

 Prestwick House

# Instant Short Story Pack



**Each pack contains:**

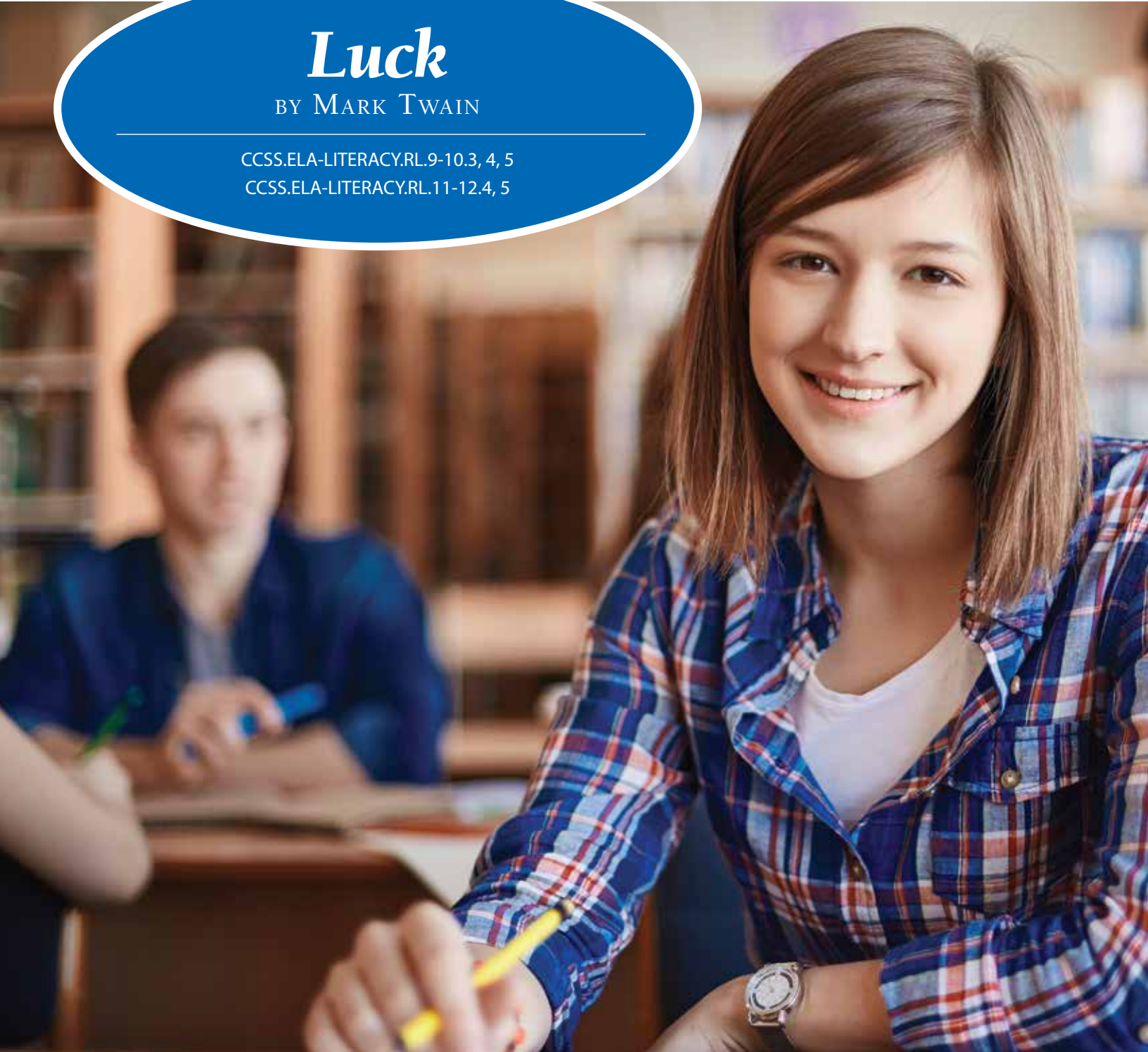
- Objectives
- Full Text of Story
- Student Questions
- Activities and Graphic Organizers
- Teacher Answer Guide

## *Luck*

BY MARK TWAIN

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.3, 4, 5

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.4, 5



## Objectives:

After completing the activities in this packet, the student will be able to:

- analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text [and] interact with other characters (RL.9-10.3),
- analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations)...advance the plot or develop the theme (RL.9-10.3),
- analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone) (RL.9-10.4; 11-12.4), and
- analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text...create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise (RL.9-10.5; 11-12.5).

## Time:

1-3 class periods

## Materials:

✓ 1 copy of each handout per student:

- **Handout #1** (4 pages) – Purpose-setting and Motivational Activities
- **Handout #2** (5 pages) – Text of Story
- **Handout #3** (1 page) – Student Questions
- **Handout #4** (7 pages) – Activities and Graphic Organizers

✓ Teacher Answer Guide

## Procedure:

1. Reproduce all handouts.
2. Distribute **Handouts #1** and **#2**.
  - Allow students to read the short biography of Twain (approximately 10 minutes).
  - Read and discuss the information about Twain's work and ideas (approximately 20 minutes).
  - Assign the story to be read for homework OR
  - Allow students to read the story in class and perform the two **As you read...**activities.
3. Distribute **Handout #3**.
4. Give students time to read the questions (approximately 5 minutes).
5. Review with students what each question is asking for and what type of information is required for a thorough answer (e.g., references to prior knowledge, quotations from the story, additional reading or research, etc.).
6. Distribute **Handout #4**.

