

Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town:

THE LEARNING RESOURCE



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INTRODUCTION

Stephen Leacock was Canada's best-known author and the English speaking world's most-celebrated humourist from 1910 through to the mid-1920s. Today he is widely regarded as the founder of Canadian humour. Of his over 50 books, *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* has proven to be Leacock's most-renowned. Over a century after its release, this collection of interconnected short stories about small-town Canada has never been out-of-print. As well, it lives on through creative re-invention: the CBC aired its second television adaptation in 2012, and a version illustrated by Seth was released in 2013. Mordecai Richler may have best-explained the book's longevity when he said in 2000 that *Sunshine Sketches* is "as much good honest fun to read today as it was when first published."¹

Because *Sunshine Sketches* is so well known, it has been and continues to be the subject of innumerable magazine articles, blog posts, and academic studies. (Check out what helped inform this learning resource on Page 91). However, for a book that has so-permeated Canadian culture there is a conspicuous shortage of educational resources dedicated to it. Teachers looking to use *Sunshine Sketches* in their classroom only have a few forgotten learning guides and a 1960 McClelland and Stewart educational issue to support their work. *Sunshine Sketches: The Learning Resource* aims to fill this void.

Sunshine Sketches: The Learning Resource is guided by an understanding that when Stephen Leacock wrote *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* he was engaged in more than just a good-natured satire of the quintessential Canadian small town. Leacock—as a public intellectual and the head of McGill University's Department of Political Economy—was intensely interested in concepts of classic liberalism, democracy, and individual freedoms. As such, *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* can be seen as Leacock's examination of how Canadians navigate relationships between the individual, the community, and the state. This makes Leacock's book an ideal way to incorporate discussion about laws and governance into English Language Arts classrooms. As Sandra Stotsky, Education Professor Emerita of the University of Arkansas said, "Histories about our laws and political systems become lively through literature.... We gain a much deeper understanding of the meaning of our civic culture when we read the literature that came from it."²

From elections to prohibition to stock market scams, *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* is surprisingly relevant today. It can help us understand the roots, benefits, and limits of Canada's liberal democratic tradition: where we have succeeded and where we can do better.



Using the Ontario Grade 11 Canadian Literature and Saskatchewan English Language Arts 30 curricula as guides, *Sunshine Sketches: The Learning Resource* is designed just as much for teachers looking to approach an individual sketch or two from the book as it is designed for teachers looking to teach

1 Richler, Mordecai. "Spend a Few Hours in the Town of Mariposa," *National Post (Toronto)*, 25 March 2000: B8.

2 qtd. in Chatlani, Shalina. "Is literature the answer to tackling poor civics curriculum?" *Education Dive*, 19 December 2016, www.educationdive.com/news/is-literature-the-answer-to-tackling-poor-civics-curriculum/432294/

the book in its whole. Each chapter has background information, reading questions, and activities for deeper consideration. In this guide, all page references for *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* are cited in-text and link to the 2010 New Canadian Library version. Because Leacock's book is in the public domain, it can also be found for free in many formats, including digital text from Project Gutenberg and an audio version from LibriVox.

Of course, no learning resource is perfect. Because teachers are the professionals closest to the actual learning taking place in classrooms, PLEA encourages feedback on this or any other of our resources. Drop us a line at plea@plea.org. Teacher insights are always helpful, always appreciated, and always improve future publications.

SUNSHINE SKETCHES OF A LITTLE TOWN: PRE-READING



THE PEOPLE OF MARIPOSA

Some time around New Year's Day 1912, the *Montreal Star* commissioned Stephen Leacock to write a series of interconnected short stories for a Canadian audience. Over the course of six months and for \$600, Leacock created *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town*. One chapter was published in the *Star* every second Saturday from February 17 to June 22, 1912. It was re-published in book form on August 9, 1912. Set in the fictional town of Mariposa, Stephen Leacock opened the first chapter by saying "I don't know whether you know Mariposa. If not, it is of no consequence, for if you know Canada at all, you are probably well acquainted with a dozen towns just like it" (1). Even if Leacock said Mariposa was like a dozen towns, there is little question that the setting of *Sunshine Sketches* was largely based on one particular town: Orillia, Ontario. About 100 kilometres north of Toronto, Orillia is where Leacock spent most of his summers.

What makes the creation of *Sunshine Sketches* even more interesting—or perhaps more controversial—is that not only was Mariposa based on something quite real, but so too were its citizens. Despite Leacock's claim that "I must disclaim at once all intentions of trying to do anything so ridiculously easy as writing about a real place and real people" (x) many of his characters—at least in part—are modelled after real-life Orillians. Notes he made when drafting the book confirm this.

The reaction to *Sunshine Sketches* by the people of Orillia was varied. Some residents appreciated being Leacock's inspiration. They even wanted in on the joke. For example, Leacock said that Orillia lawyer Mel Tudhope "wrote me a mock letter threatening to sue me for libel against these people"³. As well, a review of the book in the December 12, 1912 *Orillia News Packet* said "there is no room for resentment, in fact Orillians are rather proud to think that Orillia is the 'little town,' which has been immortalized as a type of Canadian life"⁴. However, not everyone in Orillia was tickled. As the *Globe and Mail* reported in 1951:

Jefferson Thorpe's real name was Jeff Shortt and he shaved Stephen regularly. "I used to talk to the fellow while I was shaving," Jeff remarked indignantly, "but I never thought he was going to put it all in a book."⁵

And one local in particular—Leacock's mother Agnes—was reportedly not happy with how *Sunshine Sketches* mocked Orillia's Canon Greene, even though she liked the book as a whole⁶. Nevertheless, Canon Greene himself reportedly never resented Leacock's portrayal of him⁷.

Regardless of who liked it and who didn't, it was clear to the people of Orillia that they were being mocked. This probably contributed to Leacock's decision to make some changes to *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* before its final publication in book form. When modifying *Sunshine Sketches* for its transition from serial to book, many characters' names were changed to obscure

3 qtd. in Sandwell, B.K. "Leacock Recalled: How the 'Sketches' Began." *Saturday Night*, vol. 67, issue 46, n.p.

4 qtd. in Spadoni, Carl. "Introduction." In *Stephen Leacock's Mariposa*, by Daphne Mainprize, Dundee Press, 2012, p. 20.

5 "Identifying Characters in the Sunshine Sketches." *The Globe and Mail*, 22 September 1951, p. 10.

6 Davies, Robertson. *Stephen Leacock*. Toronto, ON: McClelland and Stewart, 1970, p. 26.

7 Anderson, Allan. *Remembering Leacock*. Deneau, 1983, p. 151.

Leacock's Orillian inspirations. According to Leacock, the "names were too transparent.... It was only in fun but it led the publishers to think it wiser to alter the names"⁸. Some of those changes from serial to print included:

- Mariposa Exchange Bank Manager George Popley (based on Orillia's George Rapley) became Henry Mullins;
- Judge McGaw (based on Orillia's Judge McCosh) became Judge Pepperleigh; and
- Canon Drone (based on Orillia's Canon Greene) became Reverend Drone.

Interestingly, one name that stayed the same in the serial and the book was the central character: Mariposa's hotelier Josh Smith. Leacock based Josh Smith on Jim Smith, the proprietor of Daly House on Mississaga Street in Orillia. The character was a "joshing" representation of Adam Smith, the eighteenth-century philosopher who is regarded as the father of "invisible hand" free-market economic theory.

Even though Leacock was mocking his fellow Orillians in *Sunshine Sketches*, Leacock most likely had good intentions. As he said in the preface to his book *Humor and Humanity*, "the essence of humor is human kindness"⁹. To be sure, there is a critique of people and a critique of society in *Sunshine Sketches*. But even so, Leacock portrays Mariposa as a community of kindly people with forgivable flaws. As D.H. Carr wrote in the introduction to the 1960 educational issue of *Sunshine Sketches*, Leacock "is having fun, but it is fun with something he loves—the life, in all its patterned variety, of a little Ontario town he knows with easy and perfect intimacy"¹⁰.

8 qtd. in Spadoni, Carl. "Introduction." In *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town*, by Stephen Leacock, Broadview Press, 2002, pp. xxvii-xxviii.

9 Leacock, Stephen. *Humor and Humanity*. Henry Holt and Company, 1938, np.

10 Carr, D.H. "Biographical Note." *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town*, by Stephen Leacock, 1931. Chariot Literature Text, McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1960, p. x.

THE DEMOGRAPHICS OF MARIPOSA

When viewed from our day and age, one of Mariposa's striking features is its lack of diversity. The town is largely white, Protestant, and British. It does not look much like Canada today: according to the 2016 Census, there are 35 million Canadians. Of that, 7.5 million of us are considered migrants and 7.6 million of us declared ourselves to be visible minorities (excluding Indigenous peoples). 1.7 million of us identified as Indigenous, including 980,000 First Nations, 590,000 Métis and 65,000 Inuit people.

Although there is a discrepancy between Leacock's Mariposa and Canada today, Mariposa did look a lot like most small Canadian towns of the early 20th century, especially in Ontario. The 1911 census recorded 7.2 million Canadians. Of that, 1.6 million people were considered migrants—half of these migrants having been born in the British Isles—and only 95,000 people were considered visible minorities. 105,000 people identified as First Nations or Inuit. So while Leacock's Mariposa is white, British, and Protestant, this can be seen as a reflection of Canada's make-up at the time.

Because *Sunshine Sketches* reflects the time it was written, Indigenous peoples are amongst the people who have limited portrayals. This is perhaps best-illustrated in "The Marine Excursion of the Knights of Pythias." In this chapter, the steamship Mariposa Belle travels towards "Indian Island," a place possibly inspired in name by Big Chief Island on Lake Couchiching. On the way to the island, the passengers turn their discussion towards Indigenous artifacts and a former canoe portage, likely inspired by the narrows where Lake Couchiching meets Lake Simcoe. It is unfortunate that the Indigenous peoples of the area are only portrayed in *Sunshine Sketches* through their artifacts and history. This marginalisation is one of the problems of not just *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* but of the overwhelming majority of turn-of-the-century and modernist Canadian literature.

As can be seen, on the whole Mariposa may be full of colourful characters but it is not a very ethnically-diverse community. This is something readers of historic Canadian literature must learn to reconcile. And this is also why books like *Sunshine Sketches* are rightly being moved to a place of less prominence and less attention today, as we diversify and Indigenise the study of Canadian literature.

DISCUSS

1. Leacock wrote *Sunshine Sketches* in 1912. Given the time and the author:
 - a) What perspectives would be dominant in *Sunshine Sketches*?
 - b) What perspectives would be left out of *Sunshine Sketches*?
 - c) How would this shape the overall narrative of the book?
2. Literature, art, and popular culture reflect Canada. As our communities have diversified, so too have our artistic portrayals of them. Consider more recent comedic portrayals of Canadian communities in various mediums, such as the CBC's *Little Mosque on the Prairie*, *Schitt's Creek*, and *Kim's Convenience*, CTV's *Corner Gas*, APTN's *Mohawk Girls*, or Drew Hayden Taylor's *Motorcycles and Sweetgrass*.
 - a) How do diversified portrayals help shift our centres of discourse?





DISCUSS ...CONTINUED

- b) Can you think of other contemporary, humorous portrayals of Canada that reflect our growing diversity?
3. John Raulston Saul said that “Stephen Leacock set a pattern for Canadian comics and comic writers that goes on to this day”¹¹. As you read *Sunshine Sketches*, think about the portrayals of Canada you listed in question 2(b).
- a) What characteristics do your examples share with *Sunshine Sketches*?
 - b) Do the similarities between your examples and *Sunshine Sketches* tell us anything about what defines us as Canadians?
 - c) Do the similarities between characters from your examples and characters from *Sunshine Sketches* tell us anything about human nature?

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“Stephen Leacock.” *Extraordinary Canadians*. PMA Biographies, Inc., 2011, www.cpac.ca/en/programs/extraordinary-canadians/episodes/49649320, 0:39

LEACOCK ON IMMIGRATION

It is often pointed out that because Stephen Leacock was a British Imperialist, he was opposed to the idea of non-British immigration into Canada. There are many instances where Leacock argued this exact stance. However, his views on immigration were not consistently anti-immigration. Leacock made a passionate argument in favour of immigration in *My Discovery of the West*. This book was a reflection on his 1936 lecture tour of western Canada. It won the 1937 Governor General's Award for non-fiction. When Leacock wrote *My Discovery of the West*, the laws governing Canada's immigration were the tightest in our history: Canada welcomed only 11,000 migrants in 1936 and our anti-immigration laws were "not seriously contested by any group"¹². Against a tide of anti-immigrant public opinion, Leacock changed his mind from his previous stance. He marvelled at the foreign-language newspapers and migrant community organisations in Western Canada. He said it was a mistake to think that migrants posed a threat to Canada. Leacock called migrants an "asset" who—along with their families—should be welcomed to Canada "in floods." His rebuttal to people who based their opposition to migrants on economic reasons is still worth considering today:

The fundamental fallacy in all such thinking is that the immigrant takes away the other man's job. The truth is the other way. The tide of immigration raises the home waters.¹³

Leacock's stance is consistent with the prevailing view of economists today. As a 2017 *New York Times* report noted, "there is no clear connection between less immigration and more jobs. Rather... immigration increases economic growth, improving the lives of the immigrants and the lives of the people who are already here"¹⁴.

To be clear Leacock was only promoting diversified European immigration, including Jewish people who were actively being denied entry into Canada. The book made no mention of Canada's—and the western world's—long-standing discriminatory immigration policies against visible minorities. This omission cannot go unnoticed. However, Leacock's willingness to embrace rather than admonish non-Anglo, non-Franco migrants at a time when they were being rejected by the government and by the general public can also be seen as a small step on the path towards Canadian multiculturalism. As philosopher Charles Taylor said, the "tremendous success" of our initial embrace of non-Anglo, non-Franco European migrants helped pave the way for the 1962 deracialisation of Canadian immigration policy. This, in turn, helped lead to the multicultural Canada of today¹⁵.

¹² Kelley, Ninette and Michael Trebilcock. *The Making of the Mosaic: A History of Canadian Immigration Policy*. U of Toronto P, 2010, p. 221.

¹³ Leacock, Stephen. *My Discovery of the West*. T.H. Best Printing Company, 1937, p. 185.

¹⁴ Applebaum, Binyamin. "Fewer Immigrants Mean More Jobs? Not So, Economists Say." *The New York Times*, 3 August 2017. www.nytimes.com/2017/08/03/us/politics/legal-immigration-jobs-economy.html

¹⁵ "Charles Taylor's clear-eyed vision of our distress coupled to a deep-rooted celebration of humanity." *The Sunday Edition*, CBC Radio One, 22 January 2017, <http://www.cbc.ca/radio/thesundayedition/the-trudeau-vacation-saying-no-to-chemo-marjorie-harris-retires-charles-taylor-on-trump-1.3941092/charles-taylor-s-clear-eyed-vision-of-our-distress-coupled-to-a-deep-rooted-celebration-of-humanity-1.3941096>



DISCUSS

1. In an editorial on CBC Indigenous, Doug Cuthand discusses some current hostilities towards migration. He makes the point that:

It's kind of late to complain about immigration. There are 35 million people in Canada and only 1 million of us are members of the original First Nations. What difference will a few more make? ¹⁶

 - a) Is it possible to discuss immigration without understanding that all non-Indigenous people are migrants or descendants of migrants?
 - b) How did the Treaties pave the way for immigration into Canada? Have these Treaties been fully honoured?
2. In 1936, Leacock changed his opinion on immigration after having met many communities of new Canadians in the west. What does his experience tell us about the importance of getting to know people before forming opinions about them?
3. Leacock reverted back to his anti-immigration sentiments near the close of World War II. In 1944 he wrote that "North America can easily take in two million people a year and we need them all British" ¹⁷.
 - a) What reasons do you think Leacock would have had for making this statement at the close of World War II?
 - b) If Leacock were alive today, how would you counter this statement to him?
 - c) How should we judge Leacock for such views? Discuss the dynamics of "presentism," the principle of using today's values to judge people from the past.
4. The people of Mariposa in *Sunshine Sketches* are white, British, and Protestant. However, University of Toronto Professor of English Dennis Duffy points out that "Mariposans themselves hold no firm identity, but parade instead as Irish on St. Patrick's Day, Scots on St. Andrew's, English on St. George's, and so forth. Extend the ethnic range and you bump into our "multi-culturalism" ¹⁸.
 - a) Do you think Canadians in general embrace diverse cultures?
 - b) How can we as Canadians work to better-embrace diversity of all kinds?

¹⁶ Cuthand, Doug. "It's kind of late to complain about immigration," says Indigenous writer Doug Cuthand. CBC.ca, 4 March 2017, www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/opinion-indigenous-perspective-on-immigration-1.4008365

¹⁷ Leacock, Stephen. "Woman's Level." In *Last Leaves*, McClelland and Stewart, 1945, p. 101.

¹⁸ Duffy, Dennis. "A Humorist's Humanist World View." *The Whig - Standard*, 4 March 1989. <http://search.proquest.com.cyber.usask.ca/docview/353354710>

HORATIAN SATIRE AND STEPHEN LEACOCK: AN OVERVIEW

Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town is widely regarded as a satire. To understand the nature of Leacock's critique, one needs to understand the nature of satire. However, coming up with a definition of satire is difficult. Leonard Feinberg, a leading 20th-century satire theorist, says that "the more one studies satire the more likely he is to permit the widest possible latitude in defining terms"¹⁹. This leads Feinberg to only reluctantly define satire as a "playfully critical distortion of the familiar"²⁰. Feinberg's contemporary, Robert C. Elliott, is even more cautious about defining satire. He declines to give it a precise definition, and instead says "satire is notoriously a slippery term"²¹.

Even though these two theorists are reluctant to define satire, they are willing to spell out the purpose of the satirist. For Feinberg, the satirist's purpose is to "serve a function that the realist and romantic do not fulfill, by dramatising and exaggerating objectionable qualities in man and society"²². Similarly, Elliott says that the satirist's purpose is to "stimulate in his reader (or in Roman times, his listener) the appropriate negative response which prepares the way to positive action"²³.

One of the tools that satirists use to accomplish their purpose is humour. As a writer, Stephen Leacock gave much thought to the concept of humour. Not only did he write nearly 30 books of humorous stories, but he also wrote two books and several articles on the theory and technique of humour. His writings on the theory and technique of humour have not stood the test of time and have been largely forgotten. However, these writings do provide insight into Leacock's personal ideas about humour. Leacock believes that humour should be gentle and should not cause harm: "it becomes a condition of amusement that no serious harm or injury shall be inflicted but that only the appearance or simulation of it shall appear"²⁴. Because of his belief in gentle humour, Leacock says that laughter should function as "a relief from pain... a consolation against the shortcomings of life itself"²⁵. These beliefs—that laughter should not cause harm but instead serve as a relief—can help us better-understand exactly what kind of satire *Sunshine Sketches* is.

Satire finds roots in the ancient Roman poets Horace and Juvenal. Their two different types of satire laid the groundwork for its modern conceptualisation. Horatian satire is characterised by good-natured laughter; Juvenalian satire is characterised by rage. Elliott best-contrasts these forms when he says that "Horatian satire seeks to displace the social mask by the flick of laughter; Juvenalian satire would cleanse a rotten society in the fire of its hate"²⁶. Because Stephen Leacock intended to create good-natured laughter to bring levity to the inconsistencies of life, the satire of *Sunshine Sketches* can be put into the category of Horatian satire. It is gentle and not meant to hurt people.

19 Feinberg, Leonard. *Introduction to Satire*. Iowa State UP, 1967, p. 19.

20 Feinberg, p. 19.

21 Elliott, Robert C. *The Power of Satire: Magic, Ritual, Art*. Princeton UP, 1960, p. viii.

22 Feinberg, p. 17.

23 Elliott, p. 111.

24 Leacock, Stephen. "American Humor." *Essays and Literary Studies*, John Lane, 1916, p. 90.

25 Leacock, Stephen. *Humor and Humanity*. Henry Holt and Company, 1938, p. 60.

26 Elliott, p. 115.

It is worth considering how Stephen Leacock learned about the importance of gentle humour. In his incomplete autobiography *The Boy I Left Behind Me*, he shares an experience he had when he was a student in Teachers School. It shaped his conception of humour throughout his life. The lesson is just as valid for people today as it was for Leacock when he learned it in the 1890s:

When I duly found a boardinghouse (across the lapse of years I quite forget it and where it was), and had entered the Teachers School next day, I found it all very simple and easy beyond words after the hard study to which I was habituated. The little group of teachers in training moved about the school, listened to sample lessons (in no ways different from the lessons and classes we had all taken for years), and presently were entitled to stand up and “take the class” themselves under the supervision of the teacher.

