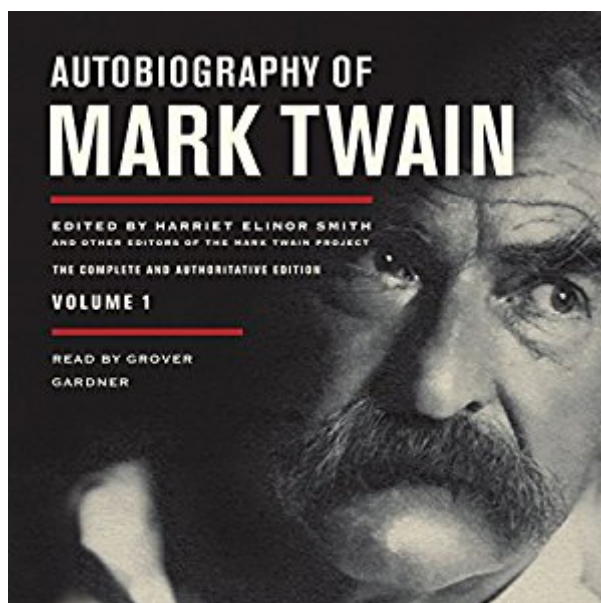


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Autobiography Of Mark Twain, Volume 1: The Complete And Authoritative Edition



Synopsis

"I've struck it!" Mark Twain wrote in a 1904 letter to a friend. "And I will give it away - to you. You will never know how much enjoyment you have lost until you get to dictating your autobiography." Thus, after dozens of false starts and hundreds of pages, Twain embarked on his "Final (and Right) Plan" for telling the story of his life. His innovative notion - to "talk only about the thing which interests you for the moment" - meant that his thoughts could range freely. The strict instruction that many of these texts remain unpublished for 100 years meant that when they came out, he would be "dead, and unaware, and indifferent" and that he was therefore free to speak his "whole frank mind". The year 2010 marks the 100th anniversary of Twain's death. In celebration of this important milestone, here, for the first time, is Mark Twain's uncensored autobiography, in its entirety, exactly as he left it. This major literary event offers the first of three volumes and presents Mark Twain's authentic and unsuppressed voice, brimming with humor, ideas, and opinions, and speaking clearly from the grave, as he intended. Edited by Harriet Elinor Smith and other editors of the Mark Twain Project. Mark Twain (1835 - 1910) was born Samuel L. Clemens in the town of Florida, Missouri. One of the most popular and influential authors our nation has ever produced, his keen wit and incisive satire earned him praise from both critics and peers. He has been called not only the greatest humorist of his age but the father of American literature.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Fifteen minutes ago I finished reading Volume One of the newly published "Autobiography of Mark Twain". It is no more possible to adequately describe this massive book as to attempt to fully

capture the full, intricate realities of a vast range of wild mountains. Twain tried for many years to write his autobiography, but time and again his efforts ground to a halt and were abandoned, although fragments were kept for eventual use (and presented as part of this Volume One). It was not until Twain fixed upon the mode of orally dictating his autobiography that he found a method that really worked for him and allowed him to complete the project to his own satisfaction. The first portion of these 1906 dictations (plus explanatory editorial notes) form the heart of the present volume (two more volumes will eventually be released to complete the "Autobiography"). The result certainly does not follow a standard autobiographical approach (which Twain characterizes as a "plan that starts you at the cradle and drives you straight for the grave, with no side-excursions permitted on the way. Whereas the side-excursions are the life of our life-voyage, and should be, also, of its history.") The "Autobiography" as dictated instead is all side-excursion, almost stream of consciousness. Twain's intent was that it not be published in unexpurgated form until a hundred years after his death, leaving him free to say whatever he wished about whomever he wished to speak. Portions of it have indeed been published from time to time, in a highly edited form bearing little resemblance to what Twain intended as the true "Autobiography". In approaching the "Autobiography" the reader should not expect a conventional, chronologically arranged, continuous narrative in the traditional style.

It really should be made clear just what this book is and isn't. It is a completist's edition of a project Twain talked about for years but never actually sat down and wrote. In this scholarly volume, roughly one-third of the massive book details the process of its compilation, by Twain and by the editors (his contemporaries as well as the present ones), and includes what might today be called "outtakes" (several of which are quite interesting and enjoyable), pieces determined not to be intended as part of the Autobiography. One reader commented that "the book needs an editor". That misses the point; the scholarly editing is masterful. It COULD not credibly be edited in the sense of cutting it down as one might a contemporary manuscript to make it suitable for publication. Another one-third of the tome consists of scholarly notes explaining many of the references in the text. Many of these are clarifications of people (some major, some insignificant) to whom Twain refers, or locations. In many cases these are extraneous to all but the most scholarly or the compulsive who needs to know who EVERYbody is and cannot determine it by context. In some cases, they correct lapses in Twain's memory (he clearly didn't research or check many of his facts). Only one-third of this volume is the Autobiography itself, and it is only mildly interesting. It is certainly not a chronological narrative, much of it was dictated by an aging and bitter man (part of its sardonic

charm), and much of it--- amazingly--- is drawn from a biography of Twain written, as a child, by his beloved daughter, which Twain explicates, albeit through the filter of the subsequent and ongoing grief Twain suffered since her youthful death. My eyesight is lousy but I was untroubled by the type.

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