



Magyar Tannyelvű Alapiskola és Gimnázium
ZŠ a Gymnázium s vyučovacím jazykom maďarským
Dunajská 13, 814 84 Bratislava



WORKSHEET

HELEN KELLER AND MARK TWAIN

When these two met, Twain was in his late fifties and Keller was just 14—the same age as Twain's youngest daughter. In the late 1890s, writer Laurence Hutton was hosting Keller—who was still a student at the Wrist-Humason School for the Deaf—at his home one afternoon when Mark Twain and his good friend William Dean Howells arrived. Keller described the experience in a letter to her mother afterwards, writing, “The two authors were very gentle and kind ... Twain felt the same way about her: In 1901, he described Keller as the “eighth wonder of the world.” Despite their age difference, they became friends and remained so for about 15 years. They exchanged many letters and always spoke highly of each other. In 1903, Twain sent Keller a letter, praising her autobiography *The Story of My Life*, and signing off with “Every lovingly your friend, Mark.”

HELEN KELLER AND ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL

Before he was the inventor of the telephone, Alexander Graham Bell taught people who were deaf and mute—work that he later said was “more pleasing to me than even recognition of my work with the telephone.” He met Keller in 1886 when her family sent her to Washington, D.C. to work with specialists. Keller later recalled that she “loved him at once.”

As Keller got older, she started exchanging letters with Bell herself, and they visited each other throughout the years. He helped her financially, as well, even helping to organize a trust fund for her in 1896. In 1907, Keller wrote to Bell, “You have been and are very good to me, and so is Mrs. Bell, and though I be silent, I cherish ever the many tokens of your love”. When her autobiography, *The Story of My Life*, was published, she dedicated it to him.

JOHN F. KENNEDY AND FRANK SINATRA

According to the book *The Kennedy Half-Century*, the Kennedy family and Sinatra were connected to a mafia boss in Chicago named Sam Giancana. There is a legend that Joseph Kennedy asked Giancana to help his son be elected in exchange for a contact in the White House. Sinatra was apparently nothing more than a middleman between the mafia and the political family. His daughter, Tina, has also gone on record confirming this story.

Eventually, the duo's friendship ended. Kennedy's administration went after crime and the mafia, which certainly severed any relationship that might have existed with Giancana.



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J.R.R. TOLKIEN AND C.S. LEWIS

The two esteemed authors first met in 1926 at a gathering for English faculty at Merton College, but they didn't really become friends until the 1930s, when they were both in a literary discussion group at Oxford University known as the Inklings.

Tolkien was raised Catholic and subscribed to that belief system his whole life. Lewis, on the other hand, had a more complicated relationship with religion. He was raised Irish Protestant, then became agnostic. Then, in 1931, he and Tolkien went on a long walk with Dyson. As they wandered, the men had a conversation about myth and God. All three later cited an important moment when Tolkien verbalized how ancient stories were able to describe higher truths, and within two weeks, Lewis was a Christian once again.

That conversation didn't just inspire Lewis's return to Christianity; it also inspired him and Tolkien to write *The Chronicles of Narnia* and *The Lord of the Rings*, respectively. The writers had a falling out while working on the books, but they continued to praise and support each other in public over the years.

ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE AND HARRY HOUDINI

On the surface, Arthur Conan Doyle and Harry Houdini didn't have much in common: Doyle, author of Sherlock Holmes, was a proper Scottish-Victorian man who believed in fairies and supernatural phenomena, and Houdini was a cynical Hungarian-American illusionist who had made a career out of exposing mediums as frauds. Still, for a time, they were friends. The two corresponded briefly when Houdini sent Doyle a copy of his own book, *The Unmasking of Robert-Houdini*, and exchanged many more letters before they met in person around 1920. It's unclear why they hit it off so well, but they did have fame and a love of sports in common. At one point, Doyle invited Houdini to a dinner party, where Houdini performed a trick in order to prove there was no such thing as real magic. Though Houdini ended the display by explaining that it was an "illusion" and "pure trickery," it only further convinced Doyle that his friend had powers. Doyle later took Houdini on a tour of Great Britain, dragging him to a myriad of psychics and séances, which Houdini abhorred.

He put up with it for a while, but the final straw for Houdini was when the pair went to Atlantic City together and tried to reach his mother at a séance. Doyle's wife, Lady Jean, acted as though she'd made contact. She wrote pages of text, which were supposedly directly from Houdini's deceased mother. Houdini played along for a bit, but there were a few glaring errors that he couldn't ignore—like the fact that the entire thing was in English, despite the fact that his mother did not know the language very well. There were also many crosses throughout the message ... and Houdini's family was Jewish.

Unsurprisingly, Houdini found the whole display very disrespectful, and it was enough to end their friendship. By 1923, the former friends were publicly feuding through letters



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published in *The New York Times*. Houdini later wrote, “There is nothing that Sir Arthur will believe that surprises me.”

MARK TWAIN AND NIKOLA TESLA

In the 1890s, Twain befriended legendary inventor and engineer (and pigeon enthusiast) Nikola Tesla. Historians don't know exactly how they met, but it was probably in New York City at a private party or a men's club. They had a little history prior to this, though. When Tesla was at school, he became dangerously ill—so sick that he later claimed to have been “given up by physicians.” He spent a lot of his bedridden time reading. And he became infatuated with Twain's early pieces. When he recovered, he credited Twain's writing; Tesla told him this story when they eventually met in person and, according to Tesla, Twain burst into tears. (Some Tesla experts think the inventor may have exaggerated this story, though.)

The details of the duo's relationship are unknown, but there are multiple photographs of the two men together, so it's clear that they spent time together. Probably the most famous photograph involving the two men, though, is one that Tesla took of Twain with a vacuum tube that Tesla created that was marred by mysterious splotches. He didn't exactly know what he had done, but this was actually a precursor to the x-ray (a discovery that happened mere weeks later by Wilhelm Röntgen).

There's a famous legend about the two men that may have been exaggerated over time. According to the story, Twain suffered from chronic constipation. So, he sat on one of Tesla's inventions—an “earthquake machine.” This was a vibrating, humming, and swinging metal disc, which was supposed to provide a therapeutic massage experience. W. Bernard Carlson, author of the book *Tesla: Inventor of the Electrical Age*, told PBS that, within a minute and a half, the machine managed to “shake the poop out of Mark Twain.” Immediately after the machine was turned off, Twain sprinted for the restroom.

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART AND JOSEPH HAYDN

It might not seem surprising that two of music's most famous composers were friendly, but Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Joseph Haydn made for a particularly unlikely pairing. Mozart was a flamboyant dresser known for his cosmopolitan upbringing and blustery personality, while Haydn came from peasant stock and had a more buttoned-down character. He was also 24 years older, and unlike the child prodigy Mozart, had not found fame until his middle age.

Little is known about the specifics of their relationship, but it appears to have been one of mutual admiration. Mozart was notorious for his blistering criticisms of fellow composers, but he always

regarded Haydn—whom he affectionately called “Papa”—with fondness and respect, and even dedicated a cycle of compositions in his honor. Haydn, meanwhile, once



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described Mozart as “the greatest composer I know personally or by name.” The two played in string quartets together in 1780s Vienna, and when Mozart died at the age of 35, the 59-year-old Haydn memorialized him by writing, “not for a hundred years will posterity see such a talent.”



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