

<p>Introduction To English Literature Stage :First L9 SS</p>		<p>Instructor :Dr. Mugdad</p>
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Definition of *short story*

: an invented prose narrative shorter than a novel usually dealing with a few characters and aiming at unity of effect and often concentrating on the creation of mood rather than plot.

Compared to novels, short stories often get overlooked as an art form, but these singular works of fiction deserve a closer look. Short stories give readers all the compelling characters, drama, and descriptive language of great fiction, but in a truly compact package.

So what is the secret behind those potent, carefully written gems? Here we tackle the definition of a **short story**, the key elements, examples, and some of the most common questions about short stories.

What is a short story?

A short story is a work of prose fiction that can be read in one sitting—usually between 20 minutes to an hour. There is no maximum length, but the average short story is 1,000 to 7,500 words, with some outliers reaching 10,000 or 15,000 words. At around 10 to 25 pages, that makes short stories much shorter than novels, with only a few approaching **novella** length. A piece of fiction shorter than 1,000 words

is considered a “short short story” or “flash fiction,” and anything less than 300 words is rightfully called “microfiction.”

What are the key elements of a short story?

The **setting** of a short story is often simplified (one time and place), and one or two **main characters** may be introduced without full backstories. In this concise, concentrated format, every word and story detail has to work extra hard!

Short stories typically focus on a single **plot** instead of multiple subplots, as you might see in novels. Some stories follow a traditional narrative arc, with exposition (description) at the beginning, rising action, a climax (peak moment of conflict or action), and a resolution at the end. However, contemporary short fiction is more likely to begin in the middle of the action (*in medias res*), drawing readers right into a dramatic scene.

While short stories of the past often revolved around a **central theme** or moral lesson, today it is common to find stories with ambiguous endings. This type of unresolved story invites open-ended readings and suggests a more complex understanding of reality and human behavior.

The short story genre is well suited to experimentation in prose writing style and form, but most short story authors still work to create a distinct mood using classic **literary devices** (point of view, imagery, foreshadowing, metaphor, diction/word choice, tone, and sentence structure).

What is the history of the short story?

Short-form storytelling can be traced back to ancient legends, mythology, folklore, and fables found in communities all over the world. Some of these stories existed in written form, but many were passed down through oral traditions. By the 14th century, the most well-known stories included *One Thousand and One Nights* (Middle Eastern folk tales by multiple authors, later known as *Arabian Nights*) and *Canterbury Tales* (by Geoffrey Chaucer).

It wasn't until the early 19th century that short story collections by individual authors appeared more regularly in print. First, it was the publication of the Brothers Grimm fairy tales, then Edgar Allen Poe's Gothic fiction, and eventually,

stories by Anton Chekhov, who is often credited as a founder of the modern short story.

The popularity of short stories grew along with the surge of **print magazines** and journals. Newspaper and magazine editors began publishing stories as entertainment, creating a demand for short, plot-driven narratives with mass appeal. By the early 1900s, *The Atlantic Monthly*, *The New Yorker*, and *Harper's Magazine* were paying good money for short stories that showed more literary technique. That golden era of publishing gave rise to the short story as we know it today.

What are the different types of short stories?

Short stories come in all kinds of categories: action, adventure, biography, comedy, crime, detective, drama, dystopia, fable, fantasy, history, horror, mystery, philosophy, politics, romance, satire, science fiction, supernatural, thriller, tragedy, and Western. Here are some popular types of short stories, literary styles, and authors associated with them:

- **Fable:** A tale that provides a moral lesson, often using animals, mythical creatures, forces of nature, or inanimate objects come to life (Brothers Grimm, Aesop)
- **Flash fiction:** A story between 5 to 2,000 words that lacks traditional plot structure or character development, and is often characterized by a surprise or twist of fate (Lydia Davis)
- **Mini saga:** A type of micro-fiction using exactly 50 words (!) to tell a story
- **Vignette:** A descriptive scene or defining moment that does not contain a complete plot or narrative, but reveals an important detail about a character or idea (Sandra Cisneros)
- **Modernism:** Experimenting with narrative form, style, and chronology (inner monologues, stream of consciousness) to capture the experience of an individual (James Joyce, Virginia Woolf)
- **Postmodernism:** Using fragmentation, paradox, or unreliable narrators to explore the relationship between the author, reader, and text (Donald Barthelme, Jorge Luis Borges)
- **Magical realism:** Combining realistic narrative or setting with elements of surrealism, dreams, or fantasy (Gabriel García Márquez)
- **Minimalism:** Writing characterized by brevity, straightforward language, and a lack of plot resolutions (Raymond Carver, Amy Hempel)

What are some famous short stories?

1. “The Tell-Tale Heart” (1843) – Edgar Allen Poe
2. “The Necklace” (1884) – Guy de Maupassant
3. “The Yellow Wallpaper” (1892) – Charlotte Perkins Gilman
4. “The Story of an Hour” (1894) – Kate Chopin
5. “Gift of the Magi” (1905) – O. Henry
6. “The Dead,” “The Dubliners” (1914) – James Joyce

7. “The Garden Party” (1920) – Katherine Mansfield
 8. “Hills Like White Elephants” (1927), “The Snows of Kilimanjaro” (1936) – Ernest Hemingway
 9. “The Lottery” (1948) – Shirley Jackson
 10. “Lamb to the Slaughter” (1953) – Roald Dahl
 11. “A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings” (1955) – Gabriel García Márquez
 12. “Sonny’s Blues” (1957) – James Baldwin
 13. “A Good Man Is Hard to Find” (1953), “Everything That Rises Must Converge” (1961) – Flannery O’Connor
- What are some popular short story collections?*
1. *The Things They Carried* – Tim O’Brien
 2. *Labyrinths* – Jorge Luis Borges
 3. *Blind Willow, Sleeping Woman* – Haruki Murakami
 4. *Nine Stories* – J.D. Salinger
 5. *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love* – Raymond Carver
 6. *The Stories of John Cheever* – John Cheever
 7. *Welcome to the Monkey House* – Kurt Vonnegut
 8. *Complete Stories* – Dorothy Parker
 9. *Interpreter of Maladies* – Jhumpa Lahiri
 10. *Suddenly a Knock at the Door* – Etgar Keret