

# MERCURY READER



a custom publication  
Annotated table of Canadian Contents\*

## Sherman Alexie, **The Toughest Indian in the World**

In Alexie's short story, a Native-American reporter picks up a hitchhiking boxer who shares information about his life and gives the reporter a scare. After the encounter, the narrator concludes that writers need to be in danger to keep their edge.

Selection A665

## Sherman Alexie, **The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven**

In this short story, a young man from the Spokane Indian Reservation travels to Seattle to fulfill his promise, but, disaffected, returns back home.

Selection A687

## Margaret Atwood, **The Female Body**

A montage of references to the female form, this essay ultimately represents the commodification and exploitation of women's bodies and the alienation of men's brains.

Selection A004

## Margaret Atwood, **Pornography**

Canadian writer Margaret Atwood attempts to define pornography but notes that the word has taken many different meanings in modern culture.

Selection A094

## Margaret Atwood, **Death by Landscape**

Two young girls bond deeply at summer camp; one dies, and leaves the other forever haunted by her memory.

Selection A666

## Margaret Atwood, **A Letter to America** **NEW!**

A noted Canadian writer expresses deep concerns regarding the Iraq war, American civil liberties, and the United States economy, worrying about the impact of U.S. domestic and foreign policy on the entire world.

Selection A802

## Patricia A. Baird and Chris MacDonald, **Should Human Cloning Be Permitted? and Yes, Human Cloning Should be Permitted** **NEW!**

A professor of medical genetics, Patricia Baird, presents a strong and unequivocal argument against human cloning. In a second article, a philosopher of ethics, Chris MacDonald, responds to Baird's opposition to human cloning, arguing for caution rather than an outright ban.

Selection A803

Maude Barlow, **Water Incorporated: The Commodification of the World's Water**

Barlow reports that as the world moves toward increased globalization the value of natural resources will be on the rise. This situation will give those who have control over resources, such as water, more economic and political power.

Selection A612

Neil Bissoondath, **Religious Faith Versus Spirituality** **NEW!**

Selection A807

Neil Bissoondath, **"I'm Not Racist, But..."**

Canadian author born in Trinidad questions the assumption that all ethnically insensitive language derives from racism, arguing that true racism results from embracing stereotypes.

Selection A562

David Brooks, **The Culture of Martyrdom: How Suicide Bombing Became Not Just a Means but an End**

Brooks, a senior editor at The Atlantic Monthly, briefly traces the increase in suicide bombings in the recent past. He profiles the suicide bomber and analyzes the culture that supports these people.

Selection A615

David Brooks, **The Merits of Meritocracy**

Children of the privileged must work very hard for what they have and for what they will get. Brooks uses the example of his daughter to show how busy she is and how she will have to compete to get into a great school and to find a greater job after school.

Selection A697

Stevie Cameron, **Our Daughters, Ourselves**

In this reflection on the worst mass murder in Canada's history, a journalist ponders the discrimination, fear, and abuse suffered by girls as they grow up—and the powerlessness of their mothers to protect them.

Selection A563

Emily Carr, **D'Sonoqua**

In an excerpted from sketches in Klee Wyck (1941), Emily Carr offers impressionistic accounts of her visits to remote Indian villages in British Columbia.

Selection A564

Wayson Choy, **I'm a Banana and Proud of It**

A Canadian writer of Chinese parentage explains why he is more than comfortable with being referred to as a banana, "yellow on the outside and white inside."

Selection A566

Douglas Coupland, **"The Sun is Your Enemy" from Generation X** **NEW!**

In this selection from Coupland's novel *Generation X: Tales for an Accelerated Culture*, the author offers a brief exchange of three friends in the California desert discussing their answers to the question, "What do you think of when you see the sun?"

Selection A815

Robertson Davies, **A Few Kind Words for Superstition**

One of Canada's foremost writers of plays, novels, and satire defines superstition and discusses "its four manifestations."

Selection A568

James Downey, **2000 Thoughts: A Liberal Education is Key to a Civil Society** **NEW!**

Downey muses on the loss of the liberal education in universities in North America, especially in Canada. He suggests that the humanities especially have lost their missions and purposes.

Selection A820

Gary Engkent, **Why My Mother Can't Speak English**

A Chinese-Canadian writer explores the cultural forces that prevented his immigrant mother from learning English and embracing Canadian culture.

Selection A569

Northrop Frye, **The Motive for Metaphor**

Frye contrasts scientific and imaginative thinking and investigates the reasons that humans need metaphors in their intellectual lives.

Selection A570

Northrop Frye, **Don't You Think It's Time to Start Thinking?**

In his essay Frye insists that thinking happens only when a person writes down ideas "in the right words." This essay may have been the opening cry of the critical thinking battle.

Selection A571

Mavis Gallant, **What Is Style?**

Gallant addresses one of the most interesting and yet vexing of questions about writing: How does a writer or critic define style, and how is a particular style defined?

Selection A572

Carol Geddes, **Growing Up Native**

A Yukon-born member of the Tlingit Nation recalls discrimination and oppression at the hands of whites and argues that native cultures have much to offer mainstream Canadian culture.

Selection A573

Lianne George, **Why are we Dressing our Daughters like This?** **NEW!**

A Canadian journalist cites a number of experts with different explanations for what many consider an alarming trend toward sexualizing girls' clothing.

Selection A826

Jane Eaton Hamilton, **Twenty-One Questions**

Gently and with some humor, Hamilton presents the challenges of two women deciding to marry each other, in how this union might be like, and unlike, other kinds of marriage.

Selection A650

Tomson Highway, **What a Certain Visionary Once Said**

An author from Manitoba offers a gentle description of the place where he spent his youth.

