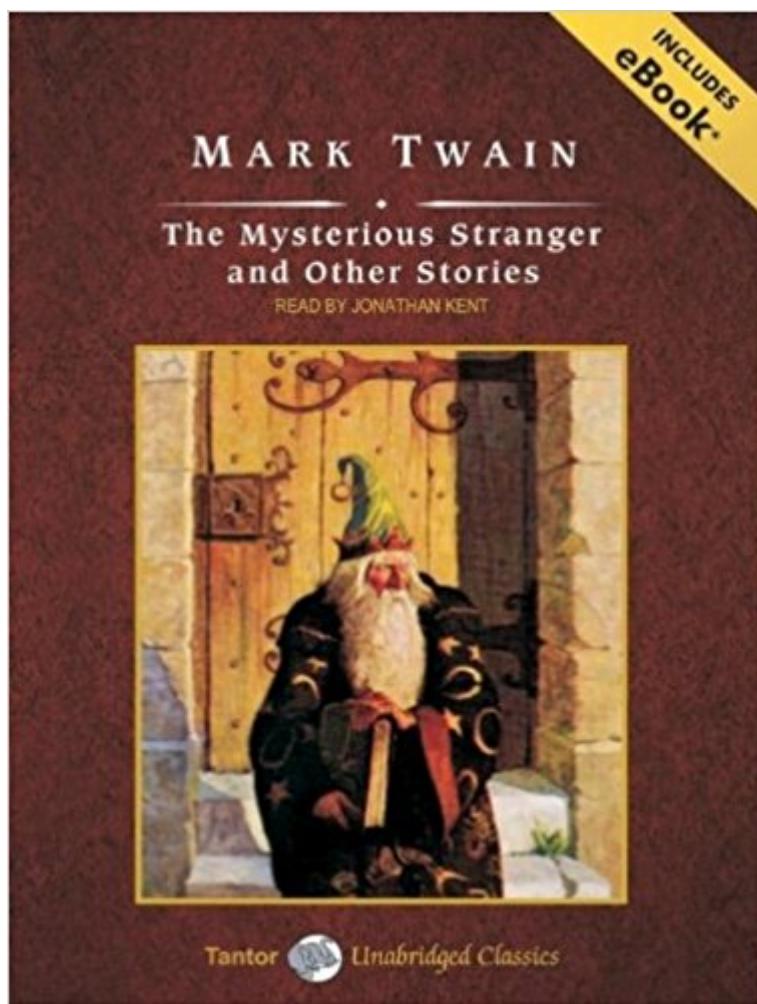


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# The Mysterious Stranger And Other Stories, With EBook



## **Synopsis**

The Mysterious Stranger, Mark Twain's fantastical last novelette, took him twelve years-and three long drafts-to complete. Based on boyhood memories of the Mississippi River Valley and of the print shops of Hannibal, the story is set in medieval Austria at the dawn of the printing craft. It is a psychic adventure, full of phantasmagoric effects, in which a penniless printer's apprentice-a youthful, mysterious stranger with the curious name 44-gradually reveals his otherworldly powers and the hidden possibilities of the mind. Ending on a startling note, this surprisingly existential tale reveals a darker side to the author's genius. The Mysterious Stranger is a rarity in the work of Twain-a story in which the author turns his sardonic, free-wheeling wit to the problem of Eternal Evil in a distant time and place. In the other stories presented here, Twain debunks his Gilded Age; he ransacks the backyards of daily life and fable to find his notorious, sometimes preposterous metaphors. He is as apt to deal with the great minds of the law hunting a wayward elephant as with a man who has a bank note no one can cash. In addition to The Mysterious Stranger, this volume includes the stories "The Man Who Corrupted Hadleyburg," "The Notorious Jumping Frog of Calaveras County," "The Story of the Bad Little Boy," "The Diary of Adam and Eve," "Edward Mills and George Benton," "The Joke That Made Ed's Fortune," and "A Fable."

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Mark Twain is the pseudonym of American writer and humorist Samuel Langhorne Clemens (1835&#150;1910), whose best work is characterized by broad, often irreverent humor or biting social satire. Twain's writing is also known for realism of place and language, memorable

