



Short  
Stories  
*for Students*

# Short Stories *for Students*

Presenting Analysis, Context and Criticism on  
Commonly Studied Short Stories

Volume 3



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# Short Stories for Students

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# An Adventure in Reading

Sitting on top of my desk is a Pueblo storytelling doll. Her legs stick straight out before her and around her neck and flowing down into her lap are wide-eyed children. Her mouth is open as though she were telling the Zuni tale of the young husband who followed his wife to the Land of the Dead, a story strangely like the Greek myth of Orpheus and Euridice, as both teach the dangers of youthful impatience.

Although the Pueblo doll was created in New Mexico, she symbolizes a universal human activity. The pharaohs listened intently to tales of the goddess Isis, who traveled to foreign lands to rescue the dismembered body of her husband Osiris. Biblical narratives thrill the reader with stories like that of mortal combat between David and the giant Goliath. Greek and Roman myths immortalize the struggles of the wandering warriors Odysseus and Aeneas. In the Middle Ages, kings, queens and courtiers sat spellbound in drafty halls as troubadours sang of tragic lovers and pious pilgrims.

Around the world and down through the ages, myths, folktales, and legends have spoken to us about the human condition and our place in the world of nature and of spirit. Despite its ancient beginnings, however, there is no rigid criteria to which a story must adhere. It is one of the most protean literary forms. Though many scholars credit the nineteenth-century Romantic writers Edgar

Allan Poe and Nathaniel Hawthorne with creating the modern short story, the form refuses to be frozen by a list of essential characteristics. Perhaps this is one of the reasons William Faulkner called it the “most demanding form after poetry.” Jack London felt it should be “concrete, to the point, with snap and go and life, crisp and crackling and interesting.” Eudora Welty wrote that each story should reveal something new yet also contain something “as old as time.”

Below are some of the qualities you may observe as you explore the works discussed in *Short Stories for Students*. These characteristics also demonstrate some of the ways the short story differs from the novel:

1. Because time is compressed or accelerated, **unity** in plot, character development, tone, or mood is essential.
2. The author has chosen to **focus** on one character, event, or conflict within a limited time.
3. Poe wrote that **careful craftsmanship** serves unity by ensuring that every word must contribute to the story’s design.
4. Poe also believed that reading should take place in **one sitting** so that the story’s unity is not lost.
5. A character is **revealed** through a series of incidents or a conflict. The short story generally stops when it has achieved this purpose. A novel **develops** a character throughout its many chapters.

Now that we have briefly explored the history of the short story and heard from a few of its creators, let us consider the role of the reader. Readers are not empty vessels that wait, lids raised, to receive a teacher's or a critic's interpretation. They bring their unique life experiences to the story. With these associations, the best readers also bring their attention (a word that means "leaning towards"), their reading skills, and, most importantly, their imagination to a reading of a story.

My students always challenged me to discuss, analyze, interpret, and evaluate the stories we read without destroying the thrill of being beamed up into another world. For years I grappled with one response after the other to this challenge. Then one day I read an article by a botanist who had explored the beauty of flowers by x-raying them. His illustrations showed the rose and the lily in their external beauty, and his x-rays presented the wonders of their construction. I brought the article to class, where we discussed the benefits of examining the internal design of flowers, relationships, current events, and short stories.

A short story, however, is not a fossil to admire. Readers must ask questions, guess at the answers, predict what will happen next, then read to discover. They and the author form a partnership that brings the story to life. Awareness of this partnership keeps the original excitement alive through discussion, analysis, interpretation, and evaluation. Literary explorations allow the reader to admire the authors' craftsmanship as well as their artistry. In fact, original appreciation may be enhanced by this x-ray vision. The final step is to appreciate once again the story in its entirety—to put the pieces back together.

Now it is your turn. Form a partnership with your author. During or following your adventure in reading, enter into a dialogue with the published scholars featured in *Short Stories for Students*. Through this dialogue with experts you will revise, enrich, and/or confirm your original observations and interpretations.

During this adventure, I hope you will feel the same awe that illuminates the faces of the listeners that surround the neck of my Pueblo storyteller.

