

100 SHORT STORIES

As The Sunday Times EFG Short Story Award winner is announced, Culture writer

TRIBUTES OF PASSAGE

Redni Vashtar by Saki (1911)
An unhealthy boy looked after by a strict aunt worships his secret pet polecat, but knows she will have it destroyed if she finds it. Exquisitely black and cool, comic and bloody.

Through the Tunnel by Doris Lessing (1955)
This is a vivid description of an English boy, on holiday in France, who is desperate to copy older French boys by swimming through a dangerous channel.

The Peaches by Dylan Thomas (1940)
A Swansea boy is sent to his aunt and uncle's farm in Carmarthenshire for the summer. When he invites a more well-to-do friend to stay, classes clash. Notable for its child's-eye view of the world.

Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been? by Joyce Carol Oates (1966)
The induction of teenage Connie into adult sexuality by the sinister Arnold Friend, who is part Elvis, part ghoul, is brilliantly handled. Every detail bristles with menace.

After Eleanor Left by Sally Rooney (2015)
An utterly original portrait of a friendship that delivers three fully realised characters with a minimum of strokes.

LOVE AND LOSS

At Hiruharama by Penelope Fitzgerald (1992)
As the wife of an English couple in the New Zealand outback goes into labour, an eccentric neighbour turns up. Gripping, witty, unpredictable.

East Wind by Julian Barnes (2008)
A divorced man embarks on a relationship with an eastern European waitress, but spoils it through his compulsion to know more of her past. Told with Barnes's eye for detail.

Love of Fat Men by Helen Dunmore (1997)
This mysterious, allusive tale captures the complex friendship between a hapless Finnish girl and a fleshy fellow student.

Single, Carefree, Mellow by Katherine Heiny (2015)
Maya plans to leave her boyfriend of five years. She is

anything but single, carefree, mellow. A fine introduction to Heiny's humour.

Bullet in the Brain by Tobias Wolff (1995)
A man sees his life flash before his eyes in the thousandth of a second it takes for a bullet to pass through his brain: all in less than 2,000 words. Genius.

Sierra Leone by John McGahern (1997)
In this tale of extraordinary grace and power, a young man living in Dublin begins an affair with the mistress of an ageing politician.

The Labrador Fiasco by Margaret Atwood (1996)
A poignant and acute story about a man disoriented by a stroke listening to his wife reading from a book he once loved about lost travellers.

Why Don't You Dance? by Raymond Carver (1978)
A divorced man sits out on his lawn and talks to a couple who later dance in the driveway. A masterful example of Carver's pacing and phrasing.

Walking the Dog by Bernard MacLaverty (1994)
Belfast is to MacLaverty what

Dublin was to Joyce. This tale of a terrifying encounter there during the Troubles confirms his equally distinguished status as a short-story writer.

Expiation by Ruth Praver Jhabvala (1982)
Protective family love is agonisingly tested in this superb story about a decent man in India whose brother commits murder.

The July Ghost by AS Byatt (1982)
A heart-rending story about an unbudgeably rational woman's inability to succumb to the consoling illusion that she still has contact with her dead young son.

Mrs Sen by Jhumpa Lahiri (1999)
Entire inner lives are revealed through rich observation in this story about the lonely wife of a maths professor in New England with a passion for fresh fish and a longing for her native India.

A Worn Path by Eudora Welty (1941)
Phoenix Jackson, an old and tiny woman, overcomes a catalogue of

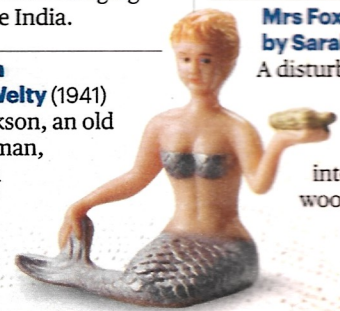
obstacles as she treks into town to collect medicine for her grandson. Typical Welty freighted with resonance.

Married Love by Tessa Hadley (2007)
Lottie, 19, marries Edgar, a composer 40 years older. It doesn't go well. Packed with detail, it's psychologically acute, typically devastating.

Fusilli by Graham Swift (2014)
Focusing on a father whose soldier son was killed in Afghanistan, Swift shows his gift for empathy in portraying ordinary-seeming people hit by extreme events.

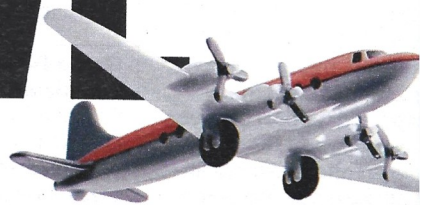
The Crime Wave at Blandings by PG Wodehouse (1936)
As Lord Emsworth rids himself of secretary turned tutor Rupert Baxter, the pleasure is in Wodehouse's deft wit.

