

# Short Stories

Is 500 words a short story?

The average short story could run anywhere from 1,000 to 10,000 words.

**Flash fiction** is a short story that is 500 words or less.



**What is the shortest famous short story?**

Ernest Hemingway once bet a bunch of fellows he could make them cry with a short story six words long. If he won the bet each guy would have to fork over 10 bucks. He won the bet. Hemingway's six-word story was,

"For Sale: Baby shoes, never worn."

Your task was (is?) a short story on the theme: "Something of value."

Here is a short story (1136 words) to read and discuss.

## A Name Like That.

by Andrew Fruchtman

"So what did you expect with a name like that?" the therapist continued.

"Oh, I don't know, I never put much credence in any of that stuff. They're just stories. Biblical or mythological, what's the difference?"

"Well maybe, but you've gotta admit it is a little weird, you being named for him. I mean 'Job,' what were your parents thinking anyway?"

"Apparently they weren't."

"So, how can we, you, deal with all this? How can you streamline your life to better slide uneventfully through your days?"

"I can try to maintain a lower profile and not draw attention to myself, but honestly things just seem to happen, no matter what I do."

"Well our time is up for this week, but let's try and work on some of the strategies we've discussed and we'll talk about it at our next session."

Dr. Galaway stood, extended his right hand for a shake, crisp white cuff jutting out from his blue blazer, clapped Job on the shoulder and opened his office door. "Next week, same time. It'll be okay, I promise."

"I hope so Doc, thanks," Job said, exiting the room.

(Next week)

"Your next patient is here Doctor, shall I send him in," the receptionist's voice crackled from the speaker. And in a lower voice whispered, "he doesn't look so good today, just a heads up."

"Okay, Olive, thank you, please send him in," Doctor Galaway responded.

"Good afternoon Job, how was the week? I can't help but notice all the bruises on your face, what happened? Please have a seat and tell me all about it."

Job limped over to the black leather couch and sat, wincing as he settled himself into a comfortable position.

"Well, it's been an especially difficult week, horrible actually."

"Would you like some tea or coffee?"

"No thanks, I'd probably gag on it, the way my day's going," Job said.

"Okay, tell me, please."

"Well, it started when I left your office last week. I mean, things haven't been going well for me for years anyway, but this week it just seems worse. It's like the universe is conspiring against me. You know that character in the Peanuts cartoon, Charlie Brown, you know the one with the rain cloud over his head? That's me," Job said.

"So you feel like the universe is bullying you, picking on you?"

"Yeah, I do. I know that's silly, but some people do seem to attract bad stuff. Call it Karma, call it pheromones or just bad luck or timing, it's a thing. It's like misfortune is metallic and I'm the frigging magnet. Just this week my girlfriend broke up with me, she'd had enough of my problems and said she needed to get away before something awful happened to her. I really can't blame her. I fell down an open manhole the other day," Job pointed to his battered face, as if to say "duh." "Lucky I wasn't killed. My boss is cutting everyone's hours at work to save money. My credit card was hacked. I dropped my iPhone in the toilet. I got old dry chicken at KFC and was sick for two days. Starbucks misspelled my name as Bob on my takeout cup. Okay, so that's not a biggie, granted, but still!"

"Wow, yeah, not a good week, sorry, but is this typical for you, oh wait, you did say it was worse than usual, didn't you?"

"Yeah, seemed so, and I was really trying Doc. I didn't go out much and when I did I tried to be as inconspicuous as possible. It's like the world has it in for me, you know?" Job removed his faded Chicago Cubs cap and ran his thick fingers through his hair in exasperation and they came away with small clumps of brown. "Great, just great," he whined, "now I'm losing my hair."

"Okay, easy now, let's try some experiments," Doctor Galaway said. "I want you to change your deodorant and after-shave. I want you to change your diet, try a vegan diet. Do twenty minutes of yoga a day and some meditation. Let's try and change your mindset and your body set. Emit a different you to the universe you think is targeting you. Game?"

"Sure, I'll try just about anything if you think it'll help," Job answered. "Thank you."

"Okay then, I'll see you next week. Try the strategies we just discussed and let's see if it makes a difference. Positive thinking!" He stood and ushered Job out of the office. "Olive? Could you please send in the next patient?" he asked, watching as Job slipped on the tile floor as he walked to the elevator. "Hope to God he doesn't fall down the shaft," he thought.

(Next week)

"Job is here for his appointment, Doctor Galaway," Olive piped through the intercom speaker and in a low conspiratorial voice added, "he looks better than last week."

"Thank you, Olive, send him in."

"So, how's it going this week Job?," Dr. Galaway asked. Have you been following my advice? Have things been better?"

"Oh my God, so much better," Job said excitedly. Yes! I've been doing what you suggested and I'm feeling really good. Except for a few minor pitfalls this week, it's been okay."

“Such as?”

"Well, my computer crashed when I did a software update, but I think it's just that it's an old model and didn't have enough memory. I tested positive for Covid earlier in the week, so that was scary, but I did two more tests and I was negative. Guess it was a glitch the first time."

“And thank you for wearing a mask this week.”

"That's okay, it also hides where I cut myself shaving the other day. New blade. I really did a number on myself," Job said. "Other than that, it's been," he leans forward, looking side to side and whispers "quiet," not wanting to alert the gods of mischief.

"Well, that's good news. Keep doing what you're doing."

“Definitely, Doc. Maybe, like you said, I’ve changed, oh I don’t know, my aura or something. Maybe it’s like I’m wearing a cloaking device of some kind, you know, like in Harry Potter, and I’m invisible to whatever power has been toying with me. In any case, thank you, and I want you to know that despite all my issues and accidents, I never lost faith in you. I knew you could help me and you did. You pulled me through.”

