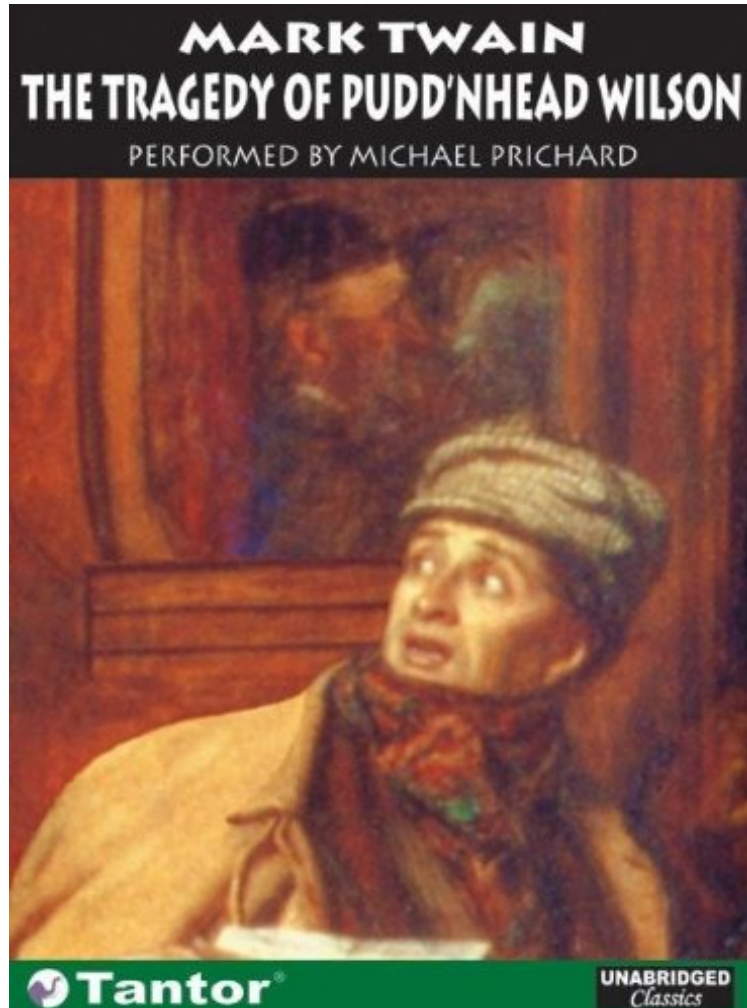


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## The Tragedy of Pudd'nhead Wilson

Mark Twain

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**Mark Twain : The Tragedy of Pudd'nhead Wilson** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Tragedy of Pudd'nhead Wilson:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A biting social commentary about the immorality and absurdity of race-based social structures and slavery By Chip Hunter Puddinhead Wilson is a tragedy, though filled with the humorous Twain wit found in all of his works. Centered on the oft-repeated archetype of Trading Places, Puddinhead Wilson satirically points out the absurdity of race-based social structures and class systems, especially those prevalent at the time. Swapped babies result in a high-born slave and a slave-born son of wealth. Whether by nature or nurture, the slave-born wealthy man lives as the worst sort of rascal and eventually finds his misdeeds catch up to him. As is typical of Twain works, PUDDINHEAD WILSON is a biting social commentary, pointing out the inconsistencies and

ridiculousness of the ways people behave towards one another. In reviewing this book, I cannot avoid mentioning the frequent use of the "N-word", which Twain uses as a device for pushing home his points about the unfairness of unequal treatment. It is jarring and unpleasant to read for many modern readers, including myself, especially when used in a purposefully derogatory way, and often by the "black" characters themselves. I put "black" in parentheses because the central black characters are only 1/16 and 1/32 negro, which was apparently plenty for them to remain slaves under the law and thus be viewed by society and by themselves as "N-word". I still recommend the book, just with a caution to expect the visceral offensiveness of racist language and behavior. It is amazing to think that such obvious evil and bigotry was the norm in parts of our country, and really not all that long ago. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Pure Mark Twain, Hence Great Read By The Mallard Who doesn't love Mark Twain? The Tragedy of Puddin'head Wilson is another reason the answer to this question is almost nobody. Of course the time and place of this story means that Twain uses language that some today would find offensive, because many people these days ignore the historical context of any story.. The narrative is laced with the N-word which is used by both blacks and whites as a matter of course. In the context of when and where Twain is writing about, readers shouldn't let it bother them. The tale is a fascinating depiction of how a person is socialized depending on the environment he or she was born into and grew up in. The two baby boys of the tale, one white and the other almost white (only a minute fraction of colored blood in his veins who is nonetheless "black") were switched by the (also) nearly white mother of one shortly after birth each grows up reflecting a slave environment for the white boy and a white environment for the near-white boy. The mother who serves in the white household is the only one who knows the truth. Unfortunately, things don't work out the way she planned and hoped. The ultimate hero, of course is Puddin'head Wilson. The story is funny, but it is also very telling of the white-black relationship of the time. b b 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Mark Twain is an extraordinarily funny writer. His observations of the ridiculous in human ...By M. Howard 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!

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. A local lawyer, David Wilson has had a similar experience. On his first day in the village he made an odd remark about a dog, and the towns people gave him the condescending name of "Pudd'nhead". Although he was a young intelligent lawyer, he is unable to live down this name and toils in obscurity for over twenty years. Finally he is presented with a complex murder trial and is given the chance to prove himself to the townspeople and shake this unjust label. This complex murder mystery is a psychological study that explores how perceptions shape character. Twain combines biting satire, with his trademark scenes of farce and levity.

(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 From the Publisher 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. From the Inside Flap: Featuring the brilliantly drawn Roxanna, a mulatto slave who suffers dire consequences after switching her infant son with her master's baby, and the clever Pudd'nhead Wilson, an ostracized small-town lawyer, Twain's darkly comic masterpiece is a provocative exploration of slavery and miscegenation. Leslie A. Fiedler described the novel as "half melodramatic detective story, half bleak tragedy," noting that "morally, it is one of the most honest books in our literature." "Those Extraordinary Twins, the slapstick story that evolved into Pudd'nhead Wilson, provides a fascinating view of the author's process. The text for this Modern Library Paperback Classic was set from the 1894 first American edition.