberty, and paralysis to human thought.” (Hank, ch.10, p.64)

“This one’s a man. If I were backed by enough of his sort, I would make a strike for the welfare of this country, and try to prove myself its loyalest citizen by making a wholesome change in its system of government.” (Hank, ch.13, p.84)

“We *must* have a religion - it goes without saying - but my idea is, to have it cut up into forty free sects, so that they will police each other, as had been the case in the united States in my time.” (Hank, ch.18, p.113)

“Training - training is everything; training is all there is *to* a person. We speak of nature; it is folly; there is no such thing as nature; what we call by that misleading name is merely heredity and training. We have no thoughts of our own, no opinions of our own; they are transmitted to us, trained into us.” (Hank, ch.18, p.114)

“If I had the remaking of man, he wouldn’t have any conscience.” (Hank, ch.18, p.116)

“A crowd was as bad for a magician’s miracle in that day as it was for a spiritualist’s miracle in mine: there was sure to be some skeptic on hand to turn up the gas at the crucial moment and spoil everything.” (Hank, ch.22, p.146)

“It was a great night, an immense night. There was reputation in it. I could hardly get to sleep for glorying over it.” (Hank, ch.23, p.161)

“The law of work does seem utterly unfair - but there it is: and nothing can change it: the higher the pay in enjoyment the worker gets out of it, the higher shall be his pay in cash, also.” (Hank, ch.28, p.203)

“I was a champion, it was true, but not the champion of the frivolous black arts, I was the champion of hard unsentimental common sense and reason.” (Hank, ch.39, p.275)

“Somehow, every time the magic of folderol tried conclusions with the magic of science, the magic of folderol got left.” (Hank, ch.39, p.282)

## ESSAY QUESTIONS

Discuss the following in a five-paragraph essay:

1. In Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, Hank Morgan decides, once he has settled into his role as the Boss, that he would not trade his kingdom for any in history. He decides this because in Camelot he is a big fish in a small pond - by far the smartest and most competent man in the land, while in the twentieth century he would be simply ordinary. Do you agree with his assessment of his own talents and of the world of the sixth century? Do you think one is better off being a big fish in a small pond? Answer the question using details from the book and from your own experience.
2. In Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, Hank Morgan decides, once he has settled into his role as the Boss, that he would not trade his kingdom for any in history. He decides this because in Camelot he is a big fish in a small pond - by far the smartest and most competent man in the land, while in the twentieth century he would be simply ordinary. What view of history is implied by Hank's self-assurance? Is such a view of history biblical?
3. Analyze the view of science and technology found in Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*. Does Twain view science as the savior of mankind, or is he instead satirizing those who hold such a belief? Support your conclusion with details and quotations from the novel.
4. Compare and contrast the pictures of Arthurian England presented in Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* and T.H. White's *The Once and Future King*. Both are highly critical of the kingdom of Camelot, but White concludes his picture with hope for the future, while Twain does not. Why do you think this is the case? In answering the question, be sure to deal with the major themes of the two novels.
5. In Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* and T.H. White's *The Once and Future King*, the authors use Arthurian England to satirize the societies in which they lived. Analyze the satirical techniques of the two writers. How are they similar and how do they differ? Consider both what is being satirized and how the authors are accomplishing their purposes.
6. Both Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* and T.H. White's *The Once and Future King* are satires of the England of King Arthur, but the latter incorporates the Arthurian saga in great detail, while for Twain the legend takes up little more than half a chapter. Discuss how White's fidelity to the plot of the legend and Twain's departure to pursue his own plot elements contribute to the nature of the satire the authors are composing. Why do you think they made the choices they did?

7. On one level, both Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* and T.H. White's *The Once and Future King* are children's stories, yet both novels contain very serious social commentary clearly intended for adults. Does the social satire found in the novels detract from the ability of children to enjoy them? If you were to classify the books, would you put them in the children's section or the adult fiction section of the library? Defend your decision.
8. Compare and contrast the views of sin and redemption found in Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* and T.H. White's *The Once and Future King*, then evaluate both views in the light of Scripture.
9. To what extent does Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* specifically target the characteristics of American society in the late nineteenth century? Choose three specific elements of the story that relate directly to conditions at the time the book was written and describe how Twain ridicules the foibles of his own age.
10. In Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, Hank Morgan clearly is a believer in the doctrine of progress. Did Twain share that belief? Does he believe progress is inevitable? Does he even believe it is possible? Support your conclusion with details and quotations from the novel.
11. Mark Twain once said, "The thing in man which makes him cruel to a slave is in him *permanently* and will not be rooted out for a million years." Use *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* to discuss Twain's view of human depravity. Does the book hint at any hope of redemption? Why or why not?
12. In Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, to what extent is Hank Morgan the spokesman for the author? Does Twain approve of everything Hank says and does, or is Hank, too, one of the targets of Twain's satire? Support your conclusion with specifics from the novel.
13. Discuss the relationship between the characters of Hank Morgan and Morgan le Fay in Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*. Does the fact that they share a name mean that Twain intends us to see them as much the same? In what ways might this be true?
14. At the end of Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, Hank Morgan dies crying out for Sandy and their child. What is the significance of this ending? Does the end of the book suggest a possible source of hope for mankind, or does it leave the reader in despair? Support your argument, not only from the words of the ending itself, but from the details of the book as a whole.

