



Nonsense Novels

Stephen Leacock, Daniel Handler (Introduction)

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A gift? Yes-a gift for you. You're welcome.—*from the introduction by Daniel Handler*

Nonsense Novels sends up the silliest conventions of the ghost story, the detective story, the rags-to-riches story, the adventure story, the shipwreck story, and, of course, the story itself. Among other things. Here the close cultivation of cliché yields a bumper crop of absurdity and the utterly ludicrous turns up at every new twist of the tale.

This is a satirical masterpiece. Stephen Leacock was a genius.

Nonsense Novels Details

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Author : Stephen Leacock , Daniel Handler (Introduction)

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From Reader Review Nonsense Novels for online ebook

Ben Loory says

this is a very funny collection of short satirical fables written by leacock in the early 20th century. i wanted to love it love it love it and sometimes i did but in the end i only just thought it was really good. some truly perfect sentences though. i would never have thought this kind of thing was being written that long ago.

Rosemarie says

Some of the stories in this collection were amusing, others less so. In the spoof of various types of novels, Leacock does make some points about the society of the time, especially mocking the greedy and the selfish. The only story I really enjoyed was the last one, "The Man in Asbestos", the most serious and thoughtful story of the ten.

Richa says

Really liked it. Contrary to it's name, the stories actually are sensible. Provided you read between the lines. Satire at its best.

Bart Williams says

At the turn of the century, thanks in large part to Walter Scott, gothic novels were all the rage. And many of them sucked. Sucked hard. Lords, shadows, stormy nights... If you have ever had to cram 'Jane Eyre' for an English literature exam, forced yourself to endure 'Mill on the Floss' or 'Jude the Obscure', or felt utterly beaten by Mary Shelley, this is the perfect remedy. What more can I say? Oh, except, yes, 'Gertrude the Governess, or Simple Seventeen.' You will never view mining techniques in Rumania with a straight face again. Bua-ha-ha-ha-ha. Ha.

Bree (AnotherLookBook) says

A collection of humorous short stories that parody popular genres like the sleuth story, medieval tale of chivalry, tragic Russian romance, and paranormal mystery. 1911.

Full review & other book recommendations at [Another look book](#)

Hands-down the funniest short story collection I've ever read. Maybe even the funniest writing I've ever read?!? I can't wait to enjoy more of Stephen Leacock's humor writing!

Also, something cool I learned from Wikipedia: in 1911 (the year Nonsense Novels was published), it was

said that more people had heard of Stephen Leacock than had heard of Canada. As in, Canada THE COUNTRY. (Where he lived and published, by the way, though he was English-born.)

Lucy Furr says

Nonsense Novels was recommended to me by my friend Jason and I'm so very glad he did. The stories within are absolutely absurd, but they are brilliant and hilarious because of it. But then again, some of the genres these stories mock are equally absurd, though they are not nearly as entertaining to read.

"Guido the Gimlet of Ghent" was far and away my favorite of the stories, followed closely by "Sorrows of the Super Soul" and "Soaked in Seaweed", but everything in *Nonsense Novels* is a good read and there are tons of great lines that made me laugh out loud, which is very rare for me when I read, I usually laugh on the inside when I'm alone. One line in particular from the Guido story really struck me as hilarious:

"The love of Guido and Isolde was of that pure and almost divine type, found only in the middle ages."

It may be funnier to me than others because I had recently proofread an essay about life in the middle ages, part of which dealt with the love stories that came from the time period and how they were, in short, overly romanticized due to the poor quality of life and a need to take their minds off it. And while that certainly isn't a symptom that has been confined to the middle ages its seems to ring truer during that time period than any other. Only in the middle ages, indeed.

Anyhoo, if you love satire, you should love these stories. If you don't love satire, well, then, I feel very sorry for you. I've heard rumors that you can buy a sense of humor on eBay for a very reasonable price.

Laura says

Free download available at Project Gutenberg.