Mark Twain

## *Luck*

“Luck” is one of Twain’s least familiar stories. It was first published in *Harper’s Magazine* in 1891 and attracted very little critical attention. A year later, Twain included it in a short collection of stories titled *Merry Tales*, which was published by his ill-fated venture, Charles L. Webster and Company.

It is possible that this story is based on an actual person, and Twain himself prefaces the story with the note that it is “not a fancy sketch.” In other words, it is not a work of the imagination. He claims to have heard it from “a clergyman,” quite possibly Joseph Twichell, a Congregationalist pastor in Connecticut. Twichell was Twain’s closest friend for over forty years. He apparently heard about a famous general from a British chaplain: the general’s accomplishments were all simply the result of luck. While it is a relatively common convention of Twain’s to have his narrator claim to have gotten the story from someone who heard the story from a different person, it is not common for Twain’s narrator to claim that the story is true and to vouch for the credibility of his sources. One biographer, Albert Paine, claims that, even though he’d been told the story was true, Twain himself thought it was unlikely and did nothing with it for many years.

Both Paine’s biography and Twain’s autobiography relate an incident in which Twain is informed that the living model for Scoresby was a Lord Garnet Joseph Wolseley. Still, Twain does not claim that Scoresby was Wolseley, only that some in Britain *believed* him to be.

Scholars of Joseph Twichell, however, have found no evidence of the supposed visit from a British clergyman or of Twichell’s involvement in inspiring “Luck.” When the story first appeared in Britain in 1900, its British readers enjoyed speculating who the unnamed “supremest ass in the universe” might be.

### ***Before you read:***

#### **Know something about the life of the author:**

Samuel Langhorne Clemens was born in Florida, Missouri, on November 30, 1835. He was the sixth of seven children, only four of whom lived to adulthood. When he was four, his family moved to Hannibal, Missouri, on the Mississippi River, which would be the inspiration for several of Clemens’s most famous works written under the pseudonym of Mark Twain.

Mark Twain

*Luck*

Lexile Measure: 1020L

(NOTE—This is not a fancy sketch. I got it from a clergyman who was an instructor at Woolwich forty years ago, and who vouched for its truth.—M. T.)

IT WAS AT a banquet in London in honor of one of the two or three conspicuously illustrious English military names of this generation. For reasons which will presently appear, I will withhold his real name and titles and call him Lieutenant-General Lord Arthur Scoresby, V.C., K.C.B., etc., etc., etc. What a fascination there is in a renowned name! There sat the man, in actual flesh, whom I had heard of so many thousands of times since that day, thirty years before, when his name shot suddenly to the zenith from a Crimean battlefield, to remain forever celebrated. It was food and drink to me to look, and look, and look at that demigod; scanning, searching, noting: the quietness, the reserve, the noble gravity of his countenance; the simple honesty that expressed itself all over him; the sweet unconsciousness of his greatness—unconsciousness of the hundreds of admiring eyes fastened upon him, unconsciousness of the deep, loving, sincere worship welling out of the breasts of those people and flowing toward him.

The clergyman at my left was an old acquaintance of mine—clergyman now, but had spent the first half of his life in the camp and field and as an instructor in the military school at Woolwich. Just at the moment I have been talking about a veiled and singular light glimmered in his eyes and he leaned down and muttered confidentially to me—indicating the hero of the banquet with a gesture:

Mark Twain

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*Luck*

**STUDENT QUESTIONS:**

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1. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.5; 11-12.5) What is the most likely purpose of the “Note” with which Twain prefaces this story? How does he achieve this purpose? How does it begin to suggest the main source of the story’s humor?  
(NOTE—This is not a fancy sketch. I got it from a clergyman who was an instructor at Woolwich forty years ago, and who vouched for its truth.—M. T.)
2. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.4; 11-12.4) How do the words chosen by the narrator and the clergyman to describe Scoresby prove ironic and contribute to the overall humor of the story?
3. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.5; 11-12.5) Explain how Twain relies on the element of coincidence to create much of the humor in this story.
4. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.3) Analyze the relationship between the clergyman and Scoresby. For what possible reason(s) would the clergyman share this story with the narrator? Be certain to provide specific evidence from the story to support whatever you claim about the clergyman.
5. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.3) Explain how the plot of this story (the clergyman’s account of Scoresby’s meteoric and undeserved rise to celebrity) and the theme (his reason for sharing it with the narrator and the narrator’s reason for sharing it with us) are colored by the clergyman’s attitude toward Scoresby.

**ACTIVITIES AND GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS:**

Mark Twain, *Luck*

**Question 1: What is the most likely purpose of the “Note” with which Twain prefaces this story? How does he achieve this purpose? How does it begin to suggest the main source of the story’s humor?**

STEP 1: First of all, consider why an author would decide to place any note at the beginning of the story.

Then, examine the precise wording of the note, the specific details the author chooses to share with the reader. Use the following chart to note Twain’s possible reasons for including specific details when he composed this Note.

(NOTE—This is not a fancy sketch. I got it from a clergyman who was an instructor at Woolwich forty years ago, and who vouched for its truth.—M. T.)

Quotation	Why is this detail included?	What does this add to the “Note”?
“not a fancy sketch”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• unembellished</li> <li>• possibly not fictional</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
“from a clergyman”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• really did hear from a clergyman</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
“instructor at Woolwich”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
“vouched for its truth”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>