In doing this I learned on the side a lesson on how not to be funny, or the misuse of a sense of humour which lasted me all my life and echoed back to me in a strange way nearly thirty years later. The principal of the Strathroy Collegiate was Mr. James Wetherell, the well-beloved “Jimmy” Wetherell whose memory is still dear to the heart of a thousand pupils. He seemed to us old at the time, as all adult people do to the eyes of eighteen, but he must have been relatively young, for he lived on and on, passed the opening century, still in harness when the Great War came, and died at a ripe age later on. He was a fine scholar, his chief subject, at least the one he liked best to teach, being English. But he had acquired, as most scholars do if absorbed in their work and exulting in the exposition of it, little tricks of speech and manner all his own and all too easy to imitate. I had at that time a certain natural gift of mimicry, could easily hit off people’s voices and instinctively reproduce their gestures. So when Jimmy Wetherell, halfway through a lesson in English, said to me most courteously, “Now will you take the lesson over at that point and continue it?” I did so with a completeness and resemblance to Jimmy’s voice and manner which of course delighted the class. Titters ran through the room. Encouraged as an artist, I laid it on too thick. The kindly principal saw it himself and flushed pink. When I finished he said quietly, “I am afraid I admire your brains more than your manners.” The words cut me to the quick. I felt them to be so true and yet so completely without malice. For I had no real “nerve,” no real “gall.” It was the art of imitation that appealed to me. I had not realized how it might affect the person concerned. I learned with it my first lesson in the need for human kindness as an element in humour.²⁷

From this early-life lesson we can understand that Leacock did not intend to create Juvenalian rage with his humour. Instead, he meant to create Horatian fun.

DISCUSS

1. Do you agree? Is it important that humour be kindly? Should you always think about how the target of a joke will be affected?
2. When is a joke not funny?



SUNSHINE SKETCHES OF A LITTLE TOWN: THE BOOK



SUMMARY

The preface to *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* is an autobiographical introduction to Stephen Leacock. It tells the reader about Leacock's background and his thoughts about the small town he profiles in the book. Because the preface establishes Leacock's approach to himself and his approach to the book, it is an important component to understanding *Sunshine Sketches*.

READING QUESTIONS

1. What parts of Leacock's life outlined in the preface can you best relate to? Why?
2. How does this preface frame what is to follow?

DEEPER UNDERSTANDING

"GIVE IT ANOTHER SQUEEZE": LEACOCK AND RECYCLED WRITING

The preface to *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* was not originally written for *Sunshine Sketches*. It first appeared in the December 11, 1911 edition of the British magazine *Canada: An Illustrated Weekly for All Interested in the Dominion*. Leacock slightly modified it for *Sunshine Sketches*. This recycling of work is typical of Leacock. Leacock rose early every morning to write for several hours. Often the result of this early-morning work was articles and short stories to be published in magazines and periodicals. Nearly every year he would put these articles together to create a book. As he says in the introduction to *Moonbeams from the Larger Lunacy*:

The prudent husbandman, after having taken from his field all the straw that is there, rakes it over with a wooden rake and gets as much again. The wise child, after the lemonade jug is empty, takes the lemons from the bottom of it and squeezes them into a still larger brew. So does the sagacious author, after having sold his material to the magazines and been paid for it, clap it into book-covers and give it another squeeze.²⁸

Sunshine Sketches follows a similar process. Its chapters first appeared as a serialisation in the *Montreal Star* over the spring of 1912. When they were assembled together into the book *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town*, Leacock added the preface by revising a previously-published autobiographical piece.

1. Was it shrewd of Leacock to re-use his work?
2. In what ways do you re-use your own work?



IN DEPTH: IRONY AND THE INTRUSIVE NARRATOR OF *SUNSHINE SKETCHES*

The preface to *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* is Stephen Leacock's self-introduction to his readers. Understanding this preface is important to understanding the book as a whole. *Sunshine Sketches* is written using a technique called the intrusive narrator. The intrusive narrator is an omniscient narrator who "not only reports but freely comments on and evaluates the actions and motives of the characters, and sometimes expresses personal views about human life in general"²⁹. Sometimes the intrusive narrator is a completely unique character that the author creates for the purpose of telling the story. However, in the case of *Sunshine Sketches* the character of intrusive narrator is almost indistinguishable from Stephen Leacock himself.

One reason why we may be able to consider Stephen Leacock as the intrusive narrator of *Sunshine Sketches* is because Leacock had a very close relationship with the book's material: *Sunshine Sketches* is largely exaggerated anecdotes of things he had heard about or witnessed first-hand in his summer hometown of Orillia. In fact, noted Canadian book editor B.K. Sandwell recalls that he "heard Leacock tell practically every one of the *Sunshine Sketches* as dinner-table anecdotes, always with the most explicit reference to Orillia and to Orillian personages"³⁰.

Another reason why we may be able to consider Stephen Leacock as the intrusive narrator of *Sunshine Sketches* is because the sense of irony in Leacock's autobiographical preface is continued into the book. This continuation leads Leacock scholar Gerald Lynch to say that the distinctions between the two are "blurred"³¹. However, Lynch also says that the voice of the person behind the preface and the voice of the narrator of the sketches "should be distinguished from one another"³². Nevertheless, Stephen Leacock is very closely related to—if not indistinguishable from—the intrusive narrator of *Sunshine Sketches*. Given the shared sense of irony, and given that *Sunshine Sketches* is an (exaggerated) recounting of things that Leacock heard about or experienced first hand, it may very well be that *Sunshine Sketches*—like a memoir—is being narrated by Leacock himself.

Because of this close relationship between author and narrator, it is important to understand who Stephen Leacock is. The preface helps accomplish this by providing readers with an autobiographical introduction to Leacock. However, the preface also establishes the tone for the book. This includes establishing Leacock's sense of irony.

UNDERSTANDING IRONY

Irony is a complex concept. Verbal irony—the kind of irony used in the narration of *Sunshine Sketches*—is "a statement in which the speaker's implicit meaning differs sharply from the meaning

29 Abrams, M. H. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 5th ed, Hold, Rinehart and Winston, 1988, p. 145.

30 Sandwell, B.K. "Leacock Recalled: How the 'Sketches' Began." *Saturday Night*, vol. 67, issue 46.

31 Lynch, Gerald. *Stephen Leacock: Humour and Humanity*. McGill-Queen's UP, 1988, p. 63.

32 Lynch, p. 63.

that is ostensibly expressed”³³. Quite simply, something different is meant than what is said. To better understand irony, it is helpful to look back at its ancient Greek origins:

In Greek comedy the character called the *eiron* was a “dissembler,” who characteristically spoke in understatement and deliberately pretended to be less intelligent than he was, yet triumphed over the *alazon*—the self-deceiving and stupid braggart. In most of the critical uses of the term “irony” there remains the root sense of dissembling or hiding what is actually the case: not, however, in order to deceive, but to achieve special rhetorical or artistic effects.³⁴

Knowing how Leacock directs irony towards himself in the preface can help readers understand Leacock’s kindly attitude toward Mariposa and its people.

The preface is based in verifiable facts and observations. In this sense, Leacock is not trying to deceive. For example, Leacock tells the reader that he earned a PhD from the University of Chicago. This is true. However, Leacock then throws in something that is not true. Leacock then claims that having a PhD means that “the recipient of instruction is examined for the last time in his life, and is pronounced completely full. After this, no new ideas can be imparted to him” (viii). This is not true. After finishing his PhD, Leacock gained a professorship at McGill University, became the head of the university’s Department of Political Economy, and went on to become a world-renowned public intellectual and humour writer. It is probably fair to say that Stephen Leacock continued to learn after receiving his PhD.

By ironically writing himself off as incapable of learning anything new, Leacock ridicules and minimizes his own accomplishments. Like *eiron*—the “dissembler” who characteristically spoke in understatement and deliberately pretended to be less intelligent than he was—Leacock understates the importance of his qualifications and accomplishments. What this signals is that Leacock is willing to laugh at himself just as much as he is willing to laugh at others. Such an approach lightens the satire of *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town*: it helps establish Leacock the narrator as a person who is not mean-spirited but rather good-humoured about things, including himself.

DISCUSS

1. Leacock closes the preface by saying: “If [*Sunshine Sketches*] fails in its portrayal of the scenes and the country that it depicts the fault lies rather with an art that is deficient than in an affection that is wanting” (xi). How does this statement enforce the idea that Leacock is laughing with and not laughing at small towns?
2. Leacock says in the preface that “I must disclaim at once all intentions of trying to do anything so ridiculously easy as writing about a real place and real people” (xi). History has shown this is not true. Leacock was very much writing about a real place and real people. Why do you think Leacock wrote this?
3. What do you think? Is the intrusive narrator of *Sunshine Sketches* an imagined character. Or is the intrusive narrator Stephen Leacock himself? Think about this as you read through *Sunshine Sketches*.

33 Abrams, p. 91.

34 Abrams, p. 91.

IN DEPTH: POLITICS, PATRONAGE, AND POLITICAL FINANCING LAWS

One of the things we learn about Stephen Leacock in the preface is his political affiliation. He says:

In Canada I belong to the Conservative party, but as yet I have failed entirely in Canadian politics, never having received a contract to build a bridge, or make a wharf, nor to construct even the smallest section of the Transcontinental Railway. (ix)

This line about the benefits of political connections is an easy-to-understand joke about political patronage. Political scientist Gord Stewart has noted that in the early days of Canadian nationhood, almost every important government contract and every important public-sector job in Canada was given to people who had membership in and donated their time and money to the political party in power at the time³⁵.

Leacock's joke, in particular, finds an interesting link to Canada's first major political scandal: the Pacific Scandal. Canada's first Prime Minister Sir John A. Macdonald (like Leacock, also a Conservative) gave the contract to build the Canadian Pacific Railway to prominent Montreal businessperson Sir Hugh Allan. In exchange for the contract, Allan gave Macdonald and the Conservatives \$350,000 for electioneering purposes. The pay-off soon became known to the public. The scandal forced Macdonald to resign as Prime Minister in 1873. The Liberals won the subsequent federal election.

Today, political financing laws exist in part to try and prevent people from receiving favours in return for political donations. At the federal level individuals can only contribute about \$1600/year to a federal political party. Corporations and trade unions cannot make any contributions whatsoever. At the provincial level, each province creates its own political financing laws for provincial political parties. This has led to a wide range of contribution limits in each province. For example, in Quebec the maximum annual donation to a political party is \$100. In Saskatchewan there are no limits whatsoever on how much money can be given to a political party.

Whether or not limits on donations are in place, there is always the possibility that a politician may favour their friends. However, it is believed that limiting political donations can at least prevent the wealthy from outrightly buying influence with government.



³⁵ Stewart, Gord. "Political Patronage Under Macdonald and Laurier 1878-1911." *American Review of Canadian Studies*, vol. 10, no. 1, 1980, p. 3.



DISCUSS

1. Canada has representative government: citizens elect people at the local level to represent our interests in government.
 - a) Not everyone can afford to donate money to a political party. How do donations distort the idea of “representative” government? Do donations make some citizens “more equal” than others in the eyes of politicians?
 - b) Generally, donations to political parties that are over \$250 must be disclosed to the public. Is disclosure enough to prevent donors from having undue influence?
 - c) Can you think of political scandals today that are similar to the Pacific Scandal?
2. Leacock wrote the Preface to *Sunshine Sketches* over 100 years ago.
 - a) What does your answer to Question 1(c) tell us about human nature?
 - b) If Leacock’s criticism about politics and patronage still holds true, does this help explain why *Sunshine Sketches* has never been out-of-print?
3. Even though Leacock belonged to the Conservative party, he was not blindly loyal to it. In his book *My Discovery of the West*, Leacock praises other Canadian political parties. He says that:

I wish that for our welfare we could combine those elements which have chiefly distinguished each of our political parties: the empire patriotism of the Conservative, the stubborn honesty of the Liberal, the optimism of the Socialist, the driving power of the Social Crediter, and the unsullied enthusiasm of all who write on their banner the name and the inspiration of youth.³⁶

 - a) By finding some good in all political parties, does Leacock set an example for how to act respectfully towards people with different views?
 - b) What is lost when people disrespect the people they disagree with?



ONE: THE HOSTELRY OF MR. SMITH

SUMMARY

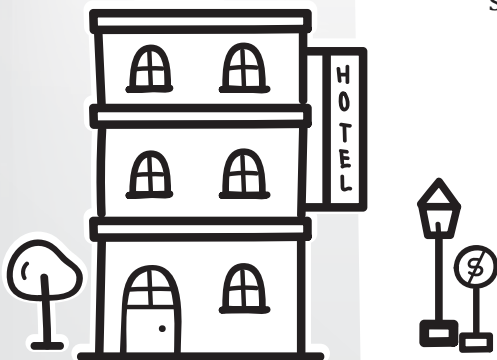
The *Hostelry of Mr. Smith* introduces Mariposa, the “busy, hustling, thriving town” (3) on Lake Wissanotti that has “a dozen towns just like it” (1). Beginning with an overview of Mariposa, the chapter moves into the arrival of Josh Smith, the revocation of his hotel’s liquor license, and Smith’s scheme to reverse the revocation.

READING QUESTIONS

1. Is Mariposa a place of “deep and unbroken peace” (2) or a “perfect hive of activity” (3)?
2. The census is a point of controversy in Mariposa. Do people still exaggerate the population of their town? If so, why do you think they do this?
3. When Josh Smith spends \$10 on the merry-go-round he sells \$40 in lager alone. What does Josh Smith learn about the “blessedness of giving” (15)?
4. Judge Pepperleigh presides over two cases where Josh Smith is accused of serving alcohol after hours (17).
 - a) How does Pepperleigh rule in these cases? What is his reasoning?
 - b) Judges must excuse themselves from hearing cases where they have a personal or financial interest. What is Judge Pepperleigh’s personal interest in this case? What do the judge’s actions tell us about the importance of judges excusing themselves?
5. Josh Smith charges less for meals at his new caff than what they cost him. Why is he doing this? Does his plan work?

DEEPER UNDERSTANDING

“DINDON FARCI À LA JOSH SMITH”: CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY



Josh Smith’s business practices draw attention to the idea of corporate social responsibility. A socially-responsible business “should strive to make a profit, obey the law, be ethical, and be a good corporate citizen”³⁷. Consider all the ways that Smith operates his hotel. This could include his improvements to the hotel rooms, his donations to various community groups, his penchant for serving alcohol after hours, and his opening (and subsequent closing) of the Rat’s Cooler and the caff.

37

Carroll, Archie B. “The Pyramid of Corporate Social Responsibility: Toward the Moral Management of Organizational Stakeholders.” *Business Horizons*, vol. 34, no. 4, July-August 1991, p. 43.

1. Is Smith running a socially-responsible business? Or is he merely manipulating people?
2. What do Smith's actions tell us about the motivations that underlie corporate social responsibility?
3. How does Smith's corporate social responsibility compare with corporations today?

"SOME OF THE PEOPLE SIGNED IT TWENTY OR THIRTY TIMES": PETITIONS

The petition that circulates through Mariposa to save Josh Smith's liquor licence shows the strengths and weaknesses of using petitions to create change. Indeed, it ultimately succeeds in influencing the authorities to reverse the liquor licence revocation. However, the petition is not without its flaws. As the book says:

It was the right kind of document, too. It began – "Whereas in the bounty of providence the earth putteth forth her luscious fruits and her vineyards for the delight and enjoyment of mankind – " It made you thirsty just to read it. Any man who read that petition over was wild to get to the Rats' Cooler. (24)

In addition to its influential opening line, even though the petition has 3,000 signatures (from a town of 5,000 people), some people signed it "twenty or thirty times" (23).

1. If you are considering signing a petition, what lessons can you take from the experience of the petition in Mariposa?
2. If you are considering creating a petition, what lessons can you take from the experience of the petition in Mariposa?
3. Find examples of petitions in your community that have been successful in helping push forward change. What led to the success?

IN DEPTH: PROHIBITION AND LIQUOR REGULATION

Societies in Asia, the Middle East, and Africa have been consuming alcohol for at least 5,000 years. Alcohol in North America is a different story. On Turtle Island—the land we now call Canada—Indigenous people did not brew alcohol. Alcohol was introduced to the land by Europeans. For most of the time since alcohol's introduction, government has been regulating it. While the government's reasons for regulation are varied, two overriding themes can be seen: alcohol causes harm to individuals and to society when misused, and alcohol is a source of revenue for the government.

Government regulations on alcohol have not always been applied equally. Historically, these regulations have been most discriminatory towards Indigenous people. Canada's race-based alcohol laws only began to be unravelled in the 1950s. One of the first discriminatory laws was the *Selling of Strong Liquors to the Indian Ordinance* of 1777. Issued by the British governor in Quebec, this law banned the private sale and distribution of liquor to Indigenous people. The Indian Department became the sole supplier of alcohol to Indigenous people. The *Indian Act of 1876* went further. It completely prohibited Indigenous people from buying or drinking alcohol unless they gave up their Indian status. These laws were said to be a response to the negative effects that alcohol had on Indigenous people. However, the laws were underpinned by the false and racist "firewater myth" that Indigenous people were "more constitutionally prone to develop an inordinate craving for liquor and to lose control over their behaviour when they drink"³⁸.

The *Indian Act's* prohibition did not stop Indigenous people from drinking alcohol. It merely pushed drinking into the shadows. A bootlegging trade popped up to supply alcohol on reserves, and Indigenous people who visited cities and towns were often able to find suppliers in town.

For the settlers in Canada, alcohol laws were also omnipresent. However, they were seldom as draconian as the laws that applied to Indigenous people. Generally governments had little interest in banning alcohol from settlers altogether, largely due to the revenue created by liquor licenses and alcohol sales. However, prohibitionists succeeded in making laws more restrictive. Prohibitionists were a powerful political force in the late 1800s and early 1900s. They were made up of a peculiar alliance of people: capitalists who did not want their workers drinking due to effects on productivity, women's groups who were frustrated with abusive husbands who spent



38 Leland qtd. in Campbell, Robert. "Making Sober Citizens: The Legacy of Indigenous Alcohol Regulation in Canada." *Journal of Canadian Studies*, vol. 42, no. 1, 2008, p. 106.

their earnings on alcohol, and religious groups that rejected alcohol altogether. Together, they pressured the public and lobbied various levels of government to limit or halt alcohol sales. As a result many places in Canada became “dry” in the late 1800s and early 1900s. However, much like the attempts to prohibit Indigenous people from drinking, attempts to prohibit settlers from drinking were exercises in futility. Some people made their own alcohol or imported it from other jurisdictions. And because alcohol was still available in pharmacies for medicinal use, some people simply obtained prescriptions from their doctors to buy alcohol. For example, in 1920 Ontario doctors prescribed 650,000 bottles of liquor. There was a 50% rise in prescriptions over the Christmas holidays.

In communities where prohibition was not in place, alcohol was tightly regulated. The regulations proved hard to enforce, and were often ignored. For example, saloon-keepers regularly served alcohol after the regulated closing hours. When saloon-keepers were caught in the act, commissioners often had trouble getting witnesses to testify because the witnesses did not want their local bar to close.

The excessive liquor regulation during the late 1800s and early 1900s shows how difficult it is for laws to be enforced when they are strongly opposed by many members of a community. Even though alcohol was very strictly regulated or banned in many places across Canada, people who wanted it would find it. And because governments wanted the revenues from alcohol sales, they had little incentive to limit or ban the sale of alcohol. These realities not only help explain the progressive loosening of liquor regulations over the past 100 years, but can also bring some insight into the evolution of laws surrounding marijuana today.

DISCUSS

1. Stephen Leacock was a fierce opponent of prohibition. In his 1919 essay “The Tyranny of Prohibition” he claims that “the fundamental fallacy of prohibition is that it proposes to make a crime of a thing which the conscience of the great mass of individuals refuses to consider as such”³⁹. Leacock’s hostility towards over-regulation of liquor can be seen in *Sunshine Sketches*. Josh Smith refuses to close his bar at the regulated hours. Smith’s “moral code was simplicity itself,—do what is right and take the consequences” (17).
 - a) What was Josh Smith’s usual procedure for closing the bar?
 - b) Josh Smith was breaking the law. Was he doing “what is right”?
2. What similarities are there between liquor prohibition and regulation in the time of *Sunshine Sketches* and the regulation of marijuana or other substances in Canada today?
3. What ways can you protest a law that you believe is wrong?

TWO: THE SPECULATIONS OF JEFFERSON THORPE

SUMMARY

The Speculations of Jefferson Thorpe recounts when “everybody went simply crazy” (27) over mining stocks. Jefferson Thorpe, Mariposa’s barber, becomes rich by stubbornly holding onto a stock in the Northern Star mine. However, just as quickly as Jeff becomes rich he loses his fortune on a bad investment in a Cuban plantation.

READING QUESTIONS

1. As the chapter opens, we learn that Jefferson Thorpe’s barber shop does not make very much money. We also learn that Jeff lost money selling his egg-producing hens to buy wheat futures. Yet “Jeff’s specialty in the way of conversation was finance and the money market” (31).
 - a) From where does Jeff get most of his financial information?
 - b) Does this qualify him to be an expert in finance?
2. Talking about mining country, Jeff says “if a feller knows the country and keeps a level head, he can’t lose” (34).
 - a) Who is the person in Mariposa who “had come down from there, and he knew all about rocks and mining and canoes and the north country” (33)?
 - b) How does this person profit from the mining craze?
3. What is Jeff’s investment strategy for his stock in the Northern Star mine? Is this the sign of a financial genius or just pure luck?
4. Jeff reinvests his money in a Cuban plantation. What does Jeff intend to do with his anticipated fortune from the plantation investment?
5. When Jeff loses his money, how does Josh Smith help out? What do you think is being said about the importance of small, local business?
6. “I may say in parentheses that it was a favourite method in Mariposa if you wanted to get at the real worth of a man, to imagine him clean sold up, put up for auction, as it were. It was the only way to test him” (42). Is wealth the true measure of a person?