characters, and hatred of hypocrisy and oppression. Born in Florida, Missouri, Clemens moved with his family to Hannibal, Missouri, a port on the Mississippi River, when he was four years old. There he received a public school education. After the death of his father in 1847, Clemens was apprenticed to two Hannibal printers, and in 1851 he began setting type for and contributing sketches to his brother Orion's Hannibal Journal. Subsequently he worked as a printer in Keokuk, Iowa; New York City; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and other cities. Later, Clemens was a steamboat pilot on the Mississippi River until the American Civil War brought an end to travel on the river. In 1862 he became a reporter on the Territorial Enterprise in Virginia City, Nevada, and in 1863 he began signing his articles with the pseudonym Mark Twain, a Mississippi River phrase meaning "two fathoms deep." In 1867 Twain lectured in New York City, and in the same year he visited Europe and Palestine. He wrote of these travels in *The Innocents Abroad*, a book exaggerating those aspects of European culture that impress American tourists. Much of Twain's best work was written in the 1870s and 1880s, when he was living in Hartford, Connecticut, or during the summers at Quarry Farm, near Elmira, New York. *Roughing It* recounts his early adventures as a miner and journalist; *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* celebrates boyhood in a town on the Mississippi River; *A Tramp Abroad* describes a walking trip through the Black Forest of Germany and the Swiss Alps; *Life on the Mississippi* combines an autobiographical account of his experiences as a river pilot with a visit to the Mississippi nearly two decades after he left it; and *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* satirizes oppression in feudal England. *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, the sequel to *Tom Sawyer*, is considered Twain's masterpiece. Twain's work during the 1890s and the 1900s is marked by growing pessimism and bitterness. Significant works of this period are *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, a novel set in the South before the Civil War that criticizes racism by focusing on mistaken racial identities, and *Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc*, a sentimental biography. In Twain's later years he wrote less, but he became a celebrity, frequently speaking out on public issues. He also came to be known for the white linen suit he always wore when making public appearances. Twain received an honorary doctorate from the University of Oxford in 1907. When he died he left an uncompleted autobiography, which was eventually edited by his secretary, Albert Bigelow Paine, and published in 1924.

A very knowledgeable friend of mine asked me not long ago about my appreciation of the writing of Mark Twain. I talked about the usual highlights: "Tom Sawyer," "Huckleberry Finn," "A Connecticut Yankee In King Arthur's Court." He asked if I were familiar with the novella, "The Mysterious Stranger." When I confessed my ignorance, he strongly recommended that I read it, and so I did. In

this compilation of the novella and three short stories, this familiar writer speaks in an unfamiliar voice. Toward the end of his life, Samuel Clemens became quite cynical and curmudgeonly. The novella "The Mysterious Stranger" was published posthumously in 1916, and reflects his later life jaundiced views of God, mankind, and the universe in general. In the story "The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg," the narrative is centered on a town this is renowned for the unshakable honesty of each of its citizens. A mysterious stranger comes to town, leaves a bag of money with clear instructions of what is to be done. The instructions are written in a way that is almost guaranteed to test the moral mettle of the town residents. As the possibility of getting their hands on the money dawns on some of the towns most prominent citizens, the fabric of their rectitude begins to unravel. In this tale, Twain shows a depth of understanding of human frailty and the human psyche that is disturbingly accurate. The novella "The Mysterious Stranger" treats the topic of an alluring young man who calls himself "Satan." He bedazzles a group of naive young men, and using his Angel of Light seduction sleight of hand, leads them on a merry chase across the universe. Reading this fascinating story reminded me of the oft-repeated phrase that the Devil's greatest accomplishment was convincing mankind that he does not exist. On the final page, Twain shares what appears to be his ultimate nihilistic philosophy of life, spoken by "Satan": "It is true, that which I have revealed to you; there is no God, no universe, no human race, no earthly life, no heaven, no hell. It is all a dream - a grotesque and foolish dream. Nothing exists but you. And you are but a thought - a vagrant thought, a useless thought, a homeless thought, wandering forlorn among the empty eternities. He vanished, and left me appalled; for I knew, and realized, that all he had said was true." What a sad perspective upon which to end one's otherwise rich life.

Twain's book, written late in life, reveals his cynicism about society and humanity. No. 44 is also a mind-bender because some of the concepts it explores are very complex. It's rather different from his more famous works; if you're looking for something like Adventures of Tom Sawyer or Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, this book may not be for you. Although No. 44 does include some of Twain's trademark humor, it's also quite dark. I found myself feeling rather depressed at the end of this novel, but I did enjoy certain instances of Twain's wit--such as his comments about cats. Overall, No. 44 gives you an interesting glimpse into Twain's mind. Just remember that it's dark in there!

Mark Twain at his best and that's better than almost anybody. I love his paragraph on the god myth at the end of the mysterious stranger which depicts the silliness of the creator story. His common

sense and humour are outstanding in this story as it always is and it was a joy to read.

I recall watching a claymation depicted version of this Mark Twain story. Having the text is nice. Overall, this is an essential story to have if you are interested in theological themes in literature. Also if you are interested in Twain's impact on American Literature. Epic.

Most definitely one of my all-time favorite books! Reading this work is like floating down a lazy river trailing your fingers in the water. Its pithy stuff this particular story, but told with such ease and sure-footedness, it requires no effort from the reader. How can that be? What a pleasure to read. I have no doubt but that I will revisit this story periodically throughout my lifetime. Thank you, Samuel Clemens!

what did you expect! One of Teslas best friends!

This edition restores the text to a more faithful representation of Twain's actual text and the result is darker, far more metaphysical version of the novel than Albert Bigelow Paine's spurious edition. This is the one to get!

I bought this book to read the last story "The Mysterious Stranger" which I enjoyed. The other selections would be good for a student first reading Mark Twain. I can see the book being assigned reading for an English class. Informative introduction by Edmund Reiss.

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