Selection A574

Greg Hollingshead, **The Naked Man**

Returning to Canada after a year in Australia, a young man discovers that his beloved Studebaker is missing and his family home is now inhabited by a bizarre assortment of strangers.

Selection A646

Carolyn Ives, **Brains, Brawn, and Beauty: A Place for Feminist Academics in Aesthetic Body Sports, or Working towards a Physical Feminism** **NEW!**

In the following essay, a college teacher and physique athlete explores the challenges of women in a male-dominated sport. Also, she confronts the paradox of being an academic feminist involved in a sport some view as objectifying women.

Selection A840

Marni Jackson, **Gals and Dolls: The Moral Value of “Bad” Toys**

A self-proclaimed “Birkenstock generation” journalist explores the world of Barbie, and concludes that parental disapproval may be precisely the reason why little girls still love her.

Selection A575

Brian J. Johnson, **The Blair Kitsch Project: An Indie Hit Goes Hollywood**

In his film review of the sequel to *The Blair Witch Project*, “the most profitable indie film in history,” Johnson describes a “postmodern trope” and a desire to “turn a cult phenomenon into a Hollywood franchise.”

Selection A510

Lynn Johnston, **Panic Helps You Focus**

In this 2000 segment of the series *For Better or Worse*, the popular cartoonist investigates the pleasures of writing and deadlines.

Selection A462

Lynn Johnston, **My Article is Complete!**

In this 2000 segment of the series *For Better or Worse*, a young writer finds deadlines in both his professional and personal life.

Selection A469

Thomas King, **Borders**

In this short story, a Native-Canadian mother and son attempt to cross the U.S./Canadian border, claiming their citizenship as “Blackfoot” rather than Canadian or American.

Selection A604

Stephen Leacock, **How to Live to Be 200**

In his humorous essay, Leacock pokes fun at the art of “healthy” living and the attempt to stay young.

Selection A577

Alistair Macleod, **The Boat**

In this story, a man looks back on his childhood in a Canadian fishing village and reflects on memories of his sisters, mother, father, and the boat that bound them together.

Selection A605

Alberto Manguel, **Reading Ourselves and the World Around Us**

In an excerpt from his book, *A History of Reading*, the author describes the moment at which he realized that he could read.

Selection A578

Alice Munro, **A Walk on the Wild Side**

Recalling her childhood in rural Ontario, Canada's foremost short story writer issues a plea to the government to provide access to open land, something she considers a necessity in any community.

Selection A580

Alice Munro, **Boys and Girls**

While growing up on a farm, a young girl gradually becomes aware of the different expectations of girls and boys.

Selection A648

Naheed Mustafa, **My Body is My Own Business**

In this essay, a young Canadian defends her choice to wear the traditional Muslim hijab. According to Mustafa, the sexes will only be equal when women no longer need to objectify their bodies.

Selection A581

Samantha Nutt, **Freedom Denied**

The director of an international child welfare agency reports that despite the fall of the Taliban in Afghanistan, women in that country still live in fear and under oppression.

Selection A639

Michael Ondaatje , **Tabula Asiae**

In his description of how a colony affects those who colonize it, Ondaatje illustrates his place in the postcolonial canon.

Selection A582

Catherine Pigott, **Chicken-Hips**

Personal experience and Katherine Gilday's documentary, *The Famine Within*, inspired Pigott to write this essay about the difficulties women face in the quest to feel at peace with weight and body image.

Selection A583

Steven Pinker, **Against Nature**

Simple natural selection based on genetic combination and recombination cannot explain much of human nature. Pinker shows that human motives often apparently contradict the strict rule of genetic selection for fitness and survival.

Selection A759

Steven Pinker, **The Blank Slate** **NEW!**

Pinker takes on the difficult question of nature and nurture. Do our parents and our culture make us what we are, or are we destined by our genes to act in certain prescribed ways? He traces a variety of kinds of evidence, all of which show that we are both at the same time.

Selection A872

B. Allan Quigley, **Knowledge Is Not Enough: Advancing Health Literacy through Lessons from History** **NEW!**

In this documented essay, Quigley shows that school literacy education can fail many students and leave need for adult literacy programs, some of which could be improved through lessons from history.

Selection A878

David Adams Richards, **My Old Newcastle**

In his short essay Richards evokes the feeling of the lost world of youth—a feeling that even the youngest reader at times has experienced.

Selection A584

David Adams Richards, **Dane**

This touching story recounts the short life of a gentle but unruly neighborhood athlete and comic.

Selection A669

Mordecai Richler, **1944: The Year I Learned to Love a German**

A Jewish novelist recalls that during the darkest days of the Holocaust during which he read a book about a German soldier that transformed both his understanding of the power of books, and the universality of human experience.

Selection A585

Mike Ross, **This Eminem May Melt Your Ears**

In this review from Canadian Website JAM!, a newspaper writer offers faint praise with strong criticism of the controversial rap artist's *The Marshall Mathers LP*.

Selection A533

Carol Shields, **The Case for Curling Up with a Book**

The Pulitzer Prize winning author expounds on the importance of making time to read.  
Selection A586

Russell Smith, **Responsibility**

A mother and son who seek mutual acceptance debate their respective life choices and values, leaving the son to conclude that he has one decision to make—the question is, will he make it?  
Selection A606

David Suzuki, **The Pain of Animals**

A Zoologist details the impact of modern biological research on laboratory animals.  
Selection A587

Charles Taylor, **The Sources of Authenticity**

A philosopher muses on what it means "to be true to oneself" in this excerpt from a lecture broadcast on CBC radio.  
Selection A588

Jane Urquhart, **Returning to the Village**

The well-known writer describes her return to a small village where she attempts to write a new novel.  
Selection A589