

How short can a short story be?

The worm

“And you? Who are you?” I ask this tiny creature that’s crawling between my feet.

“I am a worm”, the little animal answers. “A silly, slow, little animal. I breath from my skin, and my stomach tube runs through my whole body. When I was born my mother said: don’t be sad, Frederick. You are neither smart nor handsome. You have no wings. You don’t even have feet. But crawling can get you anywhere”.

Javier Tomeo, 1932 – 2013, Spanish essayist, dramatist, and novelist.

Social disorder

- What would you like to eat for dinner? asked the jailer the poor sinner who would be executed the following day. You have the right to eat and drink anything you want.

- What a shame! answered the prisoner. If you had asked me three months earlier the robbery and the murder would never have happened.

Alfred Polgar, 1873 - 1955, Austrian-born journalist.

True story

Mrs Ernestine Gapolle, 49 years old from Vichy, committed suicide with two bullets in her head.

Felix Feneon, 1861 – 1944, French anarchist and art critic during the late 19th century.

Just another story

When the war was over the soldier returned home. But he had no bread. Then he saw someone who had bread. He killed him.

“But you are not allowed to kill”, said the judge.

“Why not?” asked the soldier.

Wolfgang Borchert, 1921 – 1947, German author and playwright whose work was strongly influenced by his experience of dictatorship and his service in the Wehrmacht during the Second World War.

A devoted son

A millionaire, who had gone to the poorhouse to visit his father, met a neighbour who got really surprised when he saw him.

- Well, well, said the neighbour. So you do visit your father from time to time.

- He would have done the same for me, answered the millionaire. My old man was always proud of me. Besides, he whispered, I need his signature. I want to buy a life insurance.

Ambrose Bierce, 1842 -1914, American short story writer, journalist, poet, and Civil War veteran.

Islamization

Up in heaven two women competed for the same man.

- I was his legal wife, said the one.

- But I was his mistress, the other.

Then, Saint Peter said to the man:

- Go down again, to another place. You have suffered enough.

Ambrose Bierce

My solo

The curtain opens. I am on stage. I shoot and kill my audience. The applause comes from the orchestra.

Friedrich Karl Waechter, 1937 – 2005, German cartoonist, author, and playwright.

Expectation

When the telephone didn’t ring I knew it was you.

Dorothy Parker, 1893 – 1967, American poet, writer, critic, and satirist based in New York.

Love 77

When they had done all they needed to do, they got up, had a bath, combed their hair, put on some perfume, got dressed again and slowly and steadily became what they were not.

Julio Cortazar, 1914 – 1984, Argentine novelist, short story writer, and essayist.

The soup

I am an illegitimate child. A bright Sunday morning my mother announced to her parents very mildly and gently that she was pregnant and her boyfriend refused to marry her. My grandfather, blinded with rage, pulled both of us (my mother and me) out of the house grabbed his rifle and screamed: Get on your knees, I'll kill you both! Fortunately, at that precise moment, my quick wit grandmother appeared and said: Come inside, now. The soup is getting cold.

Bohumil Hrabal, 1914 – 1997, Czech writer.

Farewell

Full of joy, because at last the guests decided to leave, the hostess said: Please, stay a little bit longer.

Anton Chekhov, 1860 – 1904, Russian playwright and short-story writer who is considered to be among the greatest writers of short fiction in history.

The power of smallness

- Beat it, sniffed the bull to the mosquito that had sat on his ear.

- You forget I am not a bull, said the mosquito and drank voluptuously the bull's blood.

Mr Knole Schpros

Every day Mr Knole Schpros ran to the railway station and every day he missed his train.

In seven whole years he didn't manage to catch it not even once.

"The station's clock is always five minutes ahead of mine" he moans. "But, at least this way I don't have to work!"

Tomi Ungerer, 1931 – 2019, Alsatian artist and writer.

The toil of the brilliant

- How do you spend your time nowadays? they asked Mr K.

And Mr K. answered:

- I am preparing my next mistake.

Bertolt Brecht, 1898 – 1956, German theatre practitioner, playwright, and poet.

No title

His memory was so bad that he forgot he had such a bad memory and began remembering everything.

