

:: STRUCTURE ::**12.0 Objectives****12.1 Introduction to The Author****12.2 Introduction to The Essay****12.3 'Advice to Youth': Text****12.4 'Advice to Youth': An Analysis****12.5 Let Us Sum Up****12.6 Key Words****12.7 Check Your Progress 1****❖ Answer**

12.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, we shall

- discuss the meaning and tools a satire
- identify its use in literature
- understand the techniques employed to create humour

12.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE AUTHOR

Best known as the author of the novel *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Mark Twain (1835-1910) was an American author and humourist. His original name was Samuel L. Clemens. He wrote under the pen name Mark Twain.

In his lifetime, he tried a variety of occupations but the most rewarding one was his stint as a traveling reporter. During the 1860s, Twain traveled across the American West and on to the Hawaiian Islands. He wrote newspaper articles about his experiences for which he received positive reviews. This initiated his career as a public lecturer and later opened doors for his novels. Clemens had an enigmatic ability to capture the truth of his own life and 19th century America.

12.2 INTRODUCTION TO THE ESSAY

‘Advice to Youth’ is an address by Twain that he delivered at the Saturday Morning Club on April 15, 1882, in Boston. Julia Ward Howe had founded the club for her daughter’s social education. Mark Twain was widely popular at the time of the talk; his essays and travelogues had already made him an iconic humorist.

In this speech, Mark Twain employs unpredictability and satiric voices as the devices to convey his message. In literature, satire is a technique used to illustrate and criticise foolishness and corruption of an individual or a society through humour, irony, exaggeration, hyperbole or ridicule. The aim of a satire is to improve the target.

The formal definition of satire is “the use of humor, irony, exaggeration, or ridicule to expose and criticize people’s stupidity or vices.” It’s an extremely broad category. The “or” in the definition is key – most satires are humorous, ironic, and exaggerated, but they only have to be one of these things to count as satire. (<https://literaryterms.net/satire/>)

In this address, Mark Twain lists manners and conducts expected from youth but gives all of them a twist. First, he offers a piece of advice and then undermines the expectations and suggests a new take on familiar clichés.

12.3 “ADVICE TO YOUTH”: TEXT

PARA 1 Being told I would be expected to talk here; I inquired what sort of talk I ought to make. They said it should be something suitable to youth – something didactic, instructive, or something in the nature of good advice. Very well, I have a few things in my mind which I have often longed to say for the instruction of the young; for it is in one’s tender early years that such things will best take root and be most enduring and most valuable. First, then, I will say to you my young friends -- and I say it beseechingly, urgently --

PARA 2 Always obey your parents, when they are present. This is the best policy in the long run, because if you don’t, they will make you. Most parents think they know better than you do, and you can generally make more by humoring that superstition than you can by acting on your own better judgment.

PARA 3 Be respectful to your superiors, if you have any, also to strangers, and sometimes to others. If a person offends you and you are in doubt as to whether it was intentional or not, do not resort to extreme measures; simply watch your chance and hit him with a brick. That will be sufficient. If you shall find that he had not intended any offense, come out frankly and confess yourself in the wrong when you struck him; acknowledge it like a man and say you didn’t mean to. Yes, always avoid

violence; in this age of charity and kindness, the time has gone by for such things. Leave dynamite to the low and unrefined.

PARA 4 Go to bed early, get up early – this is wise. Some authorities say get up with the sun; some say get up with one thing, others with another. But a lark is really the best thing to get up with. It gives you a splendid reputation with everybody to know that you get up with the lark; and if you get the right kind of lark, and work at him right, you can easily train him to get up at half past nine, every time -- it's no trick at all.

PARA 5 Now as to the matter of lying. You want to be very careful about lying; otherwise you are nearly sure to get caught. Once caught, you can never again be in the eyes to the good and the pure, what you were before. Many a young person has injured himself permanently through a single clumsy and ill-finished lie, the result of carelessness born of incomplete training. Some authorities hold that the young out not to lie at all. That of course, is putting it rather stronger than necessary; still while I cannot go quite so far as that, I do maintain, and I believe I am right, that the young ought to be temperate in the use of this great art until practice and experience shall give them that confidence, elegance, and precision which alone can make the accomplishment graceful and profitable. Patience, diligence, painstaking attention to detail – these are requirements; these in time, will make the student perfect; upon these only, may he rely as the sure foundation for future eminence. Think what tedious years of study, thought, practice, experience, went to the equipment of that peerless old master who was able to impose upon the whole world the lofty and sounding maxim that “Truth is mighty and will prevail” -- the most majestic compound fracture of fact which any of woman born has yet achieved. For the history of our race, and each individual's experience, are sewn thick with evidences that a truth is not hard to kill, and that a lie well told is immortal. There is in Boston a monument of the man who discovered anesthesia; many people are aware, in these latter days, that that man didn't discover it at all, but stole the discovery from another man. Is this truth mighty, and will it prevail? Ah no, my hearers, the monument is made of hardy material, but the lie it tells will outlast it a million years. An awkward, feeble, leaky lie is a thing which you ought to make it your unceasing study to avoid; such a lie as that has no more real permanence than an average truth. Why, you might as well tell the truth at once and be done with it. A feeble, stupid, preposterous lie will not live two years -- except it be a slander upon somebody. It is indestructible, then of course, but that is no merit of yours. A final word: begin your practice of this gracious and beautiful art early -- begin now. If I had begun earlier, I could have learned how.

