

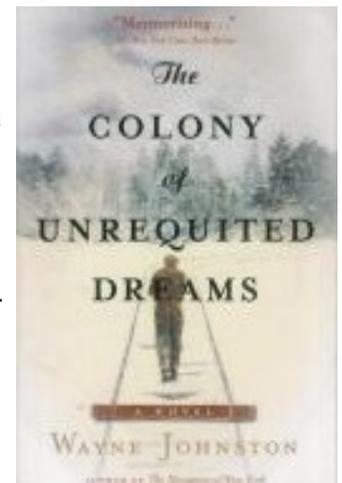


The Colony of Unrequited Dreams

Wayne Johnston

Discussion Questions

1. Both Joe and his father suffer from the fact that their last name adorns a large iron boot hanging at the entrance to the harbor, advertising the family shoe store. Why is the boot so oppressive that both Joe and his father sometimes dream about it? Why does Joe finally take it down?
2. Joe is haunted by the sense of his own insignificance. Why does he feel this way? What is the relationship between the ambitions of Joe Smallwood and his paternal heritage of small-time shopkeeping, alcoholism, and failure? How do his experiences at Bishop Feild school affect his ideas about himself?
3. Smallwood's conversion to socialism takes place after his haunting vision of the frozen bodies of the sealers who died on the ice. Would you say that his walk across the island to unionize the men is Smallwood's most heroic act in the novel? How does the rest of his career compare with the scale of this exploit?
4. Johnston has given Joe Smallwood the role of protagonist and the main first-person narrative, but some reviewers have expressed the opinion that Sheilagh Fielding is a more compelling character. Is Fielding ultimately more admirable than Smallwood? Whose life story is more interesting?
5. Why does Smallwood's marriage proposal to Fielding go awry? When he next sees her, she tells him with her customary irony that she has been "reduced to hermiting because you broke my heart" [p. 228]. How true is this statement? Why does Smallwood marry Clara Oates and not Fielding?
6. Some Canadian readers have been troubled by the liberties that Wayne Johnston has taken with the life of Newfoundland's first premier. Is the book more purely fictional, and therefore more purely enjoyable, for American readers, for whom Smallwood is not a known entity? It appears, for instance, that Johnston created the character of Fielding wholly from his own imagination. Why do you suppose he decided that Fielding was needed as a counterpart to Joe Smallwood?
12. The mystery of the anonymous letter to The Morning Post is not solved until the end of the novel, and it keeps Smallwood in the dark about some of the motivations of Fielding's character as well as her true feelings for him. How satisfying is the resolution of this issue? Does the revelation about Fielding's father highlight aspects of her character, or explain in part why she has conducted her life as she has?





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About the Author

Wayne Johnston was born and raised in Goulds, Newfoundland. After a brief stint in pre-Med, Wayne obtained a BA in English from Memorial University. He worked as a reporter for the *St. John's Daily News* before deciding to devote himself full-time to writing.

En route to being published, Wayne earned an MA (Creative Writing) from the University of New Brunswick. Then he got off to a quick start. His first book, **The Story of Bobby O'Malley**, published when he was just 27 years old, won the WH Smith/Books in Canada First Novel award for the best first novel published in the English language in Canada in that year. Subsequent books consistently received critical praise and increasing public attention. **The Divine Ryans** was adapted to the silver screen in a production starring Academy Award winner Pete Postlethwaite - Wayne wrote the screenplay. **Baltimore's Mansion**, a memoir dealing with his grandfather, his father and Wayne himself was tremendously well received and won the most prestigious prize for creative non-fiction awarded in Canada - the Charles Taylor Prize. Both **The Colony of Unrequited Dreams** and **The Navigator of New York** spent extended periods of time on bestseller lists in Canada and have also been published in the US, Britain, Germany, Holland, China and Spain. **Colony** was identified by the *Globe and Mail* newspaper as one of the 100 most important Canadian books ever produced (including both fiction and non-fiction).

This book is available for download as an eBook. For more information, please visit lpl.overdrive.com or call 519-661-4600.