Debbie Zapata says

Another author I stumbled across at Project Gutenberg, and read this month for a Literary Birthday Challenge. I might not have liked Mr. Leacock in person: note this from the wiki article about him *He opposed giving women the right to vote, disliked non-Anglo-Saxon immigration...* but this Canadian writer (again quoting wiki) *between the years 1915 and 1925, Leacock was the most popular humorist in the English-speaking world.* And one last wiki quote: *...the American comedian Jack Benny recounted how he had been introduced to Leacock's writing by Groucho Marx when they were both young vaudeville comedians.*

Maybe it was knowing this last little tidbit that made me think about so many comedy teams while I was reading Leacock's 1911 book *Nonsense Novels*. I could just imagine a combination of The Marx Brothers, Abbot and Costello, and maybe Danny Kaye all getting together to act these stories out on The Carol Burnett Show.

There are ten stories here, each one poking fun at various genres of fiction. From the detective with supposed incredible powers of deduction in **Maddened by Mystery: or, The Defective Detective** to the young man who goes to sea to earn his fortune in **Soaked in Seaweed: or, Upset in the Ocean (An Old-fashioned Sea Story.)** I was giggling all the way through the book.

My two favorites were **Guido the Gimlet of Ghent: A Romance of Chivalry** which tells of the ill-fated love between Guido and Isolde, two lovers who have never met. Here is a description of Isolde when we first meet her:

Isolde the Slender stood upon an embattled turret of the castle. Her arms were outstretched to the empty air, and her face, upturned as if in colloquy with heaven, was distraught with yearning.

Anon she murmured, "Guido"—and bewhiles a deep sigh rent her breast.

Sylph-like and ethereal in her beauty, she scarcely seemed to breathe. In fact she hardly did.

Willowy and slender in form, she was as graceful as a meridian of longitude. Her body seemed almost too frail for motion, while her features were of a mould so delicate as to preclude all thought of intellectual operation.

She was begirt with a flowing kirtle of deep blue, bebound with a belt bebuckled with a silvern clasp, while about her waist a stomacher of point lace ended in the ruffled farthingale at her throat.

That is not such a goofy start, but believe me, it gets a lot sillier. And what happens when Guido and Isolde finally meet face to face? I'm not telling, but...no, I'm not telling.

My favorite was **Gertrude the Governess** and I dare you not to think of Jane Eyre if you should ever read this story. Double dog dare you, even. *Once at night, when Gertrude withdrew to her chamber and before seeking her pillow, prepared to retire as a preliminary to disrobing—in other words, before going to bed, she flung wide the casement (opened the window) and perceived (saw) the face of Lord Ronald. He was sitting on a thorn bush beneath her, and his upturned face wore an expression of agonised pallor.*

Now I know everyone has a differently shaped funny bone. Just because these stories tickled mine to pieces they may not affect yours at all. But I am definitely going to read more of Mr. Leacock's work. And see who else from the golden era of comedy I can imagine acting out the scenes while I read.

Emily says

A collection of stories with the usual structure and a large dose of nonsense thrown in. It turns typical stories on their heads with varying degrees of comedic effects. If you aren't familiar with Stephen Leacock's writings they are a digestable dose to find if you like the flavour. It is where Inspector Clouseau meets Alice in Wonderland in a Canadian mind, that is slightly reminiscent of some short Monty Python sketches.

My favourite stories were "Gertrude the Governess" and "A Hero in Homespun." The first was a brilliant intrigue and love story that was predictable in its ending. The vocabulary was wide ranging, which had me reading for a dictionary every few pages. The second was hilarious because the reader knows it to be in part

true. Those who are jobless or like to pick on New York will enjoy this immensely.

If you read only two stories in this brief collection, you won't go wrong with "Gertrude the Governess" and "A Hero in Homespun."

