

COMPACT SEVENTH EDITION



THE STORY AND ITS WRITER

An Introduction to Short Fiction

ANN CHARTERS

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An Introduction to Short Fiction

Ann Charters

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PREFACE

A true work of fiction is a wonderfully simple thing—so simple that most so-called serious writers avoid trying it, feeling they ought to do something more important and ingenious, never guessing how incredibly difficult it is. A true work of fiction does all of the following things, and does them elegantly, efficiently: it creates a vivid and continuous dream in the reader's mind; it is implicitly philosophical; it fulfills or at least deals with all of the expectations it sets up; and it strikes us, in the end, not simply as a thing done but as a shining performance.

John Gardner, "What Writers Do"

If John Gardner's description summarizes what writers of fiction do, then this anthology was created to enable readers of short fiction to experience their "shining performance" as elegantly and efficiently as possible. *The Story and Its Writer* grew out of my desire to teach from an anthology filled as much as possible with writer talk about short stories. After years of dissatisfaction using textbooks filled with too much editor talk, I realized the books available tended to be of two types: textbooks with a limited number of stories and a bothersome, often prescriptive, abundance of editorial material; or large anthologies with many stories and very little discussion by anyone about matters sure to be perplexing to students. The first type made the editor the authority; the second type made the teacher assume that role. In neither case were those most qualified to speak about fiction — the storytellers — given space to express their authority about their craft. *The Story and Its Writer* seeks to redress these imbalances. The gratifying success the book has enjoyed over six editions confirms the appeal and usefulness of its premise.

Those looking for good fiction will find plenty of it in this compact seventh edition of *The Story and Its Writer*: over seventy of them, arranged alphabetically

by author, ranging from classic tales by Nathaniel Hawthorne and Edgar Allan Poe through modern masterpieces by Flannery O'Connor and William Faulkner to contemporary selections from the work of writers such as Tim O'Brien, Amy Tan, and Bharati Mukherjee. Even for a compact edition, the number and variety of stories should offer lots of choice and teaching flexibility.

Editorial material is amply provided as well, but all of it is designed to support students without getting in the way of their reading. Most of the editor talk is packed discreetly at the back of the book, to be consulted when appropriate, if appropriate. It includes a chapter on the history of the short story, an outline of the elements of fiction, an extensive section on writing about fiction, a glossary of more than one hundred literary terms, and a chronological listing of authors and stories. The stories themselves appear with substantial biographical headnotes, but with no other apparatus that might constrain a student's response — no interpretive introductions, no directive questions or assignments.

Those interested in more editor talk may want to examine the instructor's manual. *Resources for Teaching The Story and Its Writer Compact Seventh Edition* contains discussions of each story, questions and writing assignments for students, short bibliographies, a thematic index of the stories, a guide to commentaries, and a listing of short stories on film and video. The questions and writing assignments have also been posted on the book's companion Web site, where they can be accessed by students and instructors.

The most distinctive feature of *The Story and Its Writer* is the section "Commentaries" that immediately follows the anthology of stories. These commentaries — almost sixty of them in this compact edition — justify the title of the book. In most of the commentaries, writers discuss their stories and the stories of fellow writers that appear in the anthology, and more generally remark on the form of the story and the vocation of the storyteller. I also include a sampling of commentaries by literary critics about stories in the anthology, representing different critical perspectives, in the expectation that students will learn something about deploying such tactics in their own reading and writing. Other commentaries are included because they provide the reader important biographical and historical contexts that illuminate an author or a story. Finally, many of these commentaries are collected in two illustrated "Casebooks" that take an in-depth look at the exemplary writers Raymond Carver and Flannery O'Connor. I, and the many instructors who have used the earlier editions, find these commentaries to be just the ingredient to stimulate class discussion and give rise to lively writing.

