

Summary

Mark Twain's *Pudd'nhead Wilson* is a detective story in which David Wilson solves a murder case with fingerprinting technology. Although he identifies a murderer in court, the murderer is sold "down the river" as a piece of property because he is a Black slave. This book is focused on the problems of mulattos and the irrational classification of Whites and Blacks.

While this book was published in 1894, the story is set in the antebellum South. It highlights the problems of slavery, and racial discrimination which had become severer, even around 30 years after the Civil War. Miscegenation became prohibited in the middle of 17th century because Blacks were regarded as being inferior to Whites. Two mulattos appear in this story: One is a one-sixteenth black-blooded mother, Roxana (Roxy) and the other a one thirty-second black-blooded son, Valet de Chambre (False Tom). Both of them are Black slaves because a child's social standing is dependent upon his/her mother based on "a fiction of law and custom" in the South. The point is that a person being considered Black depends on the percentage of Black blood. Before the Civil War a one-fourth or one-eighth black-blooded person was regarded as Black. However, at the end of 19th century a person who had even one drop of Black blood was being classified as Black according to the "one-drop rule" after the passage of the Jim Crow laws and the "separate but equal" doctrine. Therefore, this rule is applied to this story intentionally. In the beginning of the story, Roxy replaces her own son with her White master's son, Tom, both of whom are born on the same day.

Twain's criticisms of racial discrimination are illustrated in four ways. First, mulattos are categorized as Black, even though they have both "whiteness" and "blackness." In Roxy's case "blackness" is shown concerning hatred of Whites, theft, superstition, devotion to the Black church, etc. On the other hand, her attitudes and appearances are mixed "blackness" with "whiteness." However, she represents "whiteness" regarding duals which are traditionally fixed in the pseudoaristocratic society. Concerning the other mulatto, False Tom, since he is raised as White, he is White mentally and physically, except his short-term mental change soon after he finds his mother, Roxy, a Black slave.

Second, the fingerprinting technology that Francis Galton, a eugenicist, was going to prove racial differences scientifically and failed to do so at the end of 19th century, is used in this book just like the "one-drop rule." Fingerprinting technology proves that False Tom is a murderer. However, once he is a Black slave, he becomes a piece of property. Finally he is sold "down the river," which means the Deep South, where slaves

are treated harshly. Twain points out that fingerprints don't show Tom's identity as an individual, but his social identity which is created in the South.

Third, Twain describes Wilson's identity which becomes intermingled "Northernness" with "Southernness" after a 23 year stay. In addition to originally coming from New York, Wilson takes fingerprints from anyone including Blacks, which indicates "Northernness." However, he expresses "Southernness," when he supports the South's traditional duels. Besides, he doesn't protest against the unreasonable treatment of False Tom, which shows Twain's criticism of the South's "law and custom."

Finally, Twain himself turned from a Southerner to a Northerner after he fled from the South. In the process his attitude to the South changed and he criticized the obsessively traditional South in some books. However, he doesn't criticize American society directly because of his own financial situation, his literary background and the social situation at the end of 19th century.

As mentioned above, Twain criticizes American society implicitly for making White-and-Black society without mulattos like the South where White-and-Black society was made by purging free Blacks in the antebellum South. Therefore, In *Pudd'nhead Wilson* lurks Mark Twain's criticism of racial discrimination with the irrational categorization of Blacks and Whites succeeding from the antebellum South at the end of 19th century.