Mark Twain Notes

1. What is the frame story?

The narrator was told by a friend to find Mr. Simon Wheeler and ask him about Leonidas W. Smiley. Although Leonidas was made up by the friend, it reminds Mr. Wheeler of Jim Smiley, and he tells the narrator a long, “boring” tale about Jim Smiley and his frog.

2. Who is Reverend Leonidas W. Smiley?

Rev. Leonidas W. Smiley was made up by a friend of the narrator to trick him into getting stuck with a long story from Mr. Wheeler.

3. Who is the narrator? Describe his character.

The narrator is a traveler who speaks very proper English and has an extended vocabulary.

4. Who is the narrator of Jim Smiley’s tale? Describe his character.

Simon Wheeler is the narrator of Jim Smiley’s tall tale. He is uneducated, monotone, speaks in a thick dialect, and is unaware of his listeners.

5. What is the setting of this story? Why did Twain likely set the story here?

The setting is Angel Camp in 1849-1850 during the Gold Rush. Mining towns were known for gambling and often contained the uneducated. They also had many travelers like the narrator.

6. What is the plot of the story?

In the exposition, we find out that the narrator’s friend asked him to ask Mr. Wheeler about Rev. Smiley. In the rising action, he asks Mr. Wheeler about Smiley and listens to a long story about the frog contest. At the climax of the story, we think Mr. Wheeler is going to end the story and let the narrator leave, but in the falling action we find that Mr. Wheeler is only taking a break and wants to start a new story. In the resolution, the narrator stands up and finally just leaves.

7. What is the theme of this story?

The major theme is educated v. uneducated.

8. Identify at least three uses of spelling to indicate dialect.

Ketched, cal’klated, and edercate

9. What genre is this story? Identify some of the aspects of this genre as seen in the text.

This story is a tall tale. Tall tales have exaggerated characters and events in them. Andrew Jackson’s fight is exaggerated in that he lost to a two legged dog and died of heart break. The incident with him filling Dan’l Webster with lead is also exaggerated.