

# Really Short Stories

Hey there! In the not-too-distant past, I posted [a thread](#) on stories that were short enough to (at least in theory) be read and discussed in a single class period, and invited people to share ideas and a potential discussion prompt. I made some suggestions in my original post, but because English teachers rock, the response was incredible – so below is my attempt to consolidate what everyone said into one location!

## Thumbnail Lesson Plan

I suggested the following lesson architecture as a starting point:

- 1) Start w/an opening activity (e.g., a Do Now) that asks s's to retrieve relevant knowledge, vocabulary, literary terms.
- 2) Students then read/annotate for what strikes them as resonant, beautiful, important or interesting
- 3) Students turn & talk in partners or small groups, then class discourse (I like a “hands-down” protocol. Want to see videos/examples of how to build this culture? Try [here](#).)
  - a. It's powerful to open with something broad like: “What do we make of this story?” but important to have 1-2 discussion prompts aligned to your goal and designed to nudge students toward the complexity of your particular text. If students don't get there (or somewhere equally rewarding) on their own, pause discourse and give students a few minutes to try your focused question.
- 4) Students “stamp” takeaways/connections to their lives & current study.
- 5) Students revise/develop their initial response to close class.

My publisher will let me have it if I don't mention that there are a ton of videos/1-pagers/class resources to support secondary English instruction in *Love and Literacy*, which you can learn about [here](#).

OK! Here's the list of what everyone said, including a few extras I'll add. I'm limiting this list to stories I could find online and which I are no more than 4ish pages. (So I'll need to pause on a few amazing suggestions like “[The Yellow Wallpaper](#)” since they're a bit longer.) If people suggested discussion questions, I'll add those too! Full disclosure: I've read many of these, but by no means all of them – so of course it's up to you to decide what is a best fit for your context. These texts are best used integrated into a curriculum discussing linked essential questions, themes, or types of text complexity. And, of course, just because a text is short enough for a class or two, of course doesn't mean you need to teach it that way.

A HUGE shout-out to everyone who made suggestions, re-tweeted, or was just positive and collegial. Thanks for building the kind of world our students can be proud to grow up in.

Author	Title w/link	Notes/Discussion Q's
Alice Walker	<a href="#">The Flowers</a>	What do you make of that last line? How would the story be different w/o it?
Kate Chopin	<a href="#">The Story of An Hour</a>	For Story of an Hour: How does this text play with characters' and readers' expectations? Why?
	<a href="#">Emancipation: A Fable</a>	( <i>Emancipation: A Fable</i> could make for a great pairing! H/T @BobMarcacci for that suggestion)
Andy Weir	<a href="#">The Egg</a>	Why might this story be in 2nd person? To whom is it speaking and about what?
Sandra Cisneros	<a href="#">Salvador Late or Early</a>	Why might Cisneros have chosen the name Salvador — savior — for this character? Is it appropriate? Ironic? Something else?
	<a href="#">Eleven</a>	How might the figurative language in this text help enrich its theme? OR Identify a symbol and describe its use. OR How would you feel were this happening on your birthday?  H/T @MistaB10 for adding this text and a number of these prompts to our list!
Tim O'Brien	Good Form (from <a href="#">The Things They Carried</a> )	What's the difference between story-truth and happening-truth? Does the distinction matter?
Harry Humes	<a href="#">The Cough</a>	What is the “it” that the final lines refer to? Why does that matter?

