

FOLKWAYS FL 9125

THE ART OF THE SHORT STORY
Essay, Poetry, Drama and Biography
Mood, Setting, and Action
Characterization
HOW THE SHORT STORY EVOLVED
the roots of the short story
and use in modern short story

THE SHORT STORY COMPARED WITH
OTHER LITERARY TYPES
questions and answers on themes
MASTERS OF THE SHORT STORY
SOME MEMORABLE THEMES EXAMINED

UNDERSTANDING AND APPRECIATION OF THE SHORT STORY / MORRIS SCHREIBER

Understanding and Appreciation of the SHORT STORY

By Morris Schreiber,

Directed by Wallace House with the University Players

Folkways Records FL 9125

The Art of the Short Story

How the Short Story Evolved

The Short Story compared with Other Literary Types

Masters of the Short Story

Some Memorable Themes Examined

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UNDERSTANDING AND APPRECIATION OF THE SHORT STORY

By Morris Schreiber

- PART I: THE ART OF THE SHORT STORY
- PART II: HOW THE SHORT STORY EVOLVED
- PART III: THE SHORT STORY COMPARED WITH
OTHER LITERARY TYPES
- PART IV: MASTERS OF THE SHORT STORY
- PART V: SOME MEMORABLE THEMES EXAMINED

Side 1/Band 1

ANNOUNCER: Presenting "Understanding and Appreciation of the Short Story," by Morris Schreiber.
Directed by Wallace House, with the University Players
... PART I: THE ART OF THE SHORT STORY.

NARRATOR: You are listening to a craftsman at work -
- cutting a precious stone and shaping it with many
facets -- to make it glow with maximum brilliance.
-- Life, too, is most sharply illumined by the reflection of its numerous segments ..

NARRATOR: The short story is a well-cleft segment of
life -- reflecting life from many angles, with front,
rear, and side views all fusing to mirror the whole...

NARRATOR: Though thousands of years old and known
by many names -- such as the anecdote, the fable, the
tale -- the short story is familiar to people of all lands
and ages, bringing into sharp focus key segments of
their lives. The storyteller's art reveals their patterns
of behavior, their conflicts, their inner thoughts
and emotions.

NARRATOR: Sometimes the short story may contain
features of other literary forms. It may incorporate:

NARRATOR: Elements of the ESSAY-

Observe how Hawthorne's personal viewpoint enters
into his probing studies of guilt. We find it in a somber
story called "Young Goodman Brown," a tale set in a
New England village in Puritan times. The husband
dreams that he and his wife have been tempted into a
rendezvous with the devil, deep in the woods. Hawthorne
himself passes judgment on the husband's guilt:

VOICE: "Had Goodman Brown fallen asleep in the
forest or only dreamed of a witch-meeting?

"Be it so, if you will, but, alas! It was a dream of
evil omen for Young Goodman Brown. A stern, a sad,
a darkly meditative, a distrustful if not a desperate man
did he become from that night of the fearful dream. On
the Sabbath day when the congregation were singing a
holy psalm, he could not listen because an anthem of
sin rushed loudly upon his ear and drowned all the
blessed strain."

NARRATOR: Elements of POETRY - Listen to
the rhythms of Poe's haunting poetic prose in "The
Masque of the Red Death":

VOICE: "And now was acknowledged the presence of the
Red Death. He had come like a thief in the night. And
one by one dropped the revellers in the blood-bedewed
halls of their revel and died each in the despairing posture
of his fall. And the life of the ebony clock went out
with that of the last of the gay. And the flames of the
tripod expired. And Darkness and Decay and the Red
Death held illimitable dominion over all."

NARRATOR: Elements of the DRAMA - Study
the terse dramatic dialogue in this scene between the
father, Thord, and the priest in Bjornson's touching
story "The Father."

NARRATOR: Thord has lavished everything on his son.
He has spared nothing to make him the most outstanding
and envied youth in the village. But shortly before his
marriage to the richest girl in town, the son accidentally
drowns before the horrified father's eyes.

After the youth's death, a stunned and humbled Thord
appears in the priest's study -- with a different request:

VOICE: "I have something with me that I should like to
give to the poor; I want it to be invested as a legacy in
my son's name."

NARRATOR: "He rose, laid some money down on the
table, and sat down again. The priest counted it."

VOICE: "It is a great deal of money."

VOICE: "It is half the price of my garden. I sold it today."

NARRATOR: "The priest sat long in silence. At last he
asked, but gently:"

VOICE: "What do you propose to do now, Thord?"

VOICE: "Something better."

