Information – contexts of production and reception

- Travel journal genre - this extract is from Twain’s stop in Marseille.
- Mark Twain (real name Samuel Clemens), American writer now most famous for *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn*.
- 1867 - Originally written as a series of newspaper articles, the reports sent back to the U. S. and published concomitantly as the journey progressed.
- A voyage and record of discovery and observation, recording personal experiences and impressions, its purpose to visit major tourist sites in Europe and the near east.
- The day-to-day ups and downs about the people, places, culture and society encountered.
- On his return, the book was assembled from these newspaper columns, revised and published.

Tasks concerning form and structure

1. Tone and atmosphere - humorous, comedic, revelatory, insightful, witty, light-hearted. Select from the text any two details which you think deserve to be described by any of the above words. Try to make an analytical comment expressing why you find the description apt i.e. explain why you find the textual example ‘humorous’ or ‘insightful’ or ‘light-hearted’ etc.

2. It is a first person narrative, usually here the first person plural pronoun ‘we’ – briefly, why? Who are ‘we’? Is it always the same people?

3. Ostensibly non-fiction – Why might it be wise to use the word ‘ostensibly’ or ‘allegedly’?

4. What do you think is Twain’s purpose in this text? To report? To inform? To describe? To entertain? To explain? Other?

5. The three elements of narrative are narration, description and dialogue. What is this text’s division into these three? Examine the proportions of each. Why does this division suit Twain’s purpose, bearing in mind the purpose, audience and other contexts of production?

6. The structure of a narrative is either chronological or not. Which is this? What is Twain’s basic pattern for the reporting of these events?

7. Consider these statements on the use of direct and indirect speech in any narrative:
   a) The writer’s use of direct speech gives emphasis to the views being expressed by that speaker, allowing the writer to represent the character of the speaker by the way in which s/he speaks.
   b) It allows interplay between the narrator’s voice and the character’s voice.
   c) If direct speech is interspersed with indirect (or reported) speech, it promotes the importance of the spoken words over the reported words: the indirect focuses on occurrences rather than the expression of characteristics.

Choose one or more of these statements that you consider apply to this text and use examples from the extract to support your case.

8. At the very end is a type of synthetic personalisation where the text manufactures a relationship with us, the readers. There is a suggestion that we are friends and that he is confiding in us. Where is this? Do you think it is effective?
Word choice – lexis

1. **Find all words** that you think belong to the specific semantic field of sea travel e.g. waterman, stern etc.

2. Because so much of the extract is speech and because of its purpose and audience, the lexis is relatively simple for a mid-nineteenth century text. Nevertheless, there are some examples in the narrative stretches of polysyllabic lexis which is rather dated in its propriety and grandness. **What is the meaning of the following?**
   - ‘disaffected member’ (l.21)
   - ‘elaborate distinctness of articulation’ (l.29)
   - ‘humiliating taunts’ (l.41)
   - ‘low disreputable falsehood’ (l.65)

3. There are other examples of individual words which are seldom used in a modern text e.g.
   - ‘contracted’ (l.1)
   - ‘rebuked’ (l.16)
   - ‘declined’ (l.25)
   **Find another three examples.**

4. As the purpose of the piece is not to describe, any description is fairly limited and straightforward. There is, therefore, frequent use of one pre-modifying adjective and then a noun e.g.:
   - ‘ignorant person’ (l.16)
   - ‘sharp bows’ (l.21)
   - ‘old woman’ (l.26)
   **Find another five examples.**

5. A distinction is created between the formality of the narrative stretches and the comparative informality of the speech by the different use of contractions. Find:
   - **Three contractions** in the spoken parts e.g. ‘that’s’ (l.9)
   - **Three examples** of words written formally in full when a contraction exists e.g. ‘could not’ (l.7)
Grammar

1. Twain has elected to create simple sentences when he is succinctly reporting or summing up or when he wants an abrupt effect e.g.:  
   - ‘I repeated.’ (l.5)  
   - ‘Still he could not understand.’ (l.6)  
   - ‘The dame looked perplexed.’ (l.29)  
   Find another three examples.

2. Because of the sequential nature of the events, it suits Twain to create compound sentences joined by ‘and’ e.g.  
   - ‘We got in and the fellow backed in to the harbour’ (l.3)  
   Find another two examples.

3. **Lines 42 to 50 comprise one long, complex sentence.** It contains some repetition but is basically a right-branching sentence, making the main point first and then adding clauses.  
   - What is the main clause at the very beginning?  
   - Quote any one clause which is then added on.  
   - Why do you think Twain has created such a lengthy complex sentence here?  

4. Find an example of syntactic parallelism in lines 52 and 53 and consider the effect of this device.

The tasks on this worksheet have covered four of these six. The two remaining are:  
- figurative language  
- sound.

Can you make at least one interesting point on each of these topics?