

The Origin of OK

Is *OK* a word, a phrase, an abbreviation, or an acronym? *OK* stands for “all correct.” That was its original meaning, an in-your-face misspelling of the first letters of *all* and *correct*. In 1839, *O.K.* was just one of many humorous abbreviations in the newspapers of Boston, and like other abbreviations, *O.K.* was usually spelled with periods.

The following year, 1840, was a presidential election year, and Martin Van Buren, also known as “Old Kinderhook” because of his birthplace in Kinderhook, New York, was up for reelection. His supporters, the Democrats, formed an *O.K. Club* in New York City. Although *O.K.* the politician lost the election, *O.K.* the expression doubled its strength, sometimes losing its periods in the process and becoming simply *OK*. *OK* was quickly recognized as a brief, distinctive, universally understood annotation to indicate approval of a document, and a brief, distinctive, universally understood spoken response to indicate understanding and acceptance of a request or order. Its brevity, simplicity, and distinctiveness have commended it to languages the world over. *OK* is America’s most successful linguistic export.

The Origin of OK

phrase

acronym

humorous

presidential

politician

distinctive

universally

annotation

brevity

simplicity

distinctiveness

linguistic

Mark Twain Visits Lake Tahoe

So singularly clear was the water, that where it was only twenty or thirty feet deep the bottom was so perfectly distinct that the boat seemed floating in the air! Yes, where it was even *eighty* feet deep. Every little pebble was distinct, every speckled trout, every hand's-breadth of sand. Often, as we lay on our faces, a granite boulder, as large as a village church, would start out of the bottom apparently, and seem climbing up rapidly to the surface, till presently it threatened to touch our faces, and we could not resist the impulse to seize an oar and avert the danger. But the boat would float on, and the boulder descend again, and then we could see that when we had been exactly above it, it must still have been twenty or thirty feet below the surface. Down through the transparency of these great depths, the water was not *merely* transparent, but dazzlingly, brilliantly so. All objects seen through it had a bright, strong vividness, not only of outline, but of every minute detail, which they would not have had when seen simply through the same depth of atmosphere. So empty and airy did all spaces seem below us, and so strong was the sense of floating high aloft in mid-nothingness, that we called these boat excursions "balloon-voyages."

We fished a good deal, but we did not average one fish a week. We could see trout by the thousand winging about in the emptiness under us, or sleeping in shoals on the bottom, but they would not bite—they could see the line too plainly, perhaps. We frequently selected the trout we wanted, and rested the bait patiently and persistently on the end of his nose at a depth of eighty feet, but he would only shake it off with an annoyed manner, and shift his position.



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Excerpt from *Roughing It* by Mark Twain. Published by The American Publishing Company, 1871.

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DAR Levels 0-9/10

Strategies: Teacher AND Student Identification of Difficult Words

Student: _____ Grade: _____ Date: _____

1st Passage Title: _____ 1st Passage Level: _____

2nd Passage Title: _____ 2nd Passage Level: _____

Did previewing the words on the list improve the student's accuracy in oral reading? Y or N
Explain:

Was the student able to predict which words would be difficult? Y or N
Explain:

Did one of these strategies result in more difficult words being read correctly by the student? Y or N
If Y, which strategy? Teacher Identification or Student Identification
Explain:

Table with 2 columns: 'During this activity, the student seemed:' and 'Additional Comments:'. The first column contains a list of checkboxes for student engagement levels: 'Actively engaged', 'Somewhat engaged', 'Passively cooperative', 'Not interested', and 'Other: _____'.