Mrs Fox by Sarah Hall (2013)
A disturbing story of a pregnant woman who transmogrifies into a fox on a woodland walk.



TRIES TO LOVE

pick their favourite tales, from Charles Dickens to Cat Person



The Camberwell Beauty by VS Pritchett (1974)

A richly Dickensian imbroglio about London antiques dealers and the passions that blaze beneath their dusty exteriors.

Vampires in the Lemon Grove by Karen Russell (2013)

Russell's imagination is explosive in this weird, psychologically piercing fable about a vampire couple.

The Swimmer by John Cheever (1964)

This quietly devastating tale takes place over an afternoon, as a dispossessed, drunk man journeys home via his neighbours' pools.

The Prussian Officer by DH Lawrence (1914)

A Lawrence gem about the repressed relationship of a captain and an orderly.

Nirvana by Adam Johnson (2014)

A heart-tugging near-future tale, and a Sunday Times EFG winner, about a dying woman consoled by a hologram.

The Quiet by Carys Davies (2014)

Set in the Australian outback in the 1900s, this is a

wrenching tale of two people finding a common bond amid the local brutality.

The Garden of Time by JG Ballard (1962)

Ballard at his most sci-fi mystical, in a story about the owners of a fantastical garden trying to hold back time.

A Clean, Well-Lighted Place by Ernest Hemingway (1933)

Hemingway can be poignant, as in this tale of Spanish waiters and an old man who won't leave their cafe.

The Daughters of the Late Colonel by Katherine Mansfield (1920)

Sorrow, menace and razor-sharp humour meld in this tale of two spinsters whose dictatorial father has died.

IN TRANSLATION

The Adventure of a Soldier by Italo Calvino (1970)

Masterly account of a young soldier's cautiously erotic encounter with a widow on a train.

The Judgment by Franz Kafka (1913)

This disorienting story about

a father and son is a microcosm of the obsessions in his best-known works.

The Treasure by Jose Maria de Eca de Queiros (2011)

A macabre little gem by Portugal's great 19th-century novelist. Around an unearthed treasure trove, three brothers murderously fall out.

A Simple Heart by Gustave Flaubert (1877)

The life of Félicité, a stoically selfless family servant in early-19th-century Normandy, is recounted in moving detail.

Fraternité by Irène Némirovsky (2000)

A wealthy assimilated Jew's awkward encounter with a poor immigrant Jew in 1930s France allows Némirovsky not just to contrast two existences, but to explore her feelings about her heritage.

Christmas Not Just Once a Year by Heinrich Böll (1951)

Auntie Milla screams when the decorations come down, so her family goes on celebrating, every day, with horrible consequences. A satirical take on Germany's failure to face postwar reality.

A Friend of Kafka by Isaac Bashevis Singer (1968)

The great Yiddisher storyteller's tale of a "friend of Kafka" in prewar Warsaw provides a burst of light on a lost bohemian world.

The Overcoat by Nikolai Gogol (1842)

The Ukrainian writer's nightmarish, acerbic account of a pitiful St Petersburg clerk who buys a new coat and is briefly accepted before catastrophe befalls him.

The Library of Babel by Jorge Luis Borges (1941)

No one could infuse a story with more fantastical ideas, as Borges showed with this mind-bending tale of an infinite library of knowledge.

SOCIETY

Bella Fleace Gave a Party by Evelyn Waugh (1932)

An elderly aristocrat in an Irish country house of fading splendour decides to throw a grand society ball: Waugh's skewering at its sharpest.

Parson's Pleasure by Roald Dahl (1977)

An antiques dealer,

masquerading as a parson gull three yokels out of a valuable piece of furniture gets his comeuppance.

The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County by Mark Twain (1867)

In Twain's yarn, the narrator is treated to a tall tale about a frog named Dan'l Webster.

Variations on a Theme by Mister Donut by David Mitchell (2014)

Mitchell gets to the heart of Japanese society, Rashomon style, through eyewitness accounts of an incident in a fast-food restaurant.

The Diamond as Big as The Ritz by F Scott Fitzgerald (1922)

This intensely alive story illustrates Fitzgerald's extraordinary capacity for satirising the wealthy.

