

TILL EULENSPIEGEL

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Till Eulenspiegel (often Tyl Uylenspieghel in Dutch) is a well-known figure from European folklore. The earliest version of his story appears in a German chapbook published around 1510. As with Robin Hood, he may or may not have been based on a historical person.

The original story describes his life in the early 1300s ending with his death from the plague of 1350. He is not a traditional hero but plays tricks and practical jokes on people, including his employers, as he travels widely around Europe. He often takes what he is told literally,

creating ridiculous situations but also revealing hypocrisy and uncomfortable truths about society. The story was rewritten many times but probably the most significant version was *The Legend of the Glorious Adventures of Tyl Uylenspiegel in the land of Flanders and elsewhere* by Belgian author Charles de Coster in 1867. This is set in the 16th century during the Eighty Years' War against Spanish rule. Born in Damme, West Flanders, Eulenspiegel with his sidekick Lamme Goedzak becomes a Flemish Protestant hero representing freedom, rebellion and national identity, alongside the comedy and pranks.

The version here has been rewritten by H.J. Jacobs with input from ChatGPT. As before (see *TML* 45) the slides are from the 'City Series' by WEDEA, Amsterdam (1930s) and came from Annet Duller's collection.

The Jolly Jests of Tyl Uilenspiegel: A Nineteenth-Century Tale



1. In the quaint days of old, there lived a whimsical rogue named Tyl Uilenspiegel, famed far and wide for his pranks and clever jests. The story begins with Tyl's three rather unconventional baptisms. Upon his first baptism, young Tyl was escorted by a portly and somewhat clumsy nurse.



2. Alas, on their return from the sacred font, the nurse stumbled and tumbled into a ditch, dragging poor Tyl with him. Tyl's father, ever the hero, pulled them both from the murky depths, thereby bestowing upon Tyl his second baptism.

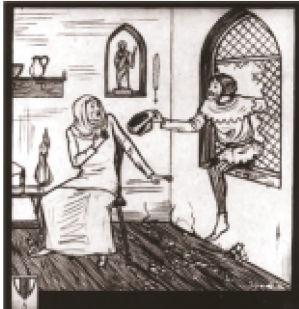
3. Once home, Tyl received a third washing to rid him of the ditch's grime. Thus commenced his life, filled with endless jests and frolics.



4. At the age of eight, Tyl accompanied his father to the city. Perched at the front of their noble steed, Tyl caused the townsfolk to stare and chuckle, though his father was quite oblivious to the reason. Little did he know, it was Tyl's inherent mischief that was the source of their amusement. He contorted his face into the most ridiculous grin imaginable and stuck out his tongue.



4/5. As Tyl grew into manhood, he sought gainful employment. He chanced upon a tailor, an old acquaintance of his father, who kindly offered to teach Tyl his trade. "Observe that window," said the tailor, "enter there."



5. Taking this instruction quite literally, Tyl leapt through the window with all the grace of a sack of potatoes. Despite this unconventional entrance, the tailor and his wife allowed Tyl to stay.



6. His first task was to fashion a new coat based on an old, worn one. True to his mischievous nature, Tyl replicated every tear and patch. The tailor, in a fit of rage, chased Tyl out of the house, brandishing a broom.

7. Next, Tyl encountered a palace cook in need of an assistant. Claiming to be a master chef, Tyl was tasked with roasting meat but was instructed not to put it too near the fire. In his typical jesting manner, Tyl took the meat to the cellar, far from any flame.



8. The cook, seeing through the prank, ordered Tyl to clear the house. Ever literal, Tyl dragged every item out, earning himself a swift dismissal.

In need of funds, Tyl proclaimed himself a painter and presented a recently purchased painting as proof.



9. Commissioned to paint portraits of the royal family, he and his helpers did nothing but idled around.



10. When the king came to inspect his work, Tyl declared that only the wise could see the painting, while fools saw nothing. Afraid to appear foolish, the king and his court lavished praise upon the empty canvas. Tyl made a hasty exit before they discovered the ruse.

11. Continuing his adventures with two companions, Tyl devised yet another jest. One companion feigned lameness and great suffering while Tyl solicited alms from sympathetic citizens. They generously donated, only to discover the 'cripple' dancing a jig soon after.



12. Thus, Tyl Uilenspiegel roamed the land, leaving a trail of laughter and folly. His pranks revealed the vanity and absurdity of mankind, yet none seemed to learn from them. And so concludes the lively tale of Tyl Uilenspiegel, the master of jest and merriment.