DEEPER UNDERSTANDING

“EVERYBODY KNEW JEFF AND LIKED HIM”: KINDLINESS AND HUMOUR

Leacock mentions several times how Mariposa’s opinion of Jefferson Thorpe changes for the better when he makes his fortune. However, Leacock refuses to go into how opinions change for the worse when he loses his fortune: “As I say, it was when Jeff made money that they saw how gifted he was, and when he lost it, – but still, *there’s no need to go into that*. I believe it’s something the same in other places too” (28).

1. Look back to “Horatian Satire and Stephen Leacock: An Overview” in the pre-reading section of this resource. What does Leacock’s refusal to talk poorly about Jeff tell us about his approach to humour and humanity?
2. Do you agree? Is there no need to go into that?

IN DEPTH: FINANCIAL REGULATIONS AND THE IMPORTANCE OF LANGUAGE

Jefferson Thorpe makes and loses his fortune through his own investing decisions. This method of investing is commonly referred to as “self-directed investing.” Instead of seeking advice from financial experts, Jeff chooses to do his own research and make his own decisions. He is a self-directed investor. Jeff’s self-directed investing leads Jeff to lose money on wheat futures, make \$40,000 on Northern Star mine shares, and ultimately lose his fortune on a Cuban plantation investment.

The benefits and drawbacks of self-directed investing was the subject of a recent *Globe and Mail* article. It says:

Investing without the services of a financial adviser may be more appealing than ever, but it is not for everyone. Without adequate knowledge, skills and time, and suitable personality traits, direct investing could be a recipe for financial ruin.⁴⁰

Jefferson Thorpe was one such person who met financial ruin from self-directed investing.

People who do not want to end up like Jefferson Thorpe can seek the services of professionals who give financial advice. Some people will seek the help of a “financial advisor” with the **or** suffix. Other people will seek the help of a “financial adviser” with the **er** suffix. The English language has no hard rule about the difference between the words advisor and adviser. However, when used in specific reference to the Canadian financial industry, advisor and adviser are very different terms under the law.

ADVISERS VS. ADVISORS

Understanding the differences between advisor and adviser requires an understanding of the laws and rules that govern Canada’s investment industry. In each province the investment industry is overseen by an agency known as a Security Regulator. Security Regulators help ensure that investors are protected from unfair, improper, and fraudulent practices. According to the Small Investor Protection Association, there are nearly 122,000 people registered with Security Regulators to provide financial services in Canada.⁴¹

Most of the people registered to provide financial services are categorised as “Dealing Representatives.” Dealing Representatives often use the term “financial advisor” to describe themselves. Financial advisors provide financial advice to their clients and are bound by certain rules. However, according to a CBC Go Public feature, at the core a financial advisor is a “salesperson”⁴².

40 Bebee, Gail. “Is self-directed investing right for you?” *The Globe and Mail*, 11 September 2014. www.theglobeandmail.com/globe-investor/is-self-directed-investing-right-for-you/article20555144/

41 Small Investor Protection Association. *Advisor Title Trickery: Your Financial Advisor is a Commission Sales Person*. October 2016, www.sipa.ca/library/SIPAsubmissions/500%20SIPA%20REPORT%20-%20Advisor%20Title%20Trickery%20October%202016.pdf

42 Johnson, Erica. “I feel duped’: Why bank employees with impressive but misleading titles could cost you big time.” CBC.ca. 29 March 2017. www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/bank-s-deceptive-titles-put-investments-at-risk-1.4044702

They sell stocks, mutual funds, and other investments to their clients. When they sell these investments to their clients, they are generally held to what is called the “suitability standard.” The suitability standard requires advisors to demonstrate that an investment is appropriate based on the client’s “goals, experience, income and risk tolerance”⁴³. The suitability standard, however, can result in decisions that might not be in the client’s absolute best interest. Because advisors receive a commission on the financial products they sell, there is an incentive for advisors to sell their clients products that generate the biggest sales commission. This creates a risk: the advisor’s primary motivation may be their own personal gain, not their client’s best interest.

Conversely, an adviser is a person in the financial industry with a very specific legal relationship with their clients. Advisers have what is called a fiduciary obligation. This is a responsibility to act honestly, in good faith, and strictly in the best interests of their clients. This means that an adviser is *legally obliged* to ensure that the investments they are selling to their clients are what the adviser honestly believes are in the best possible investment interests of that client. Of the 122,000 people registered in Canada’s investment industry, only about 4,000 have the title of adviser.

Thus, Canadian financial regulations hold advisers to a higher legal standard than advisors. This is not to say that financial advisors are unethical or dishonest people: it only is to say that advisers have a higher legal standard to live up to. Because of the differences between advisers and advisors, there has been recent discussion about changing financial industry regulations. The hoped outcome of changing regulations is that clients of financial advisers can be more confident that they are getting the best advice possible.

DISCUSS

1. The offer Jefferson Thorpe receives to invest in the Cuban plantation “made no rash promises, just admitted straight out that the enterprise might realise 400 per cent, or might conceivably make less. There was no hint of more” (39).
 - a) Could an offer like this confuse a person who is not skilled in finance?
 - b) Is it ethical to make such an offer?
2. The plantation offer seems suspicious from the start. This does not stop Jeff—nor others in Mariposa—from investing. However, Josh Smith “wouldn’t pay Billy, the desk clerk, his back wages when he wanted to put it into Cuba” (43).
 - a) Smith saved Billy from losing his money. Was it right for Smith to do what he did? Or should people be free to do as they please?
 - b) Look into the current debates on regulating the financial industry. What role should the law play?

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Bortolotti, Dan. “Screwed! Too many investors are being poorly served by advisors. Here’s how to avoid becoming the next victim.” *MoneySense*, 30 December 2015, www.moneysense.ca/save/financial-planning/dont-get-screwed-by-your-financial-advisor/



THREE: THE MARINE EXCURSION OF THE KNIGHTS OF PYTHIAS

SUMMARY

The Marine Excursion of the Knights of Pythias recounts how the Mariposa Belle sinks to the bottom of Lake Wissanotti. Because the lake is shallow, Leacock is “not talking about a steamer sinking in the ocean and carrying down its screaming crowds of people into the hideous depths of green water” (61). Rather, it is a humorous recounting of how a boat sinks in a few feet of water. A shoddy rescue effort makes saving passengers just as ridiculous as the sinking itself.

READING QUESTIONS

1. Consider this passage about people’s involvement in small communities:

Perhaps I ought to explain that when I speak of the excursion as being of the Knights of Pythias, the thing must not be understood in any narrow sense. In Mariposa practically everybody belongs to the Knights of Pythias just as they do to everything else. That’s the great thing about the town and that’s what makes it so different from the city. Everybody is in everything. (47)

When people are more involved in their communities, do they have a higher sense of responsibility towards each other? Do they have better understandings of one-another?

2. Explain the process of choosing seats on the Mariposa Belle.
3. How does the literary technique of foreshadowing build up tension in the chapter?
4. What is the fate of the lifeboat sent to rescue the people on the Mariposa Belle?
5. How does Josh Smith get the Mariposa Belle raised from the bottom of the lake?
6. Look at some famous marine disasters. For example, check out the sinking of the Titanic, the Lusitania, or especially the Eastland. What aspects of the sinking of the Mariposa Belle could be applied to those disasters?

DEEPER UNDERSTANDING

“SO PRESENTLY THEY BOTH KNEW THAT THEY WERE BLOCKED OUT OF ONE ANOTHER’S HOUSES FOR SOME TIME TO COME”: JOHN STUART MILL AND ENGAGING OTHER OPINIONS

Dean Drone and Dr. Gallagher converse while on the Mariposa Belle. Dean Drone talks about Greek history and Dr. Gallagher talks about Canadian history. Neither man seems particularly interested in what the other has to say:

And then after that they fell talking of relics and traces of the past, and Dr. Gallagher said that if Dean Drone would come round to his house some night he would show him some Indian arrow heads that he had dug up in his garden. And Dean Drone said that if Dr. Gallagher would come round to the rectory any afternoon he would show him a map of

Xerxes' invasion of Greece. Only he must come some time between the Infant Class and the Mothers' Auxiliary.

So presently they both knew that they were blocked out of one another's houses for some time to come. (56-57)

The lack of interest that Dean Drone and Dr. Gallagher show towards each other could be seen as reflective of John Stuart Mill's critique about knowing the perspectives of others.

John Stuart Mill was a liberal philosopher whose ideas interested Leacock. Mill's book *On Liberty* considers the importance of hearing out all viewpoints. According to Mill, if you only listen to people who agree with you, then you have no grounds to reject the arguments of people who disagree with you:

He who knows only his own side of the case, knows little of that. His reasons may be good, and no one may have been able to refute them. But if he is equally unable to refute the reasons on the opposite side; if he does not so much as know what they are, he has no ground for preferring either opinion.⁴⁴

Mill goes on to say that it is vital to hear counterarguments from the actual source:

Nor is it enough that he should hear the arguments of adversaries from his own teachers, presented as they state them, and accompanied by what they offer as refutations. [Instead] he must be able to hear them from persons who actually believe them.⁴⁵

Mill believes that people must hear out all viewpoints. This is the only way to come to a rational conclusion.

1. Do you agree? Does a person who only knows their own side of a case truly know the situation?
2. How can you ensure that you have all the information you need to form a valid opinion?



⁴⁴ Mill, John Stuart. *On Liberty*. Penguin Classics, 1974, p. 98.

⁴⁵ Mill, p. 99.

“THE MARIPOSA BELLE ALWAYS SEEMS TO ME TO HAVE SOME OF THOSE STRANGE PROPERTIES THAT DISTINGUISH MARIPOSA ITSELF”: THE REAL MARIPOSA BELLE

Sunshine Sketches is largely based on things that Leacock saw first-hand or heard about in and around Orillia. The sinking of the Mariposa Belle is one such story. The ship is an anagram of several steamboats that travelled Lake Simcoe and Lake Couchiching in Leacock's time. Its sinking is believed to be an exaggerated recounting of at least two—and perhaps more—rather harmless shipwrecks near Orillia. One is the August 1903 sinking of the Enterprise on Lake Simcoe. The 40-year-old Enterprise took a route through shallow water and began to sink near the Mulcaster Street wharf in Barrie, Ontario. All the passengers disembarked before it hit the lake bottom. The Enterprise was soon re-floated, stripped for parts, and its shell was sunk to the bottom of Lake Simcoe. Another is the 1898 sinking of the Islay on Lake Couchiching. However, the 1898 sinking of the Longford may be closest to Leacock's Mariposa Belle. The Longford, carrying businessmen on an outing, hit a sandbar on Lake Couchiching and became stuck. A lifeboat was sent, and when the passengers disembarked the boat floated free. Once off the sandbar, the passengers got back on and the Longford carried on to Orillia.

1. When you tell stories, do you tend to exaggerate details? How does exaggeration add to a story?
2. When is exaggeration a good strategy for storytelling? When is accuracy more important?

“WHEN THEY PUT HER IN THE WATER THE LIFEBOAT TOUCHED IT FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE THE OLD MACDONALD GOVERNMENT PLACED HER ON LAKE WISSANOTTI”: LIFEBOATS AND PUBLIC SAFETY

Many ships have sunk and many lives have been lost on Canadian waters. To help prevent the loss of lives, in the late 1800s the government of Sir John A. Macdonald set about providing communities with lifeboats. However, in almost every case the federal government's responsibility ended when they gave the community the lifeboat. The crews and the boat maintenance were left to be organised locally. Only five lifeboat stations across all of Canada were maintained by the federal government.

This system left the country with poorly-maintained lifeboats and poorly-trained rescuers. John Milton Platt, a Liberal member of Parliament, was a critic of this set-up. In 1884, he told the Minister of Marine and Fisheries that because there was “no proper system... instead of spending money in enlarging [the lifeboat program], he should perfect what he has”⁴⁶. Despite Platt's demands, the Macdonald government continued with its flawed lifeboat program.

1. Think about the lifeboat sent to save the Mariposa Belle. What problems of the Canadian government's lifeboat program did *Sunshine Sketches* expose?
2. In the 1800s, the Macdonald government was accused of placing lifeboats on shores simply to buy favour with local voters. Can you think of any instances today where governments have been accused of doing something for their own interest, and not public interest?

⁴⁶

Official Report of the Debates of the House of Commons of the Dominion of Canada. Second Session: Fifth Parliament, vol. XVI, 12 March 1884 - 19 April 1884, p. 1129.

IN DEPTH: ORILLIA, TREATY LAND, AND INHABITANTS OF LAKE COUCHICHING'S SHORES

In "The Marine Excursion of the Knights of Pythias," Dr. Gallagher discusses Old Indian Portage that the Mariposa Belle passes by. Gallagher explains that French explorer Samuel de Champlain landed there three hundred years earlier. Leacock's real-world inspiration for Old Indian Portage is Atherley Narrows. Atherley Narrows are located next to Orillia between Lake Couchiching and Lake Simcoe. Champlain arrived at the narrows in 1615.

Human presence at Atherley Narrows goes much further back than 1615. The Mnjikaning Fish Weirs at the narrows stand as evidence of this. The weirs are preserved remnants of stakes that were once used to hold fishing nets in place. A National Historic Site, the Chippewas of Rama First Nation are the stewards of the weirs today. Although the Chippewas never used the weirs for fishing, as historian R. James Ringer says:

To them, Atherley Narrows was much more than a fishing place. It was a traditional meeting place for Aboriginal nations: a place for treaties, trade, festivities and spiritual ceremonies. Due to this, the Chippewas felt they had a considerable role to play in any decision making process concerning the weir site - a hidden but important component of their cultural landscape.⁴⁷

It is difficult to determine exactly how old the fishing weirs are. Estimates suggest that they are at least 4,500 years old, evidencing the long history of human presence at Atherley Narrows.

When Champlain arrived at the narrows in 1615, the area was controlled by the Huron-Wendat confederacy. Disease and epidemic weakened the Huron-Wendat people, and they were dispersed from the area by the Haudenosaunee around 1650. In 1830, Ojibwa people under the leadership of Chief Musquakie (Yellowhead) were settled next to the narrows on the site of present-day Orillia. It was part of an experiment to create "Indian Reserves." There, the Ojibwa farmed the land. However, to make way for the town of Orillia they were forced off the land in 1838 and 1839 in what has been termed by the Chippewas of Rama First Nation an "illegal surrender"⁴⁸. They relocated across Lake Simcoe to the present-day site of the Chippewas of Rama First Nation.



⁴⁷ Ringer, R. James. "The Atherley Narrows Fish Weir Complex: A Submerged Archaic-to-Historic-Period Fishing Site in Ontario, Canada." *Revista de Arqueología Americana*, no. 26, 2008, p. 141.

⁴⁸ Chippewas of Rama First Nation. "About Us." <http://www.ramafn.com/about.asp>

THE ROLE OF TREATIES

The land north and west of Lake Simcoe that includes Orillia was ceded by seven First Nations through treaties signed in 1798, 1815, and 1818. In 1923, new treaties called the Williams Treaties were signed to address further encroachment of settlers onto traditional hunting grounds. The Chippewas of Rama are signatories to the Williams Treaties.

Even though the Williams Treaties have been signed, questions remain about their terms, interpretation, and implementation. The seven First Nations believe that they were not fairly compensated for their land, that they should have received additional lands at the time, and that the Williams Treaties did not affect the harvesting rights they received from the earlier treaties. In 1992, the Alderville litigation began to resolve the dispute. The Alderville litigation is being negotiated outside the courts.

Although resolution to the Alderville litigation has yet to be reached, treaty harvesting rights have already been recognised on an interim basis. As the Government of Ontario said:

Canada, Ontario and the Williams Treaties First Nations are committed to working together in a spirit of partnership and collaboration to find a just and shared solution that respects the rights of Indigenous peoples and all Canadians. The recognition of the First Nations' constitutionally protected treaty harvesting rights to hunt, fish, trap and gather in certain pre-Confederation treaty areas for food, social and ceremonial purposes addresses a longstanding dispute between the parties. This is an important first step toward renewed relationships and reconciliation with the First Nations for the benefit of everyone.⁴⁹

RESOLVING TREATY ISSUES

The final determinations on what is rightly owed to Indigenous people through the Williams Treaties will be a complicated process. However, the Supreme Court has developed some principles to be considered when determining treaty rights:

- A treaty is a sacred agreement involving the honour of the Crown.
- It is assumed that promises made by the Crown are intended to be fulfilled.
- Any part of a treaty that is not clear must be read in favour of the First Nation.
- Oral promises and the historical circumstances surrounding the signing of a treaty and how the First Nations would have understood it can be considered.
- Treaty promises must be interpreted in a way that allows them to evolve over time to meet changing circumstances.

These principles will help guide the settlement process between the Williams Treaty First Nations, and the Governments of Ontario and Canada.

⁴⁹ Ontario Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation. "Negotiations with the Williams Treaties First Nations Toward a Negotiated Resolution of the Alderville Litigation." 27 March 2017. <https://news.ontario.ca/mirr/en/2017/03/negotiations-with-the-williams-treaties-first-nations-toward-a-negotiated-resolution-of-the-aldervil.html>



DISCUSS

1. Stephen Leacock paid little attention to Indigenous issues, making his understandings of Indigenous people very outdated. However, it is interesting to note that Leacock admired Indigenous use of oral histories. He said the Inuit handed down their oral history “from generation to generation with the utmost accuracy”⁵⁰.
 - a) Sometimes written records do not include the whole agreement. What does this tell us about the importance of oral histories?
 - b) Treaties are written records of oral agreements, but the written record was made in a language that was foreign to Indigenous people. Is this fair?
2.
 - a) Why is it important that outstanding land claims between Canadian governments and Indigenous peoples be settled?
 - b) How does this contribute towards reconciliation?
3. Why is it important to know the history of the land where *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* is based?

FOUR: THE MINISTRATIONS OF THE REV. MR. DRONE

SUMMARY

The Ministrations of the Rev. Mr. Drone introduces the Church of England's Dean in Mariposa, Reverend Drone. Dean Drone's primary interests appear to be outside of religion. He enjoys making children's toys and reading Greek history. The Dean's only apparent ambition related to the Church of England is the construction of a new church for Mariposa. However, because "mathematics were not the rector's forte" (72) the costs of building and maintaining the new church are not fully understood. This leaves the local congregation overwhelmed with debt.

READING QUESTIONS

1. What is the fate of the original stone church? What is being suggested about respect for history and the past in Mariposa?
2. What are Dean Drone's interests? Are any of these interests strongly linked with Anglican theology?
3. Why does the Church of England find itself in financial trouble?
4. It is not just the Anglican Church that is being mocked. What does Yodel the auctioneer say about Catholic services in the city? (78)
5. What reasons do Mariposans give for avoiding church? Are they losing faith and interest in the Dean and his services, or are they just trying to avoid helping the church in its time of need?
6. What do Mariposans do to raise funds for the failing church? How does each effort fail? (p. 82-84)
7. The new Church of England is built on the same hill where Jefferson Thorpe had hoped to set up a home for incurables in "The Speculations of Jefferson Thorpe." Is this significant?

DEEPER UNDERSTANDING

"WAS IT ALREADY THE DAWN OF THE NEW JERUSALEM?": LEACOCK ON RELIGION

Leacock's satire of the Church of England can partially be understood through his views on religion. Leacock was not devoutly religious. In an essay he wrote on religion and modern morality, he said that religious traditions provided an "authoritative moral code as a guide"⁵¹ for the development of society. However, he also believed that "we have kicked out the devil as a ridiculous and absurd superstition, unworthy of a scientific age"⁵².

⁵¹ Leacock, Stephen. "The Devil and the Deep Sea: A Discussion of Modern Morality." In *The Social Criticism of Stephen Leacock*, edited by Alan Bowker, U of Toronto P, 1973, p. 45.

⁵² Leacock, p. 44.

His private views on religion were a bit more pessimistic. In 1934, he wrote a letter to his son who was about to go through Confirmation. In part, the letter says:

I do not believe that God made the world in six days, do you?

I do not believe that God created Adam and Eve and made Eve from one of his ribs, and put them in a garden and created animals. Do you?

I do not believe that Joshua made the sun stand still, do you? That Elijah went up to heaven and Jonah lived in a whale? Do you?

Nor can I feel anything but horror for the jealous, vindictive slaughtering god of the old testament. To visit the sins of the fathers on the children is, to simple people, the last word of injustice.⁵³

This was not the only known instance of Leacock casting doubt on religion to his son. Reportedly, Leacock left his son devastated when he told him that nothing happens when people die. They just cease to exist⁵⁴.

