

ROCH CARRIER

STORYTELLER SUPREME

Q

uebec writer Roch Carrier's short stories and novels vividly portray the Quebec of the 1940s and 50s. These works are accessible to a wide audience due to the equally creative efforts of Sheila Fischman, two-time winner of the Governor-General's Award for translation.

In this video, Carrier reads from five of his works, including humorous excerpts from the NFB animation film *The Sweater*, and passages from *La Guerre, Yes Sir!* (p. 30), and *Heartbreaks Along the Road* (pp. 157-158). There is also a darker side to Carrier's writing which is captured by readings from *They Won't Demolish Me!* (pp. 32, 39), and *Lady with Chains* (p. 140).

Literary translator Sheila Fischman's comments on the writer's themes and style broaden our understanding of Carrier's work and the role of the translator. Carrier himself, whether addressing students or relaxing in his favourite restaurant, talks easily about his background, the demands of writing, and his views of Quebec society.

(See reverse for more information.)

Director: Claire Helman

Producer: Tamara Lynch

25 min. 37 sec.
C 9191 036



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This video is suitable for the deaf
and hard of hearing. Closed-captioned.
A decoder is required.



VHS
113C
9191 036

Meet a warm and humorous Quebec writer.

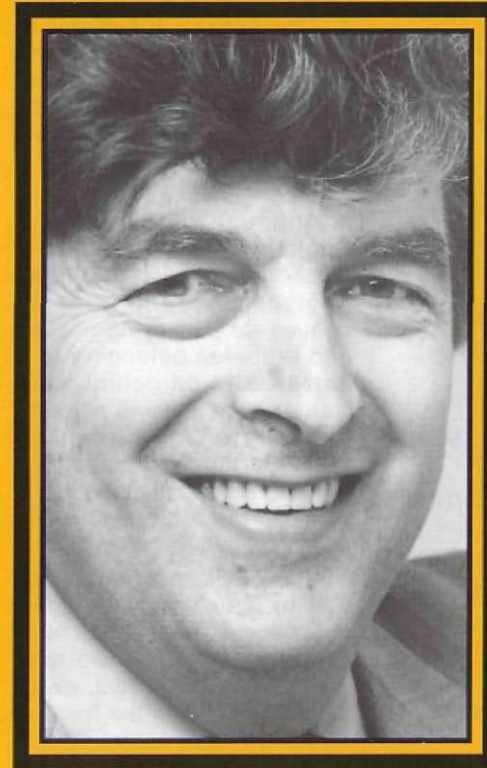


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Roch Carrier was born May 13, 1937, in the village of Sainte-Justine, southeast of Quebec City. After finishing school locally, Carrier studied in New Brunswick, Montreal, and then Paris, specializing in French literature. Besides writing, he has been involved with theatre and teaching.

Carrier has written novels, children's stories, plays and film scenarios. Ten of his novels have been translated, all by Sheila Fischman, two-time winner of the Governor-General's Award for translation:

La Guerre, Yes Sir!, 1968

Floralie, où es-tu?, 1969
(*Floralie, Where Are You?*)

Il est par là, le soleil, 1970 (*Is It the Sun, Philibert?*)

Le Deux-millième étage, 1973
(*They Won't Demolish Me!*)

Le Jardin des délices, 1975
(*The Garden of Delights*)

Il n'y a pas de pays sans grand-père, 1977 (*No Country Without Grandfathers*)

Les Enfants du bonhomme dans la lune, 1979 (*The Hockey Sweater and Other Stories*)

La Dame qui avait des chaînes aux chevilles, 1981 (*Lady with Chains*)

De l'amour dans la ferraille, 1984 (*Heartbreaks Along the Road*)

Un champion, 1991 (*The Boxing Champion*)

POINTS FOR DISCUSSION

1. The setting for many of Carrier's short stories and novels is rural Quebec in the 1940s and 50s but his themes are universal. Critics have said the reader finds "the world in a village." Discuss.

2. Although read widely in English Canada, Carrier is sometimes criticized by both Anglophones and Francophones for portraying images and attitudes belonging to a narrow and parochial past. Carrier gives several answers to this criticism in the film. What are they? Do you agree or disagree with his view of the role of the writer and his opinion of human behaviour?

3. Sheila Fischman notes that Carrier is neither a journalist nor a sociologist. Critics have described Carrier's work as "allegorical, fantastical, exaggerated — having the force of myth." To what extent then is Carrier painting a picture of life as it was — or is?

4. *La Guerre, Yes Sir!* portrays life in a Quebec village during World War Two, a period marked by French-English tensions arising from the conscription crisis. Discuss French-English relations today.

5. In *They Won't Demolish Me!*, a group of rooming-house

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dwellers led by Dorval, the enraged landlord, tries to fight the demolition of their home. When the novel was written in 1973, old buildings were torn down and replaced by modern high-rises. Today, old buildings are often renovated, but in both cases the tenants are displaced, and the conflict between urban development and the need for affordable housing continues. Do you see this problem in your community?

6. *Lady with Chains* is a historical novel depicting the hardships of pioneer life. The heroine, half-crazed by solitude, tries to poison her husband, whom she blames for the death of their baby. She is thrown into prison after giving herself up and identifies with a woman from the past convicted of a similar crime. How does this reading differ from others in the video?

7. *Heartbreaks Along the Road* uses the building of a highway, from a small village to nowhere special, as both a metaphor for life's various journeys and as an example of the political corruption experienced under Premier Maurice Duplessis — "Le Chef". Many of the thousand or so characters, such as Polycarpe Poisson, appear briefly. Do you think the author chose a representative section of the book to read, or merely a humorous one? Do Polycarpe's attempts to win a

wife mirror the many deceptions portrayed in the book, where nothing is as it seems?

8. Much of Carrier's work has been translated from French to English and has sometimes been adapted to film. Some of his work has also been presented on stage. Discuss how an author's writing might be affected by translation from one language to another or from one medium to another.

RELATED NFB VIDEOS AND FILMS

The Sweater, 10 min.
C 0180 079

The Ungrateful Land, (Roch Carrier returns to Sainte-Justine), 27 min.
C 0172 104

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