

An Introduction to The Short Story

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What is Short Story

The Short Story is a prose narrative that usually ranges between a thousand and twelve thousand words. It presents some human experience and conveys a vision.

The vision is the meaning conveyed in the story, the author's underlying idea (theme). The plot is the arrangement of incidents and details in a story involving character.

The style is the use of the right words in the right order to express the author's sense of truth in a particular work.

The Essential Features of the Short Story

1. Concentration on few characters, often one single character.
2. Lack of complicated plot and extensive description
3. Quick denouement (solution)
4. Short, dense writing, usually organized so as to focus on the exposition on one single incident
Point of View

Differences between the novel and the short story:

1. The novel is longer; it has a great deal of detail that the short story must ignore.
2. In the novel there are subplots which, usually, have a vital relationship to the main plot. The short story deals with one main incident and character.
3. The novel permits development of characters. There is usually no change in the character of a short story because it concentrates on one incident.
4. The novel permits description of setting and the influence of the setting on the characters and their actions. The short story does not give long description, and sometimes there is no description at all.
5. The novel's narrative task is elaboration; whereas the short story's is limitation and Compression.
6. The novel may make a multitude of impressions upon the reader, the short story, on the other hand, makes a single impression on the reader by concentrating on one incident or event.

The point of view from which the story will be told:

1. The first person "I" may be the main character in the story or an observer watching and reporting action
2. Third person narrator could be the point of view of one particular character, but more often it takes the omniscience (knowing everything) point of view

Setting: Time and place of the short story.

Suggested Questions

1. What was the old man doing in his native town?

- a. taking care of animals
- b. begging on the streets
- c. helping the soldiers
- d. talking care of children

2. What is special about the day the narrator encounters the old man?

- a. It is Easter Sunday.
- b. It is the last day of the war
- c. It is Thanksgiving.
- d. It is Christmas Day

3. Why does the old man leave the animals?

- a. because the children are taking care of them
- b. because he loses interest
- c. because they all die
- d. because of the artillery

4. Which animal is the old man least concerned about?

- a. the goats
- b. the pigeons
- c. the cat
- d. the dog

5. The trucks are crossing the bridge and going where?

- a. Vera Cruz
- b. Barcelona
- c. San Carlos
- d. Tortosa

6. What is the old man's native town?

- a. Vera Cruz
- b. Ebro Delta
- c. Barcelona
- d. San Carlos

7. What is the narrator's job?

- a. He questions people before they cross the bridge.
- b. He protects the people who cross the bridge
- c. He scouts ahead for the enemy's location.
- d. He stops people from crossing the bridge

8. Why does the old man stop and not go across the bridge?

- a. He is asked not to cross the bridge.
- b. He doesn't need to cross the bridge
- c. He is too tired to cross the bridge.
- d. He isn't interested in crossing the bridge

9. The old man is a symbol of what?

- a. the causes of war b. the patience of the soldiers
- c. the civilian victims of war d. the apathy of the civilians

10. How old is the old man?

- a. ninety-four b. sixty-six c. eighty-four d. seventy-six

11. Explain why the narrator takes so much time to converse with the old man. Use details from the story to support your answer.

The narrator in the story takes a lot of time to converse with the old man because he slowly tries to convince the old man to cross the bridge so the man won't die. He gets to know the man so he can slowly persuade him inside the conversation.

12. What statements from the story suggest that the old man is about to give up on life? Quote specific statements to back your answer.

Some statements from the story that suggest that the old man is about to give up on life are that his animals might get killed from war, also he is sad and tired and cannot go any farther.

- I was the last one to leave the town San Carlos.
- I have come twelve kilometers now and I think now I can go no further.
- got to his feet, swayed from side to side and then sat down backwards in the dust

13. How is the narrator portrayed in the story? How does he treat the old man? Give examples from the story to back your answer.

The narrator in the story is portrayed as a kind and curious man. Although his conversation with the old man is to get him across, he gives the man some hope and finds out where he came from. In the end, he realizes the old man is going to give up on life and tries to convince him one more time and leaves.

14. How does Hemmingway show that war is disrupting the lives of the peasants? Is this portrayal realistic? Why or why not?

Hemingway uses symbolism to show that war is disrupting to the lives of the peasants. The narrator asks what the old man's animals are and they are a cat, some pigeons, and two goats. He

chose the animals because only the cats, which are the survivors, and the pigeons, which represent the people who believe in peace but flee anyway, while the goats, which are like the innocent peasants that die due to war.

16. What is the setting of the story? Give details from the story to support your answer.

The setting of the story is daytime near a pontoon bridge close to the village of San Carlos in Spain. Proof of this is shown when the narrator asks the old man where he is from and the old man says, San Carlos. The old man also said he has traveled 12 kilometers to get to the bridge. It is during the Spanish Civil War in probably 1938.

17. What kind of life has the old man been leading? What keeps him going? Use details from the story to support your answer.

The old man has been leading a very simple life caring for his animals