



PNU University

The Short Story

(English Language and Literature)

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پیشگفتار ناشر

کتاب‌های دانشگاه پیام نور حسب مورد و با توجه به شرایط مختلف یک درس در یک یا چند رشته دانشگاهی، به صورت کتاب درسی، متن آزمایشگاهی، فرادرسی، و کمک درسی چاپ می‌شوند.

کتاب درسی ثمره کوشش‌های علمی صاحب اثر است که براساس نیازهای درسی دانشجویان و سرفصل‌های مصوب تهیه و پس از داوری علمی، طراحی آموزشی، و ویرایش علمی در گروه‌های علمی و آموزشی، به چاپ می‌رسد. پس از چاپ ویرایش اول اثر، با نظرخواهی‌ها و داوری علمی مجدد و با دریافت نظرهای اصلاحی و متناسب با پیشرفت علوم و فناوری، صاحب اثر در کتاب تجدیدنظر می‌کند و ویرایش جدید کتاب با اعمال ویرایش زبانی و صوری جدید چاپ می‌شود.

متن آزمایشگاهی (م) راهنمایی است که دانشجویان با استفاده از آن و کمک استاد، کارهای عملی و آزمایشگاهی را انجام می‌دهند.

کتاب‌های فرادرسی (ف) و **کمک درسی** (ک) به منظور غنی‌تر کردن منابع درسی دانشگاهی تهیه و بر روی لوح فشرده تکثیر می‌شوند و یا در وبگاه دانشگاه قرار می‌گیرند.

مدیریت تولید محتوا و تجهیزات آموزشی

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Preface

To the Student

The present textbook is intended for the undergraduate students studying English literature at Payame Noor University. We have done our best to provide the students with a book that is supposed to be both useful and interesting. It should help you in understanding a collection of eight great short stories written by famous short story writers. We don't expect the individual critical assessments given here be the sole interpretation; of course other interpretations might also be as valid as those presented here.

There are eight short stories preceded by an introductory chapter dealing with the Short Story, its brief history, characteristics and elements. The discussion of each short story includes a biography of the author, the story itself, a glossary of some unfamiliar words and expressions highlighted by asterisks in the text in the order they appear (this will certainly help you save time and find the appropriate contextual meaning), and the plot summary of the story. Besides, each story is subjected to close scrutiny and a critical assessment is provided.

Each chapter avails from two types of questions: 1) multiple-choice items which help you understand the details of the story while their keys are presented in the appendix, and 2) open-ended questions which are mostly taken from the analyses.

It is advisable to study the chapters in the order they appear in the book, because chapter one makes you acquainted with a short history and the characteristics and elements of the short story and the short stories chosen have been arranged according to the degree of their difficulty.

To the Instructor

Inasmuch as the book is a self-study textbook and the shortage of time to teach the course in Payame Noor University is crystal-clear, we've made the book contain necessary information for such an end but still there is the need to the teacher as a torch or guide to help the students get a fairly full grasp of what is going on in here.

The teacher is demanded to teach chapter one with patience for the sample analyses presented have most of their bases in this chapter. In order to finish the materials on time, it is advisable to ask the students to read the stories in advance individually and to share, contrast and argue over their own viewpoints in the classroom. Personal experiences of the texts are highly telling and should be respected. The teacher is here required to listen patiently to the students' arguments and let them express their arguments. To sum up the session it would be nice if the teacher further highlights the points made in the analyses.

We hope this book will add more knowledge to our students' literary experience on short stories, the primary aim of the book, and help them enjoy it.

Belghis Rovshan,
Hossein Rahmani

Chapter 1

Introduction: A brief History, Characteristics and Elements of the Short Story

Behavioural Objectives

After reading this chapter you are expected to:

- Define the short story.
- Identify the five classic parts of the short story.
- Recognize the elements of the short story.
- Discuss different points of view.