15. Compare and contrast the characters of Hank Morgan in Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* and Andrew Undershaft in George Bernard Shaw's *Major Barbara*. Both men associate progress with munitions and weaponry. Do they do so for the same reasons? Discuss the philosophies behind the munitions factories built by the two men.
16. Analyze the role of humor in Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*. Many critics have argued that the lowbrow humor and burlesque found in the story are incongruous and detract from the serious social criticism clearly intended by the author. Do you agree? Do you think that Twain's humor helps or hinders his purposes in telling the story he has presented? Support your conclusion with details from the novel.
17. Mark Twain traveled extensively in Europe before beginning his writing career, and was not pleased with what he encountered there. To what extent does *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* illustrate the ways in which he despised Europe and its inhabitants? Choose three examples of social criticism in the book and show how they were aimed, not just at the England of the sixth century, but also at the Europe of the nineteenth century.
18. In Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, what would have happened if Hank Morgan had succeeded in his plan to turn Camelot into a copy of nineteenth-century America? Had he turned it into a republic and been elected president, as he dreamed, what kind of ruler would he have been? Describe and evaluate the regime of President Morgan, had it ever come to pass.
19. Between the beginning of the Civil War and 1890, the Catholic population of America tripled, causing consternation among many in the nation. Discuss the anti-Catholicism found in Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*. Why is Twain so bitterly anti-Catholic? Do you think the issue is Catholicism as opposed to Protestantism, or an established church as opposed to religious pluralism? Support your conclusion with details from the story.
20. Discuss the portrayal of sixth-century England found in Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*. From your knowledge of medieval history, what inaccuracies did you find in the story? Which are anachronisms, taken from later periods in history? Do these historical flaws detract from the effectiveness of the story, or does Twain's disclaimer in the Preface to the effect that if Arthurian England was not the way he described it, it must have been even worse a satisfactory justification?
21. Discuss the extent to which Hank Morgan changes during the course of Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*. Are the changes in him for the better or the worse? How do these changes reflect the themes Twain is presenting in his novel?
22. Discuss the extent to which King Arthur changes during the course of Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*. Are the changes in him for the better or the worse? How do these changes reflect the themes Twain is presenting in his novel?

23. In a letter to a friend, Mark Twain described the protagonist of *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* as “an ignoramus.” Why do you think he referred to Hank Morgan in this way? What does this description suggest about the extent to which Hank, too, is the object of satire by the author? What characteristics of Hank make him worthy of satirical treatment? Be specific.
24. In Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, Hank Morgan and Merlin are foils. In what senses is this the case? What is Twain attempting to communicate by the contrasts between the two men? How do these contrasts fit the major themes of the novel?
25. Mark Twain, born in 1835 in Missouri, experienced something of slavery in his travels in the American South. Discuss his treatment of slavery in *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*. What are his major objections to the institution? In what ways do these objections give insight into Twain's beliefs concerning the value of human life and dignity? Are his treatments of these themes biblical? Why or why not?
26. In Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, Hank often emphasizes the importance of training over birth, of nurture over nature. Yet by the end of the story, Hank is increasingly frustrated by the inability of people to rise above their backgrounds. Discuss Twain's conclusion concerning the nature/nurture question. Where does he wind up on the subject? Do you think his conclusion is justified? Why or why not?
27. In a review in the London *Daily Telegraph* of Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, the author says that “an attack on the ideals associated with King Arthur is a coarse pandering to that passion for irreverence which is at the basis of a great deal of Yankee wit.” He later warns that “when [such men as Twain] have thoroughly trained a rising generation to respect nothing their irreverence will fall flat.” Evaluate the reviewer's critique of Twain's novel. Is the book nothing more than an exercise in skewering everything that is noble or worthwhile for the sake of cheap laughs, or does it instead contain worthy social criticism? How did you feel when you saw the Arthurian legend being treated so roughly in the hands of an American author?
28. Compare and contrast the critiques of knighthood and chivalry found in Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* and Miguel de Cervantes' *Don Quixote*. Do the two authors have the same goals in their criticism? In fact, do they have *any* goals in common? Which provides the more effective critique? Support your conclusions with details from the two stories.