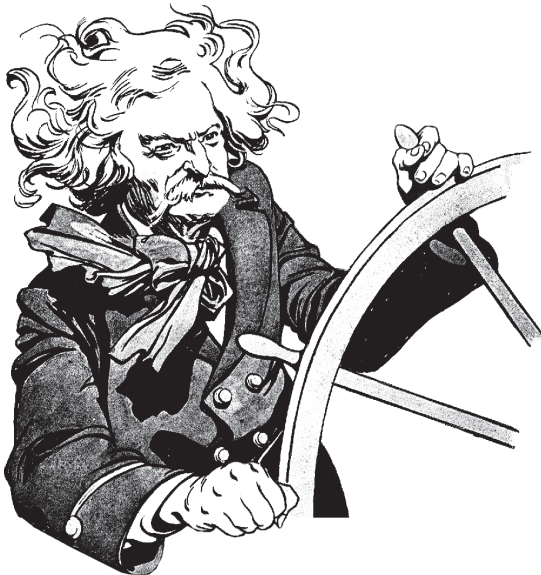# Marking the Twain

Name _____ Date _____

Quarter less twain
Quarter less twain
Lawd, Lawd, no send me quarter less twain
Throw the lead line a little higher out.
I've gone low down, so mark twain,
Mark twain.
Come ahead, Mr. Pilot, a little bit strong.
I've done got over, and I believe we're gonna
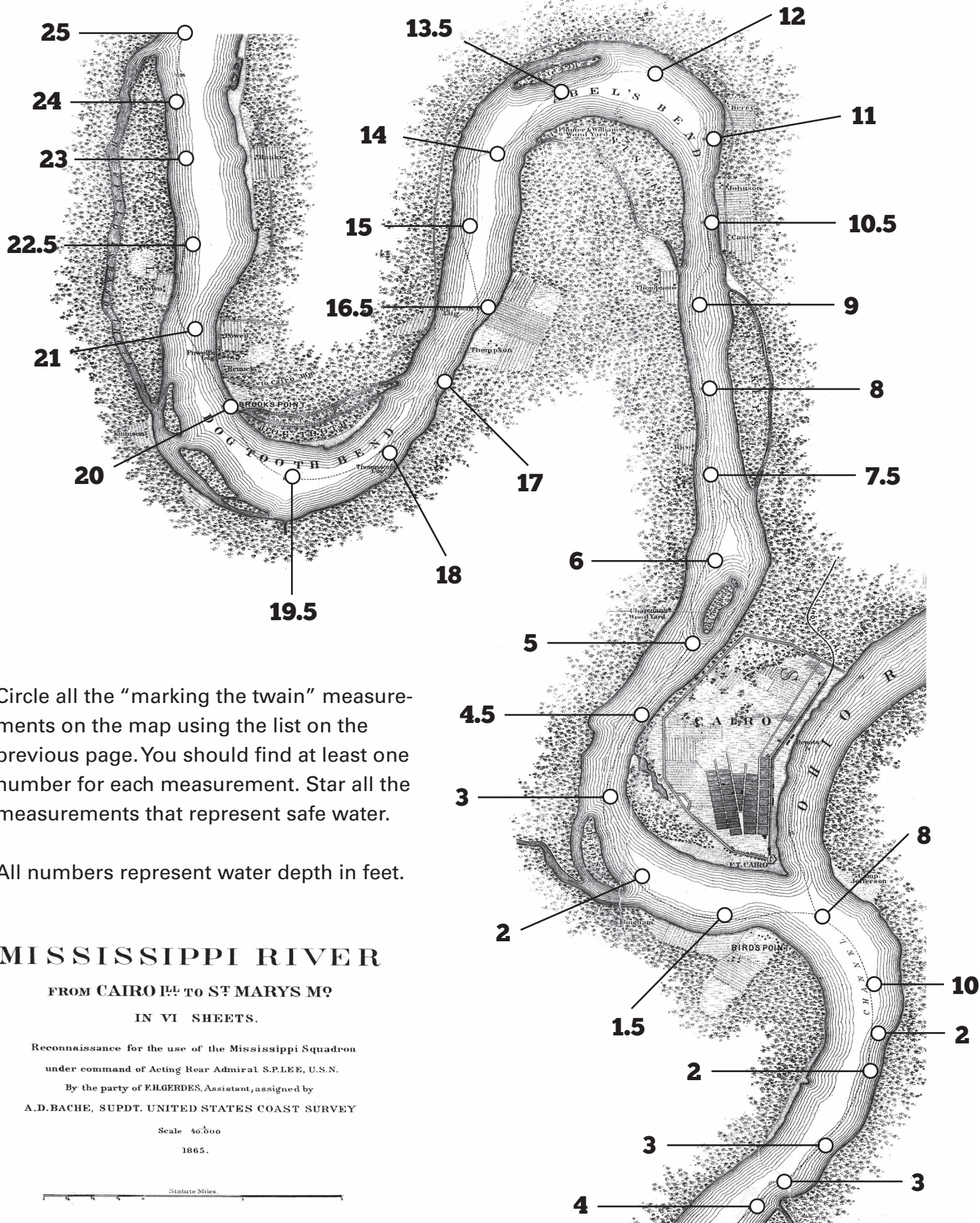*Throw the leadline over—*
No bottom here.

– from *Work Songs* by Ted Gioia

"Mark Twain," the pen name of American author Samuel Clemens, was the call the leadman made when the boat was in safe water. It meant the water was two fathoms (12 feet) deep.

A fathom was a unit of measurement the length of a man's outstretched arms (approximately 6 feet). Twain is an archaic term for the number two, so Mark Twain means "mark two."

A leadman determined the depth of the river using a leadline, which was a 30-foot-long weighted rope with incremental distances marked on it. He shouted these measurements to the pilot:

"Quarter"	1-1/2 feet (one quarter of a twain)
"Half"	3 feet (1/4 twain)
"Quarter Less"	4.5 feet (twain minus 1-1/2 feet)
"Mark One"	6 feet (1/2 twain)
"Quarter One"	7-1/2 feet
"Half One"	9 feet
"Quarter Less Twain"	10-1/2 feet
"Mark Twain" (safe water)	12 feet
"Quarter Twain"	13-1/2 feet
"Half Twain"	15 feet
"Quarter Less Three"	16-1/2
"Mark Three"	18 feet
"Quarter Three"	19-1/2 feet
"Half Three"	21 feet
"Quarter Less Four"	22-1/2 feet
"Mark Four"	24 feet
"No Bottom"	Any depth over 24 feet

Circle all the "marking the twain" measurements on the map using the list on the previous page. You should find at least one number for each measurement. Star all the measurements that represent safe water.

All numbers represent water depth in feet.

MISSISSIPPI RIVER

FROM CAIRO Ill. TO St MARYS Mo.

IN VI SHEETS.

Reconnaissance for the use of the Mississippi Squadron
under command of Acting Rear Admiral S.P.LEE, U.S.N.
By the party of F.H.GERDES, Assistant, assigned by
A.D.BACHE, SUPDT. UNITED STATES COAST SURVEY

Scale 40.000

1865.

Statute Miles.