



The Ransom of Red Chief: An O. Henry Story

O. Henry

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"The Ransom of Red Chief" may be the most widely read story in grammar, middle, and high school. Young people can relate to 10-year-old Red Chief, his father who makes the kidnappers pay him back in order to take Red Chief off their hands (plus come in darkness so others don't jail them), and all the antics and excitement of it all. It is not read or heard widely after one leaves high school, which is a shame, because it is such a magical story about expectations being crushed by realities, and the turn of events, which O. Henry was so masterful at achieving, as in "The Gift of the Magi", the other best known O. Henry story, which Simply has also recorded.

,p>The humor here is Southwestern style, with some of the violence similar to that frontier humor immortalized by Mark Twain. O. Henry spent time in Texas on various speculations and, in fact, wound up in a Texas jail for three years before coming to New York and prospering with his unique storytelling ability. The Texas influence is strongly felt here, not just in Southwestern humor, but the sense of space and vistas, with few people populating them.

A final thought for the listener: Is there anyone similar to O. Henry in style? We can't think of anyone, and that is another reason to listen to these stories. We believe most Southwestern humor in short stories is even better heard than read.

As with all Simply short stories, you should enjoy the ideas put forth in the introduction and afterword.

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Barbara Marburger:

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