NARRATOR: "They sat there for a while, Thord with
downcast eyes, the priest with his eyes fixed on Thord.
Presently the priest said slowly and softly:"

VOICE: "I think your son has at last brought you a true
blessing."

VOICE: "Yes, I think so myself."

NARRATOR: Thord looked up, "while two big tears
coursed slowly down his cheeks."

The exchange between Thord and the priest is stark in
its simplicity, the interplay like that of two characters
in a one-act play, a form which the short story most
closely resembles.

NARRATOR: Elements of BIOGRAPHY - Note
the strongly autobiographical elements in Thomas
Wolfe's colorful account of the circus in his short story
"Circus at Dawn," from his collection, From Death
to Morning.

"And to all these familiar sounds there would be
added now, with an unforgettable magic and familiarity,
all the strange sounds and smells of the coming circus.

"The gay, yellow, sumptuous-looking cars, in which
the star performers lived and slept, still dark and silent,
heavily and powerfully still, would be drawn up in long
strings on the tracks. And all around them the sounds
of the unloading circus would go on furiously in the
darkness. The receding gulf of lilac and departing night

would be filled with the savage roar of the lions, the murderously sudden snarling of great jungle cats, the trumpeting of the elephants, the stamp of the horses, and with the musty, pungent, unfamiliar odors of the jungle animals: the tawny camel smells, and the smells of panthers, zebras, elephants, tigers, and bears."

NARRATOR: Essay, poem, play, biography -- the short story has elements of each in its makeup. But basically, the short story is a distinct entity, a work of compression and condensation. Ranging in length from a few hundred words -- the span of what is often called "the short short" -- to six or seven thousand words, the short story has little room to maneuver, no time to dally. Not for it the leisurely pace or extensive development of character possible in the longer narrative, the novel. The short story must begin operations promptly.

Side 1/Band 2: The Mood, the Setting and Action

NARRATOR: Just how vital a strong beginning is toward establishing the mood, the setting, and the action of a short story, Edgar Allan Poe shows in his masterful work "The Fall of the House of Usher":

VOICE: "During the whole of a dull, dark, and soundless day in the autumn of the year, when the clouds hung oppressively low in the heavens, I had been passing alone, on horseback, through a singularly dreary tract of country; and at length found myself, as the shades of the evening drew on, within view of the melancholy House of Usher."

NARRATOR: In this suspense-filled story of mental and physical decay and death, Poe brilliantly illustrates his own concept of the short story. As Poe sees it, it should be a work brief enough to be read at one sitting. It should strive for singleness of effect, starting with the very first sentence. Every word, every mood, every incident, every characterization should, therefore, contribute to that organic unity.

NARRATOR: Hence, the short story is restricted to a few characters, incidents, and places -- presented concisely and economically within a brief span of time. For maximum power in such a work the accent must be on crisp, vivid narration and strong sensory and emotional appeal. Description, too, must be reduced to a minimum. Note how tautly and compactly Ernest Thompson Seton, the eminent naturalist, has achieved his effects in this climactic scene from his portrait of an untamable animal, "Coaly-bay, the Outlaw Horse."

The hunters, who have purchased Coaly-bay as bear-bait, are infuriated at his stubbornness, his pretended limp, his wild nature. Finally, they decide to shoot him:

VOICE: "'Guess this'll do,' said the older man. 'Well, here goes for a sure death or a clean miss,' said the other confidently, and waiting till the limper was out in the middle of the meadow, he gave a short, sharp whistle. Instantly, Coaly-bay was alert. He swung and faced his tormentors, his noble head erect, his nostrils flaring; a picture of horse beauty --, yes, of horse perfection.

"The rifle was leveled, the very brain its mark, just on the crossline of the eyes and ears, that meant sure, sudden, painless death.

"The rifle cracked. The great horse wheeled and dashed away. It was sudden death or miss -- and the

marksman missed."

NARRATOR: The short story writer must also choose subjects -- and characters -- which he can deal with concisely.

In Mary Wilkins Freeman's brilliant short story "A New England Nun," the chief character is Louisa Ellis, a woman who has waited stoically for fourteen years for her fiancé to return from abroad. But when he finally arrives, the events of the climactic fifteenth year are compressed into a few short hours and a half dozen pages of narration. The long, dull wait, the thoughts and feelings of Louisa and Joe Dagget, her fiancé, are quickly told. The climax comes when Louisa makes a fateful decision. Unknown to Joe, she has overheard him in a tryst with another girl, Lily Dyer, who has been tending his mother:

VOICE: "She never mentioned Lily Dyer. She simply said that while she had no cause for complaint against him, she had lived so long in one way that she shrank from making a change.

