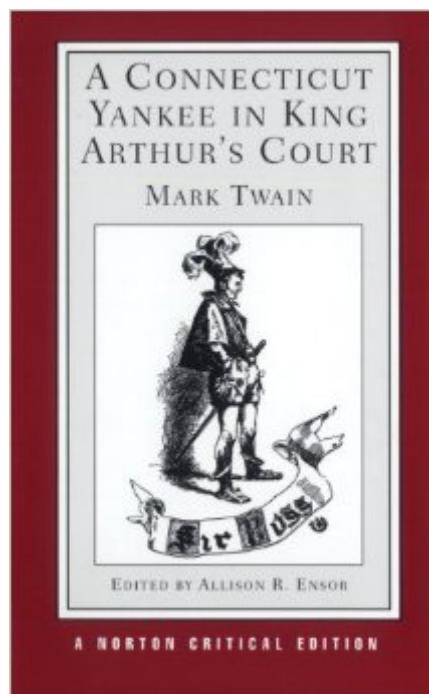


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A Connecticut Yankee In King Arthur's Court (Norton Critical Editions)



Synopsis

This edition of *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* reprints the text of the first American edition, approved by Clemens and published by his own company. Accompanying the text are thirteen of the original illustrations by Daniel Carter Beard, many of which are caricatures of well-known figures of the day. Annotations point out significant textual problems and variants, as well as explaining unfamiliar references within the text. "Backgrounds and Sources" includes selections on King Arthur from the *Oxford Companion to English Literature*; on the total eclipse from *The Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus* by Washington Irving; and on the "king's touch," the ascetic saints, and the financing of the Mansion House by W. E. H. Lecky. Selections from Clemens's letters, notebooks, autobiography, and other writings and newspaper reports of his 1886 manuscript reading at Governor's Island show how the novel developed. A section of the Beard illustrations includes material by Beard, Clemens, and Henry Nash Smith. The English edition is discussed by Dennis Welland. Early critical views are by Sylvester Baxter, William Dean Howells, Andrew Lang, Rudyard Kipling, Charles Whibley, Albert Bigelow Paine, John B. Hoben, and anonymous reviewers in the *London Daily Telegraph* and the *Boston Literary World*. The later critical essays are by Howard G. Baetzholt, James D. Williams, Kenneth S. Lynn, James M. Cox, Louis J. Budd, Henry Nash Smith, David Ketterer, and Everett Carter. A Selected Bibliography is also included.

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Customer Reviews

You might wonder what prompted Mark Twain to sidle from "straight" fiction into the realm of outright fantasy. Twain transports a Connecticut shop foreman twelve centuries into the past [and 5 000 kilometres!] to Camelot and Arthur's court. Initially confused and dismayed, Hank Morgan's Yankee practicality is quickly aroused and he becomes a major figure among the panopolied knights. With the title of The Boss, his rank equals The King or The Pope with its uniqueness. His elevation doesn't distract him from a more profound impulse, however. Hank's Yankee roots and wide experience evoke an ambition - nothing less than revolution. He wants to sweep away the monarchy and aristocracy and establish an American-style republic in Arthurian Britain. Mark Twain's scathing criticism of the sham of hereditary monarchy bolstered by an Established Church makes this among his choicest writings. He resents the condition of a Church which "turned a nation of men into a nation of worms." A fervent believer in individual freedom, Twain uses Hank to voice his disdain of Britain's royalty. It's no more than might be expected of a man who boasted of but one ancestor - who sat on the jury that executed Charles I. Hank knows revolutions never succeed when implemented from above. Revolution be achieved only when the individual's attitude changes from meek acceptance to self assertion. Hank's method reaches people through clandestine schools and factories, publication of a newspaper and establishment of a telephone system. These new forms of manufacture and communication become the foundation by which Hank expects to abolish the ancient, mis-named, chivalric tradition. Does he change the course of history?

If you think Bing Crosby's 1949 movie was anything like Mark Twain's fantasy classic published in 1889...Forget It! Like the precursor novels, 'Gulliver's Travels' written in 1726 by Jonathan Swift and 'Alice in Wonderland' written in 1865 by Lewis Carroll were made into movies that are barely representative of the original novels. The film starring Bing Crosby was a musical / comedy only touching on the very basic part of Twain's novel. Mark Twain's view of England's Lifestyle in 528 was very harsh pertaining to church and throne to say the least. On page 246, he says..." if one could but force it (manhood) out of its timid and suspicious privacy, to overthrow and trample in the mud any throne that ever was set up and any nobility that ever supported it". The book has none of the film's niceties, instead it graphically tells of unjust hangings, stake burnings, murder, slavery, and an unfair caste system. This is a brilliant novel written 113 years after the Revolutionary War and 24 years after the Civil War. The contents truly reveal Mark Twain's political and social views, which I think are worthy of the study they have received. For further information on his thoughts see: 'Autobiography of Mark Twain: Volume 1, Reader's Edition (Mark Twain Papers)'. In the year 1879,

Hank Morgan (his name is only mentioned once), an arms factory foreman, gets into a fight with a man named Hercules (no, not him) and wakes up under a tree in King Arthur's Camelot in the year 528! He is captured by the less then adequate knight, Sir Kay. At first Hank thinks he is in an insane asylum, but then as he is brought before The Knights of the Round Table to receive justice, he realizes that he really is in the sixth century.

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