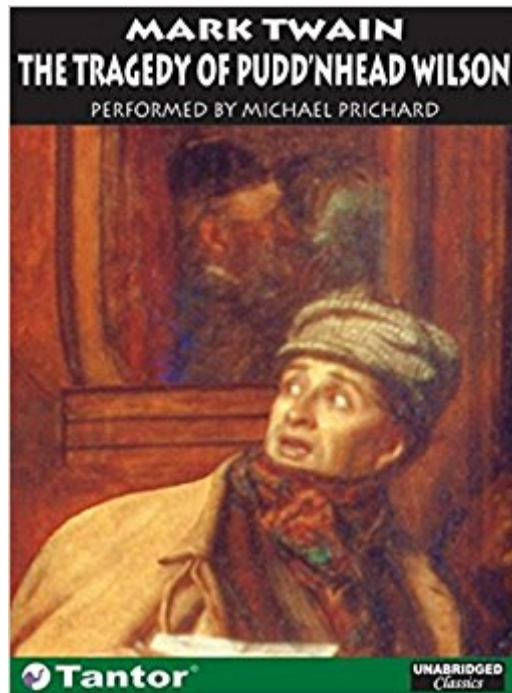




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The Tragedy Of Pudd'nhead Wilson



Synopsis

Two half brothers look so similar as infants that no one can tell them apart. One, the legitimate son of a rich man, is destined for a life of comfort, while the other is condemned to be a slave as he is part black. The mother of the would be slave is also the nurse of the other; to give her son the best life possible she switches the two. Soon the boy who is given every advantage becomes spoiled and cruel. He takes sadistic pleasure in tormenting his half brother. As they grow older, the townspeople no longer notice that the boys look similar, and they readily accept that each is born to his station.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

(in full The Tragedy of Pudd'nhead Wilson, and the Comedy of Those Extraordinary Twins) Novel by Mark Twain, originally published as Pudd'nhead Wilson, A Tale (1894). A story about miscegenation in the antebellum South, the book is noted for its grim humor and its reflections on racism and responsibility. Roxana, a light-skinned mixed-race slave, switches her baby with her white owner's baby. Her natural son, Tom Driscoll, grows up in a privileged household to become a criminal who finances his gambling debts by selling her to a slave trader and who later murders his putative uncle. Meanwhile, Roxy raises Valet de Chambre as a slave. David ("Pudd'nhead") Wilson, an eccentric lawyer, determines the true identities of Tom and Valet. As a result Roxy is exposed, Wilson is elected mayor, Tom is sold into slavery, and Valet, unfitted for his newly won freedom, becomes an illiterate, uncouth landholder. --The Merriam-Webster Encyclopedia of Literature

Webster's paperbacks take advantage of the fact that classics are frequently assigned readings in English courses. By using a running English-to-Spanish thesaurus at the bottom of each page, this edition of *Pudd'nhead Wilson* by Mark Twain was edited for three audiences. The first includes Spanish-speaking students enrolled in an English Language Program (ELP), an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) program, an English as a Second Language Program (ESL), or in a TOEFL® or TOEIC® preparation program. The second audience includes English-speaking students enrolled in bilingual education programs or Spanish speakers enrolled in English speaking schools. The third audience consists of students who are actively building their vocabularies in Spanish in order to take foreign service, translation certification, Advanced Placement® (AP®) or similar examinations. By using the Webster's Spanish Thesaurus Edition when assigned for an English course, the reader can enrich their vocabulary in anticipation of an examination in Spanish or English. TOEFL®, TOEIC®, AP® and Advanced Placement® are trademarks of the Educational Testing Service which has neither reviewed nor endorsed this book. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

I have mixed feelings about this novel. While it deals frankly with the harsh and irrational racist views of the period, and is also a sharp satire of the provincialism and prejudice of small town society, the tone is rather like a Victorian farce with characters that are mostly broad caricatures. As Twain self-deprecatingly notes in the afterword, this book was created from a collection of disparate ideas that don't completely gel (and are revisited in *Huckleberry Finn* and *The Prince and the Pauper*). Still, it's a good story that culminates in a courtroom drama that must have been quite ahead of its time. Certainly worth reading for those interested in American Literature or cultural history, but not one of my favorites. Of course, for those not familiar with Twain, be warned that much of the dialogue is in the patois of 19th century American slaves making it sometimes difficult to understand and possibly offensive to some.

Currently writing a research paper on this book. Very convenient to have it on the Kindle to highlight in different colors and go portability. A lesser known story by Mark Twain, a companion to "Those Extraordinary Twins." Very interesting to research to intended message behind the book, how Twain failed in delivering it and why.

this has been on my Kindle for years and I finally got around to reading it. I was surprised at how much I liked it. It was easy to follow and the story line was interesting to me. Sometimes, I couldn't

quite understand the dialect, but managed to get thru it. I

Mark Twain is an extraordinarily funny writer. His observations of the ridiculous in human nature are never better than in this book, about the switching of eight month old babies, one a privileged heir, the other a slave, and how this eventually comes to light. Twain titles the book a tragedy, true enough when one considers that it involves a murder that is solved, very dramatically, in the courtroom by use of fingerprints. But his portraits of the various characters are priceless. He pokes at the worst trait of each character, using biting satire to make their foibles clear. And nobody escapes his sharp pen. My only negative is his constant use of slave dialect, which was wearying. By far the best part of the book is at the very end, in a postscript called "Author's Note to 'Those Extraordinary Twins'". In it, Twain describes the difficulty of having a tale start one way and end another, and I laughed out loud over and over as I read it. If you read the book, be sure to read the postscript!

I'm not a Twain aficionado, but in the interest of better knowing my Southern literary 'roots', I've been trying to read some of his less popular works. *The Mysterious Stranger* was better, in my opinion. However, this was quite the interesting look into the lives of small town residents, slaves and slave owners, with the intrigue of a murder mystery. There was some humor. Mostly it was the drama of their lives, the suspense of a good whodunnit, and the tragic end of...well, I'll leave you to find that out. Twain built the intensity of the narrative well and I found myself reading faster and faster the closer I got to the end. Recommended.

Twain has a way to bring fictitious characters to life. Too many authors have 'variations on a few personalities.' Twain gives each one a distinct personality, a way of speaking, and a series of consistent behaviours. Each character is known and either liked or disliked. He tells a tale in a way I find fascinating and enjoyable. His style initially seems to be simple but it is clever, witty and entertaining. When I need a break from intense dramas, thrillers, and suspense offerings, I know I can find a rewarding experience from Mark Twain.

Mark Twain presents a consistent outlook on his fellow man; that we are mostly foolish and feeble-minded. Who am I to say he is wrong! In *Pudd'n'head Wilson* he delivers this again by means of a startling twist. Two infants are switched by a slave mother who replaces her master's baby with her own mostly white child, and vice versa. This crime is eventually uncovered by means of the

latest in 19th century crime fighting science. I love Mark Twain, but this book could have been much better. By Twain's own admission it started as another story entirely, but morphed into the one I just described. He says he tore out much of the old story "root and branch". However there remains some aspects of the original story which are inconsistent and awkward in the published "Pudd'nhead Wilson". Just a bit more re-writing and this may have been a masterpiece. Nevertheless, this being one of his last books, and published late in his life, I will give him a break. I enjoyed it as is.

We had to read for Lit II. I actually loved the story. It really makes us think about the importance we place on social status and race, and what really molds who a person is. Would definitely recommend this book.

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