"'Well, I never shrank, Louisa,' said Dagget. 'I'm trying to be honest enough to say that I think maybe it's better this way; but if you'd wanted to keep on, I'd have stuck to you till my dying day. I hope you know that.'

"'Yes, I do,' said she."

Side 1/Band 3: Characterization

NARRATOR: The short story writer also has a rich variety of TYPES upon which to draw for his characters. He can select from the natural and the supernatural, the normal and the abnormal.

He can call upon the supernatural to create such a portrait as that of the scheming Scratch in "The Devil and Daniel Webster," by Stephen Vincent Benét, or cross into the twilight world to fashion the pathological, nonconforming clerk, Bartleby, in Melville's story "Bartleby the Scrivener." From the convulsions of history, he can produce the abnormal -- such a grotesque as the avenging hag Baba Papagai and her dreadful bird, which she uses to "determine" the rebels' guilt or innocence, in Walter Duranty's searing tale of the Russian Revolution, "The Parrot." And in the world of legend and folklore he can find the stuff for such comic and warmly humorous portraits as Rip Van Winkle and Ichabod Crane, by Washington Irving.

NARRATOR: What child -- or adult -- can forget the spectacle of the happy-go-lucky Rip, trooping through the sleepy village with his faithful followers at his heels? Or their reactions whenever Rip hove in sight?

NARRATOR: Or who can fail to chuckle over the sight of Ichabod Crane, the gangling schoolmaster of Irving's story The Legend of Sleepy Hollow, as the pedagogue made his way about town?

NARRATOR: Yet though he has such a wide range of characters to choose from, the short story writer cannot afford the luxury of elaborate characterization granted the novelist. The short story writer must bring economy of treatment to both his story and his characters. He cannot -- must not -- go too far afield.

NARRATOR: Limits, too, are imposed on the short story in its depiction of the sensory and emotional ranges of life. Great artistry -- coupled with restraint -- are needed for such a task. Conrad Aiken meets the challenge, depicting the mental illness of a dying boy in his poignant work "Silent Snow, Secret Snow," in which a strange white blanket slowly blots out the child's world.

Zona Gale records the physical deterioration of a father, Bill, in her story of that name. Bill must struggle to find a home for his motherless daughter before he succumbs to tuberculosis.

NARRATOR: But the writer must also deal subtly and meaningfully with the slight or trivial in human affairs: the brief interlude, the chance encounter.

Such a situation occurs in "Over the River and Through the Woods," John O'Hara's story of a holiday trip to a country home. On this trip the aging owner, Mr. Winfield, meets the attractive Miss Farnsworth, his granddaughter's guest, for the first time. In a few short hours, however, he -- in all innocence -- commits a gross blunder which makes her turn on him in a fury. He is crushed, humiliated, condemned to agonizing torment:

VOICE: "He returned to his room and his chair. Slowly he took a cigarette out of his case, but did not light it. He did everything slowly. There was all the time in the world, too much of it, for him. He knew it would be hours before he would begin to hate himself. For a while he would just sit there and plan his own terror."

NARRATOR: But whatever the subject, the short story must be vivid, pictorial, and graphic. The treatment must be concrete. For in such down-to-earth directness lies its strongest appeal. And so it has been over the centuries, ever since the days of the earliest storytellers, whether they spun their tales in prose or in poetry.

Side 1/Band 4

VOICE: PART II: HOW THE SHORT STORY EVOLVED

NARRATOR: The short story has many forebears, some centuries old. It has undergone many changes, taken many forms.

NARRATOR: Yet some of these early short stories, written as legends, folk tales, fairy tales, anecdotes, fables, sermons, ballads, and other types, contain in them the seeds of the great short stories of today.

NARRATOR: The short story goes back a long time. We find it in terse narratives of man's early existence, in the records of the caves -- painted on the wall or carved into rock -- crude picture-symbols of the hunter's struggle to provide food for his family in primitive times.

NARRATOR: We find it in a tale of ancient Egypt, in "The Two Brothers," one of the oldest recorded legends in literature. "The Two Brothers" is a story of violence and fratricide -- the struggle of Osiris, the good, against his brother Set, the wicked.

NARRATOR: We meet it in the Bible -- in Cain's slaying of his brother Abel.

NARRATOR: Brothers at odds, too, are Romulus and Remus, legendary founders of Rome, reared by a she-wolf. In a quarrel over the name of the city, Romulus tragically slew his brother.

NARRATOR: The seeds of the short story lie also in the fables of Aesop, whose animals act and talk like men... in the tales of Scheherazade, regaling the sultan in The Arabian Nights... in the epics of the Bible -- such as those of Ruth and Judith and Esther, each a colorful short story of the time...