Jamaica Kincaid	<a href="#">Girl</a>	The link includes tons of potential questions!
Ellen Goodman	<a href="#">The Company Man</a>	How would you describe the tone in this text? Is the narrator neutral, and if not, what's their view? H/T @gisd_raspberry for suggesting this one!
Langston Hughes	<a href="#">Early Autumn</a>	H/T @codyjohk for adding this text to our list!  The communication issues make for a great pairing with Hemmingway's " <a href="#">A Day's Wait</a> " or Nikki Giovanni's poem " <a href="#">Legacies</a> ."
	<a href="#">Thank You, Ma'am</a>	Could make for a great pairing with Tostoy's <a href="#">The Three Questions</a>  H/T @Ultan_Mulqueen and @JoAnn_Gronholm for suggesting this classic!
	<a href="#">Salvation</a>	H/T @Mznychka for this suggestion!
Ursula K. Le Guin	<a href="#">The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas</a>	Would you stay or walk away? Provide textual evidence to support your decision.  H/T @allisonm610 for this suggestion and @ledasgirl for the prompt!  Also, potential to compare this text to NK Jemisin's response story, " <a href="#">The Ones Who Stay and Fight</a> ."
	<a href="#">She Unnames Them</a>	There's a familiar allusion at the heart of this story. How would it be different without it? (Bonus: What do we make of that last sentence?)
	<a href="#">The Wife's Story</a>	H/T @ClifClaf for this suggestion!
Shirley Jackson	<a href="#">The Lottery</a>	What assumptions do we make as readers when we start this text, and how does Jackson challenge them? What assumptions do the characters make in this text, and how does Jackson challenge them?  H/T @BrentGWarner, @stacey87309, @fireballwex, @colleenhenness4, @ClifClaf, and @LitAgentRM for this text suggestion.
Alexander Weinstein	<a href="#">Rocket Night</a>	What do you make of the last sentence of the story? If the class has already read Shirley Jackson's " <a href="#">The Lottery</a> ," how does Weinstein's story compare?  H/T @amysueobrien for this suggestion and the questions!
Leo Tolstoy	<a href="#">The Three Questions</a>	Start by asking kids the same questions the king in the story is asking.  H/T @mrpchessell for the text and prompt! This text could pair nicely with Hughes's <a href="#">Thank You, Ma'am</a>
	<a href="#">The Two Brothers</a>	H/T @MissMartinReads for this one!
George Saunders	<a href="#">Sticks</a>	H/T @codyjohk, @fran_tlc, and @carobinelli for adding this text to our list!
Ernest Hemmingway	<a href="#">A Day's Wait</a>	H/T @MatRyanELATeach for this suggestion.  The miscommunication theme could pair well with Hughes's " <a href="#">Early Autumn</a> ."
	<a href="#">Indian Camp and Hills Like White Elephants</a> (same link)	H/T @carobinelli, @JoAnn_Gronholm, and @theforgottenarm for adding these texts to our list!
	<a href="#">Cat in the Rain</a>	H/T @Mznychka for adding this text to our list!

Amy Tan	<a href="#">Fish Cheeks</a> <a href="#">Two Kinds</a> <a href="#">Mother Tongue</a>	<p>Fish Cheeks is a great place to talk about the power of imagery and diction</p> <p>@mardieteach suggests using it as well to discuss what makes a life moment “memoir-worthy”</p> <p>@irishmags26 uses it to consider it through the lens of character perspective How does Amy view what’s happening vs her mother? How does Amy’s perspective change over time?</p> <p>@PastTenseOfDraw says he uses this as a mentor text for paragraph construction: “Tan uses this great technique of asking (or implying) a question in the first sentence (“I cried” “strange menu”) then piling up details that answer it.”</p> <p>H/T @LitAgentRM, @mardieteach, @PastTenseOfDraw, @Mznychka, and @irishmags26 for adding these texts to this list</p>
Neil Gaiman	<a href="#">Click Clack the Rattlebag</a> <a href="#">Don’t Ask Jack</a> <a href="#">Chivalry</a>	<p>@Tietzsche2 points out that Click Clack plays on Gothic tropes while @educatingrae and @Moonekev suggests interrogating the first two of these texts for how Gaiman creates his atmosphere.</p> <p>H/T @JenniferLCulver, @Moonekev, and @educatingrae for adding these texts to our list, and to @MaraVerse for suggesting this calendar of tales (audio files).</p>
Rick Moody	<a href="#">Boys</a>	<p>H/T @MatRyanELATeach for this text suggestion.</p> <p>*heads up: this story is a gut punch, but there is some language that might not be appropriate for all grades</p>
Tobias Wolff	<a href="#">Powder</a>	<p>Does the setting matter in this text? If no, why not? If so, how much?</p> <p>H/T @MatRyanELATeach, @HastyStories, and @Ultan_Mulqueen for this text suggestion.</p>
Nadine Gordimer	<a href="#">Loot</a>	<p>H/T @MatRyanELATeach for this text suggestion.</p>
Sandra Cisneros	<a href="#">Barbie-Q</a>	<p>This one might be great to pair with the longer “Barbie” by Gary Soto.</p> <p>H/T @NathanJLuce for this text suggestion</p>
Hernando Tellez	<a href="#">Lather and Nothing Else</a>	<p>H/T @katykauffman and @needmoarcoffee1 for this text suggestion!</p>
Jose Vasconcelos	<a href="#">The Boar Hunt</a>	<p>H/T @katykauffman for this suggestion!</p>
Saki (HH Munro)	<a href="#">The Open Window</a>	<p>H/T @MsVBLitCoach for this text!</p>
Kij Johnson	<a href="#">Ponies</a>	<p>H/T @carobinelli for this suggestion!</p>
Claire Wigfall	<a href="#">Where the Wasps Drowned</a>	<p>H/T @aldous_suzy and @stgeorgesgovpol for this text suggestion</p>
Carmen Maria Machado	<a href="#">Horror Story</a>	<p>What if the narrator didn’t slam the door shut?</p> <p>H/T @litandlife101 for this text and prompt suggestion</p>
Charles Johnson	<a href="#">A Soldier for the Crown</a>	<p>H/T JCooperNAFO for this text suggestion; they write that it’s useful for 2nd person POV and use of irony</p>
William Carlos Williams	<a href="#">The Use of Force</a>	<p>Should we trust this narrator?</p>

