

Studies in American Literature

H. St. Jean

Mark Twain - Satirical Humorist

- from *Letters from the Earth* - Mark Twain

Read the *Diaries from Adam and Eve*

In-class/homework Writing Assignment:

Alone or with a partner, write a continuation of the diaries or a dialogue using modern situations.

1) Pretend that Adam and Eve, upon leaving Eden, were suddenly "zapped" into our time.

2) Place them in a public setting and record their thoughts, words and actions in one scene. You may write it as a play script or you may choose to stick with diary entries.

Examples: Adam and Eve at the movie theatre, Adam and Eve at the mall, Adam and Eve learning to drive a car, Adam and Eve grocery shopping, Adam and Eve at a high school prom, etc.

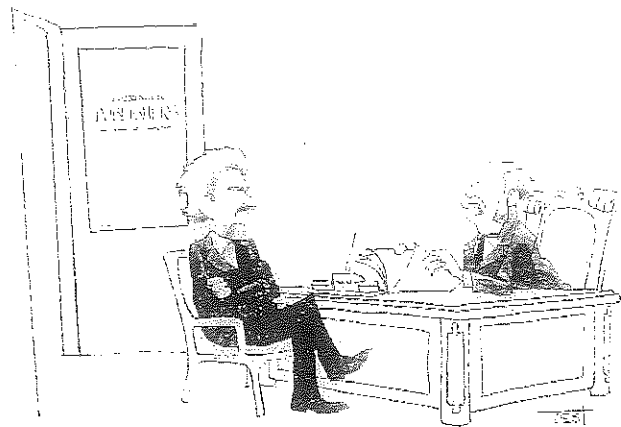
3) Remember, you are expected to write using Twain's style of satirical wit.

4) You will be asked to read/act these out in class.

5) Be respectful.

6) Page limit = 2-3 pages.

7) Have fun!



"It's just a thought, Mr. Twain.
But instead of having them surfing in Tahiti,
why not have them going down the Mississippi on a raft?"

Diaries from Adam and Eve

Directions: Read Mark Twain's fanciful diary accounts of the Garden of Eden; then answer the questions.

Adam

Monday.—This new creature with the long hair is a good deal in the way. It is always hanging around and following me about. I don't like this; I am not used to company. I wish it would stay with the other animals. . . . Cloudy to-day, wind in the east; think we shall have rain. . . . We? Where did I get that word?—I remember now—the new creature uses it.

Tuesday.—I get no chance to name anything myself. The new creature names everything that comes along, before I can get in a protest. And always that same pretext is offered—it looks like the thing. There is the dodo, for instance. Says the moment one looks at it one sees at a glance that it "looks like a dodo." It will have to keep that name, no doubt. It wearies me to fret about it, and it does no good, anyway. Dodo! It looks no more like a dodo than I do.

Friday.—The naming goes recklessly on, in spite of anything I can do. I had a very good name for the estate, and it was musical and pretty—GARDEN OF EDEN. Privately, I continue to call it that, but not any longer publicly. The new creature says it is all woods and rocks and scenery, and therefore has no resemblance to a garden. Says it looks like a park, and does not look like anything but a park.

Saturday.—The new creature eats too much fruit. We are going to run short, most likely.

Sunday.—Pulled through. This day is getting to be more and more trying. It was selected and set apart last November as a day of rest. I had already six of them per week before. This morning found the new creature trying to clod apples out of that forbidden tree.

Monday.—The new creature says its name is Eve. That is all right, I have no objections. Says it is to call it by, when I want it to come. I said it was superfluous, then. The word evidently raised me in its respect; and indeed it is a large, good word and will bear repetition. It says it is not an It, it is a She. This is probably doubtful; yet it is all one to me; what she is were nothing to me if she would but go by herself and not talk.

Monday.—I believe I see what the week is for: it is to give time to rest up from the weariness of Sunday. It seems a good idea. . . . She has been climbing that tree again. Clodded her out of it. She said nobody was looking. Seems to consider that a sufficient justification for chancing any dangerous thing. Told her that. The word justification moved her admiration—and envy, too, I thought. It is a good word.

Tuesday.—She told me she was made out of a rib taken from my body. This is at least doubtful, if not more than that. I have not missed any rib. She is in much trouble about the buzzard; says grass does not agree with it; is afraid she can't raise it; thinks it was intended to live on decayed flesh. The buzzard must get along the best it can with what it is provided. We cannot overturn the whole scheme to accommodate the buzzard.²

Monday noon.—If there is anything on the planet that she is not interested in it is not in my list. There are animals that I am indifferent to, but it is not so with her. She has no discrimination, she takes to all of them, she thinks they are all treasures, every new one is welcome.

²Mark Twain, "Extracts from Adam's Diary," in *The \$30,000 Bequest* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1917), 342-346.