Lafcadio: The Lion Who Shot Back

The story is told through the eyes of our 6 narrators who each play different roles in the show. Lafcadio first meets the hunter, who is later eaten, and discovers his talent of shooting. Later, a circus man wanders into the jungle and asks Lafcadio to join his circus as a trick shooter. Lafcadio agrees as long as he can have marshmallows. When he arrives in the city with the circus man, he learns about many new things including elevators and showers.

In the city he meets Uncle Shelby, who takes him to the barber shop, restaurant, and tailor shop. After getting his marshmallow suit, he goes back to the hotel to rest up before the big parade and circus day. The next day after the parade and the circus, Lafcadio becomes the most famous trick shooter in all of America.

Lafcadio starts to realize he is sad and bored with his life. The circus man decides to take him hunting as a new activity. Lafcadio is recognized by the old lion, who makes him realize that he is not a man; rather, he is a lion! While the lions and the hunters fight over Lafcadio, he struggles to understand where he belongs, but he is so uncertain that he runs away.

Could you keep an eye out for Lafcadio?
Meet the Cast and Hear their Takeaways!

Riley played Narrator 1 and the Old Lion, and she wants you to know:

“Don’t tell people who they should be or how they should act. That is their choice”

Abby portrayed Narrator 2 and the Hunter. She thinks:

“Sometimes being what other people want you to be isn’t what’s best for you”

Cody was Narrator 3 and the Taxi driver, and he wants to tell you to:

“Be yourself and try new things without abandoning who you know you are”

Maddie played Narrator 4 and the Circus Man. She wants to tell you:

“It’s okay to be alone sometimes to figure out where you want to be in life”

Nole, Narrator 5 and Uncle Shelby, says:

“Do what you want even if goes against what others think you want. Follow your heart and be true to yourself.”

Lastly, Matt was Narrator 6 and Lafcadio. He wants to tell you:

“If you’re genuinely happy, don’t let other people tell you what you should be feeling”

Final thoughts:

It is okay to try new things and realize you don’t like them later on. People can’t tell you what you should and should not like or feel.

Moral of the story: You know yourself better than anyone, so don’t let anyone tell you what you should be in life.
About Shel Silverstein

When you hear the name Shel Silverstein, you probably think to yourself "Oh, he's the children's poet with cool drawings." He is. However, there is much more to his story that goes unsaid. Shel Silverstein was and arguably still is one of the most popular children's poets, but not many people know he was also a playwright, cartoonist, performer, recording artist, and Grammy-winning songwriter.¹

Growing up, he originally gravitated towards athletics, but he was never able to make any of the teams. Then, he found his niche in drawing. He usually kept these drawings to himself because of their abstract style which was different from any other cartoonist; however, he began to write for his school paper at Roosevelt University.² In 1950, he ended up enlisting in the U.S. Army and served in Japan and Korea, but that was not the end of his affinity for drawing. During his time with the Army, he became a cartoonist for Stars & Stripes.³ After his time serving, he began to write for more adult based audiences. His character of Lafcadio actually began in his cartoons for some of these articles.

Throughout his time at with other publishers, Silverstein started exploring other areas of art, particularly music. He even recorded his own album Hairy Jazz in 1959. He would later go on to write songs for Johnny cash, Dr. Hook, and motion picture soundtracks. You may be asking where all his works for children started. In 1963, a book editor, Ursula Nordstrom, convinced Silverstein to write a book for children. Thus, Uncle Shelby’s Story of Lafcadio: The Lion Who Shot Back was born.⁴ Soon after he released his first book, he wrote The Giving Tree, Where the Sidewalk Ends, A light in the Attic, Falling Up, and so many more. While his stories can be viewed as merely children’s stories, he includes important anecdotes and concepts that brighten the minds of those young and old.

When looking back through Silverstein’s life, his circumstances led him from one place to another. I believe this quote from Lafcadio rings true not only to Silverstein’s life, but to our worldly situation today: “And he didn’t really know where he was going, but he did know he was going somewhere, because you really have to go somewhere, don’t you?” Silverstein’s words, not only from Lafcadio but all of his other works, create fanciful, silly stories with important life lessons for all children and all of our own inner child.

It is even more significant that we are doing this show now, because Silverstein would have celebrated his 90th birthday on the 25th of September. Happy belated birthday Uncle Shelby!

Study Guide by Alana Hernley