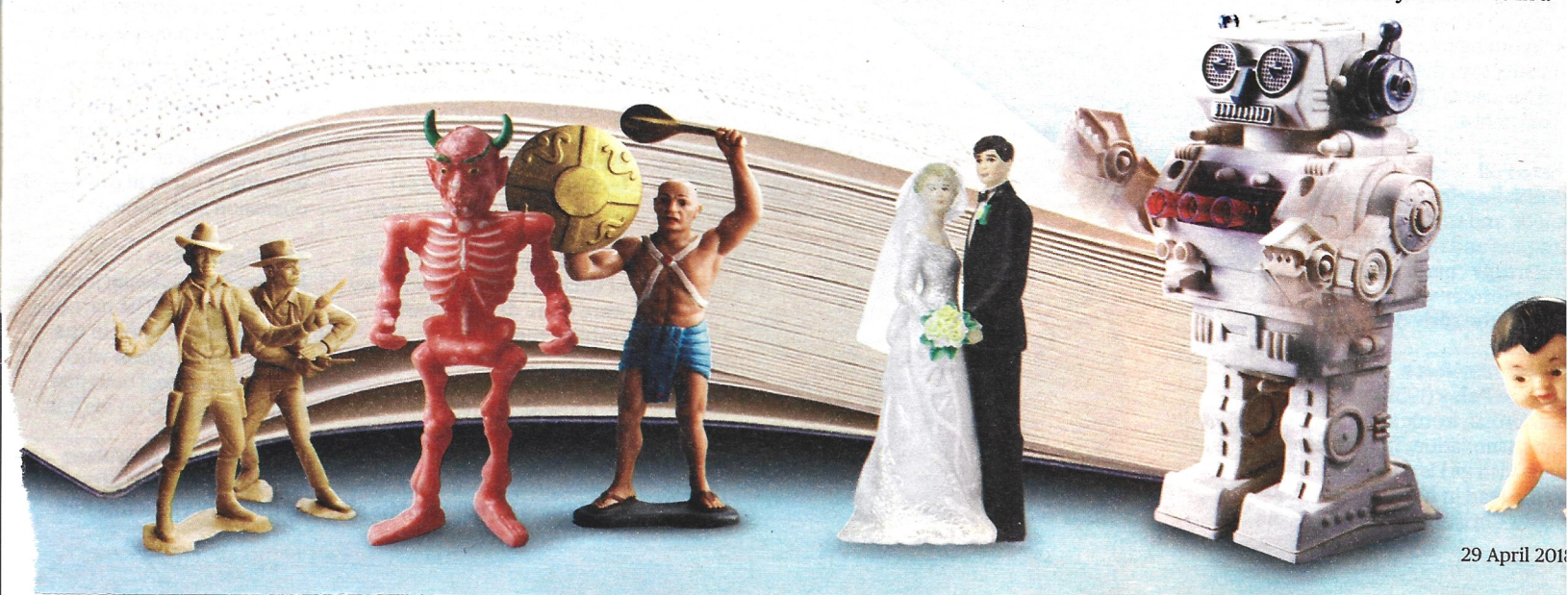
The Pugilist at Rest by Thom Jones (1991)

One of the finest analyses of the impact of the Vietnam War on the American psyche.

The Nightwatchman's Occurrence Book by VS Naipaul (1962)

Told solely via entries in a

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hotel security man's log, his boss's notes in reply, as a gem of understated humour, as the log becomes a dark tale of bad behaviour.

Smé — With Love and Honor by **JD Salinger** (1950) A touching, funny and wryly tender story of the expected rapport between sweetly earnest Devon schoolgirl and an American officer she meets just before she embarks for D-Day.

Emergency by **Benjamin Johnson** (1991) Characters are so well drawn, they all but elbow their way through the page in this surreal account of two Midwest hospital workers' drugs trip.

Devastating Boys by **Elizabeth Taylor** (1984) Worlds collide, entertainingly and beneficially, when a late Cotswolds couple meet in two East End boys for summer break.

Up to Date a Brown Girl, Black Girl, White Girl, or (Die) by **Junot Diaz** (1995) Dominican-American teenager provides a manual for dating girls of different backgrounds, unaware of how much he is revealing about his attitudes to sex, women and masculinity.

Embassy of Cambodia by **Ladie Smith** (2013) Eccentric, wonderfully weird fable about foreign workers, set on one street in London and framed by a tale of badminton.

Mud Below by **Annie Proulx** (1998) Charting the world of rodeo riders with gritty insight, Wyoming tale transmits Proulx says the rodeo is a sense of "blazing existence".

How to Fall by **Edith Pearlman** (2005) Comedy and tragedy, wit and melancholy wonderfully combine in this story of a former vaudevillian performer in the early days of TV.

