



Mark Twain and Metaphor (Mark Twain and His Circle Series)

John Bird

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Metaphor theory, observes John Bird, is like Mark Twain: both seem simple upon first introduction. Now, in the most complete study to date of Twain's use of figurative language, a veteran Twain scholar tackles the core of his writing and explores it with theoretical approaches that have rarely been applied to Twain, providing new insights into how he imagined his world—and the singular ways in which he expressed himself.

From “The Jumping Frog” to the late dream narratives, Bird considers Twain's metaphoric construction over his complete career and especially sheds new light on his central texts: *Roughing It*; *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*; *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*; *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*; *Pudd'nhead Wilson*; and *No. 44, The Mysterious Stranger*. He reconsiders “Old Times on the Mississippi” as the most purely metaphorical of Twain's writings, goes on to look at how Twain used metaphor and talked about it in a variety of works and genres, and even argues that Clemens's pseudonym is not so much an alter ego as a metaphorized self.

By offering insight into how Twain handled figurative language during the composing process, Bird reveals not only hidden facets of his artistry but also new aspects of works that we think we know well—including some entirely new ideas regarding *Huck Finn* that draw on the recent discovery of the first half of the manuscript. In addition to dealing with issues currently central to Twain studies, such as race and gender, he also links metaphor to humor and dream theory to further illuminate topics central to his work.

More than a study of Twain's language, the book delves into the psychological aspects of metaphor to reveal the writer's attitudes and thoughts, showing how using metaphor as a guide to Twain reveals much about his composition process. Applying the insights of metaphor theorists such as Roman Jakobson and Colin M. Turbayne, Bird offers readers not only new insights into Twain but also an introduction to this interdisciplinary field.

In lively prose, *Mark Twain and Metaphor* provides a vital way to read Twain's entire corpus, allowing readers to better appreciate his style, humor, and obsession with dreams. It opens new ground and makes old ground fresh again, offering ways to see and resee this essential American writer.

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Guadalupe Ramsey:

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