NARRATOR: Chaucer knew and used the short tale also. He wrote in verse. But each of the pilgrims on

his way to Canterbury has a short story to tell -- of love, hate, greed, vanity, and death.

NARRATOR: Boccaccio's people -- seven ladies and three gentlemen of Florence, taking refuge in the country from the pestilence of 1348 -- spin wondrous stories, too, in his great prose work, The Decameron. The stories cover many aspects of human existence -- the comic and the serious, the gay and the sad, the noble and the common.

NARRATOR: Chaucer also employed animal characters to tell a story. Appealing animal characters flit through the Fables of La Fontaine, the Frenchman; and a modern French writer, Edmond Rostand, has drawn on the Chanticleer character and woven a play around him.

Brer Fox, Brer Rabbit, Brer Possum, and others -- American versions of the earlier characters -- appear in the charming tales of Uncle Remus, the Negro storyteller created by Joel Chandler Harris. James Thurber has patterned the human personalities of his short story "The Catbird Seat" on them -- basing the cunning Mrs. Barrows on the fox and the timid Mr. Martin, who triumphs over her, on the rabbit. Animal Farm, by the British writer George Orwell, is another clever satire relying on animal characters.

In fact, there is hardly a civilization, ancient or modern, without its private version of the bestiary.

NARRATOR: Also contributing to the growth of the modern short story were the early ballads, verses composed and recited by anonymous folk singers and storytellers. In Howard Pyle's picaresque tales of The Adventures of Robin Hood, so popular today, we hear once more the voice of the ancient balladeer as he chants:

SINGER: "Then Robin Hood mounted the gallows so high,
Where he blew loud and shrill,
Till a hundred and ten of Robin Hood's men
They came marching all down the green hill!"

NARRATOR: After its vigorous early start, however, the short narrative languished, remained out of favor for centuries. It failed to thrive in the Renaissance, which cultivated the drama and the long prose romance. Not until such skillful practitioners of fiction as Defoe in England and Irving, Hawthorne, and Poe in America revived it, did the short story gain ground once more.

Side 1/Band 5: Relation of Modern Short Story to Its Traditional Roots

NARRATOR: To which of these early forms can you trace some of the short stories of today?

To which do they come close in spirit? In theme? In characterization? In the art of storytelling?

Here are several modern short stories similar in form or idea to the old. Do you recognize the parallel or similarity?

NARRATOR: Two stories that echo early themes are "Sherrel," by Whit Burnett, and "A Strawberry Ice-Cream Soda," by Irwin Shaw. In the first one, "Sherrel," Mark Stowe, a guilt-ridden youth of eighteen, describes an act of unintentional cruelty on his part which led to the death of his younger brother, Sherrel, and then tells how he plans to atone for his deed.

In the second, "A Strawberry Ice-Cream Soda," an older boy forces his delicate and artistic younger brother to stand and fight in his own defense.

NARRATOR: Do you see the parallel with older works in these stories?

The theme, that of brothers in conflict, suggests the ancient legends of fraternal strife -- although not on such a violent scale. A not uncommon theme in literature, it is found also in the drama, in several of Shakespeare's tales... We find it in the novel, in Thomas Mann's retelling of the Bible story of "Joseph and His Brothers."

NARRATOR: Do you see overtones of an ancient fable in this next story? In "A Village Singer," by Mary Wilkins Freeman, an ailing and aging choir singer is forced to retire by the church because her voice has deteriorated. Deprived of her sole claim to prestige, she is critical of her successor, harasses her from a distance at services, and makes life unpleasant and difficult for her.

NARRATOR: Did this story suggest Aesop's tale of "The Fox and the Grapes," in which the fox, unable to reach the grapes he desired, belittled them and called them sour?

NARRATOR: Now trace back another short narrative -- actually a story within a story -- "The Sermon," a chapter of Melville's monumental epic of the sea, Moby Dick. In this story, based on the Bible, Father Mapple delivers a thundering sermon to the assembled sailors in which he conjures up the vision of Jonah and the whale as an ominous warning to them:

FATHER MAPPLE: "Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord out of the fish's belly. But observe his prayer, and learn a weighty lesson. For sinful as he is, Jonah does not weep and wail for direct deliverance. He feels that his dreadful punishment is just... Shipmates, I do not place Jonah before you to be copied for his sin, but I do place him before you as a model for repentance. Sin not; but if you do, take heed to repent of it like Jonah."

NARRATOR: To the Biblical seers, the Egyptian scribes, the anonymous balladeers, the tellers of fable and legend -- to all these creators of the earlier forms of the short story, the modern writer is vastly indebted.

