



The Conjure Woman and Other Conjure Tales [with Biographical Introduction]

Charles Chesnutt

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Charles W. Chesnutt (1858-1932) was an author, essayist and political activist whose works addressed the complex issues of racial and social identity at the turn of the century. Chesnutt's early works explored political issues somewhat indirectly, with the intention of changing the attitudes of Caucasians slowly and carefully. His characters deal with difficult issues of miscegenation, illegitimacy, racial identity and social place. The stories in "The Conjure Woman and Other Conjure Tales" were Chesnutt's first great literary success. This collection of thirteen short stories is told by a former slave named Uncle Julius to a white couple who have recently moved to the South. Uncle Julius's tales feature supernatural elements such as haunting, transfiguration, and conjuring that were typical of southern folk tales. In this collection, "Po' Sandy" recounts how a woman changed her lover into a tree to try and protect him. Another story, "Sis' Becky's Pickaninny," tells the tragic story of a slave woman who is parted from her baby when the plantation owner sells her for a race horse.

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