English Language Arts 10-2

Unit 2: Comprehend and respond to texts

He came to open an account

The manager thinks he is a detective

- Stephen Leacock, in My Financial Career from Literary Lapses (1910, public domain), writes: When I go into a bank I get rattled. The clerks rattle me; the wickets rattle me; the sight of the money rattles me; everything rattles me.
- Later the manager says, You are one of Pinkerton's men, I presume. He has locked them in a private room because the narrator asked to speak alone.
- The narrator came to deposit fifty-six dollars and open an account. The manager treats him as a detective. The gap between that idea and the errand is the irony, and the humour sits in that gap.
- Rattle, repeated, is the language that makes the narrator seem mysterious enough for the mistake.

Leacock's bank

When I go into a bank I get rattled.

The clerks rattle me; the wickets

rattle me; the sight of the money

rattles me; everything rattles me.

"You are one of **Pinkerton's men**,

I presume," he said.

The manager presumes a detective. The narrator came to open an account. That gap is the irony.

Four literary devices

- Irony in the bank sketch is the gap between detective and depositor. The humour depends on both being in play.
- A simile uses “like” or “as”. In a short kitchen scene written for this course, a red tag on the broken staff-room kettle hangs like a small flag. That comparison belongs to the kitchen scene.
- A symbol is the tag itself: out of service. It contributes to the rule that the kettle stays idle, which is the scene’s point.
- A gesture is Rae, who runs the staff meeting in that scene, tapping the clipboard twice. The tap ends the meeting. Space and the hand do the work.

Key terms

irony

A gap between what someone expects and what is actually going on, often the source of the humour.

simile

A comparison that uses like or as, so one thing is pictured as another.

symbol

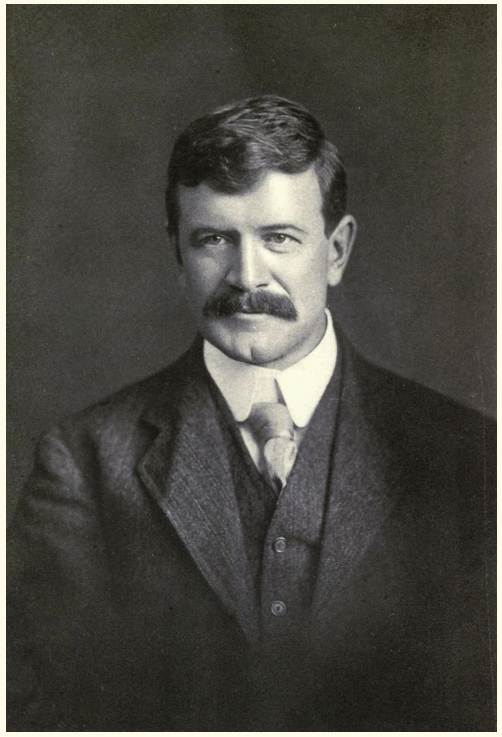
An object that carries a larger idea in the text, such as a tag that means out of service.

Simile and symbol

- Original scene: the staff kettle wears a red tag. The tag hangs like a small flag over the plug.
- Like a small flag is the simile. It makes the tag look raised and official.
- The tag is the symbol of out of service. The idea of the scene is that nobody brews with that kettle.
- Rae taps the clipboard twice, the way a referee taps a watch. People stack chairs. The gesture closes the meeting without a new speech.

The bank gap, stated

- Expected: a detective with a secret, because of alone, the locked room, and the rattled manner.
- Actual: a man with fifty-six dollars who wants an account.
- Irony: the huge suspicion and the tiny errand are both visible.
- Humour: the manager’s relief, and the narrator stepping toward the safe, grow from that same gap.



The stage door

- Original paragraph: the understudy waits in a costume that bags like a borrowed coat. A paper star is tacked to the door. When the director lifts one finger, the chatter stops.
- Find the simile, the symbol, and the gesture.
- Say what idea the paper star contributes.

Review

- Cover Leacock and the kettle.
- Original lines: Jordan holds a route map like a shield. The late bus is marked with a green card. The driver taps the card once and the line moves.
- Name one device, irony or otherwise, with evidence from these lines only.

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