Side 2/Band 1

VOICE: PART III: THE SHORT STORY COMPARED WITH OTHER LITERARY TYPES

NARRATOR: What you hear are the sounds of a new barn going up -- a barn designed to provide better quarters for Farmer Penn's animals... and even more crowded ones for his family!

NARRATOR: In this short story, "The Revolt of Mother," Mary Wilkins Freeman looks at nature and the farmer's lot hard and critically -- using the short story as her medium.

NARRATOR: Other writers, employing different literary forms, have also looked at the face of nature and arrived at a significant personal evaluation. Some have looked at it in depth in the longer narrative, the novel; others in an autobiography, a poem, an essay, or a play. And each has used the format he felt most comfortable in, the one best suited to his purpose.

NARRATOR: In the themes that follow each writer has taken a subject dealing with nature and treated it in a different literary format.

NARRATOR: EXAMINE THESE THEMES. Then indicate:

-- First, which medium a writer should choose to develop it...

-- Second, why he should select that medium.

NARRATOR: THEME NO. 1-- A naturalist, trapped in a cave with giant spiders, fights his way to freedom.

NARRATOR: THEME NO. 2-- A Norwegian immigrant youth reconstructs the story of the Westward movement from firsthand accounts and personal experience.

NARRATOR: THEME NO. 3-- A farmer's two sons, both in love with the same girl, change the patterns of their lives. The rejected suitor, a born farmer, goes off to sea. His brother marries the girl and remains on the farm to cope with problems beyond his ability.

NARRATOR: THEME NO. 4-- A man out of tune with the complexities of urban civilization chronicles the events of a two-year solitary sojourn in the woods.

NARRATOR: THEME NO. 5-- A nature lover and philosopher writes his impressions of the transcendent beauties of the natural universe, showing how it has brought him closer to God and his fellowman.

NARRATOR: THEME NO. 6-- A writer who has made a lifetime study of nature and recorded its effects on his life and thought returns to a rural spot of his early youth and extols its glories.

NARRATOR: Have you determined which medium is most suitable for each theme of nature just described?

... Here are some suggested answers:

NARRATOR: THEME NO. 1 is best expressed as a SHORT STORY since it is a single, detached incident in the life of a museum naturalist assigned to bring back rare specimens of the giant spiders. This encounter is the subject of a short story entitled "The Bamboo Trap," by Robert S. Lemmon.

NARRATOR: THEME NO. 2 can best be delineated as a NOVEL since it deals with the events and personalities of the pioneer movement on a wide canvas and on a panoramic scale. The novel describing this epic of the West is Giants in the Earth, by Ole Rølvaag.

NARRATOR: THEME NO. 3 can be developed either as a NOVEL or a FULL-LENGTH PLAY since it presents a detailed psychological study of two brothers, each at cross purposes with his destiny. The writer who selected this theme was a dramatist, Eugene O'Neill. His penetrating three-act play on the subject, Beyond the Horizon, won him the Pulitzer Prize.

NARRATOR: THEME NO. 4 is most effectively elaborated as an AUTOBIOGRAPHY. It presents the key incidents of a life apart from society in the critical self-analysis of a man who deliberately chose such an existence. His own story is told by Henry David Thoreau in the classic work. Walden.

NARRATOR: THEME NO. 5 can be suitably expressed either as an ESSAY or a POEM since it is an intimate personal expression of the writer's views on nature and the universe. Ralph Waldo Emerson, minister, essayist, and poet, delivers such a personal tribute in his ESSAY on Nature.

NARRATOR: THEME NO. 6 also offers two choices of medium -- as a POEM or an ESSAY since it reflects intense spiritual self-examination. The writer who developed such a theme was William Wordsworth, a 19th century poet laureate of England and a philosopher of nature. In his poem "Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey," he returns to this rural wonderland and extols its beauties, expressing his feelings in these lyrical lines:

VOICE: "Therefore am I still a lover of the
meadows and the woods
And mountains; and of all things we behold
From this green earth... well pleased
to recognize
In nature and the language of the sense
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the
nurse,
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and
soul
Of all my moral being."

NARRATOR: In the themes just studied we have learned and compared the rich potentialities of various literary types -- the SHORT STORY, the NOVEL, the ESSAY, the BIOGRAPHY, the POEM, and the DRAMA. Each writer has created his theme in the medium which he felt would best serve his goal.

But whatever the medium employed, each writer has moved toward the same end -- a crystallization of his experiences and an expression of his feelings toward nature -- and its power to heal or destroy.

