The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County

Mark Twain
Background Information

*Published in 1865

*First great success as a writer and brought him national attention

*Original title: “Jim Smiley and His Jumping Frog”

*This version was a further developed idea that was then published as, “The Celebrated Jumping Frog of the Calaveras County”
Summary

- Man from the East comes to a Western mining town
- Narrator speaks with Simon Wheeler—Leonidas W. Smiley
- Tall Tale about Jim Smiley
- Bet on anything
  - Horse
  - Dog
  - Frog
- After the tall tales, narrator tries to escape the tedious tales.
Jim Smiley is introduced as a major gambler: bets on the death of a wife to Parson Walker.

The Narrator introduces how he became to hearing the tales of Smiley and to how he met Wheeler.

Smiley bets on and races the mare: she won.

Smiley's bull pup wins through tactics. Ends up dying because of a loss.

The Stranger sabotages Smiley's frog, making his own frog win: winning the bet.

Smiley comes across a Stranger who bets against Smiley's frog.

Smiley gets a frog and decides to train to be the best jumping frog around.

Smiley dumps the shots out of the frogs mouth and realizes he had been cheated. The Stranger ran off with his money and could not be found.

Wheeler is called away and the Narrator learns that he was set up, and leaves as soon as possible.

The Celebrating Jumping Frog of Calaveras County
The Stars of the short story

★ Jim Smiley
  ○ Gambling man
  ○ Protagonist
★ The Stranger
  ○ Cheater
  ○ Antagonist
★ Simon Wheeler
  ○ Story teller
★ The Narrator
  ○ Educated man from the East
  ○ Tricked by his friend
★ Dan’l Webster
  ○ Smiley’s Frog
★ Andrew Jackson
  ○ Smiley’s fighting dog
★ “Fifteen-minute Nag”
  ○ Smiley’s Mare
Setting and Symbols

- Angel’s Mining Camp
- In California
- Mid 19th century

**"I found Simon Wheeler dozing comfortably by the barroom stove of the dilapidated tavern in the decayed mining camp of Angel’s, and i noticed that he was fat and bald-headed, and had an expression of winning gentleness and simplicity upon his tranquil countenance."

- Andrew Jackson the Dog—seventh president
- Dan’l Webster the Frog—senator and Secretary of State
Conflicts

- The dog with no hinds legs
- The stranger did not have a frog to bet on against Smiley’s frog
- Which frog out-jumped the other?
- Finding the Stranger
Main Ideas

- The main idea is how the frog jumps
- The celebration from Smiley after winning all of his bets
- How Smiley never cheats
Theme and Message

Theme:

- Cunning and Cleverness
  - Jim Smiley is able to win because he is clever.
  - The Narrator is conned by his friend to listen to the tales

- Competition
  - Gambling
  - Consistent betting

- Lies and Deceit
  - Smiley’s animals look like nothing special, but deceives others because they are more than the average animal
  - Cheating stranger

- Contrasting Regions
  - Educated narrator from the East
  - Uneducated characters in the mining camp
    - Different word usageage
    - West love tales, East find pointless

Messages:

- Sometimes people fail because you can’t always accomplish your mission, and sometimes the hard work is rewarded.
- Equality for all Americans
- Sometimes cheating does get rewarded.
Point of view - Perspective

➢ First Person
  ○ Narrator present the story of Jim Smiley told in Simon Wheeler’s dialect
  ○ Twain uses to contrast between:
    ▪ East VS West
    ▪ Educated VS Uneducated
    ▪ Refined VS Coarse
Tone

Disparaging and disbelieving

--The narrator’s attitude toward the subject is disbelief and annoyance.

--Narrator is slightly mocking Simon Wheeler
Style and diction

Style: Clever and Colloquial

- The narrator uses educated diction to explain the story that Wheeler told.
- Wheeler tells the tales using his uneducated diction
- Mark Twain creates fluent sentences with contrasting the East and West

Diction:

Twain uses Westerner tongue and Eastern tongue to create the word choice for the short story.

Western- “Thish-yer”, “foller”, “dangest feller”

Eastern- “Garrulous”, “Barroom”, “dilapidated”
Author's purpose and intended audience

Purpose:
- Twain wrote this to entertain
- Read out loud=laughter
- Fascinating

Audience:
- Tall tale fans
- Gambling likers
- Someone wanting a good laugh
- Easterner or Westerner
Important Vocab and Quote

- Feller- nonstandard spelling of fellow
- Garrulous- excessively talkative, especially on trivial matters
- Tedious- too long, slow, or dull
- Finesse- an attempt to win a trick with something that is not a certain win
- Genius- exceptionally intelligent
- Education- receiving or giving instruction and acquiring general knowledge

"...so from from his imagining that there was anything ridiculous or funny about his story, he regarded it as a really important matter, and admired its two heroes as men of transcendent genius in finesse."

"Smiley was monstrous proud of his frog…"

"I don’t see no p’ints about that frog that’s any better’n any other frog."

"And then he see how it was, and he was the maddest man--he set the frog down and took out after the feller, but he never ketched him."
I did enjoy this story. It was actually pretty funny and interesting. At first, I was confused reading it, but then I started to analyze the story more and began to understand what all was happening. It also might have helped that I love frogs, but they were some pretty funny tall tales.
Work Represents

Regionalism:
- Compares the West to the East through diction and word choice
- Shows contrast between personal beliefs between the Narrator and Wheeler

Naturalism:
- Smiley uses the natural abilities of each of the animals and just perfects them and uses their strengths against other animals.
- The Stranger believes all animals to be equal; none better than the other.
Similar Works

The Fall of the Athenian Empire

Goldilocks & Three Bears Sb-Apov

The Holy Barbarians

The Little Locksmith