*Nancy Rosenberger  
Conestoga High School  
Berwyn, Pennsylvania*

# Introduction

## **Purpose of the Book**

The purpose of *Short Stories for Students (SSfS)* is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying short stories by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's "For Students" Literature line, *SSfS* is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific short fiction. While each volume contains entries on classic stories frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary stories, including works by multicultural, international, and women writers.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the story and the story's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in the work; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the narrative as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the story; analysis of important themes in the story; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the work.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the story itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work.

This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the story was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the story or author. A unique feature of *SSfS* is a specially commissioned overview essay on each story by an academic expert, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each story, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the work.

## **Selection Criteria**

The titles for each volume of *SSfS* were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed include: literature anthologies, *Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges*; *Teaching the Short Story: A Guide to Using Stories from Around the World*, by the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE); and "A Study of High School Literature Anthologies," conducted by Arthur Applebee at the Center for the Learning and Teaching of Literature and sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts and the Office of Educational Research and Improvement.

Input was also solicited from our expert advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of “classic” stories (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary stories for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members—current high-school teachers—helped pare down the list for each volume. Works not selected for the present volume were noted as possibilities for future volumes. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

### *How Each Entry Is Organized*

Each entry, or chapter, in *SSfS* focuses on one story. Each entry heading lists the title of the story, the author’s name, and the date of the story’s publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- **Introduction:** a brief overview of the story which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- **Author Biography:** this section includes basic facts about the author’s life, and focuses on events and times in the author’s life that may have inspired the story in question.
- **Plot Summary:** a description of the events in the story, with interpretation of how these events help articulate the story’s themes.
- **Characters:** an alphabetical listing of the characters who appear in the story. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character’s role in the story, as well as discussion of the character’s actions, relationships, and possible motivation.
 

Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed—for instance, the narrator in “The Eatonville Anthology”—the character is listed as “The Narrator” and alphabetized as “Narrator.” If a character’s first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name.
- **Themes:** a thorough overview of how the topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the story. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- **Style:** this section addresses important style elements of the story, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary of Literary Terms.
- **Historical and Cultural Context:** This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate *in which the author lived and the work was created*. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the story is historical in nature, information regarding the time in which the story is set is also included. Long sections are broken down with helpful subheads.
- **Critical Overview:** this section provides background on the critical reputation of the author and the story, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section may include a history of how story was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent works, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- **Sources:** an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with bibliographical information.
- **For Further Study:** an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.
- **Criticism:** an essay commissioned by *SSfS* which specifically deals with the story and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work.
 

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, if applicable, set separate from the main text:
- **Media Adaptations:** where applicable, a list of film and television adaptations of the story, including source information. The list also in-

cludes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.

- **Compare and Contrast Box:** an “at-a-glance” comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author’s time and culture and late twentieth-century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the story was written, the time or place the story was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after the mid-1970s may not have this box.
- **What Do I Read Next?:** a list of works that might complement the featured story or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.
- **Study Questions:** a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the story. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.

### Other Features

*SSfS* includes “An Adventure in Reading,” a foreword by Nancy Rosenberger, chair of the English department at Conestoga High School in Berwyn, Pennsylvania. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how *Short Stories for Students* can help students enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the *SSfS* series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the *SSfS* series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in **boldface**.

Entries may include illustrations, including an author portrait, stills from film adaptations (when

available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

### Citing Short Stories for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of *SSfS* may use the following general forms to document their source. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, thus, the following examples may be adapted as needed.

When citing text from *SSfS* that is not attributed to a particular author (for example, the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.) the following format may be used:

“The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County.” *Short Stories for Students*. Ed. Kathleen Wilson. Vol. 1. Detroit: Gale, 1997. 19-20.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from *SSfS* (usually the first essay under the Criticism subhead), the following format may be used:

Korb, Rena. Essay on “Children of the Sea.” *Short Stories for Students*. Ed. Kathleen Wilson. Vol. 1. Detroit: Gale, 1997. 42.

When quoting a journal essay that is reprinted in a volume of *Short Stories for Students*, the following form may be used:

Schmidt, Paul. “The Deadpan on Simon Wheeler.” *The Southwest Review* XLI, No. 3 (Summer, 1956), 270-77; excerpted and reprinted in *Short Stories for Students*, Vol. 1, ed. Kathleen Wilson (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 29-31.