Ray Bradbury	<a href="#">The Veldt</a>	What important message(s) is Bradbury conveying and is it time-sensitive or timeless? Explain.  H/T @mardieteach, @fireballwex, and @dan_eisnor for this text suggestion! (This one's on the long side, but many people wrote in support of it... and clearly Bradbury has struck a chord with students.)
	<a href="#">The Whole Town's Sleeping</a>	A bit longer, this one taken on its own is striking for its unresolved conflict and atmosphere. (Though it does get some closure as part of <i>Dandelion Wine</i> .) Could make for a fun comparison with Joyce Carol Oates's (longer) "Where are You Going, Where Have you Been?"  H/T @moraggemma and @MissSloan4 for this text suggestion!
	<a href="#">All Summer in A Day</a>	H/T @BarbaraStans, @twinmomteach, and @DamascusHS_SDT for this text suggestion!
	<a href="#">There Will Come Soft Rains</a>	H/T @carobinelli and @LisaOlson25 for adding this text to our list!
	<a href="#">The Pedestrian</a>	H/T @hodge_miki for this one. Makes a great launch to <i>Fahrenheit 451</i> !
Mia Kuoto	<a href="#">War of the Clowns</a>	Do leaders shape our beliefs or do we select leaders to mirror or own  H/T @PastTenseOfDraw for the text and prompt suggestion
Ted Chiang	<a href="#">What's Expected of Us</a>	Does free will exist, or is it an illusion? How do you know? What's at stake? With any luck, they'll enjoy a minor existential crisis before the bell!  H/T @PGGalalis for suggesting this text and prompt!
Wunther Crue	<a href="#">Ordeal by Cheque</a>	Is there a narrative here? What is it?  H/T @Petoskey162 for suggesting this text
Marta Salinas	<a href="#">The Scholarship Jacket</a>	Q: (reflective) Think of a time in MS/HS and a specific item (of importance) that ties to that memory. What's the item? Why is it imp? What's the memory?  H/T @_missgroce for suggesting this text and prompt!
Jorge Luis Borges	<a href="#">The Witness</a>	This is almost a meditation more than it is a story. What's being "witnessed" here? Is the outlook hopeful or melancholic? OR What's the difference between the first and second paragraph? What effect does the shift have on the text?  H/T @JenniferLCulver for suggesting this text!
William Sleator	<a href="#">The Elevator</a>	H/T @merlotmonkey for this one!
John Cheever	<a href="#">Reunion</a>	H/T @EdenRitchie13 for suggesting this text!