Ramon Gomez de la Serna, 1888 – 1963, Spanish writer.

The dinosaur

When he woke up the dinosaur was still there.

Augusto Monterroso Bonilla, 1921 – 2003, Honduran writer known for the ironical and humorous style of his short stories.

Epilogue

When the Earth came towards its end there were only two humans left alive. After twenty years the older died.

Jack Ricci

No title

- The Earth? We ate it yesterday.

Yann Martel, 1963, Spanish-born Canadian author best known for "Life of Pi".

The end

A young man who was already a millionaire sat on his millions and blew his head off.
Anton Chekhov

No title

I tried to kill myself one more time: I wetted my nose and stuck it in a plug. Unfortunately it caused a short circuit and I just landed on the fridge. I am always depressed and black thoughts overwhelm me all the time. I wonder if there is death after life and if there is will it be possible to change a 50E note?

Woody Allen, 1935, American director, writer, actor, musician, and comedian.

The Little Prince and the Merchant

“Good morning” said the Little Prince.

“Good morning” said the merchant.

The merchant was selling modified pills to quench thirst.

“You drink one and then you are not thirsty for one week”.

“Why are you selling them?” asked the Prince.

“To save time”, said the merchant. “The experts estimated that thus you save fifty – three minutes per week”.

“To do what?” asked the Prince.

“Anything...” replied the merchant.

“Well,” thought the Prince, “if I had fifty – three minutes I would walk to the well”.

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, 1900 – 1944, French writer, poet, aristocrat, journalist, and pioneering aviator.

Antidote

A young ostrich ran to his mother moaning with pain wings wrapped around his stomach.

- What did you eat? asked the worrying mother.

- A box of nails, was the answer.

- What? Screamed the mother. A whole box in your age? You are really hurting yourself! Quick, hurry to swallow a pair of pincers.

Ambrose Bierce

Tragic hunt

On 13 December 1975, forty – two people departed to hunt crocodiles in Java. Twenty eight men and fourteen women. They rented two boats, filled them with supplies and sailed up the river.

When they reached their destination, a watery – mirror in the base of a huge odd rock, the crocodiles overturned the boat and ate them all. And their supplies.

Michelangelo Antonioni, 1912 – 2007, Italian film director, screenwriter, editor, painter, and short story author.

Threat

If you don't hit the road immediately, I'll look for somebody else.

Raymond Chandler, 1888 – 1959, American-British novelist and screenwriter.

A woman

There is a woman. She goes along with me as I go along with her: she loves me and she hates me.

When she hates me I love her, when she loves me I hate her. That's our only option.

Peter Esterhazy, 1950 – 2016, Hungarian writer.

Short story

There was a man who was never able to finish what he started. He came to realize that this could not go on. So one morning he woke up and said: I made my decision. From now on I will always fin.....

Stefano Benni, 1947, Italian satirical writer, poet and journalist.

A school book story

There were two men.

When they were twelve years old they beat each other with sticks and threw stones.

When they were twenty – two years old they used rifles.

When they were forty – two years old they dropped bombs.

When they were sixty – two years old they got infected.

When they were eighty – two they died.

They buried them one next to the other.

A hundred years later a worm passed through their graves but didn't realize they were two. Same dirt. Same earth.

Wolfgang Borchert

The thinking hen

A hen from Calabria decided to join the Mafia. She went to a Mafia minister to get a letter of recommendation but he said that the Mafia does not exist. She went to a Mafia judge but he also said that the Mafia does not exist. So she returned to the coop and when the other hens asked if she had succeeded she answered that the Mafia does not exist. Then all the hens thought that she had joined the Mafia and were very afraid of her.

Luigi Malerba, 1927 – 8 May 2008, Italian author who wrote short stories, historical novels, and screenplays.

Short story

He decided to change his life and make better use of the morning hours. So, he woke up at six, had a shower, shaved, got dressed, had a tasty breakfast, smoked a few cigarettes, sat at his desk and woke up at noon.

Ennio Flaiano, 1910 – 1972, Italian screenwriter, playwright, novelist, journalist, and drama critic.