PARA 6 Never handle firearms carelessly. The sorrow and suffering that have been caused through the innocent but heedless handling of firearms by the young! Only four days ago, right in the next

farm house to the one where I am spending the summer, a grandmother, old and gray and sweet, one of the loveliest spirits in the land, was sitting at her work, when her young grandson crept in and got down an old, battered, rusty gun which had not been touched for many years and was supposed not to be loaded, and pointed it at her, laughing and threatening to shoot. In her fright, she ran screaming and pleading toward the door on the other side of the room; but as she passed him he placed the gun almost against her very breast and pulled the trigger! He had supposed it was not loaded. And he was right -- it wasn't. So there wasn't any harm done. It is the only case of that kind I ever heard of. Therefore, just the same, don't you meddle with old unloaded firearms; they are the most deadly and unerring hings that have ever been created by man. You don't have to take any pains at all with them; you don't have to have a rest, you don't have to have any sights on the gun, you don't have to take aim, even. No, you just pick out a relative and bang away, and you are sure to get him. A youth who can't hit a cathedral at thirty yards with a Gatling gun in three quarters of an hour, can take up an old empty musket and bag his grandmother every time, at a hundred. Think what Waterloo would have been if one of the armies had been boys armed with old muskets supposed not to be loaded, and the other army had been composed of their female relations. The very thought of it make one shudder.

PARA 7 There are many sorts of books; but good ones are the sort for the young to read. remember that. They are a great, an inestimable and unspeakable means of improvement. Therefore be careful in your selection, my young friends; be very careful; confine yourselves exclusively to Robertson's *Sermons*, Baxter's *Saints' Rest*, *The Innocents Abroad*, and works of that kind.

PARA 8 But I have said enough. I hope you will treasure up the instructions which I have given you, and make them a guide to your feet and a light to your understanding. Build your character thoughtfully and painstakingly upon these precepts, and by and by, when you have got it built, you will be surprised and gratified to see how nicely and sharply it resembles everybody else's.

12.4 "ADVICE TO YOUTH": AN ANALYSIS

The title reveals two things; the first is that the audience is youth and the second that the purpose of the address is to teach a lesson to them.

It is very clear from the beginning of the essay that Mark Twain's bunch of advice have explicit and implicit meanings. He wishes to stimulate their thinking and reasoning ability. The entire address is full of such instances.

Mark Twain begins his address by stating that young age is the most suitable time to learn advice as it sticks to a person as s/he grows. The audience anticipates some serious, preaching kind of a speech.

His first advice to youth is 'to obey parents' especially 'when they are present'. The beginning is somber but the end is funny. Talking about the mentality of the parents, he states that most parents think that they know more than their kids. According to Mark Twain, it is always better to continue with their superstition instead of following their own judgement. When he says that parents think they know more than kids; he wishes the youth to think whether or not parents really always know better than children.

Are there any situations where a parent might not know more?

Are there any situations where youth might need to listen to their own inner voice?

When he says that youth can "make more" by just following what the parents say; does he imply that youth can get more by just obeying them than by disobeying them.

His second advice is to 'be respectful to the superiors.....to strangers, and sometimes to others.' He further says that if a person feels offended by someone, instead of using extreme measures, he should hit the person with a brick as and when an opportunity is found. However, one should also apologise to that person when it is learned that the act was not intentional. One should, according to him, 'always avoid violence'.

In this paragraph, he uses irony. As against the expectation of 'be respectful to everyone', he says to 'be respectful to seniors, strangers and sometimes to others. His suggestion to hit a person with a brick on feeling offended has a touch of humour as well as caution. Overtly, it might seem to suggest to resort to violence and covertly it implies to examine one's behaviour and avoid all sorts of thoughtless violence. Mark Twain wants youth to think before acting and thus averting all apologetic consequences.

