

## 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 Historical documents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.

### **PreK-2:** NY State Next Generation ELA Learning Standards

#### **Curricular Objectives:**

#### **Key Ideas and Details:**

PKR1: Participate in discussions about text. (RI&RL)

PKR3: Develop and answer questions about characters, major events, and pieces of information in a text. (RI&RL)

KR3: Identify characters, settings, major events in a story, or pieces of information in a text. (RI&RL)

1R2: Identify a main topic or central idea in a text and retell important details. (RI&RL)

2R3: In literary texts, describe how characters respond to major events and challenges. (RL)  
In informational texts, describe the connections between ideas, concepts, or a series of events. (RI)

#### **Craft and Structure:**

PKR5: Interact with a variety of genres (RI&RL)

KR4: Identify specific words that express feelings and senses. (RI&RL)

1R6: Describe how illustrations and details support the point of view or purpose of gathering text. (RI&RL)

2R4: Explain how words and phrases in a text suggest feelings and appeal to the senses. (RI&RL)

#### **Integration of Knowledge and Ideas:**

PKR9; KR9; 1R9; 2R9: Make connections between self, text, and the world. (RI&RL)

**Excerpts—Curricular:***Aesop's Fables:*

- “The Fox And The Goat”  
**Thematic Focus** of this fable: **pivotal social moment** (choice, think through, civil disobedience, social consciousness/awareness; **pandemic** (masks and social distancing))
- “The Sick Stag”  
**Thematic Focus** of this fable: **pandemic** (sickness, aloneness, despair); **pivotal social moment** (social awareness, community, aloneness)
- “The Fox Who Had Lost His Tail”  
**Thematic Focus** of this fable: **pivotal social moment** (choice, perspective, aloneness)
- “The Fox and The Lion”  
**Thematic Focus** of this fable: **pivotal social moment** (choice, dialectic, voice)

**Excerpts—Mark Twain:**

- 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*
- Olivia and Susy on “Momma, what is it all for?” *Mrs. Mark Twain: The Life of Olivia Langdon Clemens, 1845-1904*

**Thematic Thread Guided Questions:**

- Pandemic
  1. Like the “Sick Stag,” have you ever not felt well? What did you do? Did you tell your family, teachers, friends? Or, no one? People who lived in the 1800s and early 20<sup>th</sup> center like Mark Twain experienced different kinds of illnesses, some that made them feel very sick and frightened. Mark Twain lost some of his family members to the illnesses of the time, just like COVID-19 today.
    - ❖ As a class reflect and discuss how you feel about what is happening now around you and your family with regard to COVID-19. As you discuss, think about the following:
      1. Masks
      2. Social distancing (not being able to touch family members; talking to friends and family on social media but not in person; not touching or hugging; washing and sanitizing.
- Pivotal Social Moments
  1. As a class explore

- ❖ During times like these (COVID-19, Black Lives Matter, LGBTQ, for example), *listening and observing* are important. What have you heard or saw that made you think differently or ask why?
  - ❖ In some communities, children like you have begun to send your own messages—on sidewalks, streets, in windows like the bears: the Tedd Bear Hunt, #GoingOnaBearHunt. Have you seen or participated in this kind of activity? Mark Twain’s children were very vocal and were encouraged to express themselves, just like the foxes in “The Fox Who Lost His Tail.”
- Power of Language/Voice
    1. Every Aesop fable illustrates the power of language and voice. The words, the fable structure, the characters—all contribute to the power words can have on us from the past and today.
      - ❖ With each fable you read, discuss and explore how the characters use language and their voices to make points, to persuade, to connive, to express joy, fear, cunning, selfishness, for example.
      - ❖ Like Susy, when she turns to her mother to seek understanding, you, too, have a voice and perspective, regardless of your young years. Your voice and perspective do *adjust* to the situation experienced. For example, when you talk with your friends about a favorite topic, you have a specific voice and a friendly perspective where you share thoughts and ideas. However, with your parents, you often have a variety of voices and perspectives, depending on the situation—if you are happy, if you are in trouble, or if you are frightened.

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. Masks, hand sanitizers, Facebook, FaceTime: sharing with your family and “touching” them virtually. Each day you see eyes but not faces all the time. Create your own **My Mask and Message** poster. Take pictures, notes, drawings of the different ways people around you are living with COVID-19, Include your family and friends. Share your **My Mask and Message** with the class in person or virtually.
- B. Asking questions is what we all should do when we do not understand or when we want to understand better. Susy’s question to her mother was just that: essentially, she is asking, “I want to know better than I do now. Can your help, Mother?” Using Susy as an example, create your own **What Does It Mean?** vision board. Think about just **one** thing about which you want to know more or one thing that confuses you. You may use images, real items, events, excerpts fro the pieces your have read to include in your vision board.
 

Once you have completed your **What Does It Mean?** Vision board, share with class in person or online.

### **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