Introduction: A Brief History, Characteristics and Elements of the Short Story

Some critics believed that it might be difficult to define the short story. They were anxious about how long or short a short story could be, if the story materials of short stories were distinctive in any way, or if they tended to focus on particular kinds of characters and experiences.

Most short stories are clearly shorter than most novels; although Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Ian McEwan's *The Cement Garden* do not comply with this and are usually regarded as novelette.

In Short Stories the story material must be less complex and extensive than that of the novel; characters can not be developed as they can in novels.

The history of short fictional prose narratives goes back to ancient times and to traditions of oral story telling. "The concept of stories," according to Lucke, "must have been invented as soon as human whoops and squeals turned into language". There have been stories on papyrus since ancient times in Egypt; they have been compiled and become the Judeo-Christian Scriptures. Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are the examples of Classical period written in rhythmic verse. Later on, *fables*, stories with moral lessons, came into being; *Aesop's Fables* belongs to this era. In medieval ages, many short narratives were written in verse, but they are still seen by scholars as part of the history of the short story. After the fall of Rome in the fifth century A.D., many classical tales were Christianized, but the *short didactic tales*, flourished in medieval times, were often transmitted orally and encouraged religious devotion. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, *exempla*, short narratives used to illustrate sermons, were popular and compiled into volumes. Another ancient form of short stories was called *anecdotes*; they were popular in the Roman Empire era. Critics regard anecdotes to be a part of *parables*, "a simple, fable-like story that points beyond itself, showing us a lesson" (Mickics, 222). The early European written stories in the 14th C. were Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* and Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron*. These books include separate short stories related to each other.

The detailed account of the development of short narratives in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries has been done by Korte; she accounts for various periodicals as the basis for short fiction. In her work she points out to Daniel Defoe, Samuel Johnson, Joseph Addison, Oliver Goldsmith, Leigh Hunt, the Lambs, Mary Wollstonecraft, and a lot of lesser-known writers who produced short prose narratives in this period; furthermore, she accounts for various kinds of short narrative that have

emerged in this era: "the character sketch, the short didactic anecdote, socially critical stories, stories of sentiment and education, the gothic tale, and tales of provincial life" (47–72).

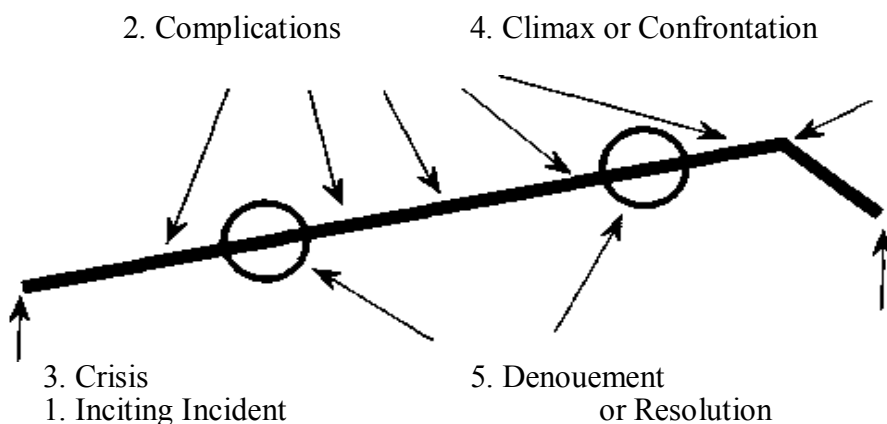
"Early Victorian short fiction, written mostly by women, takes the form of social psychological texts, gothic and sensational fiction, crime stories, and stories of colonial adventure" (Korte 72–89; Greenfield xiii–xv). But short fiction was undervalued and scarcely reflected on by its practitioners and readers for much of the nineteenth century. It was "the novel or the serial novel that was the preferred type of fictional text for the Victorian writer and publisher" (Korte, 74).