The companion Web site at www.bedfordstmartins.com/charters serves as a gateway to a suite of useful online resources for students and instructors, including questions and writing assignments for each story, sample syllabi for instructors, comprehension quizzes for every story in the anthology (LitQuiz), annotated links on writers in the anthology (LitLinks), and an interactive tutorial in fiction (VirtuaLit Interactive Fiction Tutorial). These materials are also available through a course management system (CMS) compatible with Blackboard and WebCT.

New to This Edition

The Compact Seventh Edition of *The Story and Its Writer* continues to offer an exceptional array of stories with twenty-two new works. The representation of women writers, multicultural writers, international writers and especially contemporary writers, is stronger than ever. The casebook on Raymond Carver now includes commentaries that make connections with the work of Anton Chekhov, one of Carver's most important influences. I also include a casebook that explores graphic storytelling, with excerpts and complete narratives by iconic figures such as R. Crumb and Will Eisner, bestselling authors such as Art Spiegelman and Marjane Satrapi, and innovative contemporaries such as Gilbert Hernandez, Jiro Taniguchi, and Lynda Barry. In recent years, graphic narratives have been embraced by the mainstream and on college campuses. This casebook allows students to make comparisons between the techniques of traditional forms of fiction and those of a more visually oriented age. Finally, there are two new appendices: one on reading fiction closely that centers on Grace Paley's brief story "Samuel," and the other on contemporary critical perspectives such as those of feminists and cultural critics.

Available in a More Comprehensive Edition

The full seventh edition of *The Story and Its Writer* contains 139 stories and more than 90 commentaries, with additional casebooks on Zora Neale Hurston, Joyce Carol Oates, and Edgar Allan Poe.

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I wish to acknowledge the help of many people in the preparation and revision of the anthology and the instructor's manual. I want to thank William Sheidley of the University of Southern Colorado, whose insightful commentaries on many stories that appear in *The Story and Its Writer* can be found in the instructor's manual. I am indebted to Samuel Charters who expertly contributed his thoughts on the stories new to this edition in the instructor's manual. Thanks also to past and present graduate students whose work helped shape the manual from edition to edition: Martha Ramsey, Robert Gaspar, Dennis Lazor, Maureen Grogan, Patricia Vincent, and Ning Yu. My colleagues in the English Department at the University of Connecticut — Lee Jacobus, Scott Bradfield, Compton Rees, William Curtin, Milton Stern, Jack Davis, Jack Manning, Michael Meyer, Francelia Butler, and Feenie Ziner — generously contributed suggestions and advice. I am grateful to Herbert Lederer, emeritus professor of German at the University of Connecticut, for serving as an experienced and knowledgeable consultant for the translation of the Kafka stories into American English, and to Kurt Fendt of MIT for double-checking the translations and offering good advice. The staff at the Homer Babbidge Library, especially Leanne Pander, Pamela Skinner, David McChesney, Carol Abramson, and David Garnes, gave unflagging assistance. Students in my

short story classes diligently drafted the sample essays illustrating the various ways to write about stories. Charles Flynn of the Rockefeller Library and Emily Medeiros and Clare Durst of the Dean of the College Office at Brown University were also particularly helpful.