"I'm gratified to have helped,"

Dr. Galaway said. "See you next week?"

"Yes, absolutely," Job said, rising and shaking the Doctor's hand vigorously as he left the office.

"Doctor Galaway, your next patient has arrived," Olive squawked, right on cue. Shall I send Mr. Odysseus in?"

“Odysseus? Oh, just great,” he sighed.

From <https://blog.reedsy.com/short-stories/>

**Comments:**

New Zealand's most famous short story is probably Katherine Mansfield's "The Garden Party"

Other notables are Witi Ihimaera, C.K. Stead, Janet Frame, Patricia Grace, Barry Crump,

### **The Garden Party" Synopsis**

"The Garden Party" is a fictional short story originally published in 1922 by New Zealand author Katherine Mansfield (1888-1923). Katherine Mansfield was a well-known author of the modernist period.

In the story, the wealthy Sheridan family is preparing to host a garden party at their mansion. The story is mostly told from the point of view of Laura, one of the Sheridan children. At the story's beginning, she is given the duty of helping some workmen decide where to put the marquee for the party. Soon, Laura starts to admire the workers and wishes she could spend time with people like them rather than the types of boys (upper-class boys) with whom she typically spends time.

Meanwhile, the gardener, cook, hired servants, and other servants of the Sheridan family are hard at work preparing for the party. Supplies such as lilies and cream puffs are being delivered while Mrs. Sheridan wanders around declaring that parties are exhausting and that the children should take care of the preparations so that she does not have to.

One of the delivery people reveals that a terrible accident has occurred nearby, and a working-class man has been killed. Laura says to her sister Jose that, given this tragedy, they cannot possibly still have the party later that same afternoon. Laura feels it would be insensitive to the grieving family to have a band and a loud party so close by. Jose thinks this is ridiculous and that the party should go as planned. Laura goes to her mother and shares the same concerns, but her mother reacts the same way as Jose, telling Laura that she is being absurd and inconsiderate, ruining other people's good times. To make Laura feel better, her mother gives her a fancy hat and tells her it looks magnificent. When Laura sees her reflection wearing the hat, she decides that she looks magnificent and that she should forget about the dead man until after the party is over.

The actual garden party is a success, and afterward, when the family is debriefing, Mrs. Sheridan again complains about how exhausting parties are. Mr. Sheridan turns the conversation toward the working-class neighbor's death. Mrs. Sheridan says that the death nearly ruined her party, and she again feels that it was inconsiderate for her family to mention the death to her. Then, Mrs. Sheridan gets the idea to send a basket of some uneaten sandwiches, cream puffs, and other foods from her garden party to the widow, Mrs. Scott. This idea bothers Laura, but her mother insists, and Laura is sent down the hill with the basket. As Laura nears Mrs. Scott's house, she feels like everyone is staring at her because of her fancy outfit, and she becomes afraid, wishing to be home again as soon as possible.

When Laura arrives at Mrs. Scott's house, Mrs. Scott's sister insists that Laura come inside, even though Laura repeatedly says that she does not want to come in and only wants to leave the basket that her mother sent. Laura gives the basket to Mrs. Scott, who seems confused, but accepts the basket and thanks Laura regardless. Then, the sister takes Laura into the bedroom to see Mr. Scott's body, which she thinks looks beautiful like a picture. Laura agrees, thinking he looks happy and content, away from living people's nonsense. She cries, asks the children to forgive her hat, and then returns home, where she is greeted by her brother, Laurie, who tells her to stop crying and comforts her.

Katherine Mansfield was born into a socially prominent family in Wellington, as Kathleen Mansfield Beauchamp. She lived in a small wooden house on Tinakori Road in Thorndon with her two older sisters, a younger sister and brother.

In 1893, the Mansfield family moved to the country suburb of Karori where Mansfield spent the happiest years of her childhood. However, she eventually found the confines of colonial Edwardian life stifling and sought inspiration for a new way of living in the writings of Oscar Wilde and other 'decadents'. At 19, Mansfield left for London without her family to pursue a career as a professional cello player. She never returned. She had many voyages, several lovers and counted among her friends Virginia Woolf, D.H. Lawrence, Francis Carco and the American artist Anne Estelle Rice.

Reviews spoke of 'acute insight' and 'unquenchable humour'. She then contributed to the avant-garde publication *Rhythm*, with her partner and husband-to-be, literary critic John Middleton Murry. The death of her young brother, Leslie, in the First World War, devastated her and she found solace in her remembrance of the country of their childhood. These remembrances were transformed into some of her finest writing such as *At the Bay*, *The Garden Party* and *Prelude*.

In 1917, she was diagnosed with extrapulmonary tuberculosis, which led to her death at age 34.



## Radio New Zealand Short stories:

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/collections/short-stories>



PART 15

Milk by Susy Pointon

### Milk - Ep 1

24 May 2019

Tanya escapes her past and drags her kids and alcoholic ex-partner north to the Hokianga where she soon finds herself living and working on a dairy farm. (AUDIO)

Listen 12'03" | Add to playlist | Download

A screenshot of the Radio New Zealand Short Stories website. The top navigation bar includes links for Home, News, Radio, Podcasts &amp; Series, Topics, and Pacific. Below the navigation, there is a collection titled "Short Stories" with a sub-section for "Collection parts". Four items are listed: "THE 2022 NINE TO NOON SHORT STORY COMP.", "THE 2021 NINE TO NOON INAUGURAL SHORT STORY COMP.", "PART 2 Nine to Noon Short Story Competition 2021", and "PART 4 Snapper in a Landscape". Each item has a small thumbnail image and a brief description.