According to Bernard Bergonzi *fin-de-siècle* (relating to the end of the 19th century, especially the art, culture and morals of the period) and pre-1914 (before World War I) are the periods which see "an explosion of production of and interest in short fiction, and a clear idea of the short story as a discrete kind of fictional text" (30–1).

World War II was one of the flourishing periods for the short story in Britain. Bergonzi notes the main varieties of short fiction during World War II: "accounts of army life, texts dealing with the violence of the bombing of British cities, and stories by women about their experiences during the war" (40–5).

The Five Classic Parts

Since classical times, writers have constructed stories using five basic parts. The diagram below¹ provides a draft of a plot. The thick line represents the course of a story, showing how it progresses from the beginning to the end.



1. This diagram is taken from: Lucke Margaret, *Schaum's Quick Guide to Writing Great Short Stories*. New York: McGraw Hill, 1999.

1. Inciting incident: The inciting incident starts the ball rolling, the event that begins or intensifies the protagonist's position. This action sets up a situation that will need to be resolved and creates the opportunity for the conflict to occur. Of course, some modern short stories have an abrupt beginning, i.e. they start *in medias res* (in the middle of the action).
2. Complications: This is how the writer gets his or her protagonist in trouble. Complications are the obstacles the protagonist faces and make achieving his or her goal more difficult. Complications can spring from the characters' own actions and arise throughout the story, up to the moment of climax. Throughout the complication phase the tension rises as the story proceeds and the complications accumulate.
3. Crisis: In literature, a crisis is a decisive moment or event, a turning point. The Greek root, *krisis*, means "to separate"; it separates what has gone before from what comes afterward. Often it inaugurates a change in the fortunes of one or more characters. In some short stories the crisis and climax may almost occur at the same time.
4. Climax: It is the culminating event in the series of actions. On the diagram, the climax is where the rising line reaches its peak. At this stage, the story reaches its highest excitement and power; it is where the protagonist and antagonist confront and the hero's success or failure is determined. In the climax, the conflict is resolved and the answers to the principal questions raised by the story become clear.
5. Denouement: The word "denouement" means "to untie". The ancients regarded a story as a knot; to untie the knot was meant to reveal every dim point and secrets in the story. The denouement is to tie up loose ends and to conclude the action. It can be seen from the diagram that the tension is eventually falling. In today's literature, in order not to diminish the impact of the story the climax is placed as close as possible to the end of story.

Writers write for two reasons: One is that they have something they want to say. The other is that they have something they want to find out. Through writing, which is a mode of exploration, a writer examines and comes to terms with one's ideas, insights, and experiences. In the process of writing a story, one will have a better understanding of the world and other human beings. Reading what others write, one can share a bit of that understanding.

To determine a short story from longer fictional forms is indeed difficult. Edgar Allan Poe, in his seminal essay, *The*

Philosophy of Composition, theorizes the first theory about the length of the short story; he believes that a short story should be read in one sitting. Ideally, a short story should be exactly as long as it needs to be, and no longer or shorter. Still, there are conventions; according to Lucke, a short story which has "more than 20,000 words or so" has passed the boundary of the short story and has entered the realm of the *novelette*" (5).

A short story is "a short narrative in which the author combines elements of character, conflict, plot, and setting in an artful way to interest, amuse, or inform the reader" (Ibid.).

Characters: It is through the characters' motivations, actions, and responses that the writers create the story. In order for a story to be truly satisfying, the writer has to breathe life into the characters, make them as solid and complex and real as real people in real life.

The central character of the story is the protagonist. He or she is the person around whom the events of the story revolve and usually the one who will be most affected by the outcome. The protagonist is the person with whom readers most closely identify.

Conflict: It is the fuel of the story and gives it energy. The conflict starts up the events of the story and raises issues that must be resolved. It is through these procedures that the characters reveal themselves, their motivations, weaknesses, and strengths.