Side 2/Band 2

VOICE: PART IV: MASTERS OF THE SHORT STORY

NARRATOR: The short story today has become one of the most popular and respected forms of literature throughout the world.

Who are some of the distinguished practitioners of the short story? How did they contribute to its development? What is their influence on it today? Let us explore this problem:

NARRATOR: ASSUME THAT YOU ARE A LITERARY EDITOR CONDUCTING A COLUMN ON BOOKS IN A SUNDAY SUPPLEMENT. Your readers, keenly interested in self-growth, have asked you to help them improve their reading tastes and interests. This week you have decided to devote a column to the short story, inviting their queries and providing some answers. A READER ASKS:

VOICE: In one of your columns you spoke of Edgar Allan Poe as a writer whose sweeping influence on the short story is still felt today. Please clarify.

NARRATOR: ANSWER ... Poe not only gave definition to the short story in America, but remains one of the most influential figures in modern literature. The French writer Baudelaire, chancing upon a fragment of Poe's Tales, was so fascinated by his work that he devoted seventeen years to a full translation of the stories. The Russian Dostoevsky came upon his tales and publicized "The Black Cat" and "The Tell-Tale Heart" in translation, calling them "fantastically realistic." The English writer H. G. Wells and the Frenchman Jules Verne, masters of the science fiction tale, are indebted to Poe for early beginnings of the form. One such work is Poe's study of hypnotism's holding a man back from the verge of death in a work called "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar."

Another is a tale of a fantastic trip to the moon in a balloon in a story entitled "The Unparalleled Adventure of One Hans Pfaall."

NARRATOR: Poe's horror stories, probing the dark recesses of the human mind, are brilliant studies in abnormal psychology. (In this area he was himself influenced by the German writer Hoffmann.) As "father of the detective story," Poe created the analytical detective Dupin. Dupin's close, careful reasoning, his collection and assessment of evidence in organized scientific fashion, opened the door to the creation of a host of other detectives -- Sherlock Holmes, Hercule Poirot, Nero Wolfe, Inspector Trent, Philo Vance, and others. Thousands of devoted detective story readers today owe an incalculable debt to Poe. QUESTION:

VOICE: I have often wondered at the literary output of writers like Poe, Stephen Crane, Guy de Maupassant, and Anton Chekhov, who lived such short lives yet produced so much. Can you comment on this?

NARRATOR: ANSWER ... Creative activity cannot be defined or circumscribed in terms of time.

In their brief lives, all of the four writers you mention contributed richly to the development of the short story, De Maupassant and Chekhov with more than two hundred short stories each. Poe, while not as prolific as the others in sheer volume, nevertheless, left a substantial, varied body of work in the short story, in poetry, and in literary criticism.

NARRATOR: What did the three others contribute to the growth of the short story?

De Maupassant strips away unnecessary detail, and writes sharply and directly in a lucid, deceptively easy style, as in such classic short stories as "The Necklace" and "A Piece of String."

Chekhov, although a physician by training, devoted little time to formal practice, preferring the attractions of literature.

More sympathy for human suffering intrudes into Chekhov's work than into De Maupassant's, with Chekhov's own fatal illness with tuberculosis an undoubted factor. His stories, unlike his long and often formless plays, are terse, compact, and well plotted, with detail reduced to a minimum. A model of such forthright writing is his sensitive and eloquent story "The Bet." In this work a lawyer wagers that he can remain cut off from society for fifteen years in return for two million dollars, but learns in a surprising denouement that things of the spirit far transcend the material in life.

NARRATOR: Stephen Crane, impressionist, whose life was the shortest of the four, also died of tuberculosis at thirty. But he gave the short story hard realism, vivid sensory appeal, pace and vigor, poetic grace, and psychological probing of character, notably so in such an outstanding story as "The Open Boat." In this work he portrays survivors of a shipwreck, crowded into a small craft, buffeted by wind and tide, who drift helplessly for days. When they finally reach shore, we hail their victory and mourn the death of the oiler, one of the crew, as a personal loss.

A WOMAN READER ASKS:

VOICE: I have long had mixed feelings about the work of Henry James, several of whose short stories and novels I have read. I am moved by many of his earlier works, but find his later writings complex and difficult to read.

Can you reconcile these two points of view?

NARRATOR: ANSWER ... James was a conscious craftsman, experimenter, and innovator who dedicated his whole life to the pursuit of literary excellence. In addition, he contributed greatly to the development of high standards in literary criticism.

His principal technique is to explore situations and motives of characters with meticulous care. Like De Maupassant, he excludes himself as commentator, transmitting his impressions of character through narrators and other persons. He shuns the sensational, preferring a leisurely examination of the quieter walks of life.