In addition, professors who used the previous editions of the anthology and generously took time to share their ideas about it include Dirk Aardsma, Carol Abate, Cora Agatucci, Alan Ainsworth, Glen Scott Allen, Iska Alter, Dr. G. M. Andersen, Ronald G. Ashcroft, Wendell Aycok, Julie Hakim Azzam, Jessica Baldanzi, Linda Bamber, Abby Bardi, James S. Bass, Margaret D. Bauer, Nancy Topping Bazin, Charlotte Bill, Franz G. Blaha, Ronna L. Bloom, Robert Boswell, Jeffrey P. Brandt, Donald L. Brase, Sara Braut, Deborah Burnham, Karin G. Burns, Ronald R. Butters, Jamie L. Campbell, Gerard Canavan, Eve La Salle Caram, Merrie Shannon Carpenter, Leena Chakrabati, Jose Chaves, Richard Chiasson, Robert L. Chibka, Maxine Clair, Anne Clifford, Gladys M. Clifton, Mary Clyde, Garnett Kilberg Cohen, Peggy Cole, Joyce Coleman, Linda R. Cooler, David Crowe, Virginia Cyrus, Linda J. Daigle, Carol Ann Davis, Danny L. DeLong, Lisa Denbleyker, Marvin Diogenes, J. Darryl Dockstader, Stacey Donohue, Joanne Dreschel, Rainey Duke, Jenni Dyman, Alexandra Dzenowagis, Barbara Eckstein, Jocelyn Emerson, Susan Boyd English, Josh Epstein, Preston Fambrough, Sarah Farrant, Mara Faulkner, Sheila Finch, David Franke, Gail Taliaferro Fry, Paula Garland, Casey Gilson, Maria Chiancola Glade, Sara Gogol, Daniel Gonzalez, Arnold Gordenstein, Richard Grande, Gertrude L. Graves, Joseph Green, Dorothy Gurvey, Susan G. Hall, Luther Hanson, Susan Hardebeck, William Harrell, Sydney Morgan Harrison, William R. Hatcher, E. Havazelet, Risa Hazel, Vicki Henriksen-Stalbird, James Hicks, Andrea Hills, Daniel Hipp, Roseanne Hoefel, Robert Houston, Christopher Howell, Bryan Hull, Marie Iglesias-Cardinale, Ann Iles, Vanessa Jackson, Geri Jacobs, Michael Javinsky-Wenzek, Jennifer M. Jeffers, Mark D. Johnson, Rich Johnson, Hilda Johnston, Bruce W. Jorgensen, Nancy C. Joyner, Michael J. Keenihan, Wyn Kelley, Jan Koenen, Patricia Kolonosky, Janice Milner Lasseter, Lisa Lebduska, Andrew Levy, Laurie Litchford, Beth Lordan, Thomas D. Lorenz, Ilka Luyt, Patricia Lorimer Lyndberg, Greg Lyons, Cecilia Machesla, Laurence MacPhee, Marni L. Magda, MaryJo Mahoney, Lawrence W. Manglitz, Grace Dane Mazu, Barbara McClure, Thomas McConnell, Donovan McDonough, Michael McDowell, Martha J. McGowan, Bruce McNallie, Sandra Meek, Mildred C. Melendez, Jane Melnick, Alice Miller, Joyce Marie Miller, Elizabeth Mitchell, Jeanne Montague, Rebecca Ann Moore, Patricia Moran, Dan Morgan, Robert Murray, Scott Muskin, Patricia Nolan, Patricia O'Donnell, Carol Orlock, Helen Belton Orman, Ted Otteson, J. H. E. Paine, Joyce A. Palmer, Ricky Patteson, Carol Peters, John Peterson, Nancy J. Peterson, Lelia Phillips, Richard Potter, Barbara Presnell, Kara Provost, Tison Pugh, Betty P. Pytlik, Morton D. Rich, Christopher Rieger, Dana Ringuette, Morielle Risse, Elizabeth Robertson, Paula Robison, Arthur Rogers, Zelda Jeanne Rouillard, Vicki Lynn Samson, M. Craig Sanders, William Schang, Beth Schrank, Michael Schwartz, Carolyn Foster Segal, Lavina D. Shankar, Julie Shigekuni, John Silva, Deborah Simpson, Jennifer Smith, Michael C. Smith, Robert Smith, Clifton Snider, Joan M. Spangler, Susan Stanley, Hao Sun, Susan

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Ann Charters
Storrs, Connecticut

CONTENTS

PREFACE v

INTRODUCTION THE STORY AND ITS WRITER 1

Part One STORIES

CHINUA ACHEBE

Civil Peace 10

RELATED COMMENTARY: CHINUA ACHEBE, *An Image of Africa: Conrad's "Heart of Darkness,"* 827

