








The Early 20th Century






By the 20th Century, the short story was a well-established literary form in the West, thanks to the influence of earlier writers like Edgar Allan Poe, Guy de Maupassant, and Anton Chekhov. The short story continued to flourish throughout the 20th Century due to the proliferation of popular magazines. Writers began to use the literary form of the short story to explore a variety of genres, including love stories, fantasy and horror stories, crime and mystery stories and science fiction.




Many short stories written in the early 20th Century reflect issues related to the Age of Industrialisation. During this time, a growing number of people left their farmlands and moved to the cities to work in factories. Some short stories feature the lives of immigrants, who worked hard and learned to adapt to a new language and culture in an unfamiliar environment. Major historical events like World War I, the Great Depression and World War II form the backdrop to many of the best short stories written in the first half of the 20th Century.

Here is a list of just some of the most frequently anthologised short story writers of the early 20th Century.

	Short story writers	Short story collections	Well-known short stories
1.	<p>M. R. James (1862-1936), British</p> <p>M. R. James was a medieval scholar most famous for his ghost stories. Unlike ghost stories written in the gothic tradition, James' stories had contemporary settings and were more realistic.</p> 	<p><i>Ghost Stories of an Antiquary</i> (1904)</p> <p><i>More Ghost Stories</i> (1911)</p> <p><i>A Warning to the Curious and Other Ghost Stories</i> (1925)</p> <p><i>The Collected Ghost Stories of M. R. James</i> (1931)</p>	<p>Number 13</p> <p>The Rose Garden</p> <p>A Warning to the Curious</p>
2.	<p>O. Henry, aka William Sydney Porter (1862-1910), American</p> <p>O. Henry is often considered the best short story writer of the early 20th Century. He became well known for his surprise endings, or ironic 'twists', at the end of his stories.</p> 	<p><i>The Four Million</i> (1906)</p> <p><i>O. Henry Selected Stories</i> (1993)</p>	<p>The Gift of the Magi</p> <p>The Last Leaf</p> <p>The Furnished Room</p>

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3.	<p>H. G. Wells (1866-1946), British</p> <p>H. G. Wells is best known for his science fiction novels, e.g. <i>The Time Machine</i> (1895). He also wrote a large number of short stories in the science fiction genre.</p> 	<p><i>The Stolen Bacillus and Other Incidents</i> (1895)</p> <p><i>Tales of Space and Time</i> (1899)</p> <p><i>The Country of the Blind and Other Stories</i> (1911)</p> <p><i>The Short Stories of H. G. Wells</i> (1927)</p>	<p>The Stolen Bacillus</p> <p>The Man Who Could Work Miracles</p> <p>The Country of the Blind</p>
4.	<p>Saki, aka H. H. Munro (1870-1916), British</p> <p>Many of Saki's stories are satires of society's conventions. He is sometimes compared to O. Henry, as his stories also contain surprise endings, or 'twists'.</p> 	<p><i>Beasts and Super-Beasts</i> (1914)</p> <p><i>The Short Stories of Saki</i> (1939)</p>	<p>The Mouse</p> <p>The Storyteller</p> <p>The Open Window</p>
5.	<p>W. Somerset Maugham (1874-1965), British</p> <p>Maugham /mɔːm/ is best known for his stories dealing with colonialism. His stories often feature British colonists stationed in the Far East.</p> 	<p><i>The Trembling of a Leaf</i> (1923)</p> <p><i>The Causarina Tree</i> (1926)</p> <p><i>The Complete Short Stories of W Somerset Maugham</i> (1951)</p>	<p>Rain</p> <p>Footsteps in the Jungle</p> <p>The Outstation</p>
6.	<p>Jack London (1876-1916), American</p> <p>London is well known for his novels, e.g. <i>The Call of the Wild</i> (1903), and his short stories, e.g. 'To Build a Fire' (1902, 1908).</p> 	<p><i>Moon-Face and Other Stories</i> (1903)</p> <p><i>Lost Face</i> (1910)</p> <p><i>The Complete Short Stories of Jack London</i> (1993)</p>	<p>Moon-Face</p> <p>All Gold Canyon</p> <p>To Build a Fire</p>
7.	<p>D. H. Lawrence (1885-1930), British</p> <p>D. H. Lawrence is best known for his novels, many of which explore the themes of love and relationships, e.g. <i>Sons and Lovers</i> (1913), <i>Women in Love</i> (1920), <i>Lady Chatterley's Lover</i> (1928). His early short stories, set in England during the years of World War I, explore similar themes.</p> 	<p><i>The Prussian Officer and Other Stories</i> (1914)</p> <p><i>England, My England and Other Stories</i> (1922)</p> <p><i>The Woman Who Rode Away and Other Stories</i> (1928)</p>	<p>Odour of Chrysanthemums</p> <p>The Horse Dealer's Daughter</p> <p>The Rocking-Horse Winner</p>