Paul Jennings	<a href="#">Licked</a>	The author withholds information this text. Why? How would the story be different if he had not?  H/T @fireballwex for this text suggestion!
Raymond Carver	<a href="#">Little Things</a>	H/T @JoAnn_Gronholm for suggesting this text!
	<a href="#">Popular Mechanics</a>	Explain what's going on in that final line.  H/T @jason_catoire for the text and prompt!
	<a href="#">Why Don't You Dance?</a>	H/T @WilliamWGarland for this suggestion!
Terry Bisson	<a href="#">They're Made Out of Meat</a>	H/T @SnibberSays for suggesting this text! She has found it useful to help students consider who is centered in narratives.
Jayson Reynolds	<a href="#">The Ingredients</a>	How do we learn who the characters are? Why does this matter?  H/T @ireneteacher8, who suggested this text and prompt and notes that the text is on the long side (for this list) but doable if you teach a double period :)
H.P. Lovecraft	<a href="#">The Terrible Old Man</a>	How can first impressions be deceiving? What assumptions do we make about people? H/T @GreggorySteven1 for this text and prompt suggestion!  *note: if teaching this, you'll want to confront Lovecraft's xenophobia
Yann Martel	<a href="#">We Ate The Children Last</a>	H/T @JoAnn_Gronholm and @jason_catoire for suggesting this text!
Katherine Mansfield	<a href="#">The Fly</a>	H/T @Lucyloo722 for suggesting this story!
	<a href="#">Miss Brill</a>	H/T @Mznychka for suggesting this text!
Horacio Quiroga	<a href="#">The Feather Pillow</a>	H/T @csw4au for offering this story!
Margaret Atwood	<a href="#">Bread</a>	H/T @duffandkimchi for this text suggestion!
Amy Haejung	<a href="#">Maria</a>	H/T @CohenD for this one!
Junot Diaz	<a href="#">The Terror</a>	H/T @someteacher77 for suggesting this story!
Jessie Greengrass	<a href="#">An Account Of The Decline Of The Great Auk, According To One Who Saw It</a>	H/T @VoxangelicLa for this text!
Katherine Brush	<a href="#">Birthday Party</a>	A number of structure and language moves help create the mood and meaning of this text. Which stand out to you and what effect do they have?  H/T @MissMartinReads for this text suggestion!
Isaac Asimov	<a href="#">The Fun They Had</a>	H/T @MissMartinReads for this text suggestion!
E. Lily Yu	<a href="#">The Wretched and the Beautiful</a>	H/T @someteacher77 for suggesting this text!
Thomas King	<a href="#">Totem</a>	H/T @Mznychka for suggesting this story!
Alberto Alvaro Rios	<a href="#">The Secret Lion</a>	H/T @Mznychka for this text!

Brad Watson	<a href="#">Seeing Eye</a>	H/T @LisaRothstein5 for suggesting this story!
James Joyce	<a href="#">Eveline</a>	H/T @LisaRothstein5 for this one!
John Updike	<a href="#">A&amp;P</a>	H/T @LisaRothstein5 for suggesting this text!
John Collier	<a href="#">The Chaser</a>	H/T @LisaRothstein5 for offering this story!
O. Henry	<a href="#">The Gift of the Magi</a> <a href="#">The Skylight Room</a> <a href="#">After 20 years</a>	H/T @anandula who suggested these texts! Also suggested were “The Ransom of Red Chief” and “Last Leaf,” but these were slightly too long for this list!
	<a href="#">The Guilty Party</a>	H/T @twinmomteach for suggesting this story!
Rona Maynard	<a href="#">The Fan Club</a>	H/T @twinmomteach for this text suggestion!
Lindsay MacDonald	<a href="#">Moths</a>	H/T @DariceLMoore for this one. (cw: language, abusive relationship)
Lucy Corin	<a href="#">Miracles</a>	H/T @DariceLMoore for this text. Careful – it takes a turn!
Thomas Pierce	<a href="#">Tardy Man</a>	H/T @WilliamWGarland for this story!
Annie Proulx	<a href="#">55 Miles to the Gas Pump</a>	H/T @WilliamWGarland for this suggestion!
Annie Dillard	<a href="#">The Chase</a>	H/T @DevonBurger for this suggestion!
William McIlvanney	<a href="#">At the Bar</a>	H/T @TheWalnetons for this story!

Finally, @TweetsOhia, shared their own compendium, which can be found [here](#)! Apologies if I missed anyone’s submissions – there were a lot of stories to sift through (and enjoy!).

## Still here?

You’re a teacher after my own heart. If you’re looking for further resources:

- Here’s a [thread](#) I made of reader-friendly research I think teachers should know about
- Here’s [my blog](#) on some pedagogy/Englishy stuff
- Here’s [the first chapter](#) of *Love and Literacy* (my book – a multi-year labor of love; more info [here](#))

Feel free to reach out with suggestions, ideas, and questions! Visit [stevechiger.com](#) to find me.