

Topic Page: [Short Story](#)

Definition: **short story** from *The Macquarie Dictionary*

1.

a piece of prose fiction, usually confined to a small group of characters and a single main event, and much shorter than a novel.

short stories

Summary Article: **short story**

From *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide*

Short work of prose fiction, usually consisting of between 500 and 10,000 words, which typically either sets up and resolves a single narrative point or depicts a mood or an atmosphere.

The form has a long history and examples of its popularity and success include *Aesop's Fables* and the tales of *The Thousand and One Nights*. It emerged as a literary genre in the 19th century, fostered by the rise of the novel and the growth of periodicals for leisure reading. Edgar Allan Poe's *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque* was very influential in both the USA and Europe and demonstrated the effectiveness of the form for literary Romanticism; abnormal sensation and heightened experience could be explained most intensely within a brief narrative. In Germany, Heinrich von Kleist and E T A Hoffmann used the fabulous as a means of introducing philosophical and metaphysical ideas. In contrast, Prosper Mérimée pioneered the short story as an effective form for realistic fiction. He perfected a detached, observational style which is shared to some degree by Guy de Maupassant, for whom the short story presented an opportunity to capture one particularly illuminating or revealing moment in the lives of ordinary people.

The short story form encourages economy of setting and concise narration. It must be succinct in presenting its central intention and the plot cannot be elaborate. Within these constraints, the focus may be primarily the events (as with Poe's stories), the presentation of character (as in the stories of Anton Chekhov), or the relationship between character and setting (for example, James Joyce's *Dubliners*).

Other outstanding short-story writers are Rudyard Kipling, Saki, Ernest Hemingway, Isaak Babel, Katherine Mansfield, Jorge Luis Borges, and Sherwood Anderson.

essays

Role of a narrator

Features of a short story

Creating an interesting character

Character development in a story

documents

Harte, Bret: From 'Tennessee's Partner'

Hawthorne, Nathaniel: From 'Young Goodman Brown'

weblinks

Eva is Inside her Cat – Gabriel García Márquez

'Fall of the House of Usher, The' – Edgar Allan Poe

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