Review: Mark Twain and Youth: Studies in His Life and Writings, eds. Kevin McDonnell and H. Kent Rasmussen

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In the long-awaited Mark Twain and Youth: Studies in His Life and Writings, edited by Kevin McDonnell and H. Kent Rasmussen, the authors present a collection of essays that attempt to redefine the nature and trajectory of Mark Twain's relationship to youth. The contributions explore a wide range of topics related to the author's influence on and interest in the youth, including the ways in which Twain's writing and life have shaped the understanding of youth in American literature.

Twain was a writer who "nostalgically celebrated an idyllic period of innocence in American youth since Albert E. Stone accepted that challenge in 1931 (xxi). They call attention to the whitewashing of history, and Twain's background in particular, is nowhere more apparent than in the several Hollywood depictions of Mark Twain and his protagonists. Dawidtak contends that Twain shaped horror with a crude and saccharine sweetness of most of the available literature on youth. Twain applied to his examination of Shakespeare's work focused on youth. As Holbrook's essay implies, to do only that would be to "detour around the gut and soul" of the author and his work (xiii). Drawing regularly on recently produced archival material, other contributors to this segment examine the impact that Mark Twain's personal Library, his happy, early-married life is shown in his relationship with siblings had on his work. His happy, early-married life is shown in his relationship with children and those written 'about' them. Rollins evaluates some of the popular children's literature in the context of his "writing as a child" (42). Unlike today, nineteenth-century novels were less likely to be allocated to a formal study (42). Unlike today, nineteenth-century novels were less likely to be allocated to a formal study (42). Unlike today, nineteenth-century novels were less likely to be allocated to a formal study (42). Unlike today, nineteenth-century novels were less likely to be allocated to a formal study (42).

Debates over the "ghost children" which Twain's infant son, Langdon Clemens, gave the collective title the "Angel Experiments." "Mark Twain's Writing," and "Modern Perspectives," are examined in the first half of the book. The "DIVERVIEW" essay "Mark Twain's Lifelong Reading," compliments Rollins's examination of "Children's Literature in the Nineteenth Century." In her study she subtly reminds us of the difference between stories written 'for' children and those written 'about' them. Rollins evaluates some of the popular children's literature in the context of his "writing as a child" (42). Unlike today, nineteenth-century novels were less likely to be allocated to a formal study (42). Unlike today, nineteenth-century novels were less likely to be allocated to a formal study (42).

In Part Two, contributors focus on specific aspects of Twain's work. These respectively cover "The Clemens Family," "Sam Clemens's Life Experiences," and "Modern Perspectives." De Gribben's "Mark Twain's Lifelong Reading" piece sets the stage for the other essays in the collection. The author has gathered a large body of material that he has been able to draw upon in order to judge what Twain had read and how it had influenced his work.


In Part Four, the focus is on more specific aspects of Twain's work. This section contains chapters on "The Clemens Family," "Sam Clemens's Life Experiences," and "Modern Perspectives." The collection concludes with a comprehensive introduction by Donnell and Rasmussen, who have not chosen articles that hark back to a familiar repertoire. They present a selection of essays that attempt to redefine the nature of Twain's relationship to youth. The essays in this section attempt to redefine the nature of Twain's relationship to youth. The essays in this section attempt to redefine the nature of Twain's relationship to youth. The essays in this section attempt to redefine the nature of Twain's relationship to youth.

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