1. Most of the satire in “The Ministrations of the Rev. Mr. Drone” challenges the ways that people act in relation to the church. The chapter does not specifically cast doubt on religious beliefs. Why do you think this is?
2. When Leacock wrote the above letter to his son, he gave it to his niece and secretary Barbara Nimmo to type. He asked her to destroy the original. However, Nimmo thought that the letter was too important to destroy. Instead, she filed it away in Leacock’s archives. This ensured that the letter would eventually become part of the public domain. It was published in full in *The Letters of Stephen Leacock* in 2006.
 - a) Discuss the ethics of Nimmo contradicting her uncle’s wishes and placing her uncle’s letter in his archives, knowing it would become part of the public domain.
 - b) Discuss the ethics of publishing this letter in *The Letters of Stephen Leacock*.
 - c) Discuss the ethics of republishing (part of) this letter in this learning resource.



53 Staines, David, Editor. *The Letters of Stephen Leacock*. Oxford UP, 2006, p. 235.

54 Bowker, David. “Preface.” In *On the Front Line of Life, Stephen Leacock: Memories and Reflections 1935-1944*, edited by Alan Bowker, Dundurn, 2004, p. 9.

“THE DEAN ALWAYS SHOWED THE GREATEST DELICACY OF FEELING IN REGARD TO ANY TRANSLATION”: RELIABLE INFORMATION

Dean Drone was educated in the Greek language. It is his responsibility to translate Greek passages to English for his congregation. During one sermon, he tells the congregation “The original Greek is ‘Hoson,’ but perhaps you will allow me to translate it as equivalent to ‘Hoyon’” (79). Because the Dean defaults to the popular will of his congregation in issues of translation, he asks if they will approve of his translation. They agree.

This translation, however, is not accurate. According to Leacock scholars Russell Brown and Donna Bennet:

Both words mean ‘what,’ but to think them interchangeable would be a schoolboy error, since ‘hoson’ refers to quantity (‘what amount’) and ‘hoyon’ to quality (‘what kind’).⁵⁵

This error in translation leads Gerald Lynch to conclude that:

Thus Drone’s schoolboy error proves especially revealing, since the source of all his troubles, the big church, is the direct result of his confusion of quantity and quality.⁵⁶

Of course, unless there were other people educated in Greek sitting in the congregation, they would have no way of agreeing or disagreeing with the translation. They are left to trust Dean Drone’s judgment.

1. When experts offer us information, they are acting in good faith. This is how they gain public trust. However, experts can often reach conflicting interpretations. How can we ensure that the information we use is reliable?
2. The majority of the congregation approves of Dean Drone’s translation. In fact, the congregation unanimously approves of it. Is the majority always right?

⁵⁵ qtd. in Lynch, Gerald. *Stephen Leacock: Humour and Humanity*. McGill-Queen’s UP, 1988, p. 90.

⁵⁶ Lynch, Gerald. p. 90.

IN DEPTH: BURIAL SITES AND OWNERSHIP OF HUMAN REMAINS

It is first revealed in “The Marine Excursion of the Knights of Pythias” that Dr. Gallagher takes an interest in Indigenous heritage. “The Ministrations of the Rev. Mr. Drone” continues this thread. In it, Gallagher brings to Dean Drone his latest discoveries that include “the Indian skull that they had dug out of the railway embankment” (69). According to Dennis Rizzo’s *A Brief History of Orillia*, during Orillia’s development skeletal remains and artifacts were often unearthed by workers digging house cellars and landscaping. Similar discoveries continue today⁵⁷.

At the time that *Sunshine Sketches* was written, there were few formal processes to follow when the remains of an Indigenous person were unearthed. Most often, the discovery ended up in a museum or a private collection. Today there are formal processes that must be followed.

In Ontario, when an Indigenous burial site is found it must be immediately reported to the police or coroner’s office. Officials will perform an archaeological assessment of the site. The landowner and a representative of the person or people buried there will have to come together to decide whether the remains will be disinterred or whether the site will be established as a cemetery. If the landowner and the representative cannot come to an agreement, binding arbitration will take place. Binding arbitration is a way of resolving a legal dispute without going to court: an “arbiter” hears both sides of the case, and comes to a conclusion. Their decision is legally enforceable.

In Saskatchewan, when an Indigenous burial site is found, what happens to the remains depends on how old they are. Remains that date back to the year 1700 are to be made available to the nearest First Nation following scientific examination. Remains that predate 1700 will be forwarded to the government, following any scientific research. For any remains that cannot be definitively traced to a particular First Nation, the province has created a burial ground. It is a four-hectare plot of land secretly located somewhere on the shores of the South Saskatchewan River. Some remains laid to rest in this plot date back 6,000 years. Elders from eight different groups hold ceremonies at this spot so that the people buried there can rest in peace.

Rules like these create a uniform process to be followed when human remains are dug up today. However, these rules are not retroactive: many museums and private collections have remains of Indigenous people that were unearthed years earlier. For these previously-unearthed remains, there are no hard rules that dictate their fate.

In the absence of laws governing the fate of previously-unearthed remains, the Canadian Museums Association and the Assembly of First Nations have created a set of recommendations for dealing with remains. The recommendations say that any remains that can be identified by name should be given back to the family or the First Nation. If the remains can be linked to a particular First Nation but not a particular family, the Nation should be notified. If the remains cannot be linked to a specific group, Indigenous people and the museum should work together to determine what should be done with them. Because these recommendations are voluntary, there is no legal obligation to follow them. However, the rules have been successful in bringing the remains of many people to a place of final rest.

57

Rizzo, Dennis. *A Brief History of Orillia: Ontario’s Sunshine City*. The History Press, 2014, p. 26.



DISCUSS

1. The laws associated with burial sites are not always followed. For example, in 2016 APTN reported on a “cacophony of errors” that led to Barrie’s Allandale Go Transit Station being built over top of a substantial Huron-Wendat ossuary (an ossuary is a large-pit burial site). What makes this particularly disrespectful is the Huron-Wendat belief about the afterlife. According to archaeologist Kris Nahrgag, “They believe there are two souls with a person. One goes with the person in the ground and the other one goes to the Creator. So when you bury these people every one of the bodies that are in the burial pit have a soul”⁵⁸.
 - a) Does having a law in place mean it will be followed?
 - b) Why must we be diligent to ensure that our laws are followed?
2. It is not just Indigenous burial sites that are disrespected in *Sunshine Sketches*. When the new church is built, the church’s old cemetery is smoothed out and the headstones are laid flat. What do you think this chapter says about society’s respect for burial sites?
3. Reconsider the scene where Dr. Gallagher brings the skull to Dean Drone. It contrasts many worldviews, including religious worldviews, scientific worldviews, and Indigenous worldviews, just to name a few:

I remember that on the day when Dr. Gallagher brought over the Indian skull that they had dug out of the railway embankment, and placed it on the rustic table, the Dean read to him so long from Theocritus that the doctor, I truly believe, dozed off in his chair. (p. 69-70)

What do you think is the significance of this scene?

⁵⁸ qtd. in Jackson, Kenneth. “Buried Souls: How Ontario bulldozed through a rare Huron-Wendat burial site in Barrie.” *APTN*, 9 March 2016, <http://aptnnews.ca/2016/03/09/buried-souls-how-ontario-bulldozed-through-a-rare-huron-wendat-burial-site-in-barrie/>



FIVE: THE WHIRLWIND CAMPAIGN IN MARIPOSA

SUMMARY

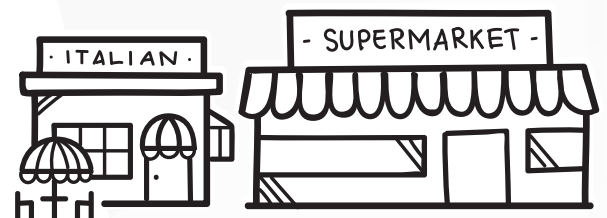
The Whirlwind Campaign in Mariposa looks at a fundraising activity for the Church of England Church. Spearheaded by the banker Henry Mullins, the fundraiser is not much more than a social club for Mariposa's businesspeople. With nobody actually raising funds, the Whirlwind Campaign eats through its meagre donations and ultimately winds down with an empty bank account. The church ends up with only \$100.

READING QUESTIONS

1. Who has the idea for the Whirlwind Campaign? Where does the idea come from? How do the men form groups for the campaign?
2. The first round of donations are conditional:
 - Mullins writes a cheque for \$100 conditional on the fund reaching \$50,000
 - George Duff writes a cheque for \$100 conditional on the fund reaching \$70,000
 - Netley writes a cheque for \$100 conditional on the fund reaching \$100,000

The conditional donations continue until the "conditional fund" reaches a quarter of a million dollars.

- a) Was there ever any actual money in the conditional fund?
 - b) Today, conditional donations are commonplace. For example, corporations and governments will often match donations made by private citizens towards particular charitable causes. Would causes be better-served if corporations or governments simply made unconditional donations?
3. Josh Smith donates \$200 on the condition that the campaign lunches take place at his hotel. Was this a smart move by Smith?
 4. The Mariposa Newspacket has a two-inch headline that reads "A QUARTER OF A MILLION."
 - a) Was using such a headline a responsible way of reporting the news?
 - b) Are there parallels between the limited information in this headline and how information is spread on social media today?
 - c) Why is it important to read beyond headlines or tweets?
 5. Are there any actual canvassers for the Whirlwind Campaign?
 6. When the Whirlwind Campaign goes bust, Mullins takes the condition off of his \$100 donation. Does Mullins' donation make up for the botched campaign?
 7. Who is to blame for the failure of the Whirlwind Campaign?



DEEPER UNDERSTANDING

“THE DAY FOR THAT KIND OF RELIGIOUS BIGOTRY IS PAST”: FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS IN CANADA

The Whirlwind Campaign is meant to benefit the Anglican Church. However, members of the Presbyterian Church are welcomed into the campaign. As it says, “Anyway it would have been poor business to keep a man out of the lunches merely on account of his religion. I trust that the day for that kind of religious bigotry is past.” (90).

This belief in *Sunshine Sketches*—that people are entitled to their own views and should not be discriminated against because of them—is consistent with Leacock’s views on freedom of association. In *The Unsolved Riddle of Social Justice*, Leacock’s 1920 book on regulating and redistributing wealth to ensure fairness for workers and the poor, Leacock discusses people’s rights to believe what they wish:

A man has just as much right to declare himself a socialist as he has to call himself a Seventh Day Adventist or a Prohibitionist, or a Perpetual Motionist. It is, or should be, open to him to convert others to his way of thinking. It is only time to restrain him when he proposes to convert others by means of a shotgun or by dynamite, and by forcible interference with their own rights.⁵⁹

Leacock’s view is largely consistent with the rights now enshrined in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. The *Charter* guarantees Canadians the following fundamental freedoms:

- freedom of conscience and religion
- freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication
- freedom of peaceful assembly
- freedom of association

These freedoms mean that Canadians are free to believe things, free to organise groups, and free to try to change people’s minds. However, the *Charter* says that “reasonable limits” can be placed on these freedoms. Freedoms may be limited if to do so is demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society. This is why, for example, hate speech is not allowed in Canada.

1. Why are these freedoms vital for a functioning society?
2. What kind of limits to these freedoms do you believe are justified in a free and democratic society?
3. Are there ever circumstances where violence is justified as a means to bring about change?

⁵⁹ Leacock, Stephen. “The Unsolved Riddle of Social Justice.” In *The Social Criticism of Stephen Leacock*, edited by Alan Bowker, U of Toronto P, 1973, p. 118.

IN DEPTH: CHARITIES AND ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS

The Whirlwind Campaign in Mariposa to rid the Church of England of its massive debt seems focussed on anything but fundraising. The “plan that they set in motion” is that:

Each day the crowd would all agree to meet at some stated place and eat lunch together, – say at a restaurant or at a club or at some eating place. This would go on every day with the interest getting keener and keener, and everybody getting more and more excited, till presently the chairman would announce that the campaign had succeeded and there would be the kind of scene that Mullins had described. (87)

There is little focus on actually fundraising. With everybody on the committees, “it is awfully hard to try to find men to canvass” (93). In the end “the crowd began eating into the benefactions, and it got more and more complicated whether to hold another lunch in the hope of breaking even, or to stop the campaign” (93).

The campaign ends with the church only getting a \$100 donation from Mullins. This is the result of so little effort being put into fundraising, and because the organising committee spends the donations they do receive on meals for themselves.

The failure of the campaign raises questions about charity work in general. In particular, it raises questions about how much money charities spend on their programming, and how much money they spend on fundraising, management, and administrative functions.

WHAT IS A CHARITY?

The Oxford English Dictionary defines a charity as “a bequest, foundation, institution, etc., for the benefit of others, especially of the poor or helpless.” Charities are mainly funded by grants from charitable foundations, grants from the government, and private donations from individuals and corporations. The Salvation Army, the Public Legal Education Association of Saskatchewan, and the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals are all examples of Canadian charities that are registered with the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA).

When a charity is registered with the CRA, it receives special tax treatment. Generally, registered charities are exempt from income tax. As well, people who donate money or property to registered charities receive tax credits for their donations. Because of these tax implications, the CRA follows certain guidelines to determine what kinds of organisations can become a registered charity.

Canadian law has no specific definition of charity. Instead, what constitutes a “charity” has largely been defined through court cases. Courts have identified four broad categories of charitable activities. If an organisation is engaged in any of these activities, it can apply to be registered as a charity:

- relief of poverty
- advancement of education
- advancement of religion
- certain other purposes that benefit the community in a way the courts have said is charitable

All of an organisation's resources and activities (funds, personnel, and property) must be devoted to further its charitable purposes in order to be eligible for registered charity status.

In addition to being involved in any of the above activities, the CRA has a two-fold "public benefit test" required of charities:

- its purposes and activities provide a measurable benefit to the public; and
- the people who are eligible for benefits are either the public as a whole, or a significant section of it. The beneficiaries cannot be a restricted group or one where members share a private connection—this includes social clubs and professional associations.

If charities cannot meet these requirements, they cannot have registered status.

WHEN IS A CHARITY NOT DOING CHARITABLE WORK?

If a charity spends too much of its time and resources on fundraising and administrative activities, it risks losing its charitable status. This is because administrative work and fundraising activities do not directly benefit the public, so they are not considered charitable work. A few high-profile cases in recent years have shed light on registered charities that have not been sufficiently focussed on charitable work:

- In 2011 the Canada Revenue Agency stripped the Organ Donation and Tissue Transplant Association of Canada of its charitable status after it spent \$1.3 million of its \$1.8 million in cash donations on fundraising and administrative activities.
- Pediatric AIDS Canada/USA lost its charitable status in 2011 for having spent \$3.26 of its \$5.26 million in donations on fundraising and administrative activities.

As well, a 2016 report by CBC News raised questions about the salaries of administrators at large charities in Ontario. They found twenty people at charities who earned over \$250,000 per year.

In an effort to ensure accountability of charities, the Canada Revenue Agency publicly reports the financial details of every registered charity in the country. Revenue and expenses—including a breakdown of how much money it spends on charitable programming, how much money it spends on management and administration, and how much money it spends on fundraising—are posted online. These reports include a general breakdown of its employees' salaries. Information on every charity in Canada can be found at www.cra-arc.gc.ca/chrts-gvng/lstngs/menu-eng.html



HOW TO JUDGE A CHARITY'S WORK

Having a general idea of how much of a charity's resources are dedicated to charitable work can be helpful information. This is especially true for people who donate money to a charity and want to be confident that their donations are being put to good use. Yet, as the saying goes, a little information can be dangerous. The information reported to the public by the Canada Revenue Agency does not reveal much about any particular charity. It only reveals some general information about the charity and numbers without context. Information on the CRA website does not tell us:

- Exactly what kind of charitable programming a charity does
- How organisational and community challenges shape a charity's fundraising costs
- How similar jobs are compensated in the public and private sector

Every charity faces different circumstances and different challenges. Numbers alone do not reveal the specific context of each charity's work, and the appropriate amount for that charity to spend on management, administration, and fundraising activities.

Mark Blumberg—a lawyer who advises charities—perhaps best describes the way to determine the effectiveness of a charity. According to Blumberg:

Unfortunately, despite what some people say, there is no easy way to determine what is an efficient and effective charity. One suggestion: instead of fixating on ratios, pick one or two organizations that you care about and help them by volunteering. There is nothing like volunteering to see whether a charity is effective and actually making a real difference in people's lives.⁶⁰

By gaining first-hand information about the charity and by giving your time to help further their purpose, you can both contribute to the well-being of your community and gain a better understanding of the work that the charity does. It will tell you much more than a few numbers on the CRA website.

DISCUSS

1. Why must charities be able to fairly pay their employees for their work?
2. Over 40% of Canadians volunteer, and over 80% of Canadians donate to charity. Young people are the most engaged volunteers in Canada, with two-thirds of people aged 15-19 volunteering.
 - a) Have you volunteered for or donated to a charity?
 - b) What did you learn from the experience?
3. Re-examine the rules for gaining registered charity status in Canada.
 - a) Would the Whirlwind Campaign in Mariposa be able to register as a charity?
 - b) What lessons does this chapter provide for people involved in charities?

⁶⁰ Blumberg, Mark. "How Much Should a Canadian Charity Spend on Overhead?" globalphilanthropy.ca, p. 5. www.globalphilanthropy.ca/images/uploads/How_Much_Should_A_Canadian_Charity_Spend_on_Overhead_in_The_Canadian_Donor_Guide.pdf



SIX: THE BEACON ON THE HILL

SUMMARY

The Beacon on the Hill recounts the night that Mariposa's Church of England Church burns to the ground. Citizens "fought the fire, not to save the church... but to stop the spread of it and save the town" (101). Thanks to the firefighting skills of Josh Smith, the fire is contained to the church and the wooden shed behind it. The town is saved, but questions linger about whether the fire was an accident or an act of arson: the church was insured for twice its replacement value.

READING QUESTIONS

1. What was Dean Drone doing when he notices that the church is on fire? Why are fires so dangerous in towns like Mariposa?
2. Who is instrumental in keeping the fire from spreading? How does he do this?
3. The day after the fire, the townsfolk survey the damage:
...they talked of the loss that it was and how many dollars it would take to rebuild the church, and whether it was insured and for how much. And there were at least fourteen people who had seen the fire first, and more than that who had given the first alarm, and ever so many who know how fires of this sort could be prevented. (104)

Has there been a significant fire in your community? Did people react the same way?

4. How much money is the church insured for?
5. What is the "queer story" of how the fire started?
6. What is the fate of Dean Drone?
7. Pathos is the quality of evoking sympathy. It is an important aspect of Leacock's approach to humour. How does pathos explain the closing line of "The Beacon on the Hill"?

DEEPER UNDERSTANDING

"AGAINST THE INTRIGUES OF A SET OF INFERNAL SKUNKS THAT MAKE TOO MUCH MONEY ANYWAY": JUDICIAL OPINIONS

When a judge comes to a decision, their decision will often be put in writing. These written decisions form what is called the "common law." Common law is the body of precedents created by judicial decisions. When similar cases are tried in the future, judges will look back to earlier common law decisions for guidance.



Because common law decisions are meant to persuade people that the right decision has been reached, judges will often eloquently write their decision. As legal scholar Richard Posner says, when reading a judge's written decision:

What we can expect (though our expectations will frequently be dashed) is a perspicuous, even dramatic, bodying forth of the judge's concerns; a lucid presentation of arresting particulars; a sense of the relatedness of these particulars to larger themes; a sense of the intellectual world outside of law; a sense of history and of the Zeitgeist; a point of view that transcends the litigants' parochial concerns; a power of clear and forceful statement; a high degree of sensitivity to the expectations of the audience; a taste of brevity...; and a leavening of wit.⁶¹

This is a lengthy list of expectations. Some judge's rulings only meet a few of these expectations. Other judge's rulings meet almost all of these expectations. In fact, some decisions are so well-written, it has led people to study them as works of literature.

1. In *Sunshine Sketches*, the insurance company takes the church to court over the insurance payout. Judge Pepperleigh rules in favour of the church:

I do know that in upholding the rights of a Christian congregation – I am quoting here the text of the decision – against the intrigues of a set of infernal skunks that make too much money anyway, the Mariposa court is without an equal. (105)

What is being satirised? The insurance company? The church? The judge? Something else?

2. Do you see any of Richard Posner's expectations for a judicial decision being met by the text of Judge Pepperleigh's decision?

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Posner, Richard. *Law and Literature*, Third Edition, Harvard UP, 2009, p. 353

IN DEPTH: FICTION AND LITERARY LIBEL

The Beacon on the Hill—like most of the stories in *Sunshine Sketches*—can be traced back to real events in Orillia, Ontario. Mariposa's Church of England Church and its Dean Rupert Drone were based on Orillia's St. James' Anglican Church and its Canon Richard W.E. Greene. Like Drone, Greene was a widower. Greene's wife—the founding president of their Women's Auxiliary—passed away in 1906. And more significantly, just like Drone, Greene oversaw the construction of a new church.

