



How to Be a Canadian

Will Ferguson , Ian Ferguson

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It isn't always easy being Canadian, according to Will Ferguson, but it can be a lot of fun. Asked to write a follow-up to his runaway bestseller *Why I Hate Canadians*, Ferguson, who's Canadian himself, recruited his brother Ian — comedy writer and executive producer of the Canadian series *Sin City* and a Canadian too — to create this ultimate guide to the country's cultural quirks. The result is a hilarious inside look at that unique species, the Canadian, and their thoughts on such diverse subjects as beer, sex, dating rituals, sports, politics, religion, social rules — and, of course, their trademark death-defying search for the middle of any road.

How to Be a Canadian Details

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From Reader Review How to Be a Canadian for online ebook

Daniel Kukwa says

Most of the time it makes me ACHE with laughter, and it's spot on about Canadian identity. That said, some of the book seems quaint and overly-nostalgic to me now...

Vivian says

It's a funny, entertaining, and quick read. If you want something one step in maturity over HELLO magazine with the same entertainment value, then this book is for you. There are lots of references to current events in Canada from the late 1990s and early 2000. (The book was first published in 2001.) These references/allusions are now out-dated and if you didn't live in Canada during that period, a lot of the jokes will whizz over your head. I was living in Canada during that time and while I recognize a number of the names and events, I can't REMEMBER much about them. Kim Campbell? Alliance Party? They are sound vaguely familiar. So, LOTS went whizzing over my head STILL. As a Canadian-expat living in Europe, I guess I will put up with anything reminiscent of Canada, because it's a way of returning home vicariously when I feel homesick. So, I think I'm being generous giving it three stars for a book that is decidedly dated and wouldn't have a shelf-life back in Canada.

Renee says

5 ? just because this is the funniest book I read in a long time !

Mariele says

This is one of the worst books I have read in a long time. No kidding. I don't understand why so many people give it four or five stars. Maybe because they are insiders and can follow the writers' line of thought. I can't. I'm not Canadian. I read this book because I wanted to find out something about Canadians and their culture. Sure, I knew it would be light entertainment. But this was lighter than light, this was tacky. It contained no proper or trustworthy information whatsoever. It wasn't even remotely funny. Or maybe it's just me and I just didn't get the point, not being Canadian. One would assume that the target group for a book of this title were non-Canadians, but obviously not. In the second half of the book, I could not stand it any more and just thumbed through it.

What did I learn from this book? One example - the chapter "How the Canadian Government Works". The chapter consists of two words. "It doesn't." What a hoot. Thank you for telling me that. Neither does the book, by the way. Nonetheless... thank you, dear Ferguson brothers, for this shortcut, instead of boring me with ten pages on this chapter, the same way you did in every other chapter - even though you could have summed up the entire book in equally poignant, brilliantly stringent yet apparently truthful phrases such as these. You could have saved everybody's time.

What will I remember about this book? Absolutely nothing. Or well, perhaps the writers' attitude will stay with me for a while, which was presumptuous and bothersome with their resurfacing jokes about the book's worthlessness and the idiots who have bought it. At least they are right about that. This book will go straight into the paper bank. As they predicted. Hilarious.

(Not!)

I have never seen Sin City, the TV show written and produced by one of the authors. If it is as bad as this book, I think I'll pass.

Kevin says

Without a doubt this is a book that everyone should read, whether you are Canadian or not. The humour presented in this book is sure to put you on the floor laughing from beginning to end.

I have read this book numerous times and it never gets old. The references to Canadian culture, way of life and Canadian icons allows for any reader (Canadian or not) to make fun of Canadian culture and feel good about it.

This book was my first introduction to Will (and Ian) Ferguson and since I have taken the opportunity to read anything that Will has written.

Do yourself a favour and check out this book right away, you will not be disappointed.

Teghan says

A HILARIOUS introspection into who we are as a people....or at least who we think we are. I wonder what non-Canadians would think if they read this. While its based solely on some of our most cherished stereotypes, parts are indeed based in truth. There is a level of embarrassing honesty to the book that you can't help but laugh at.

And I did laugh. Every page was full of the funny, Ferguson style.

Sasha Gronsdahl says

Let's be real: this book is mostly a regurgitation of all the well-worn Canadian stereotypes that are becoming less and less relevant as Canada takes on a different character in the 21st century. I picked HtbaC up in my favourite thrift shop for about \$4, and that was probably paying too much. I guffawed at the digs on BC and Victoria, but that was really it. The book is filled with cheap laughs, and since it was first published in 2001, many references and jokes are outdated. Topical humour has a short shelf life. Others may enjoy this book (the literary equivalent of a bag of Doritos, or something) but I think it's safe to say that humour writing for the masses is not my thing.

Niina says

A couple of years back we used this as a study book for our cultural studies, and that was a pretty hard thing to do. The style the book was written was funny in a number of ways, but things got problematic once you actually tried to get some proper information out of it; what struck you most strongly were the really fun parts, the ones where the writers poked and shook and made fun of "Canadians", as they put it. Due to the basic humorous mood of the book it was impossible to distinguish the trustworthy information out of ironical stereotypes and emphatic foolery. I believe I would have enjoyed *How to Be a Canadian* a whole lot more if I actually was Canadian, not a foreign student trying to learn.