Plot and Structure: "Plot", according to Mickics, "orders events so that they go somewhere, make significance; it is the narrative sequence presented by a book as we read it from first page to last" (236). He further argues that "the plot begins at a later chronological point and doubles back to an earlier one" (Ibid.). It is regarded as the whys of the events of the story. The king died and the queen died a few days later because of grief is an example of plot. "Story", Mickics contends, "is the raw material that precedes the making of the plot sequence: the reservoir of happenings that the author chooses from" (Ibid.) Story is the sequence of the happenings in the story. The king died and then the queen died is an example of story. Therefore, the story does not have anything to do with the why of the events.

The structure of a story is the frame of the story. It organizes and gives shape to the disparate parts. After the writer chose his characters and the conflict they face, he or she can explore how he or she wants to arrange and present the story's events, from beginning to middle to end.

Setting and atmosphere: The setting of a story is the location and time in which the story takes place. The tone and mood of the story, i.e. its atmosphere, increases the readers' involvement in what's going on.

Narrative voice: The first four elements constitute who, why, what, when, and where of the story; they define what the story is about. The

fifth element is the how the story is told. Point of view refers to the vantage point from which the readers are presented with the events of the story. Different points of view are as follow:

First Person

In the first person point of view, a character acts as the narrator, and tells us his or her own version of the events. The narrator refers to himself or herself as *I*, *we*, *me* or *us*.

In *A Rose for Emily*, William Faulkner describes a reclusive woman's relationship with her community; the narrator is an unidentified *we* who comes to sound like the voice of the town itself.

In the First person narration, the reader is strongly identified with the character (narrator). The reader is given a place in the head and heart of the character to hear his or her thoughts and feeling. The weak point of this point of view is that the reader knows as much as the narrator and is not allowed to enter other characters' head; the reader is not aware of the events that are happening in other places unless someone tells him or her about them later.

Third Person

In the third person point of view, the author, rather than a character, takes on the narrator's role. There is no *I* or *me* in third person, except in dialogue. All of the characters, including the protagonist, are *he*, *she*, and *they*.

A third person narrative gives the reader a wider scope. The narrator can be in several places at once. This narrator can take the reader inside the minds of more than one character. In this kind of narration the sense of reader's identification or intimacy with the narrator does no longer exist. This narration has some subdivisions:

Limited or restricted third person: It is similar to first person in that there is one specific viewpoint character and the readers see the action through his eyes and share his thoughts.

Multiple points of view: In a multiple viewpoint narration the readers are presented with the story through the eyes of two or more viewpoint characters. The usual way to handle multiple viewpoints is to assign each character certain scenes.

Omniscient point of view: In this method of narration the author is both the narrator and the viewpoint character. The author does not actually appear in the story but describes the events based on his knowledge of the characters, events, and issues with which the story deals.

Since the author knows everything (i.e. he is omniscient), there are no restrictions in describing what's going on at every place and at every moment. Although there is the possibility of entering the minds of every character and delve into his observations, thoughts and feelings, the writer runs the risk of distracting the readers rather than delighting them.

This approach distances the readers and prevents their identification with a special character.

Limited omniscient viewpoint: This kind of point of view is contradictory for while the readers are inside the character's head, they are also outside of it. Using this approach, the writer allows the readers to understand the difficulties about a character that would not be easily understood through a strictly limited first person narrative.

We hereby focus on two important sub-genres of the short story: detective short stories and gothic short stories:

The crime stories are very old but the modern *detective story* has its origins in the writings of Edgar Allan Poe. With the emergence of the detective story as a popular form, the focus of the crime narrative changed from the criminal to the maintenance of law, order and respectability.

In detective fiction criminals are punished for transgressing legal and social boundaries. Nyman believes "as soon as the upper-class detective has discovered that the murder in the country house has been committed by the butler, the local constabulary restores order and eliminates the source of disturbance" (Qtd. in Malcolm and Malcolm, 65).

