

Regionalism & Dialect: Twain's Local Color

Name: _____ Date: _____

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Students will identify features of regional dialect in Mark Twain's writing and practice representing spoken dialect in their own writing.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- notebook paper
- pencil or pen
- colored pencils
- US map (printed or drawn)

HANDS-ON ACTIVITY

1. Read the excerpt below, adapted from Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884): "You don't know about me without you have read a book by the name of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*; but that ain't no matter... it warn't no lies in it, mainly."
2. Circle three words or phrases that differ from standard grammar (e.g., 'ain't no matter', 'warn't no lies') and rewrite each in standard English next to it.
3. On your US map, mark and label three regions of the United States (e.g., New England, the South, the Midwest) and note one dialect feature or expression associated with each (research briefly if needed).
4. Write a 5-6 sentence short paragraph in the voice of a character from one of your three regions, using at least two dialect features you noted.
5. Read your paragraph aloud, then explain to a partner or family member which region your character is from and how the dialect gave it away.

QUESTIONS

1. What is 'dialect,' and why did Twain use it in *Huckleberry Finn*?
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2. Rewrite this Twain phrase in standard English: 'it warn't no lies in it, mainly.'
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3. Which region did you choose for your dialect paragraph, and what dialect feature did you use?

4. What is one risk or downside writers should be careful of when representing dialect in fiction?