Loudest Voice by **Grace Paley** (1959) Humorous, ironic story about assimilation, in which a Jewish girl is chosen to play the lead in her primary school's Christmas play.

Nocturne with Neon Lights by **Frank Tuohy** (1978) A predatory Englishman in Tokyo gets his comeuppance in this story by a writer who specialised in satirising international relationships.

Green Tunnels by **Aldous Huxley** (1921) Suave satire flickers over arty rich expats in this tale of disenchantment in 1920s Tuscany.

The News of Her Death by **Petina Gappah** (2016) A bravura tale featuring a hugely funny chorus of warm, bitchy African hairdressers, all poring over the untimely death of a colleague.

Civil War Land in Bad Decline by **George Saunders** (1997) Hilarious portrayal of a dilapidated Civil War theme park, plagued by ghosts from that era.

Solid Geometry by **Ian McEwan** (1975) A narrator shuns his wife to read his great-grandfather's eccentric and eventful diary – and eventually decides to get rid of her entirely. Wry and macabre.

The Jewbird by **Bernard Malamud** (1963) The author is on top form in this affectionate, sardonic story about a talking crow persecuted by a frozen-food salesman and suffering anti-semitism.

Extra by **Yiyun Li** (2003) This is a gripping account of an exploited elderly woman in Beijing, from our leading fictional informant on life in Mao's China.

The Wrong Set by **Angus Wilson** (1949) Aghast to hear that her undergraduate nephew

has got into left-wing circles, a blowsy singer in a 1940s Soho drinking club takes tipsy action. Caustically funny.

Mary Postgate by **Rudyard Kipling** (1915) After a 1915 air raid, a constrained English spinster throbs with pleasure as she lets an injured German aviator die in pain. A quiet shocker.

Bang-Bang You're Dead by **Muriel Spark** (1982) A sardonic tale of rivalries and resentments festering in the colonial Africa Spark knew during the Second World War.

Amy Foster by **Joseph Conrad** (1901) The desolating story of a marriage between a simple woman and a shipwrecked soul from Central Europe.

Beer Trip to Llandudno by **Kevin Barry** (2012) A real-ale club's July outing uncovers simmering tensions: an immensely touching winner of The Sunday Times EFG Short Story Award.

Rain by **Somerset Maugham** (1921) Incessant rain, tropical heat and moral decay bring out the darkest impulses of early-20th-century Pacific colonials.

WOMEN'S ISSUES

Hey Yeah Right Get a Life by **Helen Simpson** (2001) An inspired description of the havoc motherhood wreaks on a woman's sense of self.

Cat Person by **Kristen Roupenian** (2017) The stilted romance and bad sex between 20-year-old Margot and 34-year-old Robert became one of the most talked-about stories ever.

Roman Fever by **Edith Wharton** (1934) As two American matrons, once love rivals, talk in a Rome restaurant, revelations of what happened when they were there decades earlier reshape their lives.

Friend of My Youth by **Alice Munro** (1990) Munro's stories are socially, psychologically and emotionally substantial. Set in rural Ontario, this displays all

the brilliance that won her a Nobel prize.

Landlord of the Crystal Fountain by **Malachi Whitaker** (1934) A schoolmistress travelling north makes a fateful decision in this story by a writer known as "the Bradford Chekhov".

Chagrin in Three Parts by **Graham Greene** (1967) As an elderly British writer at a restaurant in Antibes ruefully eavesdrops on two French women, a stylish comedy of sexual manoeuvres plays out.

People Like That Are the Only People Here by **Lorrie Moore** (1997) Moore delivers brittle humour and immense pathos as she tracks the plight of a mother shepherding her two-year-old through cancer treatments.

SPOOKY/GOTHIC

There Will Come Soft Rains by **Ray Bradbury** (1950) This tale of a computer-controlled house of the future carrying on its tasks, unaware that its human inhabitants are missing, shows Bradbury's talents at their finest.

Lost Hearts by **MR James** (1904) A spine-chiller: in a lonely mansion, two murdered youngsters take gruesome revenge on their killer.

The Fall of the House of Usher by **Edgar Allan Poe** (1839) The narrator witnesses the descent into madness of his friend Roderick Usher and the entombment of Roderick's sister as their house collapses, literally and metaphorically.

The Queen of Spades by **Alexander Pushkin** (1834) An officer in St Petersburg tries to steal a secret for winning at cards in this tale of obsession and chance.

The Signal-Man by **Charles Dickens** (1866) Nerve-jangling. The narrator becomes implicated in the fate of a railwayman who hears eerie signal bells just before accidents on his line.

