

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 Historical documents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.

Elementary: Grades 3-5 NYEngage Standards

Curricular Objectives:

Module 1B: Poetry, Biography, and Writer's Identity

Module 2B: Inventions that Changed People's Lives

Module 3B: Considering Perspectives and Supporting Opinions

Excerpts—Curricular:

Aesop's Fables:

- “The Father And His Sons”
Thematic Focus of this fable: **pivotal social moment** (community, choice); **Power of Language/Voice**
- “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)
- “The Fishermen”
Thematic Focus of this fable: **pandemic** (joy and sorrow, despair, lack of control)
pivotal social moment (fear, joy, sadness, hope)
- “The Rich Man and The Tanner”
Thematic Focus of this fable: **pivotal social moment** (community, aloneness, Other);
Power of Language/Voice (dialectic)

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)

Thematic Thread Guided Questions:

- Pandemic
 1. Think about how the characters and/or authors we have read handled illness and/or being separated and alone. Let’s compare and contrast the characters actions and responses to what you experienced, observed, with your family and with others outside of your family.
 - ❖ Remember the friends who came to visit the sick stag. Were they *really* there to help, or were they there to see and take advantage? Did you see any examples of this behavior during the shelter in place in your community, on television, or social media?
 - ❖ Think about how the fox attempts to persuade his friends to cut off their tails to identify with him. Now think about the conversation you and your family or friends have had about whether to mask or not, to socially distance or not, to break the rules or not. Share with class your thoughts and perspectives.
 - ❖ Using the excerpt about influenza and Plasmon from “Mrs. Mark Twain,” discuss what you read, heard your family discuss, or you explored about how to think about COVID-19. Explore with your class how people who are fearful sometimes look to any cure, even if it may not be safe.

- Pivotal Social Moments
 1. As a class explore how sometimes people can make assumptions about others without ever having even one conversation. Has that ever happened to you or someone you know? Share with the class.
 - ❖ Using “The Fox and The Lion” and/or “The Rich Man and The Tanner,” compare/contrast with Aunt Rachel and Misto’ C.
 - ❖ Now, explore discuss how sometimes a person can make mistaken judgements about another. Share any examples you have seen or experienced about how listening and talking with someone who may be new in class, who may be from a different culture or any have other differences has helped or even surprised you.

- 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 front he 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.
 - ❖ You, too, have a voice and perspective. 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. Mark Twain (Samuel Clemens) wrote about serious illnesses affecting his family (autobiography) and his time. Authors throughout time have done so, as well, in autobiographies and fiction (Aesop). Today, technology has drastically affected how you can share facts and stories about your life, family, community, experiences.

Working in small groups, create your own **MY COVID-19 Journal**. Your journal can include images from social media, your community; interviews with your teacher(s), friends, family; activities you created during the shelter in, masks you may have designed, for example. Once your group has created the **MY COVID-19 Journal**, share in online or in person with class. Then discuss as a whole what you discovered about yourself, your group members, and finally thought about the other **MY COVID-19 Journals**.

- B. Mark Twain was fascinated with the technology of his period. He also used the social media of his time to comment on and to *influence*—a foreshadow of *Influencers* who today rely on social media and YouTube to persuade and influence young people like you.

The death of George Floyd and the technology that allowed people around the world to see and hear and virtually experience his death and those who killed him have had profound impacts on people. In the United States, social protests and movements, such as Black Lives Matter, have emerged, influencing and persuading people from all walks of life to talk and listen and act.

Create your own **My Voice Counts Influencer Vlog**. In your **Vlog** chronicle your thoughts and perspective about this pivotal social moment. What have you learned? What do you still *not* understand? What do you want to know more about? You can use your conversations with friends, what you have read, seen on social media, television, film. Once you have completed **My Voice Counts Influencer Vlog**, share with your teacher and discuss how you and your class can share with others.

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