

Lifelong Learning Collaborative Syllabus  
*Best Short Stories Evah*  
Fall 2021

**When** Mondays at 1 PM  
September 20 - November 22, 2021  
No class on Columbus Day, October 11

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**Coordinators** Barbara Barnes  
  
Sidney Okashige

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**Course Description**

**Our Goal** This class shares and discusses the short stories that we know and love and explores new ones yet undiscovered. By doing so it aspires to nourish our own life experiences.

Each of us takes from the printed page as much as we bring to it. If that statement is true, then for every twelve readers, there are a dozen ways to understand and experience a short story. So reading and talking about a story in a group of twelve (or fifteen, in our case) can expand the richness of a story twelvefold/fifteenfold.

Another added dimension of enjoyment or appreciation is that we understand and appreciate a story differently now than when we read it in high school or in college.

A sidebar comment: this means there are probably no wrong interpretations of a story. Members of the group can feel comfortable with their own unique understandings of the story while expanding and enhancing their appreciation of the story through others' insights.

**How it will work** Your coordinators have curated more than twenty short stories that are available online without charge. The stories include well-known "chestnuts" and recent or lesser-known stories of high quality.

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Participants are invited to suggest and to substitute a favorite story that is not listed in the prepared lists and is available on the Internet. Having signed up to lead a class, a member of the class will make a short presentation about his/her chosen short story before leading a discussion about the story itself.

**See Class Format** below for the details.

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**Where to find the short stories**

Your public library!

**Printed text** *An **optional** print resource of American short stories: 100 Years of the Best American Short Stories*  
Lorrie Moore, editor. Heidi Pitlor, coeditor  
2015 by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt

**Internet links**

*Free printable short stories we will use for the course:*  
Howard Allen's Best Short Stories of All Time Online  
[owlcation.com/.../Best-Short-Stories-All-Time-Online](http://owlcation.com/.../Best-Short-Stories-All-Time-Online)  
[owlcation.com/.../Short-Stories-With-a-Twist-Ending](http://owlcation.com/.../Short-Stories-With-a-Twist-Ending)  
[owlcation.com/humanities/Modern-Short-Stories...](http://owlcation.com/humanities/Modern-Short-Stories...)

[Seven Best Places to Read Short Stories Online For Free](#)  
(including Project Gutenberg)

[The Decameron Project](#) - [New York Times](#) short stories from the Pandemic

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**Class Format**

*PRIOR TO THE FIRST CLASS, participants select a story/author from a master list and sign up for a date and time to lead a discussion.*

Discussion leaders start off by sharing "a hook," something that caught their interest about

- The author (about five minutes)
- The geography, era, or cultural context of the story (about 5-10 minutes)

For the remainder of the hour, the group discusses the questions prepared by the leader and sharing their personal observations and discoveries.

**How to prepare for your presentation**

*Please submit your questions to Barbara Barnes at [provwalk@aol.com](mailto:provwalk@aol.com) on the **Wednesday** before your presentation.*

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**Questions/prompts**

When it's your turn to lead a discussion, here are five prompts to consider as you develop your presentation questions. Submit all five just as they are written below OR excerpt and modify these prompts to apply more specifically to your story. Think of **five** as the magic number: not too few and not too many. Just right!

**Suggested prompts**

1. What did the author set out to tell by writing this short story?
2. Please read a passage you liked and tell us how it stood out for you.
3. What, if any, is the historical or cultural context of the story? Implications for diversity?
4. What relevance does the story have today?
5. How well did the author achieve what s/he set out to do?

During the second hour, we'll repeat the format, using a more recently written short story or a lesser-known author or story.

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**A note about your sources**

If in preparing your presentation you use print or online resources, please let us know what they were so that others may enjoy them in addition to your presentation.

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**OPTIONAL  
Electronic files for  
your presentation**

Please send any PowerPoint Presentations, photos, or similar files for screen sharing to [sidokashige@gmail.com](mailto:sidokashige@gmail.com)

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**Preparing for  
others'  
presentations**

On weeks when you are not leading the discussion, prepare for class as follows.