St. James worshipped in a stone church when Reverend Greene arrived in Orillia in 1888. The building was much beloved by the congregation. However, Greene wanted to expand the facility. Unfortunately, the stone church's foundations and walls could not support structural expansion. So just like the old stone Church of England Church in *Sunshine Sketches*, the old stone St. James' Anglican Church in Orillia was pulled down to make way for a new building. The December 3, 1889 minutes of St. James' Building Committee describes what was to become of the old church:

The Old Church after the first of April be handed over to the Contractor with the exception of the seats, windows and their parts retained by the Wardens-the stove above ground in the new church to be taken from the heat stove in the present Church.⁶²

So much like Leacock's fictional church in *Sunshine Sketches*, "the stone of the little church was... devoutly sold to a building contractor" (75).

Orillia's new church opened in March 1891. Fifteen years later, the new church caught on fire. However, unlike the catastrophic fire at Mariposa's Church of England Church, St. James did not burn to the ground. The congregation of St. James was able to restore their building. And unlike Leacock's story, the fire at St. James was not a case of insurance fraud. In fact, church records show that St. James was forced to make financing plans to fund the restoration.

As can be seen, the circumstances of Dean Drone and Mariposa's Church of England Church are not far removed from the circumstances of Reverend Greene and Orillia's St. James' Anglican Church. But Leacock's version does not paint Greene and his stewardship of the church in a particularly good light. Stephen Leacock was not the first—and certainly will not be the last—fiction writer to base a character on someone from real life. So is there anything that the law can do if a person is lampooned by a writer?

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Saint James' Anglican Church. *Meeting of the Building Committee 1889-1892*. 3 December 1889.

DEFAMATION AND FICTION

Defamation is the injury of a person's reputation or good name. If it is written it is called libel. If it is spoken it is called slander. When a writer bases their fiction on real-life people and their lives, the writer risks being taken to court if the portrayal defames the real-life person. This has happened countless times. For example, in 2013 French author Christine Angot and her publishers were ordered to pay €40,000 in damages to Angot's ex-lover over the book *Les Petits*. The book's portrayal of Angot's ex-lover drove her to attempt suicide. As well, in the 1990s English author DJ Taylor was forced to settle out of court for basing one of the main characters of his novel *Real Life* on a pornographer he had met some years earlier.

Rodney Smolla, an American jurist, has summarised what authors should do to minimize the risk of being sued when creating characters based on real people:

When an author wants to draw from a real person as the basis for a fictional character, there are two relatively "safe" courses of action from a legal perspective: First, the author may make little or no attempt to disguise the character, but refrain from any defamatory and false embellishments on the character's conduct or personality; second, the author may engage in creative embellishments that reflect negatively on the character's reputation, but make substantial efforts to disguise the character ... to avoid identification. When an author takes a middle ground, however, neither adhering perfectly to the person's attributes and behavior nor engaging in elaborate disguise, there is a threat of defamation liability.⁶³

If a person believes that they have been defamed in a work of fiction, they could sue the author. For the suit to be successful, three arguments must be proven:

1. That the words would lower the person's reputation in the eyes of a reasonable person,
2. That the words refer to that person, and
3. The words were published.

If these three conditions are proven, then the author may be responsible for paying general damages for pain and suffering, and specific damages for any direct costs or loss of earnings that occurred because of the portrayal.

⁶³ Smolla, Rodney. "Could I Be Liable for Libel in Fiction?" *Rights of Writers*, 18 December 2010. www.rightsofwriters.com/2010/12/could-i-be-liable-for-libel-in-fiction.html

In the case of *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town*, many of the thinly-veiled characters could have created the possibility of a defamation lawsuit. Even though Leacock remarks in the preface that “I must disclaim at once all intentions of trying to do anything so ridiculously easy as writing about a real place and real people” (x), it is clear that *Sunshine Sketches* is about Orillia and its people. Legal scholars say that while such disclaimers can be helpful for lawyers to point to if a writer is accused of writing about real people, if the statement is not true it is not helpful.

Leacock was never taken to court by the real-life people he wrote about for his thinly-veiled, over-the-top portrayal of Orillia. However, Mel Tudhope, an Orillian lawyer and Leacock’s friend did send him “a mock letter threatening to sue me for libel against these people”⁶⁴. This was the closest Leacock ever came to being sued by someone in Orillia over *Sunshine Sketches*.

Today, the descendants of those people Leacock wrote about could not sue Leacock’s estate for defamation on behalf of their ancestors. The law of defamation generally follows the principle that “the dead cannot be defamed.” Claims of defamation are meant to protect a person’s reputation so that they can earn a living and remain in good standing in their community. Neither a person’s ability to earn a living nor their standing in a community can be altered once a person is dead. Therefore, the courts would usually not agree to hear such a case.

DISCUSS

1. Review Rodney Smolla’s advice to avoid lawsuits for libel. Do you think Leacock took reasonable precautions in *Sunshine Sketches* to avoid a libel suit?
2. Re-read the preface of *Sunshine Sketches*, especially Leacock’s disavowal of having written about a real place and real people (pages x-xi). Note that he says it was only his “intentions” not to write about a real place and real people. What does that mean?



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Sandwell, B.K. “Leacock Recalled: How the ‘Sketches’ Began.” *Saturday Night*, vol. 67, issue 46.



SEVEN: THE EXTRAORDINARY ENTANGLEMENT OF MR. PUPKIN

SUMMARY

The Extraordinary Entanglement of Mr. Pupkin discusses the backgrounds and personalities of several characters in *Sunshine Sketches*: Peter Pupkin, the junior teller at the Exchange Bank; Pupkin's roommate Mallory Tompkins, who worked at the Mariposa Times-Herald; Judge Pepperleigh, the district judge of Missinaba County; and Pepperleigh's wife Martha and children Neil and Zena.

READING QUESTIONS

1. Describe Judge Pepperleigh's temperament.
2. Judge Pepperleigh presides over the case where his son is accused of assaulting Peter McGinnis, the Liberal organiser.
 - a) How does Pepperleigh rule in this case?
 - b) What is Pepperleigh's reasoning?
 - c) Judges must excuse themselves from hearing cases where they are related to any of the litigants or lawyers involved. What do Judge Pepperleigh's actions tell us about the importance of this requirement?
3. Why would it "serve no purpose now" (113) to tell Judge Pepperleigh about the behaviour of his son Neil? Do you agree?
4. When discussing the gossip about the Pepperleighs, the narrator asks "But are you sure you know the other side of it?" (113). Why is this an important question to ask in any situation?
5. According to Duncan McDowall's history of the Royal Bank, "Just as a minister knew the secrets of a community's soul, so the banker knew its true financial worth. Thus the banker, however junior, had to act with discretion and rectitude"⁶⁵. Look back to how Pupkin discusses the town's finances on pages 114-115. Was Pupkin living up to this ideal?
6. Describe Mallory Tompkins and Peter Pupkin's debates on creationism vs. evolution.
 - a) Who wins these debates?
 - b) Why?
 - c) What do these debates tell us about having an informed opinion?
7. How does Peter Pupkin meet Zena Pepperleigh? Is it really "one of the strangest circumstances in the whole world" (119)?

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McDowall, Duncan. *Quick to the Frontier: Canada's Royal Bank*. McClelland and Stewart, 1993, p. 106.

DEEPER UNDERSTANDING

“WHEN A LIBERAL GOT IN IT MADE HIM MAD, AND HE SAID SO”: JUDGES AND POLITICAL CONNECTIONS

Judges are appointed to their jobs by the government of the day. This has led some people to suggest that judges are given their jobs because of political connections. This was a major concern in the past, especially in Leacock’s time. Then, the judges who were appointed almost always held a record of service to the ruling political party. However, in 1989 the federal government overhauled the judicial appointment system to help ensure that judges were appointed because of merit and not because of political leanings. The process continues to receive periodical reforms, including further improvements in 2016.

When there is an opening for a judge in a federal court of Canada, interested lawyers and judges can apply for the position. The applications are vetted by special committees made up of lawyers, judges, and the general public. The committees decide whether or not the applicant should be considered for the job. The names of the candidates that the committee deems qualified for the position are forwarded to the Minister of Justice. The Minister of Justice consults further and then makes final recommendations to the Cabinet. The Cabinet will then advise the Governor General of their decision on who should be given the position. The Governor General will act on the advice of the cabinet and appoint the judge.

The process for choosing judges for other courts is similar. For the Supreme Court, it is the Prime Minister—not the Minister of Justice—who makes the recommendation to the Governor General. As well, nominees to the Supreme Court must appear before a parliamentary committee to respond to questions. When provincial governments choose judges for provincial courts, they follow a process similar to how the federal government chooses federal court judges. The appointment is made by the Lieutenant Governor, upon the advice of the provincial Minister of Justice.

Judges remain in their positions until the age of 70 or 75 depending on the court, unless they retire early or are removed from office due to disciplinary reasons.

When a judge is sworn into office, their job is not to uphold the will of the political party who put them in power. Instead, they take an oath to “do right to all manner of people after the laws and usages of this realm, without fear or favour, affection or ill will.” This oath means that judges must make rulings based strictly on what the law says. There is ample evidence that judges follow this oath. For example, many laws created by Stephen Harper’s Conservative government were ruled to be unconstitutional by Supreme Court justices appointed by Stephen Harper’s government. These high-level rulings against the government demonstrate how the judicial appointment process in Canada has integrity: judges act to uphold the law, not party politics.

1. Why is it vital that for justice to be served, judges must come to conclusions on cases strictly based on what the law says and what the facts of the case are?
2. Would you have faith in a court run by Judge Pepperleigh?

“THE JUDGE HOWLED LIKE AN ALGONQUIN INDIAN”: HISTORICAL WRONGS AND RECONCILIATION

When Europeans arrived in North America, they largely considered Indigenous peoples to be “savages” and inferior civilisations. To Europeans, the land they arrived on was virtually empty or “terra nullius,” an idea used in international law to justify the takeover of land. The racist view of a few “savages” scattered about an “empty land” was the basis of the European approach to Indigenous peoples for hundreds of years: it was the accepted view in respectable intellectual circles, it was upheld in court cases, and it was assumed to be the truth by the vast majority of Europeans.

Like far too many Canadians of the past, Stephen Leacock held many of these views. *Sunshine Sketches* makes this evident in the passage “You get that impression simply because the judge howled like an Algonquin Indian when he saw the sprinkler running on the lawn” (113). As well, Leacock’s 1914 book *The Dawn of Canadian History* refers to Indigenous people as “savages,” claiming that there were only 20,000 Indigenous people across all of Canada at the time of contact. With the big picture, Leacock was wrong. Conversely though, it is noted in Allan Anderson’s *Remembering Leacock* that in person Leacock was exceptionally kind to Indigenous people and people of colour. Also, Ralph Curry’s biography of Stephen Leacock notes that Leacock’s mother Agnes—a guiding force in Leacock’s life—was highly regarded by the people of the Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation. And one of Leacock’s friends until his passing was Jake Gaudaur of the Métis Nation of Ontario, who he lionised in his essay “Bass Fishing on Lake Simcoe.”

Nevertheless, Leacock’s kindness in person does not negate his problematic academic views. These writings expose someone who was certainly a “man of his time” when it came to race and Indigenous people. As historian Margaret MacMillan said on CBC Radio One’s *Ideas*, “history reminds us that deeply held beliefs can often be deeply wrong, and they often can be held by very clever, very powerful people who have sources of all sorts of information and they still get it wrong”⁶⁶. For MacMillan, this reality can help give us all a sense of humility as we look to the past, the present, and the future.

One way our society has been looking to the past, present, and future is the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. As the Truth and Reconciliation commission says:

reconciliation is about establishing and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in this country. In order for that to happen, there has to be awareness of the past, acknowledgement of the harm that has been inflicted, atonement for the causes, and action to change behaviour.⁶⁷

Passages such as the one in *Sunshine Sketches* about Judge Pepperleigh’s temperament—possibly referring to a war cry given that the Algonquins were embroiled in many famous wars with the Iroquois to the south—perpetuated a false view of Indigenous people in general and Algonquin people in particular.

⁶⁶ “Rear View Mirror: Has the future ever looked like the past?” *Ideas*. CBC Radio One. www.cbc.ca/radio/ideas/rear-view-mirror-has-the-future-ever-looked-like-the-past-1.3878278, 28:10.

⁶⁷ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future*. 2015. www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Honouring_the_Truth_Reconciling_for_the_Future_July_23_2015.pdf, pp. 7-8.

Algonquin is an umbrella term for a cultural and linguistic group of Indigenous peoples that include the Mississauga, Ojibwe, Cree, Abenaki, Micmac, Malecite, Montagnais, and Blackfoot, who have lived for at least 8,500 years in the land now known as southern Quebec and eastern Ontario. The Algonquin language was considered a root language for many other Indigenous languages, so learning it became key knowledge for early fur traders who were pressing deeper into North America. Far from being a cry of anger, Algonquin language was important for building relationships between Europeans and Indigenous people. Unfortunately, despite the deep history and cultural importance of the Algonquin and other Indigenous languages, at least ten Indigenous languages have gone extinct in the past century. Of the 90 or so that remain today, almost all of them are endangered.

1. What kind of harm could passages like the one in *Sunshine Sketches* cause?
2. How can we atone for past wrongs such as this?
3. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission has recommended funding be put in place to preserve and teach Indigenous languages.
 - a) How does language instruction help build a mutually respectful relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in this country?
 - b) How can we change our actions in the future to ensure we are more respectful of Indigenous languages?



IN DEPTH: THE CONDUCT OF CANADA'S JUDGES

Mariposa's Judge Pepperleigh has a particular "judicial temper of mind" (109). Sometimes, he is prone to fits of anger. Other times, he is gentle and caring. And he spends many of his leisure hours sitting on his verandah reading foreign news and pronouncing imaginary sentences upon world leaders. There is little that seems consistent about Judge Pepperleigh except for his steadfast support of the Conservative Party. This almost-maniac personality is Pepperleigh's "broad, all around way," and it is said in *Sunshine Sketches* that this is a trait that "lots of judges have" (109).

Judge Pepperleigh—like every Mariposan—is obviously a satirical stretch. All of us—including Canada's judges—have human traits that include human weaknesses, and it is the role of the satirist to magnify these traits. However, it should be noted that Canada's judges take their position in the community very seriously. Judges are not in the habit of making public spectacles of themselves. Nor are judges involved in party politics. In fact, federally-appointed judges in Canada have a complex set of ethical principles that help guide their behaviour both in their job and in their communities.

JUDGES AND THEIR ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

Judges hold their office and their role in the community in high esteem. To help prevent criticism of their office and guide their actions, the Canadian Judicial Council has created *Ethical Principles for Judges*. This document provides guidance for how federal judges should act in their professional role and in the community. The document's principles include that judges:

- should not engage in public debates about their decisions. There is an expectation that their decisions will speak for themselves;
- should not participate in public discussions or hold membership in groups that address major social issues (with the exception of issues that directly affect the operation of Canada's courts). This is to help preserve the judiciary's reputation as being as non-biased as possible; and
- should not participate in partisan political activities. This is to ensure they remain above the political fray.

It is believed that when judges hold themselves to ethical principles, their standing in the community will remain high. As well, holding themselves to ethical principles helps to maintain a common understanding that judges make impartial decisions based on what the law says and what the facts of the cases are.

Just because judges hold themselves to high standards, and just because judges often stay out of the day-to-day fray of community organisation and politics, it does not mean that judges have no opinions or sympathies. The very fact that they must come to conclusions on the cases before

them means they must have opinions and sympathies. However, as was spelled out in the case *R.D.S. v. The Queen*:

True impartiality does not require that the judge have no sympathies or opinions; it requires that the judge nevertheless be free to entertain and act upon different points of view with an open mind”⁶⁸

This is why judges must treat everyone who appears in their court fairly and even-handedly. This is also why judges will not be pressured into making particular decisions by the government, the police, or private citizens.

The extremely high standards set out in the *Ethical Principles for Judges* help preserve the reputation and integrity of Canada’s judiciary and Canada’s legal system. Canadians in large believe that our judges are independent, impartial, and objective because they strive to act in such a way.

Mariposa’s Judge Pepperleigh, however, is a different story. He throws his canary cage into bushes because the canary won’t stop singing. He tells people that the country is going to the devil every time a Liberal gets into office. He gives favour to his own son in a court case. In real life not only would such behaviour be looked upon disapprovingly under the *Ethical Principles for Judges*, but he could be subjected to disciplinary action if a member of the public was to make a formal complaint about his actions.

DISCUSS

1. Sometimes judges act in ways that do not live up to their ethical principles. For example, in late 2016 a judge in Hamilton wore a “Make America Great Again” Donald Trump hat in court. The incident sparked 81 complaints to the Ontario Judicial Council. The Women’s Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF)—one of the complainants—was concerned that the judge’s “partisan display raises the appearance of, or apprehension of, a lack of impartiality, contrary to the principles of judicial ethics”⁶⁹. The Judicial Council largely agreed with the complainants, ruling that the incident was a single aberrant and inexplicable act of judicial misconduct. He was suspended for 30 days.

- a) Why would it be a concern if a judge wore a ball cap with a political slogan to court?
- b) The 81 complaints lodged against the hat-wearing judge outnumbered all complaints the judicial council received against all judges in the previous three years. What does this tell us about political sensitivities and the notion that judges must remain outside of partisan politics?

⁶⁸ qtd. in Canadian Judicial Council. *Ethical Principles for Judges*. https://www.cjc-ccm.gc.ca/cmslib/general/news_pub_judicialconduct_Principles_en.pdf, p. 38

⁶⁹ qtd. in Fine, Sean. “Hamilton judge who wore Trump hat in court to face disciplinary hearing.” *The Globe and Mail*, 19 April 2017. www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/ontario-judge-who-wore-trump-hat-in-court-to-face-disciplinary-hearing/article34756092/

EIGHT: THE FORE-ORDAINED ATTACHMENT OF ZENA PEPPERLEIGH AND PETER PUPKIN

SUMMARY

The Fore-Ordained Attachment of Zena Pepperleigh and Peter Pupkin recounts Zena Pepperleigh and Peter Pupkin's courtship. It is revealed that Pupkin comes from a wealthy family in the Maritimes with ties to the Pepperleighs. When Pupkin failed his law entrance exam, his family sent him to work in Mariposa's Exchange Bank and have his desires for luxury "thumped out of him" (134). It was this that led him to meet Zena Pepperleigh.

READING QUESTIONS

1. Describe Zena Pepperleigh and Peter Pupkin's courtship.
2. Judge Pepperleigh believes that anybody who earns more than \$3,000 per year (his salary) is overpaid. Mr. Muddleson, the high school principal, believes anybody who earns more than \$1,500 per year (his salary) is overpaid. Trelawney, the post-master, believes that anybody who earns more than \$1,300 per year (his salary) is overpaid. What is being said about how people view themselves and how people view others?
3. Stephen Leacock studied at the University of Chicago under the economist Thorstein Veblen. Veblen introduced the idea of "conspicuous consumption." It refers to how people will needlessly buy flashy things to enhance their image and social status.
 - a) How is the idea of conspicuous consumption challenged by this statement:
I don't know whether you know it, but you can rent an enchanted house in Mariposa for eight dollars a month, and some of the most completely enchanted are the cheapest. (123)
 - b) Do you agree with this statement?
4. Why is Pupkin in Mariposa? What is the relationship between the Pepperleighs and the Pupkins?
5. Why is Pupkin afraid of his family coming to Mariposa?

DEEPER UNDERSTANDING

"WITH ALL THE HARDIHOOD OF THE UNITED EMPIRE LOYALISTS": CANADA'S FIRST REFUGEES

Nearly a quarter of a million residents of the thirteen American colonies did not support the American Revolution. For various reasons, they remained loyal to the British Crown. About 100,000 of these people fled the colonies, mainly moving to the Maritimes. Called "United Empire Loyalists," they had diverse backgrounds: African Americans (mostly of western African descent), Europeans (mostly from England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland, Denmark, and Germany), and even about 2,000 Six Nations Iroquois from New York State.

The first waves of Loyalists arrived in 1783 and 1784, swelling the Maritime population. They arrived with few possessions and suffered many hardships and deaths in their first winter

here. Those who survived persevered and contributed much to the character of Canada today. According to the Canadian Encyclopedia, “Modern Canada has inherited much from the Loyalists, including a certain conservatism, a preference for ‘evolution’ rather than ‘revolution’ in matters of government, and tendencies towards a pluralistic and multi-ethnic society”⁷⁰.

1. A plaque at Loyalist House, a National Historic Site in Saint John New Brunswick, refers to the Loyalists as our first refugees. What does the Loyalist influx tell us about the importance of refugees to Canada?
2. Loyalist House sits on what was traditionally Welastekwewiyik land. Welastekwewiyik origin stories tell of a Creator without assigning a gender to that creator.
 - a) How does the Welastekwewiyik belief about gender and Creator differ from the gendered Creator of Western belief systems?
 - b) Mariposa reflects small-town Canada of its time. Almost everyone in a leadership role in Mariposa is male. If Western religions had a creator with no assigned gender, would our society have developed differently? How?