SHERMAN ALEXIE

The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven 15

RELATED COMMENTARY: SHERMAN ALEXIE, *Superman and Me,* 832

ISABEL ALLENDE

An Act of Vengeance 21

SHERWOOD ANDERSON

Hands 28

RELATED COMMENTARY: **SHERWOOD ANDERSON**, *Form, Not Plot, in the Short Story*, 835

MARGARET ATWOOD

Happy Endings 33

RELATED COMMENTARY: **MARGARET ATWOOD**, *Reading Blind*, 837

JAMES BALDWIN

Sonny's Blues 37

RELATED COMMENTARY: **JAMES BALDWIN**, *Autobiographical Notes*, 841

TONI CADE BAMBARA

The Lesson 61

RUSSELL BANKS

Black Man and White Woman in Dark Green Rowboat 68

RELATED STORY: **ERNEST HEMINGWAY**, *Hills Like White Elephants*, 350

RELATED COMMENTARY: **RUSSELL BANKS**, *Author's Note*, 845

AMBROSE BIERCE

An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge 75

JORGE LUIS BORGES

The Circular Ruins 83

RELATED COMMENTARY: **JULIO CORTÁZAR**, *On the Short Story and Its Environs*, 859

RAYMOND CARVER

Cathedral 88

Errand 98

What We Talk About When We Talk About Love 107

RELATED CASEBOOK: **RAYMOND CARVER**, *On Writing*, 941; **RAYMOND CARVER**, *Creative Writing* 101, 946; **RAYMOND CARVER**, *The Ashtray*, 949; **RAYMOND CARVER**, *On "Errand,"* 950; **OLGA KNIPPER**, *Remembering Chekhov*, 952;

HENRI TROYAT, *Chekhov's Last Days*, 953; TOM JENKS, *The Origin of "Cathedral,"* 956; ARTHUR M. SALTZMAN, *A Reading of "What We Talk About When We Talk About Love,"* 957; A. O. SCOTT, *Looking for Raymond Carver*, 959

WILLA CATHER

Paul's Case 117

RELATED COMMENTARY: WILLA CATHER, *The Stories of Katherine Mansfield*, 847

JOHN CHEEVER

The Swimmer 133

RELATED COMMENTARY: JOHN CHEEVER, *Why I Write Short Stories*, 855

ANTON CHEKHOV

The Darling 143

RELATED STORY: RAYMOND CARVER, *Errand*, 98

RELATED COMMENTARIES: ANTON CHEKHOV, *Technique in Writing the Short Story*, 857; LEO TOLSTOY, *Chekhov's Intent in "The Darling,"* 919

KATE CHOPIN

Désirée's Baby 154

The Story of an Hour 158

RELATED COMMENTARY: KATE CHOPIN, *How I Stumbled upon Maupassant*, 858

SANDRA CISNEROS

The House on Mango Street 162

JOSEPH CONRAD

Heart of Darkness 165

RELATED COMMENTARY: CHINUA ACHEBE, *An Image of Africa: Conrad's "Heart of Darkness,"* 827

STEPHEN CRANE

The Open Boat 228

RELATED COMMENTARY: STEPHEN CRANE, *The Sinking of the Commodore*, 861

JUNOT DÍAZ

How to Date a Browngirl, Blackgirl, Whitegirl, or Halfie 247

CHITRA BANERJEE DIVAKARUNI

Mrs. Dutta Writes a Letter 250

RALPH ELLISON

Battle Royal 266

RELATED COMMENTARY: RALPH ELLISON, *The Influence of Folklore on "Battle Royal,"* 864