1. Read the story, twice if possible.
  2. Answer as many of the presenter's questions as possible.
  3. Make note of your own questions and comments; did anything puzzle you?
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## Schedule for Presentations

Class	Date	Presenter I - "Chestnuts" (Familiar/famous short stories)	Presenter II - Recent or unfamiliar short stories
1	Sept 20	Zoom-style Cocktail Hour, with virtual hors d'oeuvres and appetizers: <a href="#">If You Knew Me . . . silly and serious</a>	
		A mini- <i>chestnut</i> (an old favorite): <a href="#">The Necklace</a> Guy de Maupassant (1884) <b>Discussion leader:</b> <b>Barbara Barnes</b>	A recent/unfamiliar short story: <a href="#">Sonny's Blues</a> UTube text and audio <a href="#">Sonny's Blues</a> pdf James Baldwin (1957) <b>Discussion leader:</b> <b>Carol Gjelsvik</b>
2	Sept 27	<a href="#">The Lottery</a> Shirley Jackson (1948) <b>Discussion Leader:</b> <b>Carol Hoppe</b>	<a href="#">Impatient Griselda</a> Margaret Atwood (2020) <b>Discussion Leader: Sonie Price</b>
3	Oct 4	<a href="#">Rikki-Tikki-Tavi</a> Rudyard Kipling (1894) <b>Discussion Leader:</b> <b>Rosalind Ladd</b>	<a href="#">The Third and Final Continent</a> Jhumpa Lahiri (1999) <b>Discussion Leader: Barbara Nesto</b>
4	Oct 11	<b>No class</b> Please read the <u>New Yorker</u> article about O. Henry.	<b>No class</b> The <u>New Yorker</u> article will be sent out as a pdf on October 4
5	Oct 18	<a href="#">The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber</a> Ernest Hemingway (1936) <b>Discussion Leader:</b> <b>Patty Reynolds</b>	<a href="#">The Masque of the Red Death</a> Edgar Allen Poe (1850) <b>Discussion Leader: TBA</b>
6	Oct 25	<a href="#">The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County</a> Mark Twain (1865)	<a href="#">The Color War</a> Jodi Picoult (2013)

		At the intersection of the visual arts and Twain's writing <b>Presenter and discussion leaders: Barbara Barnes and Joan Hausrath</b>	Black Huck Finn in New England <b>Discussion leader: Martha Nielsen</b>
7	Nov 1	<a href="#">Perfect Day for Bananafish</a> J. D. Salinger (1948) <b>Discussion Leader: Sidney Okashige</b> Possible interactivity: defining a short story	<a href="#">Paul's Case</a> <a href="#">Paul's Case pdf</a> Willa Cather (1905) <b>Discussion Leader: Celene Healy</b>
8	Nov 8	<a href="#">Babylon Revisited</a> F. Scott Fitzgerald (1931) <b>Discussion Leader: Margaret Lawrence</b>	<a href="#">Cathedral</a> Raymond Carver (1981) <b>Discussion Leader: Joan Hausrath</b>
9	Nov 15	<a href="#">A Rose For Emily</a> Faulkner (1930) <b>Discussion Leader: Penny Stein</b>	<a href="#">A Visit of Charity</a> or <a href="#">A Visit of Charity</a> Eudora Welty (1941) <b>Discussion Leader: Mary Welch</b>
10 Finale Txsgvng Week	Nov 22	<a href="#">The Ransom of Red Chief</a> O. Henry (1902) <b>Discussion Leader: Carol Knopf</b>  Let's discuss what we want to do for this last class.	<a href="#">Two Thanksgiving Day Gentlemen</a> O. Henry (1907) <b>Discussion Leader: Andy Klein</b>

### Class Feedback Form

*Please cut and paste into an email to us.* We coordinators value your participation in this class. To help keep us on track or to make any mid-course corrections that might be needed, please give us your feedback **at any time** during or after the course. Thank you!

1. Is this class meeting your expectations regarding its content and format?

Yes     Mostly     No    Comment (optional):

2. Please tell us two features of the class that you are particularly enjoying. (Class features include: guest visits; discussions; coordinators' presentations, class members' presentations, etc.).

3. Please tell us one (or two) features of the class that you suggest we adjust, change or eliminate and why.

Anything else you would like to share?