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## Literature Teaching Unit

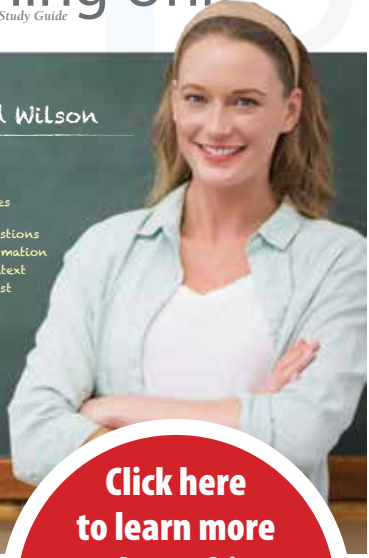
Chapter-by-Chapter Study Guide



### Pudd'nhead Wilson

by Mark Twain

- Learning objectives
- Study Guide with short-answer questions
- Background information
- Vocabulary in context
- Multiple-choice test
- Essay questions
- Literary terms



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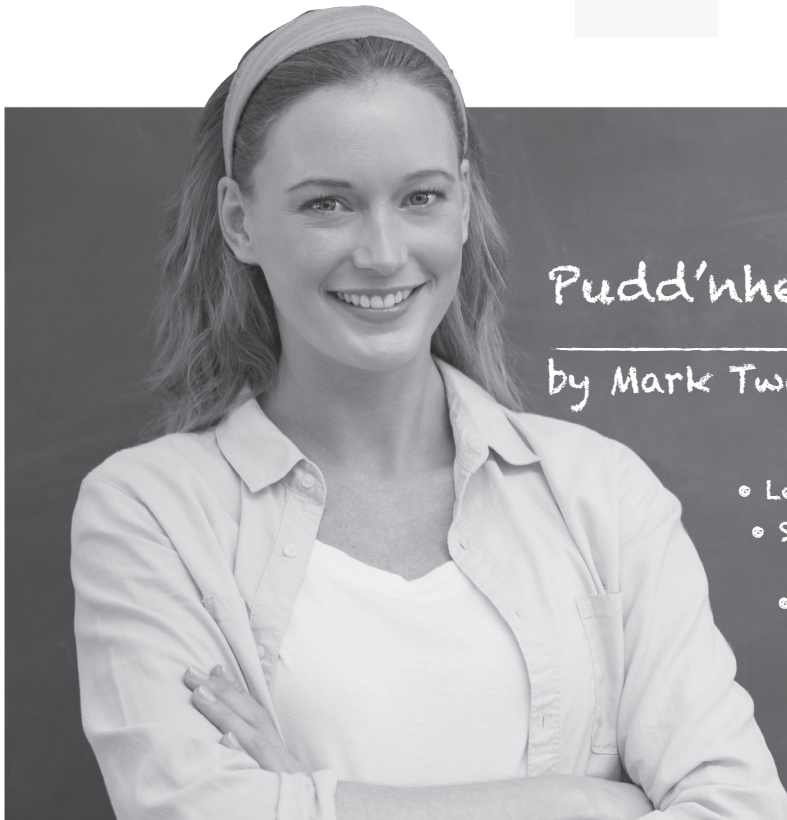
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Item No: 300883

# 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.

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

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

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**Chapter III**

## VOCABULARY

**cloud** – a shawl  
**communing** – discussing  
**conflagration** – an intense burst (of color in this instance) or flame (usually referring to a fire)  
**crooning** – singing, speaking  
**house-minions** – house servants, slaves  
**lurid** – pale  
**pauper** – a poor person  
**peremptoriness** – haughtiness  
**speculations** – business transactions, deals; risks  
**usurper** – a thief

1. What impact does the robbery have on Roxy? Why would killing Percy Driscoll not help Roxy's son?

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2. Reread the description of Roxy's actions in this chapter, then define each of the following terms. Third person omniscient point-of-view often reveals the author's feelings through use of specific words within the novel.

conflagration

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linsey-woolsey

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death-toilet

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cloud

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**Chapter X**

## VOCABULARY

**abashed** – embarrassed  
**chattel** – a person's property; a slave  
**intrepidity** – incurable  
**reconnoiter** – a survey  
**tattle** – gossip; chatter

1. What questions does "Tom" begin asking himself? How do you think he would have answered them before he discovered his true identity?

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2. What is Krakatoa? How does the use of this event describe "Tom" at this point in the novel?

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3. Explain "Tom's" state of mind in this chapter.

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4. With what term does "Tom" refer to himself? Why does Twain use quotation marks? Discuss the use of this term by whites versus blacks. How is it the same/different?

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5. The events in this chapter are considered a flashback. Explain why the departure from the chronology of events is effective.

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