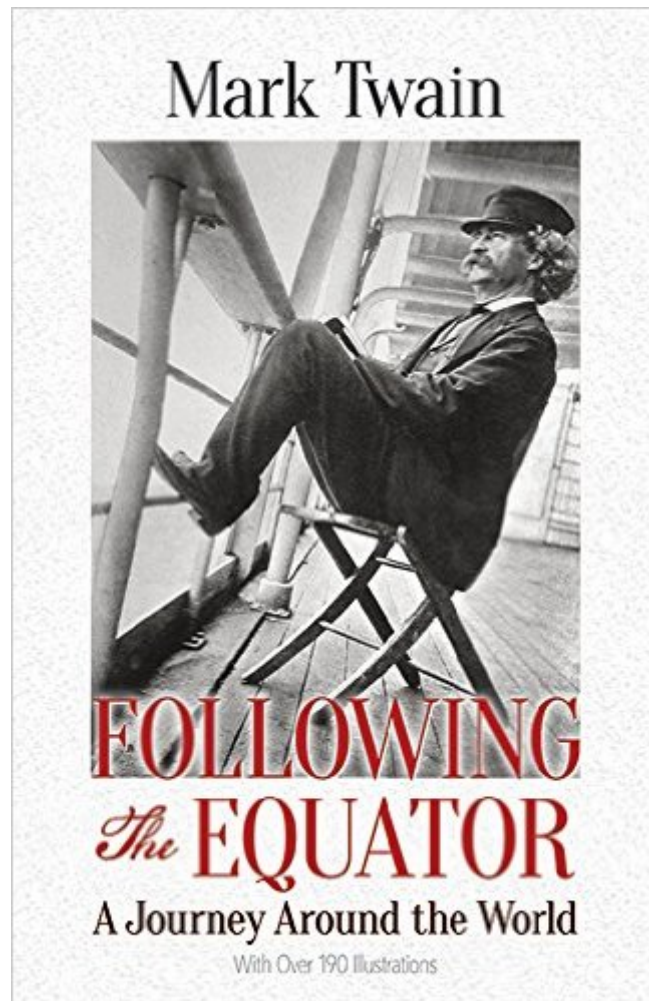


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Following The Equator: A Journey Around The World



Synopsis

Great writer's 1897 account of circumnavigating the globe by steamship. Brimming with ironic, tongue-in-cheek humor, the book describes shark fishing in Australia, riding the rails in India, tiger hunting, diamond mining in South Africa, much more; also peoples, climate, flora and fauna, customs, religion, politics, food, etc. 197 illustrations.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This book is a treasure. Twain's story-telling is laced with subtle humor recounting his meandering journey (as in no great hurry to get to a particular destination) around the world. I suggest you read this book in small doses, kind of like a daily conversation with a [really interesting] neighbor where stories are exchanged. I often read stories from this book to my children (ages 8 & 6) at bedtime. Clearly written in another era, Twain's sense of humor cracks me up, but some comments would today be considered politically incorrect so I make some real-time "adjustments" when reading it to the kids. I credit Jimmy Buffett with pointing me to this book through a reference on a CD although I don't share the opinion that Buffett's book is in the same league. As cited earlier, you can open this book anywhere, just read a chapter and it makes sense. My copy has no bookmark in it. We just hop around. Twain takes us places we've never been. Great book.

Any reader who loves a good book will relish the vicarious experience of traveling with Twain, his wife, Livy, and Clara, one of their three daughters as they tour the world on the lecture circuit. It's important to understand the necessity of the trip: Twain was 60, facing bankruptcy, and signed on

for the lecture tour in order to pay off his debt. The grueling schedule and unpredictable travel accommodations take no toll on his writing, however. Prepare to laugh - hard and often. Was it hot in India? "I believe that in India 'cold weather' is merely a conventional phrase and has come into use through the necessity of having some way to distinguish between weather which will melt a brass door-knob and weather which will only make it mushy." Teachers - do not pass on the opportunity to laugh and learn and share the world with your students. Geography, history, culture, language, climate, language arts (oh, his choice of words and phrases!), politics, time zones, botany, geology, biology, religion - all are explored and described and relevant today. Jimmy Buffett's "Remittance Man," "That's What Living is to Me," and "Take Another Road" all spring from this book (especially the remittance man, a character you'll meet early in the book). There is also an "unfinished story" with which you can challenge your students. I worked with nineteen 4th and 5th grade gifted students one summer, and they spent two weeks reading, scripting, and animating a 70 minute video of this book. They loved it, and so will your students if you plan accordingly. A good accompanying video is "On the Trail of Mark Twain" with Peter Ustinov, but only as a companion - NOT as a replacement! Go for it... where else will you get the opportunity to travel from Vancouver to Hawaii to Fiji to Australia to New Zealand to Ceylon to India to South Africa? The book chronicles their travels in such a way that you can pick it up and focus on one region without losing anything. But don't let that stop you from reading the whole book. See the Southern Cross and the Blue Mountains. Get roused out of your comfortable train berth to change cars in Australia because the gauge of the tracks changes from wide to narrow. Meet the dingo and the Aborigines, eavesdrop on Twain's conversation with "Satan" and "God" in India, explore the diamond mines of South Africa near the Trappist Monastery, and steer clear of the sharks in the Great Barrier Reef. There is more adventure in this one book than a whole year's subscription to National Geographic. My favorite part? Twain's vivid description of "that bird of birds - the Indian crow." No, wait, it's the hand-car ride down the Himalayas. No, wait... ah, who can pick? Read it yourself, and find out why. [Added later: A great companion piece to this book is *Mark Twain: Words & Music*.]

A highly entertaining read. Twain's classic storytelling and embellishing descriptions of people, places and events will make you laugh out loud! It is truly a sad day when you have reached the end of this book. Strongly recommended for readers worldwide.

A lot has changed in the 144 years since this book was first published. The Boer Wars have fallen out of the headlines and few people today can locate the Sandwich Islands. Yet Twain's insights

into what makes us tick, his witticisms and maxims still cut to the quick today. The book is about his journey around the world--to Hawaii, Australasia, India and South Africa. We're immediately drawn into Twain's confidence and see the world then through our friend's eyes--way back then. Twain benefits from writing when generalizations about groups weren't frowned upon; they were expected. We can't really learn about a country as large as India without generalizations. Such generalizations could never be made today for fear of offending some group. That said, if a racist is someone who believes in the superiority of one race over another, Twain qualifies, as do almost all of his contemporaries. But let's not apply today's standards to 19th century authors and let's not that ruin an enjoyable literary journey. The Digireads version appears to be published with economy foremost in mind. Chapters begin and end mid-page, the font is tiny and the margins are even smaller. Otherwise this book would deserve 5 stars.

The only thing I would add to the other positive reviews is that the book is just riddled with political and social commentary - wonderfully scathing, far ahead of its time, and subtly presented at that. Jingoism is derided, missionary zeal seen from the perspective of the injured convert, colonialism unmasked, feminism promoted other ills wrought by the west are put in perspective as well through good storytelling and Twain's trademark humor. A great travel tale, but also a work of wicked and broad-reaching social commentary backed up by solid history and first-hand accounts.

This isn't your typical Mark Twain book. In journal style Twain takes you along with him as he circumnavigates the world. He not only shares experiences he had but includes what he learned of the different countries' cultures, customs, and people. Very educational. You will see the world through Mark Twain's eyes. Pay attention to catch the hidden humor. Another great piece by Mark Twain.

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