His next suggestion is about getting up early. He wants to remind them of the familiar maxim "Early to bed, early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise". He is expected to support this old cliché but here to he gives it a twist. He suggests using a lark to decide the time to get up. This would be, according to him, a good idea as the lark can be trained and one can 'get up at half-past nine, every time...'

Mark Twain, here, hints at not going for the conventional thinking worrying about what others would think. One should have the logic to choose a routine.

‘be very careful about lying.’ is the next advice by Mark Twain. Lying has is a great art but if not practiced, it can be a great risk as well. If a liar is caught, s/he would never have a similar standing. In Mark Twain’s opinion, ‘a single clumsy and ill-finished lie’ is the ‘result of carelessness born of incomplete training’.

Using irony once again, Mark Twain demonstrates that lying is bad and one should not indulge in this act. Indirectly, he makes everyone brainstorm many ideas; is it possible not to lie ever? Is a lie necessary? Keeping in mind the importance of the formative years of their life, Twain would like the audience to inculcate ‘patience, diligence, painstaking attention to detail’ as they are needed for perfection and are the basis for the future eminence. He would like the girls to think about the efforts must have been put by the ‘peerless old master’ who have proved that “Truth is mighty and will prevail.”

Mark Twain would like the audience to ponder over the possibilities of truth to be mighty and prevailing all the time. To make them contemplate, he shares a case of a monument in Boston. The monument is of a man who believed to have discovered anesthesia. Later on, however, it was revealed that he was not the person. Thus, the monument now symbolises a lie. Thus, Twain shows that a lie cannot last for long. Even if lasts, one should not take any merit in it. He then humourously accepts that had he practiced the ‘gracious and beautiful art’ earlier, he probably would have mastered it.

His next advice is about handling ‘firearms carelessly’ means being careful with guns specially in the presence of children. He shares an anecdote about a grandmother who was attacked by her grandson thinking it was fun. He placed the gun against his grandma’s breast and pulled the trigger. Luckily, no harm was done as the gun was not loaded. Mark Twain asserts that people need to be educated about guns as they have the potential to be dangerous and deadly.

Mark Twain, before ending his speech, emphasises the role of books in the improvement and growth of human beings. He asks the girls to be careful while choosing them. He apparently also suggests a few names. However, actually, he does not want them to read only those that are suggested by others.

He ends his speech with the hope that the audience will remember whatever he has advised and be guided by them. Doing so, he adds, will help them be like many others. Here, he actually offers a word of caution. Essentially, he would like them to find a balance between what others suggest and what they themselves feel. Then, they would be on their own.

Very wittily, Mark Twain offers some absurd advice to help the audience to contemplate about what is good and what is not good for them.

12.5 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, you have learned

- to understand the meaning of satire and its use in language
- to recognize the tools used to express satire

12.6 KEY WORDS

didactic	: intended to teach, particularly in having moral instruction as an ulterior motive.
tender	: showing gentleness, kindness, and affection
enduring	: lasting over a period of time; durable
beseech	: ask (someone) urgently and fervently to do something; implore; entreat
offend	: cause to feel upset, annoyed, or resentful
resort	: turn to and adopt (a course of action, especially an extreme or undesirable one) so as to resolve a difficult situation.
intended	: planned or meant
splendid	: magnificent; very impressive
maxim	: a short, pithy statement expressing a general truth or rule of conduct.
clumsy	: awkward in movement or in handling things.
temperate	: showing moderation or self-restraint.
elegance	: the quality of being graceful and stylish in appearance or manner.
diligence	: careful and persistent work or effort
painstaking	: done with or employing great care and thoroughness
peerless	: unequalled; unrivalled
lofty	: of imposing height, high
prevail	: prove more powerful or superior, persuade (someone) to do something
feeble	: lacking physical strength, especially as a result of age or illness
preposterous	: contrary to reason or common sense; utterly absurd or ridiculous
heedless	: showing a reckless lack of care or attention
battered	: injured by repeated blows or punishment, (of a thing) damaged by age and repeated use
rusty	: (of a metal object) affected by rust
screaming	: long, loud piercing cries expressing extreme emotion or pain
meddle	: interfere in something that is not one's concern
precepts	: a general rule intended to regulate behaviour or thought

gratified	: pleased or satisfied
humour	:It is a literary tool to make the reader laugh through surprise, irony, hyperbole, exaggeration etc.
irony	:Irony is a figure of speech in which words are used in such a way that their intended meaning is different from the actual meaning of the words. It may also be a situation that ends up in quite a different way than what is generally anticipated. In simple words, it is a difference between appearance and reality.(https://literarydevices.net)
exaggeration	:Exaggeration is a statement that makes something worse, or better, than it really is.
hyperbole	:It is a figure of speech in which an author or speaker intentionally exaggerates to an extreme. It is used for emphasis or as a way of making a description more creative and humorous.