The Company of Wolves by **Angela Carter** (1979) In this dark version of Red



MIKE CATHERO



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THE FIVE MOST POPULAR SHORT STORIES

The Lady with the Dog by Anton Chekhov (1899)

In a few pages, Chekhov achieves the density of a novel. In this, his most famous short story, Gurov, a banker, notices a beautiful woman on holiday and they have an affair. There's no dramatic twist: rather, it's a masterclass in mapping, concisely, a total character transformation.

Boule de Suif by Guy de Maupassant (1880)

The Prussian army has captured Rouen. When

some well-to-do citizens are given permission to travel to Le Havre, they're scandalised to be sharing a coach with a prostitute. In a few thousand words, Maupassant exposes the towering edifice of bourgeois hypocrisy.

A&P by John Updike (1961)
Updike wrote 186 short stories, and almost all of them could be included here. Written in the voice of a checkout boy at an A&P supermarket, this tells what happens when "in walks these three girls in nothing but

bathing suits". It has Updike's trademark sensual detail, sexual tension and mastery of work-life technicalities, and sees a minor moment become a major life incident.

The Dead by James Joyce (1914)

Joyce said *Dubliners* was written in a style of "scrupulous meanness", but the collection's multilayered *pièce de résistance*, *The Dead*, is a cornucopia of his talent for capturing the sound of speech and thought. One of the best short stories ever written.

The Ballroom of Romance by William Trevor (1972)

Trevor was at his most affecting when anatomising the compromises of ordinary lives. This tale of Bridie, the thirtysomething daughter of an Irish farmer, and her attempt to escape the constraints of her life by seeking love at the local dance hall, is touching but never sentimental.

Read *The Sunday Times EFG Short Story Award winner, Peanuts Aren't Nuts*, by Courtney Zoffness, page 36

Riding Hood, a fearless girl heads off a strange man by turning him into a wolf.

The Adventure of the Speckled Band by Arthur Conan Doyle (1892)

A young woman who has died in baffling circumstances presents Sherlock Holmes with a locked-room mystery.

Thurnley Abbey by Perceval Landon (1908)

Ruth Rendell thought this

ghost story by a friend of Kipling the scariest in the language. Its revenant is a creepy star turn.

The Yellow Wallpaper by Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1892)

Tour de force about a wife whose doctor husband sends her for a "rest cure" for her nerves. As her fascination with the wallpaper by her bed grows, the reader's grip on the truth slips and slides.

Barbara of the House of Grebe by Thomas Hardy (1890)

A hideously defaced marble statue sends tremors through a marriage in this shudder-inducing gothic tale.

The Lottery by Shirley Jackson (1948)

The *New Yorker* received a torrent of incensed letters in the wake of publishing *The Lottery*, a brilliantly calm and removed yarn that turns on

the twisted capacity of ordinary humans to do evil.

The Cone by HG Wells (1895)
Sexual jealousy and hot-blooded vengeance flare amid the blast furnaces of the Potteries in a tale of horror.

The Lesson of the Master by Henry James (1888)

An urbanely ironic tale about a novelist and his disciple that is also a warning about the sacrifices art can exact.

Giants of the genre From Trevor, Joyce, Maupassant, Chekhov and Updike

The Only Only by Candia McWilliam (1972)

This startling juxtaposition of lyricism and horror leaves a lasting impression.

The Demon Lover by Elizabeth Bowen (1941)

When a mother returns to her family home in the Blitz, she finds a letter from a man she had once promised to marry. A haunting story.

A Good Man Is Hard to Find by Flannery O'Connor (1955)

A startling combination of horror and humour in this Southern gothic tale, as a family encounter the gangster and an escaped oddball convict in Georgia.

TESTING TIMES

A Private Experience by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2008)

Two women shelter in a safe house while men butcher each other with machetes. Adichie captures the terrors of the Nigerian civil war and the redemptive power of the women's shared humanity.

To Build a Fire by Jack London (1908)

As man and dog struggle to survive at "75 below zero" on the Yukon Trail, Alaska, the deadly rigours of a hostile environment are evoked by a writer who knew every gruelling step of the way.

Let Them Call It Jazz by Jean Rhys (1962)

Rhys flaunts her talent for emotional precision and withering dialogue in this tale of a Martinique immigrant who winds up in London.

The Deep by Anthony Doerr (2011)

Winner of The Sunday Times EFG Award, this striking story set in Depression Detroit, is about a boy with a weak heart shown the wider world.

Selected by

Francesca Angelini, Lucy Atkins, Helen Hawkins, And Holgate, Peter Kemp, Claire Lowdon, David Mills, Alexander Nurnberg and Nick Rennison