NARRATOR: On the question of his style:

His own brother, the noted philosopher and psychologist, William James, was irritated by what he felt was Henry's difficult and oblique literary style in the later works -- with long sentences crammed with qualifying and modifying clauses and phrases. And Somerset Maugham, whose own style is simple and direct, called Henry James "the worst of all possible influences."

NARRATOR: Yet, despite these and other harsh evaluations, the bulk of James' work constitutes high literary art. Consider one example, his tightly structured short story "The Real Thing," representative of the best of his art. In this work he has created memorable portraits of an elderly aristocratic couple, fittingly named Major and Mrs. Monarch, who, having come down in the world, apply for work as artists' models.

NARRATOR: Unfortunately, however, they cannot bend or adjust to the needs of the artist. Nor can he picture them other than as rigid, inflexibly genteel types. By a perverse stroke of fate, "the real thing," James concludes, has become "so much less precious than the unreal." QUESTION:

VOICE: In an earlier column on the novels of Ernest Hemingway and William Faulkner, you called them important "innovators" in American literature. Please explain.

NARRATOR: ANSWER ... In the field of the short story, particularly, Hemingway, by his qualities of understatement, artful simplicity, and direct, vigorous style, set a literary model in the twenties that was much imitated by later writers. This method of understatement is seen in Hemingway's famous early short story, "The Killers." The triggermen hunting for Ole Andreson are not only impersonal thugs hired to do a job; they also give no hint as to why Ole has been marked for murder.

NARRATOR: In contrast to Hemingway's, Faulkner's literary style is sensuous and impressionistic. Like Henry James, he explores his subject in detail. Like James' work, his later fiction is elaborate, highly involved, often tortuous in its twists and shifts of mood and action.

NARRATOR: But unlike James, he is uninhibited, direct, often brutally realistic. In his pictures of the decadent world of Yoknapatawpha, the mythical Southern county which he created, he mirrors the darkness and gloom of a dying society.

NARRATOR: In such a twilight world, "Wash," one of his finest stories and character studies, is set. This story, often published separately, is from his searing and complex novel Absalom, Absalom. Wash is a handyman of colonel Sutpen, a Southern slave owner. Though the two often drink and make merry together, there is an invisible line between them which Wash may

not breach. It is when the colonel oversteps this line with Wash's granddaughter that Wash, whom even the colonel's slaves had looked down on, proves his courage and manhood in a violent and flaming ending.

Side 2/Band 3

VOICE: PART V: SOME MEMORABLE THEMES EXAMINED

NARRATOR: Assume that you are a librarian who has been commissioned by a national magazine to prepare a compilation called "A Tribute to The Short Story," as a feature of National Book Week.

You decide to organize the tribute around the concept of Memorable Themes in the Short Story and to include outstanding passages from the stories.

Your plan is twofold:

- First, to select passages that will best illustrate the theme...
- Second, to include examples that will stimulate the reader to seek out and read the original story.

After careful deliberation and selection you prepare the compilation that follows:

PROCEDURE:

- Examine each theme.
- Try to identify the story based on it.
- Cite a passage illustrating the theme.

VOICE: "A Tribute to the short story" -

NARRATOR: SUBJECT: Personal Code

THEME: In which short story does an eminent scientist, faced with the choice of endorsing the pseudobiological theories of a dictatorship, reach a morally right decision?

ANSWER: In "Blood of the Martyrs," by Stephen Vincent Benét.

NARRATOR: The General said in an undertone:

VOICE: "Take the pen, Professor Malzius. The inkwell is there. Now you may sign."

NARRATOR: "Professor Malzius stood, his fingers gripping the big, old-fashioned inkwell Then, before the General could stop him, he had picked up the inkwell and thrown it in the Dictator's face. The next moment the General's fist caught him on the side of the head and he fell behind the desk to the floor...." Said the Dictator in a dry voice:

VOICE: "'Take that man out and shoot him. At once.'"

NARRATOR: "They rushed then, each anxious to be first. But Professor Malzius made no resistance."

NARRATOR: SUBJECT - Family

THEME: In which story does a child whose beloved grandfather is being sent to a home for the aged because of his father's impending remarriage, intervene decisively to save the grandfather?

ANSWER: In "The Blanket," by Floyd Dell.
... How?

VOICE: "'Yes, a single blanket's enough for an old man when he's sent away. We'll save the other half, Dad; it will come in handy later.'"

VOICE: "'Now, what do you mean by that?'"

VOICE: "'I mean that I'll give it to you, Dad - when you're old and I'm sending you away.'"