“YOUNG PUPKIN WAS KEPT OUT OF THE LAW BY THE FOOL SYSTEM OF EXAMINATIONS”: BECOMING A LAWYER

There are many requirements to meet before a person can practice law in Canada. First, a person must hold a law degree from a recognised law school. The College of Law at the University of Saskatchewan is one such school. To be accepted into Saskatchewan’s three-year program, applicants generally must complete at least two years of university and write the Law School Admission Test (LSAT). The LSAT measures certain abilities considered important to the study of law. After graduating from the law program, the Law Society of Saskatchewan generally requires graduates to article for one year with a practicing lawyer, to attend the Bar Admission Course during the articling year, and to write and pass the Bar examinations. Only once all these requirements are met can a person become a practicing lawyer.

These requirements are onerous. However, it was not always this way. In the past, entry into the legal profession did not necessarily mean completing a law program or writing exams. For example, in Upper Canada (now Ontario), it was possible from 1832-1857 to become an attorney simply by articling with practicing attorneys. There were no exams before or after the articling. This led to criticisms. Without tests, it was said, grossly-illiterate attorneys could be practicing law. In 1857, the examination processes were restored. Over the next twenty years, the Law Society of Upper Canada raised testing standards and established formal education programs for would-be lawyers. This education and testing controlled who could become a lawyer, thus strengthening the profession and reducing the risk of clients receiving incompetent representation from a lawyer.

1. A criticism of early law school programs was that “a student who allowed himself to become a mere copying machine was not fit to become a lawyer”⁷¹. Do you agree? Are schools “copying machines” that merely reproduce dominant thought processes?
2. Is it preferable that people such as lawyers meet defined, professional standards?

⁷⁰ “Loyalists.” *The Canadian Encyclopedia*. www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/loyalists/

⁷¹ Moore, Christopher. *The Law Society of Upper Canada and Ontario’s Lawyers, 1797-1997*. U of Toronto P, 1997, p. 116.

IN DEPTH: WORKING FOR THE BANK IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY

Peter Pupkin's life seems bleak. He lives in a rooming house. He earns \$800 a year. He is unable to marry because his salary is below the bank's minimum requirement for marriage. Pupkin's bleak life is similar to the life of most Canadian bank clerks at the time of *Sunshine Sketches*.

The working conditions for junior employees of Canada's banks traces back to the Scottish tradition of banking. According to Duncan McDowall's history of the Royal Bank *Quick to the Frontier*,

Scottish bank clerks led a dismal life, enduring low pay, little prestige, and stiff discipline, all in the interest of job security and later advancement. The entire apprenticeship experience in Scottish banking was intended to build character – accuracy, probity, and loyalty being key attributes of a tenured bank officer.⁷²

Young bank clerks usually lived in the bank. Their work and life were governed by complex rules and regulations. Clerks were required to stay debt-free, avoid financial speculation, and be ready and willing to move across the country to new branches at a moment's notice.

The banks believed that meeting these requirements would be easier if their clerks were not married. To the banks, marriage was a distraction that would lead to clerks taking on debt to buy a home and start a family. As well, marriage would complicate the bank's ability to move their young clerks around the country, and it would increase the costs of staff relocation. This is why bank clerks at the time were prohibited from marrying until their salary was \$1000 a year. It was a way that the banks could control their staff's life for their own benefit. *Sunshine Sketches* addresses this issue:

Pupkin's salary was eight hundred dollars a year and the Exchange Bank limit for marriage was a thousand.

I suppose you are aware of the grinding capitalistic tyranny of the banks in Mariposa whereby marriage is put beyond the reach of ever so many mature and experienced men of nineteen and twenty and twenty-one, who are compelled to go on eating on a meal ticket at the Mariposa House and living over the bank to suit the whim of a group of capitalists. (129)

Banks kept these policies until after World War II. The Royal Bank, for example, had restrictions on marriage until 1954.

An event that helped bring about the end of bank marriage policies was a 1939 court case in Scotland. It brought negative attention to how banks restricted marriage. In July 1935, Scotland Commercial Bank clerk William Notman announced that he would get married, against the bank's

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McDowall, Duncan. *Quick to the Frontier: Canada's Royal Bank*. McClelland and Stewart, 1993, p. 95.

will. The Commercial bank responded by dismissing Notman. In return, Notman took the bank to court. The case received international attention.

The bank's defence was that they dismissed Notman for his lacklustre job performance, not his marriage. While the specifics of the court case revolved around the bank's internal evaluation policies and whether or not Notman lived up to them, the public focussed on the bank's marriage restrictions. Novelist Eric Linklater perhaps best-captured public sentiment towards the banks when he wrote in the July 18, 1936 *New Statesman*:

Bankers ... are not the only people condemned to celibacy and three pounds a week. A priest of the Church of Rome is paid even less and promised more strictly to chastity. A priest of the Church, however, is compensated for these disabilities by his conviction that he is serving the kingdom of God, and such compensation may be thought sufficient.

But the bank clerk, wifeless, and underpaid, is serving a bank. Do the governors believe their prestige is equal to God's?⁷³

The jury decided the case in Notman's favour. He was awarded £1000 plus his court costs. The Commercial Bank appealed the ruling twice. They lost both times. While the ruling did not overturn the right of the Scottish banks to regulate marriage, the negative public attention undermined the banking industry's moral authority to regulate marriage. Soon banks began dropping their restrictions on marriage.

DISCUSS

1. How much control should an employer be allowed over the lives of their employees?
2. *Sunshine Sketches* makes an interesting point about how unchecked power of capitalists can lead to social unrest and even revolution:

Whenever Pupkin thought of this two hundred dollars he understood all that it meant by social unrest. In fact, he interpreted all forms of social discontent in terms of it. Russian Anarchism, German Socialism, the Labour Movement, Henry George, Lloyd George, – he understood the whole lot of them by thinking about his two hundred dollars. (129)

- a) Look up the reform and revolutionary movements in this passage. What was each group's critique of society? What was each group's vision for society? How did each group propose to achieve their vision for society?
 - b) When power is imbalanced in society, is there a risk of upheaval and even revolution?
3. Leacock was a conservative who opposed revolutionary socialism. However, he also believed there was a great deal that we could learn from socialism to improve society. What was Leacock trying to accomplish by including Pupkin's dissatisfaction with bank marriage policies in *Sunshine Sketches*?

73

McKinlay, Alan. "Banking, bureaucracy and the career: the curious case of Mr. Notman." *Business History*, vol. 55, no. 3, 2013, p. 439.

NINE: THE MARIPOSA BANK MYSTERY

SUMMARY

The Mariposa Bank Mystery recounts “one of the most impenetrable bank mysteries that ever baffled the ingenuity of some of the finest legal talent that ever adorned one of the most enterprising communities in the country” (142). While the identity of the late-night intruder at the Exchange Bank is never solved by any bank or law official, the intrusion paves the way for Peter Pupkin to marry Zena Pepperleigh.

READING QUESTIONS

1. In one of Pupkin’s suicidal moments, he picks up a copy of Immanuel Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*. However, he fails to read it. Kant’s book considers the foundations and limits of knowledge.
 - a) Look at Pupkin’s jealousy of the poet reading on the Pepperleigh’s porch. What was Pupkin’s reason for being jealous? How was Pupkin’s jealousy based on limited knowledge?
 - b) What are the risks of acting on limited knowledge?
2. When Pupkin hears the intruder in the bank, he remembers that “there was sixty thousand dollars in the vault of the bank below, and that he was paid eight hundred dollars a year to look after it” (144).
 - a) What is this passage saying about the imbalance of wealth in society?
 - b) Is this fair?
3. Who did Pupkin see in the bank’s basement? Who did Gillis see in the bank’s basement?
4. How do the details of Pupkin’s wound change as the story spreads throughout Mariposa? Is this generally how stories evolve as they are passed through a community?
5. What is the fate of Peter Pupkin and Zena Pepperleigh?
6. The Mariposa bank mystery is “one of the most impenetrable bank mysteries that ever baffled the ingenuity of some of the finest legal talent that ever adorned one of the most enterprising communities in the country” (142). Is anything in this statement true?
7. How does the chapter reveal that suicide is a poor idea?

DEEPER UNDERSTANDING

**“HALF THE WITNESSES WERE OFF WITH SHOTGUNS
AS SOON AS THE COURT WAS CLEARED”: CORONER’S
INQUESTS**

With the Mariposa Bank Mystery, the court is “summoned in inquest on the dead robber—though they hadn’t found the body” (149). Like most things in the Mariposa court, the proceedings devolve



into nonsense. When Henry Mullins testifies that he was hunting at the time of the shooting, the inquest shifts its focus from the “dead robber” to the best place for duck hunting. The inquest is then disbanded so people can head to the river to hunt.

Unlike the nonsensical situation in Mariposa, coroners serve an important role when a person dies in unexplained or unnatural circumstances. When a coroner investigates a death, they set out to confirm who died, where and when the person died, how the person died, and other circumstances of the death. The coroner has the authority to secure the scene, collect information, and inspect and seize documents or other possessions. In some cases, the coroner may order an autopsy of the deceased person. It does not determine whether someone is to blame for the death or whether criminal charges should be laid.

Sometimes a coroner will hold an inquest into a death. An inquest has a similar function to an investigation. However, an inquest is conducted more like a court hearing, and is generally open to the public. An inquest may be held if it is necessary to:

- find out the identity of the deceased and the cause of death
- inform the public about the circumstances of the death
- inform the public of dangerous practices or conditions, and recommend ways to avoid preventable deaths

The coroner calls witnesses to give testimony under oath. A jury decides the same issues that an investigation does, and makes recommendations for avoiding similar deaths in the future. Like an investigation, an inquest does not decide criminal or civil responsibility for a death.

1. Look into reports about recent coroner’s inquests in or around your community. Why is it important to hold inquests when deaths are violent or suspicious?



IN DEPTH: IDENTIFYING AND COMBATTING PROFILING AND RACIAL PROFILING

Profiling is when people are targeted by authorities based on stereotypes instead of reasonable suspicions. A common form of profiling is racial profiling. The Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) defines racial profiling as “any action undertaken for reasons of safety, security or public protection, that relies on stereotypes about race, colour, ethnicity, ancestry, religion, or place of origin, or a combination of these, rather than on a reasonable suspicion, to single out an individual for greater scrutiny or different treatment”⁷⁴.

When people act on stereotypes, they are acting on preconceived, oversimplified, and often prejudicial beliefs about a person’s characteristics. These beliefs are based on wider conceptions about their identity group. Far too often, stereotypes are false, negative, and used in hurtful ways.

Unfortunately, people in positions of authority—people who ought to know better—sometimes act on their stereotypical views. The OHRC report on racial profiling found such incidents having taken place:

- a law enforcement official assumes someone is more likely to have committed a crime because he is African Canadian
- school personnel treat a Latino child’s behaviour as an infraction under its zero tolerance policy while the same action by another child might be seen as normal “kids’ play”
- a private security guard follows an African American shopper because she believes the shopper is more likely to steal from the store
- an employer wants a stricter security clearance for a Muslim employee after September 11th
- a bar refuses to serve Aboriginal patrons because of an assumption that they will get drunk and rowdy
- a criminal justice system official refuses bail to a Latin American person because of a belief that people from her country are violent
- a landlord asks a Chinese student to move out because she believes that the tenant will expose her to SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) even though the tenant has not been to any hospitals, facilities or countries associated with a high risk of SARS⁷⁵

The report points to studies by psychologists and criminologists who research the impact of profiling. These studies show that such incidents are not just mere inconveniences. Rather, they have profoundly negative impacts on the well-being of the person who has been profiled. As well, profiling has a broader negative effect on the social harmony of the wider community.

While racial profiling has received much-needed attention in recent years, Mariposa bank mystery suggests that people have been acting on false and negative views of “others” for some time. Because *Sunshine Sketches* was written at a time when Canada and its narratives were

74 Ontario Human Rights Commission. *Paying the price: The human cost of racial profiling*. www.ohrc.on.ca/en/paying-price-human-cost-racial-profiling

75 Ontario Human Rights Commission.

predominantly white, the profiling in Mariposa is not race-based. Rather, the shooting at the bank is used by the police in Missinaba County to profile “vagrants and suspicious characters” in a misguided attempt to ensure security and public safety:

a number of arrests – mostly vagrants and suspicious characters – were made.... One man was arrested twenty miles away, at the other end of Missinaba County, who not only corresponded exactly with the description of the robber, but, in addition to this, had a wooden leg. Vagrants with one leg are always regarded with suspicion in places like Mariposa, and whenever a robbery or a murder happens they are arrested in batches. (151)

While the people profiled were white, the underlying foundation is the same: people being singled out because they are “different.”

Because profiling and racial profiling can happen in so many situations, there is not a single approach to follow if you or someone you know suspects that it has taken place. That said, the African Canadian Legal Clinic has put together a helpful Anti-Racial Profiling Toolkit. While its suggestions are primarily based on incidents of police engaging in racial profiling, the toolkit has advice that can be adapted for any suspected incident of racial profiling. According to the ACLC, relevant considerations for determining if racial profiling took place include:

- statements were made to indicate the existence of stereotyping or prejudice (such as racial slurs)
- a non-existent, contradictory, or changing story is given for why someone was subjected to greater scrutiny or differential treatment
- an explanation is offered that does not accord with common sense
- the situation would have unfolded differently had the person been from a non-profiled group
- the person in the position of authority overstepped their powers⁷⁶

The method of reporting the incident will depend upon who has oversight of the person that is suspected of racial profiling. It could be reported to the police oversight watchdog, the provincial human rights commission, or the school board for example.

It is important to take action in incidents of racial profiling. However, perhaps the best way to combat profiling and especially racial profiling over the long term is to help build a non-racist, non-judgmental society. This is not easy work. It includes becoming aware of your own prejudices, and helping others see their prejudices. Working towards this will not only reduce racial profiling, but it will also build public trust.



DISCUSS

1. The Ontario Human Rights Commission says that “Stereotyping becomes a particular concern when people act on their stereotypical views in a way that affects others. This is what leads to profiling. Although anyone can experience profiling, racialized persons are primarily affected”⁷⁷.
 - a) Why are profiling and racial profiling wrong?
 - b) What kinds of harms will profiling create for the people targeted? For society as a whole?
2. Have there been incidents of profiling and racial profiling in your community? What can you do to reduce and end it?
3. Profiling existed in *Sunshine Sketches*, a book written over 100 years ago. What does this tell us about the pervasiveness of this problem? What does this tell us about human nature?



TEN: THE GREAT ELECTION IN MISSINABA COUNTY

SUMMARY

The Great Election in Missinaba County recalls the excitement in Mariposa as a federal election campaign gets into swing. Henry Bagshaw, the Liberal Member of Parliament for Missinaba County, learns that hotelier Josh Smith will be running against him as a Conservative. Smith's platform of prohibition and a restrictive trade tariff with the United States leaves Bagshaw feeling as though he has been "struck with a club" (167).

READING QUESTIONS

1. The election is described as "a waving of flags and a beating of drums" (155).
 - a) What does this description mean?
 - b) Is this like elections today? If so, how?
2. Voters are said to be able to "decide the most complicated question in four seconds" (156).
 - a) Is this true? Does the average voter believe that they know the solution to almost any problem put before them?
 - b) What do you think would happen if the average voter's four-second solution was put into action?
3. What is the motivation for people who vote Conservative? What is the motivation for people who vote Liberal?
4. When Dean Drone expresses support for Liberals in his church, all the Liberals get up and leave. Similarly, when the Presbyterian minister expresses support for the Conservatives, all the Conservatives leave his church.
 - a) What is being said about people's willingness to listen to viewpoints that differ from their own?
 - b) Does this problem of not listening to others still exist today?
5. Review the description of Henry Bagshaw on page 162. Who is he? Why does he have so many contradictory attributes? What is being said about politicians?
6. Bagshaw tells Tompkins:

Can't you manage to get some articles in the other papers hinting that at the last election we bribed all the voters in the county, and that we gave out enough contracts to simply pervert the whole constituency. Imply that we poured the public money into this county in bucketsful and that we are bound to do it again. Let Drone have plenty of material of this sort and he'll draw off every honest unbiassed vote in the Conservative party. (165)

Aside from the reason he gives, why would Bagshaw plant a story in the papers about handing out bribes and public money?

DEEPER UNDERSTANDING

“KING GEORGE HAD SENT OUT A WRIT”: WHEN AN ELECTION IS CALLED IN CANADA

When a federal election is called, it is often said that the writ is dropped. “Writ” refers to the formal written order specifying the candidate nomination deadline and the day of the election. Writs are signed by the Governor General and sent to the returning officer of every constituency in the country. After the election, the returning officer writes the name of the winning candidate on the back of the writ and returns it to the Chief Electoral Officer. So unlike the saying, no writs are actually dropped when an election is called. This makes “drop the writ” an idiom. Its origin is believed to come from the statement “draw up the writ.”

1. Writs offer no reason for an election other than saying that a new parliament is to be elected. Why would it say in *Sunshine Sketches* that King George “sent out a writ or command for Missinaba County to elect for him some other person than John Henry Bagshaw because he no longer had confidence in him” (158)?

“THE DOMINION OF CANADA HAD SPENT OVER TWO THOUSAND DOLLARS IN SHAVING THAT FACE”: POLITICIAN’S IMAGES AND THE PUBLIC PURSE

Several comments are made about public money being spent on Bagshaw’s personal grooming. “He had... a smooth statesmanlike face which it cost the country twenty-five cents a day to shave” (161), and he “wore a long political overcoat that it cost the country twenty cents a day to brush, and boots that cost the Dominion fifteen cents every morning to shine” (161).

The narrator ironically quips “But it was money well spent” (161).

Spending public money on the grooming of a politician may seem obscene, but it happens quite often. Some of the most famous examples in recent history come from France, where president after president has spent countless euros on makeup and hair stylists. It has been a problem in Canada, too. For example, Senator Mike Duffy spent \$10,000 on a personal trainer. As well, former Prime Minister Stephen Harper once had a personal stylist on the public payroll.

Even though Canadian politicians have moved away from paying for their personal grooming with public money, they have found other ways to spend public dollars to manage their image. For example, every Prime Minister since Pierre Trudeau has had a photographer document their time in office, paid for out of the Prime Minister’s communications budget. These photographers are justified because they are creating a historical record of the Prime Minister’s time in office. However, their photographs are also used while the Prime Minister is in office, distributed in order to enhance the Prime Minister’s public image.

1.
 - a) Is it okay for politicians to spend public money on personal grooming, so that they look better to the public?
 - b) Is money spent on photographers different? If so, how?
2. What does spending money on Bagshaw’s image tell us about the human nature of politicians? What does it tell us about the human nature of voters?

IN DEPTH: IDEOLOGY AND LEACOCK'S CLASSIC LIBERALISM

Understanding the criticism that Stephen Leacock is making of our electoral system in the “The Great Election in Missinaba County” and “The Candidacy of Mr. Smith” can be helped by understanding Stephen Leacock’s political ideology. However, defining Leacock’s politics is a difficult task. A survey of his writings often reveals a conflicted—though not necessarily contradictory—mind. For example, Leacock is a champion of democracy: “The principle of democratic rule has now become a permanent and essential factor in political institutions”⁷⁸. He is an Imperialist, loyal to the British Empire: “Nor is it ever possible or desirable that we in Canada can form an independent country”⁷⁹. As discussed in the chapter activities for “The Ministrations of the Rev. Mr. Drone,” he is not religious: “We have kicked out the devil as a ridiculous and absurd superstition, unworthy of a scientific age”⁸⁰. As discussed in the chapter activities for “The Extraordinary Entanglement of Peter Pupkin,” he certainly shares many of the disappointing views of his times about race: “The disaffected had found a leader in Louis Riel, a cracked visionary who had enough megalomania for two rebellions and not enough capacity for one”⁸¹. And as discussed in the chapter activities for “The Candidacy of Mr. Smith,” his views on gender are at times cringe-worthy: “Practically all of the world’s work is open to women right now, wide open. *The only trouble is that they can’t do it*” (his emphasis)⁸².

Religiosity aside, it should thus come as little surprise that Leacock was a life-long supporter of the Conservative Party. However, to narrowcast him through this lens would be a mistake. His ideal political party, he writes in *My Discovery of the West*, would combine “the empire patriotism of the Conservative, the stubborn honesty of the Liberal, the optimism of the Socialist, the driving power of the Social Creditor, and the unsullied enthusiasm of all who write the banner on the name and inspiration of youth”⁸³. Further, regardless of how terribly-dated many of his above-stated views are, those stances—while representative—only represent *part* of Leacock’s thinking. Leacock realises that at its worst democracy produces the election “of genial incompetents popular as spendthrifts; of crooked partisans warm to their friends and bitter to their enemies; of administration by a party for a party; and of the insidious poison of commercial greed defiling the wells of public honesty”⁸⁴. He supports Imperialism because Canada’s greatness could make us an equal partner with England “in an Empire, permanent and indivisible”⁸⁵. While Leacock is

78 Leacock, Stephen. *Elements of Political Science*. New and Enlarged Edition, Constable & Company, Ltd., 1921, p. 46.

79 Leacock, Stephen. “Greater Canada: An Appeal.” In *The Social Criticism of Stephen Leacock*, edited by Alan Bowker, U of Toronto P, 1973, p. 10.

80 Leacock, Stephen. “The Devil and the Deep Sea: A Discussion of Modern Morality.” In *The Social Criticism of Stephen Leacock*, edited by Alan Bowker, U of Toronto P, 1973, p. 44.