Jim says

No, these are not in any sense of the word novels. They are stories poking excellent fun at various genres of short stories, such as Sherlock Holmes detective stories, adventures at sea, visits to the future, chivalry, the Scottish Highlands, the supernatural, and romance. Leacock reminds me somewhat of S. J. Perelman, who was responsible for much of the Marx Brothers' best lines.

In "Soaked in Seaweed," Leacock's humor could very easily have come from the author of **Acres and Pains** and **Rising Gorge**:

As I stepped on the deck I could not help a slight feeling of triumph, as I caught sight of my sailor-like features reflected in a tar-barrel that stood beside the mast, while a little while later I could scarcely repress a sense of gratification as I noticed them reflected again in a bucket of bilge water.

And again:

The vessel was on the eve of departure. Her deck presented that scene of bustle and alacrity dear to the sailor's heart. Men were busy nailing up the masts, hanging the bowsprit over the side, varnishing the lee-scuppers and pouring hot tar down the companion-way.

At first I was not quite sure how to take **Nonsense Novels**, but as I read on, I began to enjoy it so thoroughly that I resolved to find some other of Leacock's works and hope they were anywhere near as funny.

This is excellent humor, and I was in the mood for it.

Nandakishore Varma says

Ever since I studied "With the Photographer" in college, I have been a fan of Leacock - an irreverent and weird wordsmith. His over-the-top comic stories are pure genius. I was in stitches while reading this, most of the time.

Sarthak Pranit says

Thanks to Goodreads, you have just stumbled a gold mine of every possible parody on this planet. I still can't understand why Stephen Leacock is not as huge a name as Douglas Adams. Maybe luck truly is a bitch. Nevertheless...

Now before coming across this book, I was truly suffering from a Good Book Withdrawal. The last good

work of fiction I read was Rosie's Project and that was over two months ago. But, like they (random collective of random people) often say, good things come to those who go through a lot of shit in a small span of time.

Nonsense novels is a collection of superficial spoofs about every imaginable literary genre - the detective story, the hero story, the antihero story, the sea drama, the family drama, etc. He basically took a certain theme that most writers made a formula of and then annihilated it.

But unlike most spoofs and parodies, Leacock never risked turning over-critical and over-assessing. You can see his efforts to keep the reader laughing, and nothing more. He was superficial, as if to almost suggest the mood of writers who repeat a literary formula to achieve a shortcut to fandom. And one can only admire his intention to do this - he made fun of others by making fun of himself - there is character in such an attempt.

But the reason I will choose to forget this book soon is the same reason this book was written for - it was nothing more than pure and unmemorable fun, like a zipless fuck. And there's a magic in forgetting such a thing.

Marsha says

This anthology is Mr. Leacock's send-up of various genres. The supernatural ghost tale, the detective novel, the rags-to-riches tale and more are all shot at with the superb skill of a keen-eyed archer and none of them misses the mark. Gently amusing, pointed and witty, *Nonsense Novels* reveals a sharp love of literature as well as the knowing depreciation it takes to laugh at it. More amusing than *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* (if less action packed), this novel is a must-have for those who know that even the classics can stand a little ribbing.

Michael Emond says

This novel was published exactly 100 years ago and 100 years later it will still provoke laughs and readers will still be amazed by the wit contained within. It is 10 chapters of an inventive mind mocking the different writing tropes in various genres (e.g. Sherlock Holmes, Scotland romance, rags to riches story, the Old homestead). While I will admit some chapters work better than others and some of the genres are not as well known in 2011 as they were in 1911 the humour still leaps out of the page. What makes me smile so much after reading this book is the discovery that good humour is good humour and it can stand the test of time of 100 years. I wish the humour novels of today were as funny as this novel is. Also recommended: *Three Men in a Boat*.

Bob says

Not really novels, but a collection of very silly and absurd short stories, 'Nonsense Novels' was highly entertaining for me. It is surprising that with an original publication date of 1911 all these tales are still so funny. His satire is equal opportunity; he manages to make fun of us all even after more than 100 years.

