

Individual Learning Packet

Teaching Unit

Pudd'nhead Wilson

by Mark Twain

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Pudd'nhead Wilson

Objectives

By the end of this Unit, the student will be able to:

1. discuss the effectiveness of a third-person omniscient narrator and how the use of internal dialogue provides help to the reader.
2. define and identify examples of the following literary terms:
 - foreshadowing
 - symbolism
 - repetition
 - dramatic irony
 - flashback
 - irony
 - personification
 - plot
 - metaphor
 - simile
 - narrator
3. discuss the importance of simple fingerprinting in the story.
4. identify Twain's varied writing style and its importance in the novel.
5. identify the use of allusions, including:
 - Dante
 - Benjamin Franklin
 - Greek mythology
6. define the five parts of plot structure and identify them within the novel:
 - exposition
 - rising action
 - climax
 - falling action
 - resolution
7. comment on the motif of disguises and identity changes within the story, in regards to the following characters:
 - Tom
 - Chambers
 - Roxy

Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. In the following quote from Chapter 2, which characters in the novel, represent Adam, the apple, and the serpent?

“Adam was but human—this explains it all. He did not want the apple for the apple’s sake, he wanted it only because it was forbidden. The mistake was in not forbidding the serpent: then he would have eaten the serpent.—*Pudd’nhead Wilson’s Calendar*.”
2. What was happening in the United States during 1894 when *Pudd’nhead Wilson* was published? Why is this information important in understanding the novel?
3. “But I reckon I’ll take along a hoss-shoe to keep off de witch work.” Explain Roxy’s superstitious beliefs about horseshoes and witches.
4. Twain represents most of the women in *Pudd’nhead Wilson* as domestic. Why does Roxy not fit into this representation? With what other characters does she contrast? What is the main reasoning for her difference from all other women in the novel?
5. If the battle is overcoming obstacles, consider Roxy and Pudd’nhead Wilson in terms of the following statement: It is not the fight itself that is important, but *how* one fights that wins the battle.
6. There is an old saying, “patience is a virtue.” How does this adage work as a theme for this novel?
7. Pudd’nhead Wilson continuously battles caste, or the social system, with the other citizens of Dawson’s Landing. How might one compare his character with a slave?
8. Mark Twain emphasizes the importance of one’s familial heritage. Explain how and why heritage is important to the following characters: Roxy, “Tom,” Judge Driscoll.
9. Discuss how Roxy is continuously punished for switching the babies. Why is it ironic that she is not lawfully disciplined at the end of the book? Do you think that the other punishments she has received throughout the novel are sufficient? Why or why not?
10. List the instances when characters “change” their physical appearance, such as Roxy dressing as a man to visit “Tom,” “Tom” making himself black before one of the robberies, etc. What lesson might Twain be teaching the audience about pretending to be something they are not?
11. Identify the five parts of plot within the novel: exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution.
12. Why might Mark Twain have chosen the title *Pudd’nhead Wilson*?

Chapter I

VOCABULARY

antediluvian – ancient
approbation – a formal approval
brad-awls – an instrument used to make holes for nails
flotilla – a large number of boats
formidable – fearful, causing nervousness
hamlet – a small village
infallible – certain; perfect
labrick – an idiot
lummoX – a clumsy person
opulently – abundantly, richly, profusely
pudd'nhead – an idiot
tinmonger – a tinsmith
torrid – hot
transients – people traveling in search of work

1. Describe the setting, including date and location.

2. What purpose does the Mississippi River serve to Dawson's Landing? How might it have importance within the plot?

3. What does the phrase "prove title" mean?

Chapter V

VOCABULARY

cipher – a worthless person
incommode – an inconvenience
indolent – lazy
surliness – arrogance
tippling – drinking liquor

1. Why was “Tom” a prize to Mrs. York Driscoll?

2. Where did “Tom” go after he turned 19, and how long was he there? Why did he come home? How has he changed?

3. What did the people of Dawson’s Landing mean by saying “Tom” “preferred to be supported by his uncle until his uncle’s shoes should become vacant”?

Chapter XIII

VOCABULARY

calaboose – a jail
degenerate – degraded
desolate – joyless
dissipated – corrupted
draymen – a person who works by hauling goods in a cart or wagon
paltry – trivial; meager
remnant – the remains

1. Much to “Tom’s” chagrin, he discovers Wilson would have done what for him?

2. What is the reward for the thief and the twins’ dagger?

3. What is “Tom’s” reaction to the reward? How is his reaction an example of dramatic irony?

4. Why has Justice Robinson, Buckstone, and Jim Blake come to Wilson’s house?

Chapter XVII

VOCABULARY

buncombe – nonsense
canvass – solicitation of votes
derision – hatred, contempt
mountebanks – pretenders

1. Explain the twins' popularity at the beginning of the chapter.
