

History 498
Devine
Spring 2018

Study Guide for Articles by Kasson, Carter, and Hansen

1. According to Kasson, how does Hank Morgan resemble a 19th century missionary in the ways he reacts to the inhabitants of Arthurian England? What motivates Hank -- republican ideals or practical considerations? A combination of both?
2. How does Kasson characterize Hank's relationship with the "common people"? Is he genuinely concerned with "advancing" them? Overall, how successful is he in using technology to bring progress to the 6th century?
3. According to Kasson, how did Mark Twain's contemporaries' react to his novel? Why was their response so different than that of critics of our own time?
4. Everett Carter (in "*The Meaning of A Connecticut Yankee*") believes that late 20th Century critics have misread the message of Twain's novel by imposing the preoccupations and assumptions of their own time on Twain's work of the 1880s. Why does he disagree with scholars who see Hank as a villain and the novel as anti-technology and a critique of 19th Century industrial society and 19th century notions of "progress"? What evidence does Carter introduce to demonstrate his case that Twain much preferred the 19th Century to the 6th Century and that Hank is not a power hungry dictator?
5. Hank Morgan wants to bring "civilization" to Camelot. What seems to be Hank's (and Twain's) definition of "civilized"? What characteristics would a "civilized" society have? (Would they, for example, include certain ways of behaving, certain ways of organizing public institutions, and the replacement of monarchy with a republic?) How might the three authors you've read answer this question differently?

6. Everett Carter sees Hank as a sympathetic hero (much like Huck Finn, he comes closest to the voice of Twain). Chadwick Hansen ("The Once and Future Boss"), and, to a lesser extent, John Kasson, see Hank in a far more negative light. How effectively do these authors put together their arguments? Which argument do you find most persuasive? Which episodes in the novel support your point of view?
7. What does the conclusion of the novel reveal about attempts to change society for the better? Is Hank to blame for the death and destruction at the end or should blame be assigned elsewhere and to whom? To human frailty? To the Church? Does the ending shed any light on Twain's views about the human condition and what shapes human behavior?
8. Recently, a political scientist published an article entitled "A Connecticut Yankee in the Court of Saddam," interpreting Twain's novel as a cautionary tale for those who would spread "civilization" and "democracy" as the U.S. did in Iraq during the last decade. Can one take this message from the novel or, as Everett Carter suggests, is doing so imposing a modern interpretation on a story that Twain never intended to be interpreted in such a light? Cite evidence from the text to make your case.