Shane Mackenzie says

I think this is my favourite book on Canadian identity. It does not try to be anything nor does it take itself seriously at all. Will & Ian Ferguson keep me laughing and I adore the quiz in the back. I read it out to friends of mine and laugh when they don't get the cultural and historical references because they are too immersed in their own lifetime's events. Overall, a fantastic read and actually quite illuminating the Canadian condition without intending to do so.

Eric B. Kennedy says

I really wanted to like this book, but it just didn't work out that way. Don't get me wrong - there were some chortles and snickers, but as a whole, the book read more like a series of weak inside jokes and trying-too-hard than as clever commentary. Perhaps I was looking for more subtle, sly humour... but the book left me wanting. Wouldn't recommend unless you're well versed - and amused by - 90s stereotypes of what it means to be a Canuck.

Matthew Lloyd says

The thing about *How to be a Canadian* is that it won't tell you **how** to be a Canadian, so much as it satirises Canadian identity for those who have it and know what it is. For those of us with limited knowledge of what it means to be Canadian, much of the book falls flat because I have no preconceptions about how Québécois drive, what the relationship between Edmonton and Calgary is, nor do I have any idea how the Canadian government works - so telling me "it doesn't" just falls flat. Especially as government is usually such a ripe topic for satire - as the descriptions of the Canadian political parties in Chapter 15 makes clear.

Personally, where I could follow the book it was good (I live near enough Toronto and have friends from BC, so I can get what those places are supposed to be like), where I couldn't it was bad, and frequently came across as mean spirited; the best parts were when they explained Canadian beer (not actually good if you're from Europe, but *better than American beer*, which genuinely helped me to understand Canadian beer a lot better than I had done - with the exception that I still have no idea why you'd serve **cold** beer in sub-zero temperatures), the worst when they failed to understand football (or "soccer", as North Americans persist on calling it because they still need to distinguish between Association Football and Rugby Football, even though as far as I can tell they don't play rugby, either [it's difficult to tell **what** they're doing behind all that

armour, though]).

How to be a Canadian takes inspiration from *How to Be an Alien: A Handbook for Beginners and Advanced Pupils* by George Mikes, a Hungarian writer satirising the British, and I suspect without having read *How to be an Alien* that it is perhaps more insightful and accessible by virtue of having been written by an outsider. *How to be a Canadian* is perhaps better compared to the British Mark Steel's *Mark Steel's In Town*, which is a well-meaning description of what makes certain towns in the UK great, refusing to take pot-shots at easy targets like Milton Keynes and Birmingham, instead celebrating their unique character. Comparing Steel to the Ferguson brothers, I think I'm happier being British.

BrokenTune says

Funny, but trying too hard towards the end.

However, there are some great passages - like this one on Canadian fiction writing:

"Handy tip! Write about a family gathering, a funeral or some sort of homecoming. That's the easiest way to bring characters together without having to construct a plot. And make sure to include the free-spirited sister, the recovering alcoholic brother, the other sister (the one who gave up on her dreams and is married to an abusive and/or aloof man) and - last but not least - the standard-issue abusive and/or aloof father figure. Add to the mix some cryptic dialogue about a past betrayal, maybe a dark secret or two, and half-bake at 40F. Do you see how these things just write themselves?"

Sadly, this does remind me of a few books, not all of them Canadian, though.

Colin Birge says

Things I learned from this book:

1. How Canadian Government Works. "It doesn't."
2. Screech. "The national drink of Newfoundland. Cheap rum. Cheap *Jamaican* rum. Wrathful, fire-breathing, eyeball-bleeding, down the hatch, sear-yer-gut and melt-yer-eyebrows Jamaican rotgut."
3. Saskatchewan: "**Original name: Ksiskatchewanisipi. Are you serious? Yes. Why did they change it?** Because they didn't want to have a name that was difficult to pronounce or spell. **Are you kidding? No.**"
4. Curling. "A sport of great skill in which players compete to see who can drink the most and still stand on ice."

...and much, much more. Quite educational, really.

Divya says

This book is titled *How to be Canadian*, but I am glad I didn't read it when I first moved to Canada. After living in Canada for a year, I picked up on a lot of the cultural quirks subconsciously. And it was lovely to actually read it in print. This book had me laughing out loud right from the first chapter! I especially loved

the 12 ways to say Sorry. This book portrays the Canadian society in a voice that Canadians know best: sarcasm! Give it a read.

Sarah Sammis says

How to be a Canadian is a humorous look at all things Canadian. The book is short and broken up by topics covering things like Canadian English / Canadian French, the geography, history and so forth. The book was written by Canadians for Canadians but is also very funny for its quips about American culture.

The book is funny enough to read out loud. I read most of it to Ian. It's especially funny to us since Ian's brother and sister-in-law are now living in British Columbia.

Some of my favorite pieces involved ways to spot the American in disguise (saying 'huh' instead of 'eh') and the jokes about the difference provinces. The description of PEI is perfect (it's run by Anne the dictator).

So if you know a Canadian, are a Canadian or want to be a Canadian, get yourself a copy of this book.