NARRATOR: SUBJECT - Courage

THEME: In which story do the survivors of a shipwreck, exhausted and fighting for life, struggle to keep their boat afloat on the last lap of the journey?

ANSWER: In "The Open Boat," by Stephen Crane.
... How?

VOICE: "There were no hurried words, no pallor, no plain agitation. They simply looked at the shore. 'Now remember to get well clear of the boat when you jump,' said the captain.

"Seaward the crest of a roller suddenly fell with a thunderous crash, and the long white comber came roaring down upon the boat. 'Steady now,' said the captain.

"But the next crest crashed also. The tumbling, boiling flood of white water caught the boat and whirled it almost perpendicular. Water swarmed in from all sides.

" 'Now, boys, the next one will do for us, sure,' said the oiler. 'Mind to jump clear of the boat.'

"The third wave moved forward, huge, furious, implacable. It fairly swallowed the dinghy, and almost simultaneously the men tumbled into the sea."

NARRATOR: SUBJECT — Survival

THEME: In which story does a British explorer, lost in the Amazon jungles, find shelter in the home of a wealthy plantation owner with unusual literary tastes? What strange fate does he begin to suspect lies in store for him?

ANSWER: In the story "The Man Who Liked Dickens," by Evelyn Waugh.
... How?

VOICE: " 'I said how soon do you think I shall be able to get a boat? I appreciate all your kindness to me more than I can say but...' "

VOICE: " 'My friend, any kindness I may have shown is amply repaid by your reading of Dickens. Do not let us mention the subject again.' "

NOTE:

Many of the stories discussed on this record are available in the following Scholastic Book Services anthologies:

"The Masque of the Red Death," Eight Tales of Terror, Edgar Allan Poe - T290

"The Fall of the House of Usher," Eight Tales of Terror, Edgar Allan Poe - T290

"The Tell-Tale Heart," Ten Great Mysteries, Edgar Allan Poe - T210

"The Black Cat," Ten Great Mysteries, Edgar Allan Poe - T210

"The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar," Ten Great Mysteries, Edgar Allan Poe - T210

"A Piece of String," Guy de Maupassant, Famous Stories - T765

"The Gift of the Magi," O. Henry, 14 Famous Christmas Stories - T636

VOICE: " 'Well, I'm very glad you have enjoyed it. I have, too, but I really must be thinking of getting back.' "

VOICE: " 'Yes. The black man was like that. He thought of it all the time. But he died here.' "

NARRATOR: SUBJECT — Moments of Decision

THEME: In which fine Christmas story, with an unusual surprise ending, do Jim and Della, a young married couple with limited income, individually speculate on what present each can afford to buy the other? To what momentous decision does Della finally come?

ANSWER: In "The Gift of the Magi," by O. Henry.
... How?

VOICE: " 'So now Della's beautiful hair fell about her, rippling and shining like a cascade of brown waters. It reached below her knee and made itself almost a garment for her. And then she did it up again nervously and quickly. Once she faltered for a minute and stood still while a tear or two splashed on the worn red carpet.

"On went her old brown jacket; on went her old brown hat. With a whirl of skirts and with the brilliant sparkle still in her eyes, she fluttered out the door and down the stairs to the street.

"Where she stopped the sign read: 'Mme. Sofronie. Hair Goods of All Kinds.' One flight up Della ran, and collected herself, panting. Madame, large, too white, chilly, hardly looked the 'Sofronie.'

" 'Will you buy my hair?' asked Della. "

NARRATOR: You have just heard "A Tribute To The Short Story" -- a superb literary medium, capturing in condensed utterance, brief but compelling moments of courage, devotion, loyalty, decision -- and truth!

In addition, the following stories are available in Scholastic Literature Unit anthologies:

"The Gift of the Magi," O. Henry - S. L. U. MOMENTS OF DECISION - TX295

"A Strawberry Ice Cream Soda," Irwin Shaw - S. L. U. FAMILY - TX297

"The Blanket," Floyd Dell - S. L. U. FAMILY - TX297

"Bill," Zona Gale - S. L. U. FAMILY - TX297

"The Bamboo Trap," Robert S. Lemmon - S. L. U. SURVIVAL - TX241

"The Man Who Liked Dickens," Evelyn Waugh - S. L. U. SURVIVAL - TX241

"Coaly-Bay, The Outlaw Horse," Ernest Thompson Seton - S. L. U. ANIMALS - TX301

For further information, write for Readers' Choice Catalog, Scholastic Book Services, 904 Sylvan Avenue, Englewood Cliffs, N. J. 07632.