81 Leacock, Stephen. *Canada: The Foundations of its Future*. Montreal: House of Seagram, 1941, p. 165.

82 Leacock, Stephen. “The Woman Question.” In *The Social Criticism of Stephen Leacock*, edited by Alan Bowker, U of Toronto P, 1973, p. 57.

83 Leacock, Stephen. *My Discovery of the West*. T.H. Best Printing Company, 1937, p. 256.

84 Leacock, Stephen. “The Unsolved Riddle of Social Justice.” In *The Social Criticism of Stephen Leacock*, edited by Alan Bowker, U of Toronto P, 1973, p. 114.

85 Leacock, “Greater Canada,” p. 4.

not religious, he holds that society's morality was established by "past ages'... authoritative moral code"⁸⁶. Leacock's disdain for Riel is tempered by a belief that the Métis uprising at Red River was "warranted, the anger justified. The government of Canada had been guilty of at least gross neglect"⁸⁷. And even though Leacock harbours an unfortunately traditional view of women, he also views legislation that positively discriminates against them as "a gross injustice. There is no defence for it"⁸⁸.

Perhaps, though, the writing that best reveals the interplay of Leacock's conservative mindset, his gentle nature, and his respect for popular will can be found in—of all places—a 1943 piece he wrote on corporal punishment. In it he relays that as a student, being caned was a point of pride because "[we] perhaps felt hurt by it but not degraded. On the contrary, it gave one something of the feeling of a veteran at the wars." Leacock waxes nostalgic for his years as a schoolmaster, having "licked no less than eight cabinet ministers, two baronets, and four British generals—to say nothing about one-half of the bench and the bar in Toronto." However, Leacock does not view these past experiences as an unassailable dictum for how society should be directed into the future: "But, observe that once the idea arises that physical punishment is a degradation, then it is. It has got to go. It is, as soon as you reflect upon it, mere barbarism"⁸⁹. Leacock, it seems, was not a static thinker and would respect the popular will.

Gerald Lynch uses the label "tory-humanist"⁹⁰ to describe Leacock. In making this claim, Lynch looks to Charles Taylor's *Radical Tories*, an exploration of the roots of Canada's "red tory" movement. The book cites Leacock's influence on its development. Canadian red tory conservatism descended from the British Tory tradition, and was influenced by the French and the United Empire Loyalists (see the chapter activities for "The Fore-Ordained Attachment of Zena Pepperleigh and Peter Pupkin"). This background created a conservatism that was wholly different than the United States' libertarian-based conservatism. "Unlike the caricatured capitalist," writes Taylor, "Canadian conservatives believe in an organic society and the mutual obligations among all classes. Which is why... they embrace the principle of social justice and even the welfare state"⁹¹. Taylor's views were written before the rise of the Reform Party in the late 1980s: many people would argue that Reform shifted Canadian conservative values closer to American conservative values. However, the idea of a conservative who embraces social justice and the welfare state can be argued to be a reasonable—though not perfect—description of Stephen Leacock.

Understanding Leacock's foundational political beliefs can be done through a look at Leacock's immensely-popular 1906 textbook *Elements of Political Science*, revised and expanded in 1913 and again in 1921. *Elements of Political Science* was Leacock's best-selling book. Equally helpful is his much briefer 1942 treatise *Our Heritage of Liberty*. These two books can help provide a base to understand Leacock's guiding ideological principles.

86 Leacock, "The Devil," p. 45.

87 Leacock, *Canada*, p. 165.

88 Leacock, "Woman Question," p. 57.

89 Leacock, Stephen. "Stephen Leacock on 'caning.'" *The Clearing House*, vol. 17, no. 6, 1943, p. 368.

90 Lynch, Gerald. *Stephen Leacock: Humour and Humanity*. McGill-Queen's UP, 1988, p. 4.

91 qtd. in Lynch, p. 3.

In *Our Heritage of Liberty*, Leacock demonstrates impressive knowledge of the origin and theory of the state, from the Greeks through to the French Revolution and beyond (even if he is guilty, as historian Margaret MacMillan says, of galloping through them). His first stop in recent manifestos relevant to modern thought is Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*. Typical of Leacock's penchant for simplification, he credits Smith with the rise of individual economic theory and boils down *Wealth of Nations* to its main theme: enlightened self-interest allows for an invisible hand to lead to betterment for all⁹². With lineage-based generalisation, Leacock also credits Smith for being "a Scot, thorough and cautious. He made a job of it, took twelve years and a thousand pages, and when the book was done, there was nothing more to say for a generation"⁹³. *Elements of Political Science* sticks to the explanatory, acknowledging the "general economic harmony"⁹⁴ brought about by Smith's work.

Neither book invests any critique exclusively into Smith's theory. This is peculiar. Not only is critique commonplace in most of Leacock's writing, but a generous portion of Leacock's 1903 doctoral dissertation, *The Doctrine of Laissez Faire*, is devoted to deconstructing *Wealth of Nations*. (Leacock wrote an even more devastating critique in 1935, "What is Left of Adam Smith?") While his dissertation does not strike down the overall intent of *Wealth of Nations*, it demonstrates its contradictions and shortcomings. The "serious qualifications"⁹⁵ that Smith's theory requires for free markets to actually function leaves Leacock to acidly declare "so much then for the general principle itself"⁹⁶.

Where Leacock does address general shortcomings with laissez-faire beliefs is in his next stop in *Our Heritage of Liberty*, John Stuart Mill. To be clear, Leacock holds Mill's beliefs in the highest regard. He says that "Mill stands with his feet firm" in his claim that individuals must be given the right of expression⁹⁷. Leacock conveys that John Stuart Mill speaks with "immortal dictum"⁹⁸ when claiming that there must be some "part of the life of every person within which the individuality of that person ought to reign uncontrolled... some space in human existence thus entrenched around and sacred from authoritative intrusion"⁹⁹. And Leacock even declares that *Liberty* is the "best expression ever given to the reasoned idea of individual freedom"¹⁰⁰. Where Leacock's critique surfaces is with Mill's advocacy for government to provide public services¹⁰¹, and Mill's

92 Leacock, Stephen *Our Heritage of Liberty*. John Lane the Bodley Head, 1942, p. 47.

93 Leacock, *Heritage*, p. 47.

94 Leacock, *Elements*, p. 344.

95 Leacock, Stephen. "The Doctrine of Laissez Faire." In *My Recollection of Chicago and the Doctrine of Laissez Faire*, edited by Carl Spadoni, U of Toronto P, 1998, p. 23.

96 Leacock, "Doctrine," p. 58.

97 Leacock, *Heritage*, p. 50.

98 Leacock, *Heritage*, p. 50.

99 qtd. in Leacock, *Heritage*, p. 50.

100 Leacock, *Heritage*, p. 48.

101 Leacock, *Heritage*, p. 48.

belief that the government must coin money and operate a postal service¹⁰². To Leacock, these qualifiers are blazingly inconsistent with Mill's theories of liberty. However, they are also of "such obvious convenience and general utility as entirely to warrant the violation of individual liberty involved"¹⁰³. To Leacock, this is not so much an abdication of principle as it is a demonstration of the "difficulties [that] show how hard it is to follow consistently the thread of a single principle in a maze of circumstance"¹⁰⁴.

While a believer in individual liberty, Leacock believes that in practice it must have limits. To demonstrate this, Leacock props up anarchism in *Our Heritage of Liberty*. Quickly tracing through its peaceful ideological history and later associations with violent uprising, Leacock concludes that anarchism is only useful as a philosophy. Central to this criticism, Leacock writes:

It claims that there is no need for government at all. If you and I want to do anything in common we can do it by voluntary agreement. Our neighbours can join in with us. If we need protection at night we can club together and hire a watchman. That scheme of course is admirable for arranging a picnic or a fraternity dance, but mere insanity as applied to the conduct of all society.¹⁰⁵

Leacock says that reality has shown that people cannot all agree, thus forcing the compulsion of authority and the need for government to act to ensure the general welfare of citizens¹⁰⁶. For Leacock, anarchism simply cannot be implemented in practice.

While *Elements of Political Science* does not touch on anarchism, it still pillories extreme individualism. There, Leacock goes after individual liberty rooted in biological beliefs, or what would now be called social Darwinism. Leacock pointedly observes that:

If the sole test of fitness to survive is found in the fact of survival, then the prosperous burglar becomes an object of commendation, and the starving artisan an object of contempt. If it is assumed that widows will die unless the government helps them, and that usurers will grow rich unless the government stops them, this seems a very poor reason for saying that widows *ought* to die and usurers *ought* to grow rich.¹⁰⁷

Willingness to follow a biological doctrine of survival of the fittest to its logical outcome is so flawed and inhumane to Leacock, it "hardly needs detailed refutation"¹⁰⁸.

102 Leacock, *Elements*, p. 342.

103 Leacock, *Elements*, p. 342.

104 Leacock, *Heritage*, p. 50.

105 Leacock, *Heritage*, p. 52.

106 Leacock, *Heritage*, p. 52-53.

107 Leacock, *Elements*, p. 346.

108 Leacock, *Elements*, p. 346.

Leacock's discounts of extreme individualism serve to illustrate his agreement with Mill. "In short," he writes, "any government must not only protect its citizens, but it must act positively in many ways for the general welfare"¹⁰⁹. However, with all the qualifications required of Mill's (and, for that matter, Smith's) theories, Leacock is left to question if in practice, this is so much a doctrine of liberty as it is a doctrine of social solidarity and collective action¹¹⁰.

Where social solidarity and collective action go too far into authoritative intrusion for Leacock is socialism, the last ideological stop in *Our Heritage of Liberty*. Leacock's consistent, lifelong view is that socialism is a dangerous and impossible proposition. That being said, Leacock is never entirely dismissive of the concept, either. In rationalising socialism as a theory, he lays out Karl Marx's argument that:

the more free the competition the more the weak are trampled by the strong. People with no property, he says, have to sell their labour power to people with property, who wouldn't buy it unless it brought in more than they gave for it. Seen thus, individual liberty and equality are not bread but a stone. What does it profit a man to have the right to refuse work, if refusal means starvation?¹¹¹

One of Leacock's main quibbles with how socialism proposes to solve this problem is that he believes that people are not constituted to work by voluntary effort. (He excludes many academics and professionals from this critique on the basis of their work being more like play.) Instead, Leacock holds that people are generally self-interested and predisposed to want to work for their own private gain, not for the public good¹¹². His summary refutation of socialism in *Our Heritage of Liberty*, however, is noteworthy in its backhanded tribute:

It is proper, however, to pay to the *idea* of socialism, not to the practice of it, the tribute which fittingly belongs to it. There can be no doubt of the underlying inspiration which explains its appeal to younger minds, to people entering upon life and cherishing high ideals. The notion of all people working together in cheerful comradeship sounds vastly better, after all, than the stingy maxim, "every man for himself." The only difficulty with socialism... is that it doesn't yet work; it is too good; if the day ever comes when we are good enough for such a system, then we shall need no system at all.¹¹³

Somewhat cryptically, in *Elements of Political Science* Leacock even goes so far as to suggest that socialistic theory contains "a great deal that is true and extremely useful in directing the proper

109 Leacock, *Heritage*, p. 53.

110 Leacock, *Heritage*, p. 49.

111 Leacock, *Heritage*, p. 54.

112 Leacock, *Heritage*, p. 55.

113 Leacock, *Heritage*, p. 56.

measures of social reform”¹¹⁴. Leacock’s textbook does not, however, explicate what specifically he finds useful in it for reform.

Concrete examples of where Leacock would go with reform can be found in his 1921 treatise *The Unsolved Riddle of Social Justice*. Though long on rhetoric and short on concrete proposals—most of it is a blistering though at times misguided critique of socialism—its solutions to economic inequality offer quite progressive proposals. Here is an understanding of how Leacock would find resolution to his life-long frustration with society’s failure to fairly distribute wealth. Leacock believes it is necessary for the government to provide paid work for the unemployed, maintenance for the infirm and aged, and education and opportunity for children¹¹⁵. For workers, minimum wage must be legislated and the work day reduced to something around four or five hours¹¹⁶. The means to pay for Leacock’s proposals are progressive income taxes reaching 50%, and taxes on profits and inheritance “never dreamed of before”¹¹⁷. Cautious of socialism, such reforms are to be done in a manner so that the “vast mass of human effort must still lie outside the immediate control of the government”¹¹⁸. Leacock was so convinced of these policies, he declares that “no modern state shall survive”¹¹⁹ without implementing such reforms. It is really *The Unsolved Riddle of Social Justice* that most concretely illustrates, at least in a prescriptive policy sense with relation to political economy and the market’s unequalising nature, how Leacock would apply Smith’s belief that “[t]hose exertions of the natural liberty of a few individuals which might endanger the security of the whole society... ought to be restrained by the laws of all government”¹²⁰.

While defining Stephen Leacock’s politics is a difficult task, it is possible to understand his general framework of underlying philosophical beliefs. Leacock believes in democracy. He is an advocate of individual liberty. He accepts the self-interested individual as reality. He champions the redistribution of resources across society. And he envisions the state’s role in the economy as police, not producer. There is no doubt that Leacock was behind the curve on gender and race issues, very much reflecting the views of his time. However, when it came to social welfare and economic redistribution, Leacock was particularly perceptive about the benefits and shortcomings of classic liberalism. In this sense, he was far ahead of most of the politicians of his day.

114 Leacock, *Elements*, p. 354.

115 Leacock, *Unsolved*, p. 140.

116 Leacock, *Unsolved*, p. 143.

117 Leacock, *Unsolved*, p. 141.

118 Leacock, *Unsolved*, p. 141.

119 Leacock, *Unsolved*, p. 140.

120 qtd. in Leacock, “Doctrine,” p. 26.



DISCUSS

1. Even though Leacock was a conservative, many of his university students have remarked that his course reading lists spanned political ideologies. This is consistent with John Stuart Mill's belief that people should learn about ideas from the idea's proponents as well as the idea's opponents. As Mill said in *On Liberty*:

Nor is it enough that he should hear the arguments of adversaries from his own teachers, presented as they state them, and accompanied by what they offer as refutations. That is not the way to do justice to the arguments, or bring them into real contact with his own mind. He must be able to hear them from persons who actually believe them; who defend them in earnest, and do their very utmost for them. He must know them in their most plausible and persuasive form; he must feel the whole force of the difficulty which the true view of the subject has to encounter and dispose of; else he will never really possess himself of the portion of truth which meets and removes that difficulty.¹²¹

Leacock practiced this idea in his teaching. As a result, many of his students went on to become not conservatives but rather leading socialist thinkers of the early- and mid-twentieth century.

- a) Do you agree? Does a person who only knows their own side of a case truly know the situation?
 - b) Do all views merit equal time and equal respect?
 - c) How can you ensure that you have all the information you need to form a valid opinion?
2. Historian Margaret MacMillan says that for Stephen Leacock, "the profound problem facing the twentieth century was one of the fair distribution of society's goods"¹²². Has society yet solved this problem?
 3. What ways do you see Leacock's politics reflected in his election chapters?
 4. In what ways do you see Leacock's politics kept out of his election chapters?

¹²¹ Mill, John Stuart. *On Liberty*. Penguin Classics, 1974, pp. 98-99.

¹²² MacMillan, Margaret. *Stephen Leacock*. Penguin Canada, 2009, p. 90.



ELEVEN: THE CANDIDACY OF MR. SMITH

SUMMARY

The Candidacy of Mr. Smith continues the story of the federal election campaign. Literally overnight, Josh Smith becomes a British Imperialist as he bears the Conservative banner against incumbent Liberal Henry Bagshaw and Independent candidate Edward Drone. The campaign devolves into appeals based on meaningless statistics, shady tactics, and self-interest. Smith proves victorious with the help of supporters who “vote and keep on voting till they make you quit” (181).

READING QUESTIONS

1. When Josh Smith begins his run for office as a Conservative, he hoists a British flag over his hotel then “watched the flag fluttering in the wind” (168).
 - a) What does this line mean?
 - b) Aside from hoisting the British flag, what other changes does Smith make at his hotel?
2. The positions of three candidates are summarised by their promotional materials:
 - SMITH AND BRITISH ALLEGIANCE reads the Conservative banners
 - BAGSHAW AND LIBERTY, BAGSHAW AND PROSPERITY, VOTE FOR THE OLD MISSINABA STANDARD BEARER reads the Liberal banners, and
 - DRONE AND HONESTY reads the single Drone banner.

Expand on the positions of each of the candidates.

3. What happens to Drone’s banner? What is the significance of this?
4. What is Josh Smith’s strategy for dealing with the press? How do the papers report their interview with him?
5. Describe the phenomenon of the political buggies campaigning in the countryside.
6. Review Bagshaw’s speech on pages 174 and 175.
 - a) Is he really trying to “depart leaving as little animosity behind me as possible” (174)?
 - b) What is lost for democracy when people demonize their political opponents?
7.
 - a) What mistake does Smith make about his prohibitionist platform?
 - b) Smith’s updated prohibition policy tries to appease everyone:
A declaration in favour of such a form of restrictive license as should promote temperance while encouraging the manufacture of spiritous liquors, and by a severe regulation of the liquor traffic should place intoxicants in the hands of those fitted to use them. (177)
 - c) How is the prohibition debate in Mariposa similar to Canada’s decriminalisation of marijuana?
8. Describe the bandwagon effect on election day. How do people react when they think a candidate is leading? What is being said about human nature?

DEEPER UNDERSTANDING

WOMEN AND THE VOTE

The women's suffrage movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century succeeded in getting women the right to vote. One of the critics of this movement was Stephen Leacock. In the October 1915 *Macleans* magazine, he wrote what can only be viewed from today's vantage point as a very unfortunate and condescending essay. "The Woman Question" acknowledged that women's right to vote was an inevitability. However, Leacock believed that the right to vote would change little about society for women.

Leacock based his position on a belief that women often did not have characteristics needed for full participation in the workforce. In 1915, there were few jobs available to women and those jobs that were available were underpaid. Leacock said "to turn a girl loose in the world to work for herself, when there is no work to be had, or none at a price that will support life, is a social crime"¹²³. He said that giving women the right to vote would not solve this. Rather, the remedy "is bound up with the general removal of social injustice, the general abolition of poverty"¹²⁴. As such, Leacock believed that the state must create social welfare legislation to support women and to ensure that they did not need to rely on marriage to survive.

Suffragist Nellie McClung eloquently and tartly responded to critics such as Leacock in the May 1916 *Macleans*. "Speaking of Women" said that men were afraid of granting women equal rights because men were afraid of losing their domestic help. McClung pointed out that 30% of women were already in the work force, though she did not address the issue of wage inequality. McClung said that even if the claim that women were physically inferior to men was true, this was no reason to deny women the vote because "the exercising of the ballot does not require physical strength or endurance"¹²⁵. To the point that the world was full of injustice, McClung responded "Is it any comfort to the woman who feels the sting of social injustice to reflect that she, at least, had no part in making such a law?"¹²⁶. As such, McClung believed that women had every right to have an equal say in the public affairs of the nation.



¹²³ Leacock, Stephen. "The Woman Question." In *The Social Criticism of Stephen Leacock*, edited by Alan Bowker, U of Toronto P, 1973, p. 60.

¹²⁴ Leacock, 59.

¹²⁵ McClung, Nellie. "Speaking of Women: Anti-Suffrage Reasoning." In *Nellie McClung Readings*, Famou5 Foundation, p. 4.

¹²⁶ McClung, p. 4.

In the end, the arguments of Nellie McClung and the “Famous Five” suffragettes who fought for women’s rights won the day. Manitoba was the first province to grant women the right to vote in 1916. Alberta and Saskatchewan soon followed. However, it was not until 1951 that every province and territory allowed women to vote in their elections.

1. Liberal democracies like Canada are at least theoretically based on the concept that ideas should be openly exchanged through rational debate. Ultimately, the best ideas should prevail. Leacock’s and McClung’s essays in *Macleans* help demonstrate this concept at work.
 - a) Is peaceful dialogue always the best way to deal with social injustice?
 - b) Is violence ever justified as a means to enact change?
2. Leacock was passionately opposed to the prohibition of alcohol, and the women’s suffrage movement was closely linked with prohibition campaigns. Do you think this would have influenced Leacock’s opinion on granting women the right to vote?
3. Examining our past is complex. Canadians today are right to view Leacock’s views on women as wrong. The suffragists were on the right side of history regarding the right to vote. However, the suffragists held other views that Canadians now view as wrong-headed. McClung and some of the “Famous Five” campaigned for prohibition, were Imperialists with racist beliefs, and even advocated for eugenics.
 - a) Canadian historian Margaret MacMillan points out that “We don’t like ambiguity—we want people to be either thoroughly bad or thoroughly good. We want heroes ... but I think you have to look at a person’s whole record”¹²⁷. Discuss this statement.
 - b) How can we celebrate the glorious aspects of our past while acknowledging the scandalous aspects of our past?

