



I'm not robot



Continue

Pudd'nhead wilson study guide

Pudd'nhead Wilson is a novel by classical writer Mark Twain. In this novel, a slave switches her child with her master's child to protect him from the dark side of slavery. The child grows to be spoiled and cruel and treats his own mother with contempt until he hears the truth of his birth. Afraid of being discovered, this young man commits the only crime that will reveal the truth to everyone he has ever known and let him sell in the river, just as his mother once feared. Pudd'nhead Wilson is a fascinating study in human nature that entertains as it encourages its readers to consider the larger questions of society. Dawson's Landing is a small town on the Mississippi River that has always been a quiet, simple place to live. David Wilson chooses to settle here and begin his career in law, but it will be more than twenty years before he has the opportunity to practice the law because a foolish statement will give him the reputation of an unintelligent man, or a pudd'nhead. Instead of the law, Wilson pursues other interests, including fingerprint collection. Wilson collects fingerprints from everyone in the city, including multiple babies in the city. Roxana is a slave who gave birth to a son on the same day that her master's wife gave birth to his only surviving son. When Percy Driscoll, roxana's master, is a widower, Roxana becomes the sole carer of his young son Thomas. Many people in the city comment how alike the two babies look. Roxana is a light skinned black woman and her son is as blond and honestly skinned as young Thomas. When the babies are seven months old, Roxana is frightened by the thought that the master might one day sell her son along the river. At first, Roxana is considering killing her child, as well as herself. However, Roxana realizes that it would be much easier to switch babies. Roxana's son grows up as Tom Driscoll, the spoiled son of one of the richest men in town, while Driscoll's biological son grows up as Chambers, the child of a slave. When Tom's father dies, Tom moves in with his uncle, Judge Driscoll, while Roxana is freed and starts working as a chambermaid on a steamer. When Roxana returns to Dawson's Landing many years later, she finds Tom as spoiled and cruel as ever. Roxana tells Tom the truth about his birth and promises to tell Judge Driscoll if he doesn't pay her half of his benefits every month. Tom agrees. Roxana, however, is just one of Tom's problems. Tom also has a gambling addiction and is in debt. Tom can't ask his uncle to pay the debt, because the last time he threatened to remove Judge Driscoll Tom from his will. Instead, Tom started robbing his friends and neighbors to pay the debt. A sensation spreads across Dawson's Landing when two strangers, foreigners with a title, come to town. Everyone is so fascinated by these gentlemen that they don't notice tom robbing them blindly. robbed. They visit the strangers. Later, Tom learns that a knife that he stole from these strangers is worth a lot, but that all pawn brokers are signed up to help catch the thief. Tom can't sell the knife, but he needs money to pay off his debt. Roxana comes up with a plan to delay Tom's creditors, but this plan fails if Tom is robbed. Instead, Roxana suggests that Tom sell her as a slave to get the money to pay his debts and then buy her back in a year. Tom agrees, but sells her down river to a cruel mistress who has beaten her in the fields. Roxana walks away and comes to Tom, who has already made a deal to hand her over to her new master. Roxana threatens to tell Judge Driscoll about Tom's birth if he doesn't go to him and get the money needed to buy her freedom. Tom agrees, but instead of asking Judge Driscoll for the money, he decides to steal it. In the midst of the theft, Judge Driscoll caught Tom. Tom kills Judge Driscoll instead of being exposed as a thief. The crime is accused on one of the strangers because the stranger tried to call the Judge out for a duel and was refused. Not only this, but the murder weapon was the stranger's knife. Wilson recognizes Tom's fingerprints on the murder weapon. When Wilson goes back to check all of Tom's fingerprints, he also discovers the baby switch. In court, Wilson proves Tom's guilt. Tom confesses and has been convicted of murder. However, Percy Driscoll's creditors argue that they should be allowed to sell Tom to pay off the debts left of Percy's estate. Tom gets pardoned and is sold along the river. At the same time, Chambers, the real Thomas Driscoll, inherits all the money from Judge Driscoll. Chambers, however, cannot read or write, feels out of place among the whites and misses his life among blacks. Turn off Nav Psst ... Do you want to know a secret? Mark Twain's Pudd'nhead Wilson may just have a better read than that way his more famous book, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn. According to some bigwigs in the literary world, Twain's 1894 novel is superior to Huck Finn for his honesty and should be considered an unrecognized classic (source). Set in a southern city in the years leading up to the Civil War, Pudd'nhead Wilson is all about the problems that arise after a slave changes the identity of her master's white baby and her own light-tinged baby. And when we say trouble, we're talking about deceit, treason, and even (gulp) murder. yes, it's pretty exciting stuff. Pudd'nhead Wilson was Twain's last great work of fiction and the book ended with writing history would we really expect something less from Twain?). Pudd'nhead goes down in history as the first novel ever to use fingerprints to solve a crime. Who knows, maybe if Twain were around today he would be writing episodes of Law and Order of CSI! We're not suggesting you get dumped. is. copy of Huck Finn or something. But we do agree that you probably won't regret giving Pudd'nhead a chance. Pudd'nhead Wilson probably wouldn't have been the most popular man in high school. The truth is, Pudd'nhead is what some might call a nerd. First of all, he has all these weird hobbies: reading palms, collecting people's fingerprints, building his own almanac. He's also a little socially awkward: after making a joke that no one gets, he becomes a complete outcast in his town. Forced to endure plagues from the city's biggest bullies, Pudd'nhead ends up keeping to himself for the most part. Others keep