Tragedy

She was successful, wealthy, sophisticated and had a lot of friends. She should be a very happy woman except that she was not. She was unhappy, miserable, nervous and unsatisfied. Her therapists could not cure her and she could not help them by telling them what the problem was because she didn't know. She was seeking her tragedy. Then, she met a pilot many years younger and became his mistress. He tested aeroplanes and one day while testing a new engine something went wrong and the plane fell. He died in front of her eyes. Her friends were afraid that she might kill herself from grief. They were totally wrong. She became happy, fat and satisfied. She had found her tragedy.

Somerset Maugham, 1874 – 16 December 1965, English playwright, novelist, and short story writer.

No title

They were waiting for the rising of the sun. It never came.

Antonia Suzan Byatt, 1936, English novelist, and poet.

Weeping

It was in the jungle of the Amazon in Ecuador. The Indians were weeping an old dying granny. They were sitting by her death bed sobbing. A visitor, coming from an other world, asked: why are you weeping? She is still alive. They replied: so she knows how much we love her.

Eduardo Galeano, 1940 – 2015, Uruguayan journalist, writer and novelist considered, among other things "a literary giant of the Latin American left".

The loss

Once upon a time there was a God who had lost his faith.

Jacques Sternberg, 1923 – 2006, French-language writer of science fiction and fantastique.

The Peeping – Tom

A Peeping – Tom had climbed up a tree and was watching a dimly lighted window. Suddenly a naked man appears and sees him.

Naked man: I'll kill you, pig.

Peeping – Tom: You were unique! Magnificent!

Naked man: Really? She has never told me that!

A respectable Senator

A senator, who was elected after he had promised to his voters that he would never steal, brought his home a large part of the Capitol's Dome. His voters gathered outside his house to protest and decided to lynch him.

"You are very unjust" said the Senator. "It is true I promised that I would never steal. But did I promise that I would never lie?"

The voters decided that he was an entirely respectable gentleman and they elected him for the Congress of the USA with no promises made.

Ambrose Bierce

The kiss

The girl kissed the frog and transformed into a frog.

Ennio Flaiano

Motive

The writer, who barren of inspiration, commits a crime in order to find at last an exciting theme for his book, since he is not even considered a suspect surrenders, in order to be left alone to work in peace in his cell, finally gets acquitted, and sits idle barren of inspiration as before.

Günter Kunert, 1929 – 2019, German writer.

The pious driver

Driving her luxurious car to go to church, an old lady does not pay attention to the red light and hits two youngsters who were crossing the road. Giving a glance at the mirror realises that they are not dead so she speeds up in order to be on time for the mass.

Otto Jägersberg, 1942, German writer.

The advice

In the end of a long road lived an ex university professor, who had been abandoned by his wife and his four children who hated his guts, had lost all his money in gamble, abused his dogs, and was dirty and smelly. The villagers went to him when they needed advice.

Jakob Arjouni, 1964 – 2013), German writer.

Reconsideration

The first humans who stood on their two feet were found doped so they lost their title. The gold was awarded to the crawlers.

Michael Augustin

**As amazing as it might seem
6 word short stories
are a possibility**

For sale: baby shoes, never worn.
Artist's problem: Fresh idea, empty pen.
Dinner for two: widower and memories.
I asked. You answered with silence.
Why are you in my selfie?
Tripped over luck, stumbled upon tragedy.
You're my certain kind of sadness.
I was born, but never lived.
She wanted but she was never wanted.
He said: imperfections made her perfect.
He sat on the sea, pondering.
Cupcakes were always the answer. Always.
A house filled with joyful noise.
Stayed home sick. Best day ever.
Sunday morning: biscuits, chocolate and cherries.
Lost a mother, became a mother.
Yesterday I was a different person.
Who invited him to the party?
Screaming loud but nobody can hear.
I have no reason to apologise.
I'm not alone but I'm lonely.
But nobody knows the real me.
I wish I had no regrets.
Show me my reason for existence.
I feel everything; it's too much.
I looked but I never saw.
The waiting room had no doors.
Time traveller dies tragically: 1964 – 1514.
You're not a good artist, Adolf.
We're all trying to forget someone.

Now you try it... Have fun!