When quoting material from a book that is reprinted in a volume of *SSfS*, the following form may be used:

Bell-Villada, Gene H. “The Master of Short Forms,” in *Garcia Marquez: The Man and His Work* (University of North Carolina Press, 1990); excerpted and reprinted in *Short Stories for Students*, Vol. 1, ed. Kathleen Wilson (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 90-1.

### We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editor of *Short Stories for Students* welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest short stories to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may write to the editor at:

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# Literary Chronology

- 1776:** The signing of the Declaration of Independence signals the beginning of the American Revolution.
- 1789:** The French Revolution, marked by the violent Reign of Terror, shifts the balance of power in France.
- 1804:** Nathaniel Hawthorne is born in Salem, Massachusetts, on July 4.
- 1834:** Frank R. Stockton is born in Philadelphia.
- 1836:** Bret Harte is born in Albany, New York, on August 25.
- 1850:** *The Scarlet Letter*, Nathaniel Hawthorne's novel of a minister's involvement with a married woman, is published.
- 1853:** "Bartleby the Scrivener, A Tale of Wall Street" by Herman Melville is published in *Putnam's* magazine.
- 1861:** The U.S. Civil War begins when Confederate forces capture Fort Sumter in South Carolina.
- 1864:** Nathaniel Hawthorne dies in Plymouth, New Hampshire, on May 19.
- 1865:** The U.S. Civil War ends; Abraham Lincoln is assassinated.
- 1866:** H. G. Wells is born in England on September 21.
- 1867:** John Galsworthy is born in Surrey, England, on August 14.
- 1869:** "The Outcasts of Poker Flat" by Bret Harte is published in *Overland Monthly* magazine.
- 1876:** Susan Glaspell is born in Davenport, Iowa, on July 1.
- 1882:** "The Lady, or the Tiger?" by Frank Stockton is published in *Century* magazine.
- 1883:** Franz Kafka is born in Prague, Bohemia, on July 3.
- 1898:** *The War of the Worlds*, H. G. Wells's early science fiction classic, is published.
- 1902:** John Steinbeck is born in Salinas, California, on February 27.
- 1902:** Frank Stockton dies in Washington, DC.
- 1902:** Bret Harte dies in Surrey, England, on May 5.
- 1908:** Richard Wright is born near Natchez, Mississippi, on September 4.
- 1910:** "The Japanese Quince" by John Galsworthy is published.
- 1911:** *The Door in the Wall and Other Stories* by H. G. Wells is published.
- 1912:** The *R.M.S. Titanic* sinks on her maiden voyage from Southampton, England, to New York.

