

Prose II – Unit II – Spectator Club

The Spectator's Club Members

THE SPECTATOR-OF CLUB

Richard Steele and Joseph Addison



Joseph Addison



Joseph Addison (May 1, 1672 – June 17, 1719) was an English essayist and poet. He was a man of letters, eldest son of Lancelot Addison, and later the dean of Lichfield. His name is usually remembered alongside that of his long-standing friend, Richard Steele, with whom he founded The Spectator magazine.

## Richard Steele

Sir Richard Steele  
(bap. 12 March 1672  
– 1 September 1729)  
was an Irish writer  
and politician,  
remembered as co-  
founder, with his  
friend Joseph  
Addison, of the  
magazine *The  
Spectator*.



## THE SPECTATOR

- ▣ *The Spectator (1711-1712 and 1714) was a weekly magazine written by Joseph Addison and Richard Steele.*
- ▣ *The Spectator focused more consistently on political, philosophical, religious and literary issues.*
- ▣ *The Tatler folded at the start of 1711, but was almost immediately followed by The Spectator.*
- ▣ *Here Addison took the lead, contributing a larger number of essays than Steele and, most scholars agree, setting the tone for the new journal.*
- ▣ *The Spectator, which was published every day except Sunday, ran 555 issues, until finally running out of steam.*

**The Periodical Essays:** *The Spectator* (1711-1712 and 1714) was a weekly magazine written by **Joseph Addison and Richard Steele**, which followed an earlier weekly magazine, also written by Addison and Steele, called *The Tatler*. Both the periodicals were the most popular and influential literary periodicals in England in the eighteenth century.

**Fictional Characters:** Steele created the Spectator Club and presented the character of Sir Roger De Coverly, a fifty-six-year-old bachelor and country gentleman, as its central spokesman. Other members of this fictional group included a merchant, Sir Andrew Freeport, a lawyer, a soldier, a clergyman, and a socialite, Will Honeycomb, who contributed gossip and interesting examples of social behavior to Mr. Spectator.

**The Spectator's Club** is the group of men with whom Steele sits and chats with most often. This group of fine gentlemen, in all predefined senses of the word, includes Sir Roger de Coverley, a nameless lawyer, Sir Andrew Freeport, Captain Sentry, Will Honeycomb, and a nameless clergyman. During the course of this article, Steele succeeds in describing the personality and conversation available from each of these men.

**Sir Roger de Coverley** is a fifty-six year old baronet with very strong family history. He is often in contradiction to the world around him, but being a gentleman he can do this without creating enemies. Steele claims that Sir Roger has remained a bachelor because he was once crossed in love. Before this tragic affair, Sir Roger was what Steele referred to as a "fine gentleman", one who dined with the best and fought duels. Since his unfortunate love affair he has been quite different though. Now he refuses to dress like the gentleman of the day and will only wear the clothes that were in style during his love affair but have "been in and out twelve times since he first wore it."

Aside from his outdated dress, he keeps a good house in town and country and has such a great disposition that "he is rather beloved than esteemed." Everyone does like him though, all of his servants are happy and the women profess their love to him. As far as an occupation goes, he is "a county justice of the peace, presiding over quarterly sessions of the court."

The next member, **the nameless lawyer**, is also a bachelor. Steele claims that this man is only a lawyer because his father wanted him to be. He is a member of the Inner Temple but knows nearly nothing about the laws of the land. Instead of studying law, this man studied literature. Steele claims that this member of their club had read everything but hardly agreed with any of it. Steele goes on to describe this man as having a "great deal of wit" as well as being "an excellent critic." This man is also so familiar with all of the customs of the "ancients" that he is able to be a "very delicate observer of what occurs to him in the present world."

The third member of the group is **Sir Andrew Freeport**. Sir Andrew is the businessman of the Club who is "a merchant of great eminence in the city of London." This man is said to be of good company because he has good sense and discourse. Although he may not have a great wit, all of these qualities make him qualified to be a member of the Club. Sir Andrew is obviously a rich man who knows his commerce and it is said that out of most of the ships coming to London it is difficult to find one he does not own.

**Captain Sentry** is the next member of the Club. It seems that he would be nearly a perfect gentleman, except that he is too modest. This man used to behave with great gallantry, but he is now the next heir to Sir Roger so his life has changed. Captain Sentry is very frank in his conversation and his years of travel in the military service has given him many stories that make him agreeable in conversation.

The next member of the Club is **Will Honeycomb**. Steele describes this man as being familiar with the gallantries and pleasures of the age. He is also described as "very careful of his

person" so he can hide his true age. It seems that this man's area of expertise is women. According to Steele, "In a word, all his conversation and knowledge has been in the female world." It seems that Mr. Honeycombed is welcomed into the Club because he "enlivens the conversation." "To conclude his character, where women are not concerned he is an honest, worthy man."

The final member of The Spectator's Club is a **nameless clergyman**. This man is last in the article because he is seldom at the meetings. Although he is a very philosophic clergyman, he is of the utmost breeding and therefore good enough for the club. Steele claims that although the clergyman never brings up the topics, he seems to always speak upon something diving. Steele suggests that this could be because all of the group members are becoming old and suggest these topics because the Club wants the clergyman's input.

And the **Spectator**

Steele talks of these great gentlemen and describes how good of men they are. But if one reads close enough it is easy to pick out the faults of each of the men. None of them are able to be the definitive gentleman, but through their faults, they are good enough to keep around for fun conversation.