

## The New Normal: The Past Speaking To Our Students' Present

What follows are instructional exemplars for elementary, middle school, and high school. Each module includes

- Curricular Objectives
- Thematic Thread Guiding Questions based on STI 2020 themes to spark classroom exploration and discussion
- Interactive Activities
- Excerpts from primary source curricular texts (fiction, nonfiction)
- Excerpts from primary source Mark Twain (fiction, nonfiction: speeches, interviews, journals, notes, letters)
- Primary and secondary sources to complement texts:
  1. Historical periodicals
  2. Images
  3. Historical documents
  4. Artifacts
  5. CMTS videos:
- Contemporary resources to scaffold/interleave with curricular and Mark Twain texts

Each exemplar models how teachers can build on and create their own modules.

We will also include more exemplars throughout the year for participants to access with resources.

**High School:** Grades 9-12 Curriculum Map: **NOTE:** Because we will continue to add instructional content using many of the recommended texts, please know that in addition to the texts used here, other texts listed in grades 9-12 will also have instructional modules added after the Institute throughout the year.

### **Curricular Objectives:**

Modules 9-12.1: Reading Closely and Writing to Analyze:

- How do authors develop complex characters and ideas?
- How do authors develop and relate elements of a text?
- How do authors structure texts and develop ideas?
- How do authors use rhetoric and word choice to develop ideas and claims?
- How do authors use figurative language or rhetoric to advance a point of view or purpose?
- Exploring complex ideas through craft and structure.
- Writing: researching multiple perspectives to develop a position.
- Understanding and evaluating argument: analyzing text to write arguments
- How do authors use craft and structure to develop characters and ideas?
- How do authors use narrative techniques to craft fiction writing?
- Analyze the interaction of central ideas and character development.

**Excerpts and short pieces—Curricular:**

- “Tell-Tale Heart” Edgar Allan Poe
- “Letter from Birmingham Jail” Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
- *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* Rebecca Skloot
- *The Awakening* Kate Chopin
- “Civil Disobedience” Henry David Thoreau
- “A Joy to Be Alive” Jimmy Santiago Baca

**Excerpts—Mark Twain:**

- “A True Story” (short story)
- Influenza and Plasmon in *Mrs. Mark Twain: The Life of Olivia Langdon Clemens, 1845-1904*
- Letter excerpt: “About young John D. Rockefeller’s Sunday-school talks (Tuesday, March 20, 1906) in *Autobiography of Mark Twain, Volume 1*
- Autobiographical Dictation 6 December 1906 in *Autobiography of Mark Twain, Volume 2*
- Olivia and tuberculosis in *Mrs. Mark Twain: The Life of Olivia Langdon Clemens, 1845-1904*
- Mark Twain on consumption (speech)
- Mark Twain excerpt “Independence Day” 4 July 1907 (speech)
- Frederick Douglass excerpt “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?” 5 July 1852 (speech)

**Thematic Thread Guided Questions:**

- Pandemic
  1. Illness, virus, disease, pre-existing conditions—these are terms and phrases which are now in our daily lives. A pandemic that is grounded in human illness, death, suffering, sustained isolation, and the feeling of loss of normalcy can have detrimental effects. Most of all, the *unknown* is perhaps the most fearful, for the unknown means we have no map, no direction that we can clearly see and understand, look forward to.

Along with Mark Twain and Olivia Langdon Clemens, many people felt the same fear and uncertainties, just as the characters and real people in the texts you are reading: Henrietta Lacks and her family, Edna Pontellier, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Jimmy Santiago Baca.

First, individually, reflect and chronicle incidents or moments when you have experienced or other people and situations you have experienced of what feels like a pandemic of health crisis or equity concerns.

- ❖ Using examples from the assigned texts and recommended excerpts from Mark Twain and others, describe what made you think of pandemic.
- ❖ Compare and contrast your personal or observation of others who have experienced a health or equity moment(s) that were overwhelming.

- ❖ Integrating excerpts from Mark Twain and his period with other primary resources and your assigned texts, explain what you learned about the event/moment and the person/people involved.

- Pivotal Social Moments

1. This country exists because of pivotal social moments. Mark Twain's 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries were rife with pivotal social moments: slavery, Civil War, women's suffrage, Reconstruction, Lincoln's assassination, the emergence of Jim Crow, and Imperialism. The assigned text(s) you have read include these issues and concerns from different periods by authors of different ethnicities, gender, culture, experiences.

Using a selected assigned text, excerpt from Mark Twain, and if you want, an excerpt from the contemporary primary/secondary sources, analyze through comparison and contrast how each writer creates character and perspective and argument.

