

The garrison mentality was first coined by literary critic Northrop Frye in his 'Conclusion' to the *Literary History of Canada* (1965). He suggested that this aspect of Canadian identity was formed through the population's history and experience with vast wilderness, early settlement and growth in multiculturalism. Frye stated that travellers and merchants who resided in early Canada developed these social traits because they lived in garrisons, or isolated military communities.<sup>[3][6]</sup> He also claimed that this national identity of cowardly protectionism has stunted the growth of Canadian literature.<sup>[7]</sup>

The theory was later expanded upon by poet [D. G. Jones](#) in the book *Butterfly on Rock* (1970), arguing that the garrison mentality's defensive stance against nature has shifted into a more amicable relationship since colonisation.<sup>[11]</sup> Jones also expanded upon Frye's metaphor by considering the theory from a biblical perspective, asserting that significant Canadian writers have the salvational task to break down the garrison mentality. He believes that such authors are responsible for letting nature back into not only their own lives, but the lives of their audiences.<sup>[8]</sup>

Author [Margaret Atwood](#) in *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature* (1972) also added to the development of this theory by suggesting that the Canadian insecurity surrounding survival was also a product of cultural domination from the US, not just the physical landscape.<sup>[11]</sup> These ideas were also corroborated by articles, such as from [The New York Times](#), which implicitly acknowledged and signalled a change from Atwood's model of the garrison mentality by stating: "After decades of meekly accepting cultural domination by Americans, the people of Canada are suddenly moving on several fronts to protect and revitalize their national culture."<sup>[9]</sup> She also theorised that characters were very commonly in positions of 'victimhood' within Canadian texts.<sup>[6]</sup> Atwood agreed with Frye's evaluation that Canadian literature lacked growth and grounding, finding that this level of preoccupation with survival was unique to Canadian texts.<sup>[7]</sup>