The detective story reached its perfection in the works of Arthur Conan Doyle, Sherlock Holmes (an expert on poisons, anatomy and fingerprints, i.e., in "the science of deduction") and Agatha Christie with whose detectives, Hercule Poirot and Miss Jane Marple, the image of the detective changed to more domestic and feminine actors. Hercule Poirot, with his small figure and effeminate behavior is to somewhat a parody of the tall Englishman Holmes.

Gothic tales were particularly popular in Britain from 1764 to 1820. Becky DiBiasio accounts for the characteristics of *gothic stories*:

1. They are about innocent characters who are powerless and at risk of physical, sexual, and mental violation by patriarchal villains.
2. Medieval castles and abbeys, exotic locales, and the ruins of religious houses provide the settings.

Edgar Allen Poe's *The Cask of Amontillado* has these elements and is regarded to be one of the short stories of the genre.

Understanding the Details

Answer the following items by choosing the best choice.

1. *Heart of Darkness* and *The Cement Garden* are regarded as
 A. Short Story B. Novel C. Novelette D. Romance
2. The history of the fictional prose narratives goes back to
 A. Classical Times B. Medieval Ages
 C. Modern Times D. The 19th Century
3. Short narratives of the medieval ages were mostly
 A. Oral B. In Verse C. In Prose D. In Dialogue
4. After many classical tales were Christianized.
 A. The Fall of the Roman Empire B. The Rise of the Roman Empire
 C. The Formation of the Greek Empire D. Fin-de-siècle
5. Anecdotes were regarded to be a part of
 A. Exemplum B. Parables C. Fables D. Allegory
6. The early European written stories in the 14th C. were Geoffrey Chaucer's and Giovanni Boccaccio's.....
 A. Canterbury Tales / Decameron
 B. Decameron / Canterbury Tales
 C. Canterbury Tales / A Rose for Emily
 D. The Philosophy of Composition / Heart of Darkness
7. The five classic parts of the short story, in order, are.....
 A. Inciting Incident, Complications, Crisis, Climax and Denouement.
 B. Denouement, Complications, Crisis, Inciting Incident and Climax.
 C. Inciting Incident, Climax, Crisis, Complications and Denouement.
 D. Complications, Inciting Incident, Crisis, Climax and Denouement.
8. "..... short fiction, written mostly by women, takes the form of social psychological texts, gothic and sensational fiction, crime stories, and stories of colonial adventure."
 A. Late Modern B. Late Victorian
 C. Early Modern D. Early Victorian

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9. Some modern short fiction starts, i.e. in the middle of the action.
A. Fin-de-siècle B. In medias res
C. In crisis D. With flashbacks
10. How the writer gets his or her protagonist in trouble is called
A. Inciting Incident B. Crisis
C. Denouement D. Complications
11. In the short story, what separates what has gone before from what comes afterward is known as
A. Crisis B. Climax
C. Denouement D. Complication
12. The story reaches its highest excitement and power in
A. Inciting Incident B. Climax
C. Denouement D. Crisis
13. In the loose ends are tied up and the action is concluded.
A. Inciting Incident B. Complications
C. Denouement D. Crisis
14. Which of the following CANNOT be an ingredient of the short story?
A. Plot B. Characters
C. Setting D. First Person Narration
15. In narration the narrator and the readers are identified very strongly identical.
A. First Person B. Omniscient
C. Third Person D. Limited Omniscient
16. Which of the following writers IS NOT regarded as a detective story writer?
A. Edgar Allan Poe B. William Faulkner
C. Agatha Christie D. Arthur Conan Doyle
17. Medieval castles and abbeys, exotic locales, and the ruins of religious houses provided the settings for

A. Medieval Short Stories
C. Gothic Short Stories

B. Detective Short Stories
D. Novelettes

Open-ended Questions

1. Discuss briefly the history of short fictional prose narratives.
2. Elaborate on the five classic parts of the short story.
3. Define the short story and its elements.
4. Elaborate on different points of view.
5. Discuss omniscient point of view and its subcategories.
6. What are the characteristics of gothic stories?