calling him names and making jokes about his hobbies and ambitions, but he manages to ignore them for the most part and continues to pursue the things he enjoys. And that's probably a good thing, because it turns out that one of his weird hobbies is exactly what allows him to save the whole town from a murderer. As a result, Pudd'nhead goes from Town Zero to Town Hero. Talk about revenge from the nerds. Wilson's WebsiteYep, that's right: this book is cool enough to get its own homepage. The story of his LifeCheck to see if you are related to Mark Twain on this timeline of his life, publications and genealogy. In the Mood for More Mark? Here are three books by Twain that you read online. Twain TalkEntertain your friends and family with these Twain quips. Mark's Mind GameTake a break from reading and playing this memory-building game that Twain created himself. Film or TV productionPudd'nhead Wilson Goes to the MoviesYou probably won't fall asleep during this 1916 film version of the novel - it's only 50 minutes long. Must-See TVPudd'nhead, Tom and Roxy bring their drama to the small screen in an American Playhouse TV production (1984). Articles and InterviewsLet's Talk TwainRudyard Kipling (author of The Jungle Book) lights up a cigar and talks to Twain in this interview. No one likes Twain? Find out why Mark Twain would be banned from Facebook if he were around today. VideoHome Sweet HomeCheck out Twain's digs. AudioHave You Heard the Story of Pudd'nhead Wilson? Sit back and listen to the audio version of Pudd'nhead Wilson.ImagesPortrait of a Pudd'nheadCheck the original illustrations of the novel. What a CharacterLife magazine footage of Twain (they're pretty funny). Join us today and never see them again. By entering your email address, you agree to receive emails from Shmoop and check if you are over 13 years of age. Toggle Nav We just stumbled into a small town in early nineteenth century Missouri called Dawson's Landing- that's quite the original Dawson's But before our story really gets rolling here, our narrator gives us the low point about what's going on here. The big news in town is that Percy Driscoll's wife died shortly after she gave birth to a little boy named Tom. Percy is a wealthy businessman who. That. A bunch of slaves. And how is this for a coincidence: one of Percy's slaves, Roxy, happened to give birth to a little man named Chambers on the same day that Tom was born. Because Roxy is so light-skinned, Tom and Chambers can practically continue for twins. Our narrator also gives us the dirt on Driscoll's neighbor, David Wilson. After earning the reputation of the city fool and the associated nickname, Pudd'nhead, this man's hopes of establishing a career in law were crushed. But don't feel sorry for Pudd'nhead, because he finds a lot of solace in his hobbies, like collecting other people's fingerprints. One night, Roxy begins to fret that her precious baby Chambers could one day be sold along the river in much harsher conditions of slavery. To prevent this, she comes up with a plan: she dresses Chambers in Tom's beautiful clothes and puts Tom in Chambers's rags, basically changing the identity of the children so that her baby can grow up as a free man rather than a slave. Yes, just this. Got. Interesting. Roxy manages to do her plan, and a distracted Driscoll notices nothing. Shortly after Roxy makes the switch, Pudd'nhead takes the children's fingerprints (FYI: he likes to take several samples of the fingerprints and had taken them before the babies were swapped). Percy Driscoll quacks and Tom (Roxy's biological son posing as Percy's son, just to be super clear) is sent to live with his wealthy uncle, judge York Driscoll. Granted her freedom by Percy on his deathbed, Roxy sets out to start a new life as a chambermaid on a steamer. Tom grows up and goes to college, but drops out and returns home to sponge off his uncle. Tom also picked up on a big gambling addiction and got a serious debt. Although Driscoll initially bails his cousin, Tom soon begins to disguise himself and rob houses in the city to pay off his later debts. After falling on hard times, Roxy returns to Dawson's Landing and tries to hit Tom for some money. He blows her off so she informs him about the switch she made when he was a child and threatens to tell Driscoll if he doesn't pay. Gosh, thank you, Mom. A shocked Tom agrees to pay Roxy every month to keep her quiet. Meanwhile, Luigi and Angelo, twins from Italy, come to visit Dawson's Landing. The whole town is impressed by these exotic foreigners and the woman whose house they stay in hosts a big feast for them. Tom attends the party and steals Luigi's valuable knife. However, Tom's plans to pawn the knife to get money for his latest debts are thwarted when he learns that a fall is to catch the thief. Roxy suggests that Tom sell her back into slavery to get the money to pay off his debts and then buy it back in a year. When Roxy winds is sold along the river to a very cruel master, though, she escapes and tells Tom he would come with the money to buy her freedom or else she goes blab to Driscoll about his true identity. Tom decides to steal his uncle's money. But he messes up the plan and instead ends up stabbing and killing Driscoll with Luigi's stolen knife. Luigi and Angelo, accused of murder and accessory to murder, respectively, are sent to prison to await their trial. Pudd'nhead agrees to defend the twins in court. The case looks beyond hopeless. At the eleventh hour, however, Pudd'nhead discovers that the fingerprint on the knife at the crime scene matches Tom's fingerprint from his collection. Huzzah! While studying the fingerprints, Pudd'nhead also discovers that Tom and Chambers were swapped when they were children. Armed with his amazing new evidence, Pudd'nhead proves to the court that the twins are innocent and that Tom is guilty. Slam dunk. He also reveals that Tom and Chambers were swapped, making Tom a slave. The twins are released, Tom is thrown in jail, and the city now idolizes Pudd'nhead. But Tom won't be locked up for long. The governor decides that a valuable slave should not be left to waste in prison. So Tom gets pardoned and – wait for it – sold along the river. Talk about a twist of fate. Join us today and never see them again. By entering your email address, you agree to receive emails from Shmoop and check if you are over 13 years of age. 13.