“NEARLY TWO CIGARS TO ONE WERE SMOKED IN HIS COMMITTEE ROOMS AS COMPARED WITH THE LIBERALS”: PUBLIC OPINION POLLING

Public opinion polling can be a useful tool for understanding how citizens feel about an issue. However—especially during election campaigns—the focus on polling can sometimes overshadow other issues. Polls are reported on daily and people watch the ups and downs like sports scores. In fact, polling stories are consistently one of the most popular reads on the Canadian political news aggregator National Newswatch. However, public opinion polls are only one way that people attempt to gauge the popularity of political parties and their candidates. Other measures that people commonly use to gauge the level of support include money fundraised, party rally attendance, numbers of lawn signs, and amount of social media followers.

Regardless of the method of measurement, people like to know who is winning or losing in politics. Jon Krosnick, a public opinion polling expert, told *Macleans* that “there’s a natural tendency of humans to want to know about what others do, what they think.... It’s the principle of wisdom

¹²⁷ qtd. in Carlson, Kathryn Blaze. “What happens when the heroes of the past meet the standards of today?” *National Post*, 14 May 2011. <http://nationalpost.com/news/what-happens-when-the-heroes-of-the-past-meet-the-standards-of-today>

of the crowd”¹²⁸. In other words, people look to popular opinion to help form their own opinion. This makes polls useful for understanding public feelings about an issue, a party, or a candidate.

What polls cannot do is provide in-depth information about an issue, a party, or a candidate. To make an informed decision, citizens need to understand broader concepts than just the level of public support. Why is the issue now being discussed? What underlies the issue? How will the issue affect the lives of all citizens? To build understandings like these, citizens must look beyond popular opinion polls.

1. Do polls inform voters or influence voters?
2. The more information people have at their disposal, the better able they will be to make an informed decision: polls can be helpful this way. But is time spent looking at polls better-spent exploring issues?

“VOTE AND KEEP ON VOTING TILL THEY MAKE YOU QUIT”: VOTER FRAUD IN CANADA

Charles Power, a long-standing Canadian Liberal politician, wrote in his memoirs that:

The [voter] lists used in [the 1908 federal] election were provincial lists which had been compiled two or more years earlier, and contained the names of many dead and absent persons. However, by a custom regarded as common and ordinary, the votes of the dead and absent were not lost but were made good use of by both contesting parties.¹²⁹

Stories of voter fraud like this—where people would cast additional votes by pretending to be someone they are not—are legendary in Canadian political lore. However, Elections Canada says that voter fraud has never been widespread in Canada, historically or presently.

Today, there are processes to ensure that people do not vote more than once. To vote in a federal election you must be on the federal electors list. Voters can register for the list in advance or register on polling day. As well, voters must show identification when they vote. While these rules on registration and on using ID help prevent fraud, they have an unfortunate side-effect: they can create problems for voters such as the homeless or students living away from home who may have difficulties providing valid identification with an address.

1. What difficulties would students or homeless people have in obtaining proper identification so that they can vote?
2. How could this be remedied?
3. Why is it important that voting be made as accessible as possible? How do we balance that concern with ensuring that voter fraud does not take place?

128 qtd. in Cheadle, Bruce. “How useful are political polls?” *Macleans*, 4 May 2015. www.macleans.ca/politics/how-useful-are-political-polls/

129 qtd. in Elections Canada. *A History of the Vote in Canada*. Second edition, p. 56.

IN DEPTH: “THE DEFINITIVE ANALYSIS” OF CANADA’S 1911 RECIPROCITY ELECTION

Historian Jack Granatstein has called the election campaign in *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* “the definitive analysis”¹³⁰ of Canada’s 1911 federal election. This election pitted Sir Wilfred Laurier’s Liberals against Robert Borden’s Conservatives. The Liberals had been in power for 15 years, and were seeking a fourth mandate. When the writ was dropped, the Liberals held 133 seats in the 221-seat House of Commons. The Conservatives held 85.

The major election issue in 1911 was an all-encompassing trade agreement the Liberal government negotiated with the United States. The agreement—known as Reciprocity—was to open up trade between Canada and the United States, largely at the expense of inter-Canadian trade and trade with the British Empire. Canadians initially embraced the deal. However, by the time the agreement was put to the House of Commons for debate and vote, public support for it was faltering. Because the Liberals had a majority in the House of Commons, the only way the Conservatives could stop the vote was by waging a filibuster. A filibuster is a method of stalling legislative procedures by indefinitely dragging on debate about it. Faced with a paralysed parliament, Laurier asked the Governor General for an early election. The Governor General agreed, and the writ was dropped. While several issues were at play in the campaign, the key question was the Reciprocity agreement. The agreement was framed as a question of whether Canada would remain part of the British Empire, or be pulled into the orbit of the United States.

The fictional election in *Sunshine Sketches* is much like the 1911 Reciprocity election. *Sketches’* election chapters open with the statement that:

It was a huge election and that on it turned issues of the most tremendous importance, such as whether or not Mariposa should become part of the United States, and whether the flag that had waved over the school house at Tecumseh Township for ten centuries should be trampled under the hoof of an alien invader, and whether Britons should be slaves, and whether the farming class would prove themselves Canadians” (155).

This opening is similar to the Conservative Party’s 1911 campaign manifesto. The manifesto included a statement from Robert Borden that said:

We pledge ourselves to a course of policy and administration which will maintain independent and unimpaired the control of our own affairs by the Parliament of Canada: a policy which, while affording no just cause of complaint to any foreign nation will find its highest ideal in the autonomous development of Canada as a nation within the British Empire.

In the past we have made a great sacrifice to further our national ideals; we are now face to face with a misguided attempt to throw away the result of these sacrifices.¹³¹

130 Granatstein, Jack. *Yankee Go Home? Canadians and Anti-Americanism*. HarperCollins, 1997, p. 43.

131 “Mr. Borden Issues a Manifesto to Canada.” *The Ottawa Journal*, 15 August 1911, p. 12.

Just as in *Sunshine Sketches*, the 1911 election was presented to voters as being about the preservation of Canada.

The rhetoric about Reciprocity and our national identity during the 1911 election was heated. The front page headline of the September 21 Toronto *World* blazed “Which will it be? Borden and King George or Laurier and President Taft?”¹³². Such headlines reflected the fears that Reciprocity was a path to annexation by the United States. These fears were inflamed by statements coming from American political leaders. Champ Clark, the Speaker of the US House of Representatives, speculated that Reciprocity was the beginning of the end of Canada. In a speech that was well-received by American lawmakers, Clark said “I look forward to the time when the American flag will fly over every square foot of British North America up to the North Pole”¹³³. As well, US House of Representatives member William Bennett introduced a resolution that the United States should begin talks with Britain on how to annex Canada¹³⁴. Because Bennett was opposed to Reciprocity, people have speculated that he did this only to inflame Canadians. These actions from American lawmakers helped the Conservatives paint themselves as defending Canada and its British connection from hostile and invasive American forces.

In this battle, Canadian corporations and farmers tended to line up with whatever side best-suited their financial interests. The powerful railways and banks supported the Conservative Party. To them, Reciprocity would shift trade to a north-south pattern. This would break down the east-west trade routes that the government had created, the railways built up, and the banks financed. The same was true for Canadian meat packers who did not believe they could compete with American competitors. Grain millers also opposed Reciprocity because they feared that grain would be shipped south and milled in the United States. Canadian fruit growers, also at a distinct disadvantage to their American counterparts, opposed Reciprocity. On the other hand, the most notable proponents of Reciprocity were western grain farmers. Western grain farmers relied on central and eastern Canada to sell their grain. They believed that freer trade with the United States would open up new markets and reduce their transportation costs.

With all the talk of the changes in the trade of goods, people were wondering what would happen to the price of goods. Reciprocity’s proponents said that the agreement would drive up the prices of raw materials to the benefit of Canadian producers. However, they also argued that Reciprocity would drive down the price of consumer goods. There may be economic merit to this argument. However, the premise that the prices of raw goods would go up while the prices of end-product would go down defied the “common sense” of most voters. The complexities of this debate was not helped by each side flooding newspapers with statistics about the comparative prices of commodities on both sides of the border. A similar thing happened in Leacock’s *Mariposa*, satirically twisted by comparing unrelated goods. The *Mariposa Newspanet* “absolutely proved that the price of hogs in Mariposa was decimal six higher than the price of oranges in Southern California and the average decennial import of eggs into Missinaba County had increased four decimal six eight two in the last fifteen years more than the import of lemons in New Orleans”

132 qtd. in Macquarrie, Heath. “Robert Borden and the Election of 1911.” *The Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, vol. 25, no. 3, August 1959, p. 278.

133 qtd. in Allan, Chantal. *Bomb Canada: And Other Unkind Remarks in the American Media*. Athabasca UP, 2009, p. 17.

134 Allan, 18.

(172). In Canada and especially in Mariposa, everyone had an opinion but very few people actually knew what they were talking about.

While the Reciprocity agreement was the major focus of the 1911 campaign, it was not the only issue discussed. There was also a major anti-patronage theme to the campaign. At the time, virtually every government job and contract was given to supporters of the political party in power. Because the Liberals had been in power federally since 1886, by 1911 they had built up considerable leverage through their patronage. Just as John Henry Bagshaw says in *Sunshine Sketches*, “we gave out enough contracts to simply pervert the whole constituency.... we poured the public money into this county in bucketsful and that we are bound to do it again” (165). It was independent candidate Edward Drone who took up the anti-patronage cause in *Sunshine Sketches*, but in the federal election it was the Conservatives who took up the cause. However, the Conservative stance against patronage was “a major irony” because provincial Conservative governments in Manitoba, Ontario, and BC were engaged in rampant patronage themselves. In fact, these provincial governments used their patronage appointees to come to the aid of their federal Conservative counterparts during the election campaign¹³⁵.

Especially in Quebec, another major issue was Imperial defence. The establishment of a Canadian navy through the *Naval Service Bill* was controversial throughout Canada. Quebec nationalists feared the creation of a Canadian Navy would allow too much British interference over Canadian affairs, as a Canadian Navy would be at the beck and call of Great Britain. Conversely, many Conservatives in the rest of Canada argued that an independent navy was a step away from the Imperial connection with Britain. As Laurier lamented, “I’m branded in Quebec as a traitor to the French. And in Ontario as a traitor to the English. In Quebec I’m attacked as an Imperialist, and in Ontario as an anti-Imperialist”¹³⁶. The issue of Imperial defence also appeared in Mariposa, and Josh Smith had no idea what to do about it. He simply defaulted to the position that “I’m fer it too” (171) upon learning that the Conservatives in Ottawa were in favour of it.

In the end, there were several issues at play in the 1911 election, but the focus was on Canada’s future as either a member of the British Commonwealth or a satellite of the United States. After the votes were counted, Robert Borden became Prime Minister as the Liberals and Conservatives switched positions in the House of Commons. The Liberals won 85 seats, the Conservatives 132. Four seats went to independent candidates. Despite the huge shift in seat counts and the heated rhetoric of the campaign, there was only a 6% swing in the popular vote from the Liberals to the Conservatives. Nevertheless, the 1911 election is still viewed as one of the most important in Canadian history. Many scholars believe that Reciprocity “played the decisive role”¹³⁷. The election entrenched Canada’s loyalty to the British Empire for years to come, and in many ways entrenched a view that Canada must remain independent of the United States. As Robert Borden said, “We must decide if the spirit of Canadianism or Continentalism shall prevail on the northern half of the continent”¹³⁸.

135 Johnstone, Richard and Michael B. Percy. “Reciprocity, Imperial Sentiment, and Party Politics in the 1911 Election.” *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 13, no. 4, December 1980, p. 722.

136 qtd. in “The 1911 Federal Election.” *Telling Times*, CPAC, 2007. www.youtube.com/watch?v=az3sxlMvzpQ, 5:36

137 Macquarrie, 283.

138 Borden, Robert. *His Memoirs, Volume 1*, McClelland and Stewart, 1969, p. 157.



DISCUSS

1. In Mariposa, voters blindly repeated meaningless statistics instead of deeply-considering facts:

I suppose there was no place in the whole Dominion where the trade question—the Reciprocity question—was threshed out quite so thoroughly and in quite such a national patriotic spirit as in Mariposa. For a month, at least, people talked of nothing else. A man would stop another in the street and tell him that he had read last night that the average price of an egg in New York was decimal ought one more than the price of an egg in Mariposa, and the other man would stop the first one later in the day and tell him that the average price of a hog in Idaho was point six of a cent per pound less (or more, — he couldn't remember which for the moment) than the average price of beef in Mariposa.

People lived on figures of this sort, and the man who could remember most of them stood out as a born leader. (173)

The kind of behaviour—blindly repeating statistics with no broader context—is contrary to the idea of critical thinking. According to Robert Reich:

Critical thinking means not accepting what you are simply told or what you read or what you hear, but looking behind it. Asking whether it sounds real, whether it sounds logical and coherent. Critical thinking also means not to accept any conspiracy theory or plot you might hear, but actually look for evidence. Critical thinking means to look for facts and analysis and logic. And that is I think what all of us are obliged to do.¹³⁹

- a) Do we tend to parrot the claims of individuals we agree with, without looking into the facts they are presenting?
 - b) How can we verify the information we consume?
 - c) Can a democracy properly function if voters do not engage in critical thinking?
2. Mariposans often act in self-interest rather than broader public interest:

Here and there you might see Edward Drone, the Independent candidate, wandering round from farm to farm in the dust of the political buggies. To each of the farmers he explained that he pledged himself to give no bribes, to spend no money and to offer no jobs, and each one of them gripped him warmly by the hand and showed him the way to the next farm. (172-173)

 - a) Do you think voters view their own personal gains as more important than the broader interests of society?
 - b) What is the risk to society if people fail to consider interests outside their immediate sphere?
 - c) Why must the common good be a central feature of democracy?

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"The Rise of the Anti-Establishment: Where do we go from Here?" *Ideas*. CBC Radio One. www.cbc.ca/radio/ideas/the-rise-of-the-anti-establishment-where-do-we-go-from-here-1.4077287, 37:30

TWELVE: L'ENVOI. THE TRAIN TO MARIPOSA

SUMMARY

L'Envoi closes out *Sunshine Sketches* with an imagined train ride back to Mariposa from the city. Unlike the rest of the book, there is little humour in the closing narration. It is a reflection of shared humanity and how almost everyone has roots in “the little Town in the Sunshine that once we knew” (191).

READING QUESTIONS

1. What are the three definitions of home for the narrator?
2. In the crowd on the train, how is the narrator able to determine who is from the city and who is from Mariposa?
3. Why is the narrator nervous about returning?

DEEPER UNDERSTANDING

“AS IF THEY WERE ALL ONE FAMILY”: KINDLINESS AND HUMOUR

Sunshine Sketches has been continuously in print since it first appeared in 1911. Suggesting its importance, University of Ottawa English professor Gerald Lynch believes that it “should be recognized as the first masterpiece of Canadian fiction”¹⁴⁰ While it is always difficult to determine exactly what makes some books classics and what leaves other books forgotten, novelist Eleanor Catton provides a clue about the nature of fiction that may help explain the lasting appeal of *Sunshine Sketches*. Catton believes that love and redemption are an important part of any book. “As a reader,” says Catton, “it is very hard to fall in love with a book that is vicious at its heart, or cowardly or mean-spirited”¹⁴¹.

Catton’s belief in the need for kindness in fiction holds some similarities to Leacock’s views on humour. In all of Leacock’s writings about humour, he insists it must be kindly: “students of writing will do well to pause at the word *kindly* and ponder it well”¹⁴². Beyond kindness, Leacock believes that humour in its best form—what he calls sublime humour—should be a mixture of laughter and pathos that provides “prolonged and sustained conception of the incongruities of life itself”¹⁴³.



¹⁴⁰ Lynch, Gerald. “From Serial to Book: Leacock’s Revisions to *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town*, *Studies in Canadian Literature*, vol. 36, no. 2, p. 109.

¹⁴¹ “‘The Luminaries’ with author Eleanor Catton.” *The Sunday Edition*. CBC Radio One. www.cbc.ca/radio/popup/audio/listen.html?autoPlay=true&clipIds=2415677228&mediaIds=2415676713&U=%5Bobject%20object%5D&contentarea=radio&contenttype=audio, 29:49.

¹⁴² Leacock, Stephen. *How to Write*. John Lane the Bodley Head, 1943, p. 213.

¹⁴³ Leacock, Stephen. “American Humor.” *Essays and Literary Studies*, John Lane, 1916, p. 92.

(Pathos is the quality of evoking pity or sadness.) So while there is much critique of small towns and human traits in *Sunshine Sketches*, it is difficult to say that the book is vicious, cowardly, or mean-spirited. Rather, it seems to exude a love for the Mariposas of Canada, even if Canada's Mariposas are inherently flawed places.

1. How does L'Envoi create pathos? What impact does it have on *Sunshine Sketches* as a whole?
2. Do you agree with Catton's idea that books that are vicious cannot be loved?
3. L'Envoi closes by saying that we all have roots in "the little Town in the Sunshine that once we knew" (191). Is this true? Are we all—at least in some ways—like the people of Mariposa?

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

1. Novelist Robertson Davies has an interesting take on the importance of humour in *Sunshine Sketches*:

Strip the book of humour, and what do we have? A community in which the acknowledged leaders are windbags and self-serving clowns, and where the real leader is an illiterate saloon-keeper; a community that sees financial acuity in a lucky little barber who makes a one-in-a-thousand killing in the stock-market; a community that will not support a church, but will swindle an insurance company with a fraudulent fire; a community in which an election is shamelessly rigged; to say nothing of a community where a school-teacher who takes an occasional glass of beer is “the one who drinks” (and thus an unfit person to receive a raise in pay), where the captain of the lake-boat cannot keep it off a shoal, and where a chance encounter between a nightwatchman and a bank clerk becomes a tale of heroism.¹⁴⁴

Do you agree? Are the people of Mariposa a collection of a town full of incompetents and self-serving clowns? If so, how does the humour of *Sunshine Sketches* mask this?

2. According to *Sunshine Sketches*, “the Mariposa court, when the presiding judge was cold sober, and it had the force of public opinion behind it, was a terrible engine of retributive justice” (9). Retributive justice is the idea that if a wrong is committed, there should be some form of proportional punishment (“an eye for an eye”). However, retribution is only one idea about how to achieve justice. Two other ideas about justice are influential in Canadian law: restitution and restoration:
 - Restitution is the idea that the offender must repay the victim for lost or stolen goods or otherwise make amends for the wrong committed.
 - Restoration is largely an Indigenous concept that recognises that everything is connected. A crime disturbs the harmony of these connections. The remedy to a crime should be determined by the needs of victims, the community, and the offender. Restoration is meant to heal victims and communities while encouraging the offender to confront the consequences of their actions. It is to restore things as much as possible to how they were before the crime.
 - a) Look at the incidents of Judge Pepperleigh and the Mariposa Court in *Sunshine Sketches*. How is the court a tool of retributive justice?
 - b) Which of the above three concepts of justice seem the most fair?
 - c) How can these three ideas about justice be used together?

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Davies, Robertson. *Stephen Leacock*. Toronto, ON: McClelland and Stewart, 1970, pp. 25-26.

3. Stephen Leacock believes that on their own, laws will do little to shape society. He says:

We have become children of legislation. We reach out for a law. For each and every social ill our misguided democratic system has made us demand a remedy in the form of a statute. We have grown to despair of individual morality. We legislate ourselves into sobriety, into early rising, into Sabbath keeping, into thrift. We no longer realize that the law is only the letter; behind it is the spirit or it fails.

The truth is that effective legislation must follow public opinion and not proceed and coerce it. It is not the burglary laws that keep most of us from theft. It is something out of which the burglary laws arose.¹⁴⁵

- a) Do you agree that effective laws must follow public opinion and not proceed and coerce it?
 - b) Are there times that we need to make laws to regulate people's behaviour?
 - c) Think of the flaws of the people in *Sunshine Sketches*. Would laws be able to correct these flaws?
4. Novelist Timothy Findlay says that *Sunshine Sketches* "is narrated by a character, presumably Leacock himself, who knows all and tells all"¹⁴⁶. What do you think? Is the book's narrator a made-up character? Or is it Stephen Leacock himself? How would this impact your understanding of the book?
5. Novelist Guy Vanderhaeghe says that "a writer defines his fictional universe as much by what he excludes as by what he includes"¹⁴⁷. Consider this statement with respect to Leacock and *Sunshine Sketches*.
6. Many questions have been asked about *Sunshine Sketches* in this learning resource. Stephen Leacock believes that "[to] analyze is often to destroy"¹⁴⁸. Do you agree?

¹⁴⁵ Leacock, Stephen. "The Revision of Democracy." *Papers and Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Political Science Association*, vol. 6, 1934, p. 15.

¹⁴⁶ Findlay, Timothy. "Riding off in All Directions: A Few Wild Words in Search of Stephen Leacock." In *Stephen Leacock: A Reappraisal*, edited by David Staines, U of Ottawa P, 1986, p. 8.

¹⁴⁷ Vanderhaeghe, Guy. "Leacock and Understanding Canada." In *Stephen Leacock: A Reappraisal*, edited by David Staines, U of Ottawa P, 1986, p. 20.

¹⁴⁸ qtd. in MacMillan, Margaret. *Stephen Leacock*. Penguin Canada, 2009, p. 60.

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