LOUISE ERDRICH

The Red Convertible 277

WILLIAM FAULKNER

A Rose for Emily 286

That Evening Sun 293

RELATED COMMENTARY: WILLIAM FAULKNER, *The Meaning of "A Rose for Emily,"* 866

GABRIEL GARCÍA MÁRQUEZ

A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings 307

CHARLOTTE PERKINS GILMAN

The Yellow Wallpaper 313

RELATED COMMENTARIES: SANDRA M. GILBERT AND SUSAN GUBAR, *A Feminist Reading of Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper,"* 867; CHARLOTTE PERKINS GILMAN, *Undergoing the Cure for Nervous Prostration,* 870; CHARLOTTE PERKINS GILMAN, *Why I Wrote "The Yellow Wallpaper,"* 872

NADINE GORDIMER

Some Are Born to Sweet Delight 327

NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

Young Goodman Brown 339

RELATED COMMENTARIES: HERMAN MELVILLE, *Blackness in Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown,"* 889; EDGAR ALLAN POE, *The Importance of the Single Effect in a Prose Tale,* 907

ERNEST HEMINGWAY

Hills Like White Elephants 350

RELATED STORY: **RUSSELL BANKS**, *Black Man and White Woman in Dark Green Rowboat*, 68

ZORA NEALE HURSTON

Sweat 355

RELATED COMMENTARIES: **ZORA NEALE HURSTON**, *How It Feels to Be Colored Me*, 873; **ALICE WALKER**, *Zora Neale Hurston: A Cautionary Tale and a Partisan View*, 930

SHIRLEY JACKSON

The Lottery 365

RELATED COMMENTARY: **SHIRLEY JACKSON**, *The Morning of June 28, 1948, and "The Lottery,"* 877

GISH JEN

Who's Irish? 373

SARAH ORNE JEWETT

A White Heron 382

RELATED COMMENTARY: **SARAH ORNE JEWETT**, *Looking Back on Girlhood*, 880

HA JIN

Saboteur 391

JAMES JOYCE

Araby 400

The Dead 404

RELATED COMMENTARY: **FRANK O'CONNOR**, *Style and Form in Joyce's "The Dead,"* 901

FRANZ KAFKA

A Hunger Artist 435

The Metamorphosis 441

RELATED COMMENTARIES: **ANN CHARTERS**, *Translating Kafka*, 851; **R. CRUMB** AND **DAVID ZANE MAIROWITZ**, *"A Hunger Artist,"* 996; **JOHN UPDIKE**, *Kafka and "The Metamorphosis,"* 927

JAMAICA KINCAID

Girl 477

RELATED COMMENTARY: JAMAICA KINCAID, *On "Girl,"* 884

JHUMPA LAHIRI

When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine 480

D. H. LAWRENCE

The Rocking-Horse Winner 493

KATHERINE MANSFIELD

The Fly 506

RELATED COMMENTARY: WILLA CATHER, *The Stories of Katherine Mansfield*, 847

BOBBIE ANN MASON

Shiloh 511

RELATED COMMENTARY: BOBBIE ANN MASON, *On Tim O'Brien's "The Things They Carried,"* 885

GUY DE MAUPASSANT

The Necklace 523

RELATED COMMENTARIES: KATE CHOPIN, *How I Stumbled upon Maupassant*, 858;
GUY DE MAUPASSANT, *The Writer's Goal*, 887

HERMAN MELVILLE

Bartleby, the Scrivener 531

RELATED COMMENTARY: HERMAN MELVILLE, *Blackness in Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown,"* 889

NICHOLASA MOHR

Tell the Truth 559

BHARATI MUKHERJEE

The Management of Grief 565

ALICE MUNRO

Miles City, Montana 578

RELATED COMMENTARY: ALICE MUNRO, *How I Write Short Stories*, 893

JOYCE CAROL OATES

Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been? 595

RELATED COMMENTARIES: **JOYCE CAROL OATES**, *From "Stories That Define Me: The Making of a Writer,"* 895; **JOYCE CAROL OATES**, *Smooth Talk: Short Story into Film*, 896

TIM O'BRIEN

The Things They Carried 608

RELATED COMMENTARY: **BOBBIE ANN MASON**, *On Tim O'Brien's "The Things They Carried,"* 885