- 1914:** Julio Cortazar is born in Brussels, Belgium, on August 26.
- 1914:** With the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand of Austria, long-festering tensions in Europe erupt into what becomes known as the Great War.
- 1915:** *The Metamorphosis*, Franz Kafka's novella about a man who wakes up and finds that he has been transformed into a cockroach, is published.
- 1917:** "A Jury of Her Peers" by Susan Glaspell is published.
- 1918:** World War I, the most deadly war in history, ends with the signing of the Treaty of Versailles.
- 1919:** "In the Penal Colony," written by Franz Kafka in 1914, is published. The first English translation of the story does not appear until 1948.
- 1920:** The 18th Amendment, outlawing the sale, manufacture, and transportation of alcohol—known as Prohibition—goes into effect. This law led to the creation of "speakeasies"—illegal bars—and an increase in organized crime. The law is repealed in 1933.
- 1922:** *The Forsyte Saga*, John Galsworthy's novel with characters based on his own family members, is published.
- 1922:** Grace Paley is born in New York City on December 11.
- 1924:** Franz Kafka dies in Kierling, Austria, on June 3.
- 1928:** Cynthia Ozick is born in New York City on April 17.
- 1929:** The stock market crash in October signals the beginning of a worldwide economic depression.
- 1930:** Chinua Achebe is born in Ogidi, Nigeria, on November 16.
- 1931:** Donald Barthelme is born in Philadelphia on April 7.
- 1932:** John Updike is born in Pennsylvania on March 18.
- 1933:** John Galsworthy dies in London, on January 31.
- 1937:** *Out of Africa*, Isak Dinesen's novel about plantation life in Kenya, is published.
- 1938:** "Flight" by John Steinbeck is published in the collection *The Long Valley*.
- 1938:** Raymond Carver is born in Oregon on May 25.
- 1939:** World War II begins when Nazi Germany, led by Adolf Hitler, invades Poland; England and France declare war in response.
- 1939:** *The Grapes of Wrath*, John Steinbeck's tale of the Joad family's displacement from the dust bowl of Oklahoma to the harsh farming life in California, is published.
- 1939:** Margaret Atwood is born in Ottawa, Ontario, on November 18.
- 1940:** *Native Son*, Richard Wright's novel about Bigger Thomas, a man condemned to death for the murder of a white woman, is published.
- 1940:** Bobbie Ann Mason is born in rural Kentucky on May 1.
- 1940:** Maxine Hong Kingston is born in Stockton, California, on October 27.
- 1942:** "The Man Who Lived Underground" by Richard Wright is published in *Accent* magazine.
- 1942:** "Sorrow-Acre" by Isak Dinesen is published in her collection *Winter's Tales*.
- 1945:** World War II ends in August with the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan.
- 1946:** H. G. Wells dies in London on August 13.
- 1948:** Susan Glaspell dies in New York City.
- 1950:** Senator Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin sets off the "Red Scare" that leads to government hearings and blacklisting of suspected communists.
- 1954:** Sandra Cisneros is born in Chicago.
- 1956:** "Axolotl" by Julio Cortazar is published in *Final del juego*.
- 1958:** *Things Fall Apart*, Chinua Achebe's classic novel about the Ibo society of Nigeria before British colonization, is published.
- 1960:** Richard Wright dies in Paris on November 28.
- 1960:** *Rabbit, Run*, John Updike's novel of a working-class man who constantly relives his high-school glory days, is published.
- 1961:** "A & P" by John Updike is published in the *New Yorker*.

- 
- 1963:** President John F. Kennedy is assassinated in Dallas, Texas, on November 22.
- 1963:** *Hopscotch*, Julio Cortazar's ground-breaking novel of 155 chapters, is published.
- 1968:** "Robert Kennedy Saved From Drowning" by Donald Barthelme is published in his collection *Unspeakable Practices, Unnatural Acts*.
- 1968:** John Steinbeck dies in New York City on December 20.
- 1971:** "Vengeful Creditor" by Chinua Achebe is published in his journal, *Okike*.
- 1972:** "A Conversation with My Father" by Grace Paley is published in the *New American Review*.
- 1974:** President Richard Nixon resigns following the Watergate scandal.
- 1977:** "Rape Fantasies" by Margaret Atwood is published in the Canadian edition of *Dancing Girls and Other Stories*.
- 1980:** "The Shawl" by Cynthia Ozick is published in the *New Yorker*.
- 1980:** "On Discovery" by Maxine Hong Kingston is published in her book *China Men*.
- 1982:** "Where I'm Calling From" by Raymond Carver is published in the *New Yorker*.
- 1982:** "Shiloh" by Bobbie Ann Mason is published in the *New Yorker*.
- 1984:** Julio Cortazar dies in Paris on February 12.
- 1985:** *In Country*, Bobbie Ann Mason's novel about the social effects of the Vietnam War, is published.
- 1986:** *The Handmaid's Tale*, Margaret Atwood's novel about the futuristic dystopian society of Gilead, is published.
- 1988:** Raymond Carver dies in Washington on August 2.
- 1989:** Donald Barthelme dies in Houston on July 23.
- 1990:** Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev's policy of *glasnost* results in the fracturing of the Iron Curtain. By December the Soviet flag is lowered from the Kremlin.
- 1991:** "Woman Hollering Creek" by Sandra Cisneros is published in her collection, *Woman Hollering Creek and Other Stories*.

# Acknowledgments

The editors wish to thank the copyright holders of the excerpted criticism included in this volume and the permissions managers of many book and magazine publishing companies for assisting us in securing reproduction rights. We are also grateful to the staffs of the Detroit Public Library, the Library of Congress, the University of Detroit Mercy Library, Wayne State University Purdy/Kresge Library Complex, and the University of Michigan Libraries for making their resources available to us. Following is a list of the copyright holders who have granted us permission to reproduce material in this volume of *SSFS*. **Every effort has been made to trace copyright, but if omissions have been made, please let us know.**

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