Ask yourself, what is the author's purpose in writing this text. What pivotal social moment prompted the necessity for this text(s). Compare and contrast difference and effect of each text.

Is your perspective different now that you have read the text(s)? How? Or, why not?

- Power of Language/Voice

1. Every utterance we make is rhetorical. When we say hello or smile at another person or even a pet, we are desiring a like response. And, when we do not receive that like response, we either are put off by the lack of recognition or are in a quandary. Authors—fiction and nonfiction—rely on their use of language and voice to present a moment in time: a personal or national crisis, a challenge, an unexpected occurrence, a social awakening.

As the deaths of Mark Twain's loved ones illustrate, his awareness and evolving comprehension not only of slavery but more importantly, his embrace of understanding and wrestling with inequity clearly emerge in his fiction and nonfiction. Using an excerpt from Mark Twain and from the primary/secondary resources, trace how writers use language for a purpose, for a specific occasion, aimed at a specific audience—past and 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Discuss as a class the impact language and voice can have on oneself and others.

Share with the class examples of how you use your voice(s) and perspective(s) verbally, on social media, in class, and other locations.

### **Interactive Activities—Scaffolding Curricular and Mark Twain:**

- A. Each of the curricular texts listed above explore the varied definitions and perspectives of freedom and voice from different periods of time, different geographical regions, different ethnic cultures. Some of the excerpts from Mark Twain also explore freedom and voice from his era, such as “A True Story” and “Independence Day.”

After having read the assigned curricular text(s) and one of Mark Twain's how do these examples and actions and perspective compare and contrast with yours and those of your family, friends, community? Create your own version of Dr. King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail."

Your own **Letter of Freedom and Voice**. To begin, scaffold what you have learned from reading assigned curricular texts, Mark Twain's short story and/or "Independence Day," and what you choose from the primary, secondary, and contemporary resources. Your first objective is to analyze the language, its use, its message, and its effect from the past texts. Next, you will build your multi-media letter to illustrate and argue for your perspective on freedom and voice for your generation. Your **Letter of Freedom and Voice** may utilize all forms of media and must include written portions. To assist you in your vision, the original publication of Dr. King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail" is provided.

- B. Henry David Thoreau wrote "Civil Disobedience" in 1849 to protest/argue against slavery and the Mexican/American War. His protest is a direct appeal to the conscience of America. Mark Twain accomplished this same social mission through his fiction, speeches, letters, and in some of his personal relationships. His ability to use language both in writing and speaking attests to his acumen and deliberateness.

Today, the power of language has morphed because of technology. And, because of technology, social and civil disobedience have new platforms: smart phones, Blogs, Vlogs, Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, and so many, many others. During Mark Twain's era, newspapers (Black and White), magazines, photography were the scope. Today, however, the scope and, equally as important, the time frame within which information travels directly impact the momentum and breadth of social and civil disobedience.

Create your own **Social and Civil Disobedience 30 Second Vlog**. To help you focus on and target your message, think about and ask yourself the following questions:

- ❖ What does social disobedience mean today? What does civil disobedience mean today?
- ❖ Is there any cause or pivotal social moment I know that would cause me to be socially or civilly disobedient?
- ❖ Have I ever participated in or know anyone who has participated in being socially or civilly disobedient?
- ❖ What do I have to say about the social and civil disobedience I have read about in the past and am reading and/experiencing today?
- ❖ What do I want social and civil disobedience to accomplish?

You may use the primary, secondary, and contemporary resources to create your **Social and Civil Disobedience 30 Second Vlog**. Share with class, and if your teacher and school will allow, share with the school.

### **Primary and Secondary Resources:**

1. "Plasmon" in *The Province Vancouver*, British Columbia 13 Nov 1906 (Elem)
2. "Plasmon" in *Kansas City Kansas Globe*, 20 Sep 1906 (MS/HS)
3. "Influenza" in *The Baltimore Sun*, 14 Apr 1907
4. "Influenza" in *The Sun NYC*, 14 Apr 1907
5. "Tuberculosis" in *NY Tribune*, 3 Aug 1901

6. “Diphtheria [sic]-Take Precautions” in *Democrat’s and Chronicle* 14 Dec 1882
7. “Diphtheria [sic]” *Star-Gazette Elmira, NY*, 12 Nov 1902

**Contemporary Resources:**

1. Open Letter from Boston Physicians, 14 March 2020
2. The Houston Years of George Floyd, *Houston Chronicle*, 30 May 2020
3. Keeping Our Eyes on The Prize: Mr. George Floyd, GenZ, and Our Teaching, *EdWeek*, June 2020
4. *The Atlantic*’s original publication of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail 1963, pp. 74-83