FLANNERY O'CONNOR

Everything That Rises Must Converge 623

Good Country People 634

A Good Man Is Hard to Find 648

RELATED CASEBOOK: **FLANNERY O'CONNOR**, *From "Letters, 1954–55,"* 964; **FLANNERY O'CONNOR**, *Writing Short Stories*, 967; **FLANNERY O'CONNOR**, *A Reasonable Use of the Unreasonable*, 972; **ROBERT H. BRINKMEYER JR.**, *Flannery O'Connor and Her Readers*, 975; **DOROTHY TUCK McFARLAND**, *On "Good Country People,"* 980; **WAYNE C. BOOTH**, *A Rhetorical Reading of O'Connor's "Everything That Rises Must Converge,"* 984; **SALLY FITZGERALD**, *Southern Sources of "A Good Man Is Hard to Find,"* 987

FRANK O'CONNOR

Guests of the Nation 660

RELATED COMMENTARIES: **FRANK O'CONNOR**, *The Nearest Thing to Lyric Poetry Is the Short Story*, 900; **FRANK O'CONNOR**, *Style and Form in Joyce's "The Dead,"* 901

TILLIE OLSEN

I Stand Here Ironing 671

ZZ PACKER

Drinking Coffee Elsewhere 678

GRACE PALEY

A Conversation with My Father 694

RELATED STORY: **GRACE PALEY**, *Samuel* [in Appendix 1], 1039

RELATED COMMENTARY: **GRACE PALEY**, *A Conversation with Ann Charters*, 903

EDGAR ALLAN POE

The Cask of Amontillado 699

The Tell-Tale Heart 705

RELATED COMMENTARY: **EDGAR ALLAN POE**, *The Importance of the Single Effect in a Prose Tale*, 907

KATHERINE ANNE PORTER

He 710

ALIFA RIFAAT

Distant View of a Minaret 718

LESLIE MARMON SILKO

Yellow Woman 722

RELATED COMMENTARY: **LESLIE MARMON SILKO**, *Language and Literature from a Pueblo Indian Perspective*, 910

AMY TAN

Two Kinds 731

RELATED COMMENTARY: **AMY TAN**, *In the Canon, for All the Wrong Reasons*, 916

LEO TOLSTOY

The Death of Ivan Ilych 741

RELATED COMMENTARY: **LEO TOLSTOY**, *Chekhov's Intent in "The Darling,"* 919

JOHN UPDIKE

A & P 783

RELATED COMMENTARY: **JOHN UPDIKE**, *Kafka and "The Metamorphosis,"* 927

ALICE WALKER

Everyday Use 789

RELATED COMMENTARIES: **CHERYL B. TORSNEY**, *"Everyday Use": My Sojourn at Parchman Farm*, 922; **ALICE WALKER**, *Zora Neale Hurston: A Cautionary Tale and a Partisan View*, 930

DAVID FOSTER WALLACE

Incarnations of Burned Children 796

EUDORA WELTY*A Worn Path* 800RELATED COMMENTARY: EUDORA WELTY, *Is Phoenix Jackson's Grandson Really Dead?*, 932**TOBIAS WOLFF***Say Yes* 808**RICHARD WRIGHT***The Man Who Was Almost a Man* 813RELATED COMMENTARY: RICHARD WRIGHT, *Reading Fiction*, 934**Part Two COMMENTARIES**

CHINUA ACHEBE*An Image of Africa: Conrad's "Heart of Darkness"* 827**SHERMAN ALEXIE***Superman and Me* 832**SHERWOOD ANDERSON***Form, Not Plot, in the Short Story* 835**MARGARET ATWOOD***Reading Blind* 837**JAMES BALDWIN***Autobiographical Notes* 841**RUSSELL BANKS***Author's Note* 845**WILLA CATHER***The Stories of Katherine Mansfield* 847**ANN CHARTERS***Translating Kafka* 851