12.6 Check Your Progress 1

Read the sentences given and pick the most appropriate meaning conveyed by the underlined word.

- Very well, I have a few things in my mind which I have often longed to say for the instruction of the young;
 - desired
 - dreamt
 - requested
 - asked
- This is the best policy in the long run, because if you don't, they will make you.
 - after some years
 - after some distance
 - sooner
 - ultimately
- If a person offends you and you are in doubt as to whether it was intentional or not, do not resort to extreme measures;
 - analyses
 - evaluates
 - insults
 - critiques
- Many a young person has injured himself permanently through a single clumsy and ill-finished lie, the result of carelessness born of incomplete training.
 - tricky
 - uncoordinated
 - difficult

- d. tongue-tied
5. In her fright, she ran screaming and pleading toward the door on the other side of the room;
- a. beseeching
 - b. supporting
 - c. defending
 - d. arguing

Choose the correct options.

1. Choose the correct paraphrase of the statement selected from the essay 'Advice to Youth
'Always obey your parents, when they are present'.
- a. One should obey parents in their presence.
 - b. One should obey parents when they give your presents.
 - c. If you obey your parents, they would become like present.
 - d. Always obey your parents to get presents.
2. Which of the following meaning in NOT conveyed through the given sentence?
'Many a young person has injured himself permanently through a single, clumsy and ill-finished lie, the result of carelessness born of incomplete training.'
- a. A liar will injure himself for the sin of lying.
 - b. Lying requires training and skill.
 - c. Only young people tell lie.
 - d. There is no problem if you are a regular liar.
3. Which of the following meanings is conveyed in the Paragraph 5 of the essay 'Advice to Youth'?
- a. Confidence, elegance and precision is necessary for an impressive personality.
 - b. If a lie is caught, it can greatly damage the reputation of a person.
 - c. Truth is hard to kill.
 - d. One can practice the art of lying at any stage.
4. Which of the following meanings is NOT conveyed in the Paragraph 4 of the essay 'Advice to Youth'?
- a. According to Twain, help of a lark is advisable to get up early.
 - b. Everyone has different opinion about getting up in the morning.
 - c. It is a good thing to go bed early.
 - d. It is difficult to train a lark.
5. Which of the following literary works is not suggested by Twain for reading?
- a. *The Innocents Abroad* by Mark Twain
 - b. *Saints' Rest* by Baxter

- c. *Sermons* by Robertson
- d. *I Will Be A Lady – a book for girls* by Mrs. Tuthill.

Answer the Following Questions in Brief

1. Who is the target audience?

2. Why does Twain suggest the youth to obey their parents?

3. What superstition (common belief) do parents have according to Twain?

4. How, in Twain's view, can the youth avoid violence?

5. Why is lying bad according to Twain?

6. Why, according to Twain, is lying a great art?

7. What is Twain's advice to youth about lying?

8. Write the anecdote about firearms in your words

9. What is his advice about reading?

10. What is the outcome of building one's character, according to Twain?

11. Write the significance of the story behind the monument in Boston?

Answer the following questions in 100 to 125 words.

1. What advice does Mark Twain give to the youth throughout the essay?

2. Is Mark Twain's advice relevant today?

3. What does Twain satirise during his address on 'Advice to Youth'?

Write paragraphs on :

1. 'The Best / Worst Advice You were Given

Points to be included:

- Who gave it? When?
- Was it solicited /unsolicited?
- What was your reaction?
- Did you follow it? Yes / No ? Why?
- Impact of your decision today.
- If you found someone in a similar situation, what would do? Why?

2. Advice to Old

Points to be included:

- Whom would you like to advise? Why?
- What would be your advice?
- What would be their likely reaction? Why
- The probability of their accepting your advice
- The supposed impact of your advice

SUGGESTED READING

- Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms, Charis Baldick
- Introduction to English Literature, RJ Rees
- Studying Literature, Pramod Nayar
- Complete Essays of Mark Twain by Charles Neider
- "On the Decay of the Art of Lying" by Mark Twain
- "The Decay of Lying" by Oscar Wilde,

❖ **Answers**

Check Your Progress 1

1. a 2. d 3. c 4. b 5. a

Check Your Progress 2

1. a 2. b 3. b 4. d 5. d