

SAMUEL LANGHORNE CLEMENS – MARK TWAIN

By Carole L. Cooney

Samuel Langhorne Clemens is better known under his pen name, Mark Twain. He was a famous American writer, humorist and lecturer whose popular books, *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn*, were based on his own childhood adventures. His family moved to Hannibal, Missouri when he was four years old, where his liveliness drove his mother “crazy.” She was willing to pay someone to take care of him and try to teach him manners. Miss Horr was not only his school teacher, but the person paid to take charge of little Sam several hours each day.

Setting: Outside the Clemens house; the log cabin school

Characters:

Narrator

Mother

Annabelle, a neighbor

Miss Horr, the teacher

Sam

Jimmy, a pupil

Narrator: Samuel Langhorne Clemens is better known under his pen name, Mark Twain. He was a famous American writer, humorist and lecturer whose popular books, *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn*, were based on his own childhood adventures. His family moved to Hannibal, Missouri when he was four years old. He was a very lively child who drove his mother “crazy.”

Mother: Annabelle, I just don’t know what to do to control little Sam. Do you know what happened yesterday?

Annabelle: Why, no, although my boys were saying something about little Sam down by the river.

Mother: That boy! He nearly drowned again. Praise the Lord, Jimmy pulled him out in the nick of time! But I fixed him up good.

Annabelle: Did you use the mullein tea?

Mother: I sure did. And this time I used castor oil as well. That restored him right quick!

Narrator: As soon as little Sam recovered, he was sent off to school. Each morning, Miss Horr, the teacher, gave instructions to the students.

Miss Horr: Now children, I have just reviewed the rules for today. Do not forget them.

Narrator: Little Sam listened carefully as he tried to figure out ways of *not* obeying the rules.

Miss Horr: Samuel, were you playing again? That is the second time you’ve broken your chalk. You *must* be careful because chalk is fragile. One more time and you’ll be punished.

Narrator: Little Sam had a hard time being careful. He spun it and the chalk broke. In a quick move to gather the pieces of chalk, his writing slate slid onto the floor with a loud crash.

Miss Horr: Samuel Langhorne Clemens! Stand! Go outside and bring me a switch for your punishment.

Narrator: Little Sam was confused. Punishment with a switch? His mother always used her hand. Outside the school room was a huge forest. Every branch and switch looked

too big. Across the way was a shop with some wood shavings outside. The wind blew some into the air and one landed at little Sam's feet. A smile broadened his face as he picked it up, walked into the classroom and handed it to Miss Horr.

Miss Horr: Samuel Longhorne Clemens! I'm ashamed of you. Jimmy, go outside and fetch a switch for Sammy.

Jimmy: (with a smirk) Yes, Miss Horr, with pleasure.

Narrator: Jimmy returned with a good sized switch and Miss Horr punished little Sam. At noon, little Sam ran home and cried to his mother.

Sam: Mother, I was punished with a switch today. I don't like school. I don't want to learn anything or be a great man. I want to be a pirate or an Indian and scalp Miss Horr. (crying) Mother, do I *have* to go back to school?

Mother: Yes, Sammy. I'm sorry that punishment hurt but you will soon learn to like school.

Narrator: Little Sam went back to school but he never liked it. He did learn to read and write inspite of Miss Horr's frequent use of the switch. One afternoon, little Sam was sitting by the river dreaming and talking to himself.

Sam: Some day I'm going to be big and strong. Then I'm going to capture Miss Horr and drag her into the middle of town by her hair for everyone to see how mean she is.

Narrator: The days passed and Sam grew to respect Miss Horr and her teaching ways. Later in life, Sam owed much of his success to Miss Horr for setting him on "the straight and narrow" and teaching him the love of reading and writing.