



# How to Tell a Story and Other Essays (1897) (The Oxford Mark Twain)

*Mark Twain*

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"Fenimore Cooper's Literary Offences," the best-known and best-loved essay in this collection, is Mark Twain's how-to guide for the would-be author. A hilarious and cutting critique of what *not* to do, this deliciously wicked essay also lays out what writers should and must do if they want their fiction to live and breathe--as Twain's own fiction always does. In "How to Tell a Story," the title piece, Twain takes on such mysteries as the perfectly-timed pause and the uses of the dead-pan mask, and candidly describes his own efforts to hone his platform skills. In "What Paul Bourget Thinks of Us," Twain lays out a job description for the "native novelist" that is as fresh and accurate today as when Twain first wrote it. Anyone who cares about storytelling or writing will find Twain's sage suggestions in this volume compelling and engaging.

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