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8.	<p>Katherine Mansfield (1888-1923), New Zealander</p> <p>Mansfield grew up in colonial New Zealand. She is considered one of the best short story writers of her period. She was highly influenced by Russian writer Anton Chekhov.</p> 	<p><i>Bliss and Other Stories</i> (1917)</p> <p><i>The Garden Party and Other Stories</i> (1922)</p> <p><i>The Short Stories of Katherine Mansfield</i> (1937)</p>	<p>Bliss</p> <p>The Garden Party</p> <p>The Doll's House</p>
9.	<p>H. P. Lovecraft (1890-1937), American</p> <p>Lovecraft wrote horror, fantasy and science fiction stories. He is considered one of the most influential horror story writers of the 20th Century.</p> 	<p><i>The Call of Cthulhu and Other Weird Stories</i> (1999)</p> <p><i>The Thing on the Doorstep and Other Weird Stories</i> (2001)</p> <p><i>The Dreams in the Witch House and Other Weird Stories</i> (2005)</p>	<p>The Colour Out of Space</p> <p>The Thing on the Doorstep</p> <p>The Shadow Out of Time</p>
10.	<p>Agatha Christie (1890-1976), British</p> <p>Christie is best known for her crime novels, e.g. <i>Murder on the Orient Express</i> (1938). She also wrote plays, e.g. <i>The Mouse Trap</i> (1952), and collections of short stories. She is one of the best-selling authors of all time.</p> 	<p><i>Poirot Investigates</i> (1924)</p> <p><i>The Mysterious Mr Quin</i> (1930)</p> <p><i>Thirteen Problems</i> (1932)</p>	<p>The Adventure of the "Western Star"</p> <p>The Coming of Mr Quin</p> <p>The Tuesday Night Club</p>
11.	<p>James Thurber (1894-1961), American</p> <p>Thurber is best known for his cartoons, modern-day fables and short stories. His short stories are witty and humorous.</p> 	<p><i>Fables of Our Time and Famous Poems Illustrated</i> (1940)</p> <p><i>My World – And Welcome To It</i> (1942)</p> <p><i>The Thurber Carnival</i> (1945)</p>	<p>The Unicorn in the Garden</p> <p>The Secret Life of Walter Mitty</p> <p>The Catbird Seat</p>
12.	<p>F. Scott Fitzgerald (1896-1940), American</p> <p>Fitzgerald is considered one of the greatest writers of the 20th Century. He is most famous for his novel <i>The Great Gatsby</i> (1925). He wrote many short stories set in the 1920s 'Jazz Age'.</p> 	<p><i>Tales of the Jazz Age</i> (1922)</p> <p><i>All the Sad Young Men</i> (1926)</p> <p><i>Taps at Reveille</i> (1935)</p>	<p>The Curious Case of Benjamin Button</p> <p>Winter Dreams</p> <p>Babylon Revisited</p>

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13.	<p>William Faulkner (1897-1962), American</p> <p>Faulkner is best known for his novels, e.g. <i>The Sound and the Fury</i> (1929). His novels and short stories are set in the American South. His style is characterised by 'stream of consciousness' writing. </p>	<p><i>These 13</i> (1931)</p> <p><i>Collected Stories</i> (1951)</p>	<p>A Rose for Emily</p> <p>Red Leaves</p> <p>That Evening Sun</p>
14.	<p>Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961), American</p> <p>Hemingway began his career as a short story writer, but is best known for his novels, e.g. <i>A Farewell to Arms</i> (1929), and his novella <i>The Old Man and the Sea</i> (1952). His sparse writing style is characterised by understatement. </p>	<p><i>In Our Time</i> (1924)</p> <p><i>The Fifth Column and the First Forty-Nine Stories</i> (1938)</p>	<p>The Snows of Kilimanjaro</p> <p>Old Man at the Bridge</p> <p>Soldier's Home</p>
15.	<p>John Steinbeck (1902-1968), American</p> <p>Steinbeck is best known for his novel <i>The Grapes of Wrath</i> (1939) and his novella <i>Of Mice and Men</i> (1937), both set during the Great Depression. The stories in <i>The Long Valley</i> (1938) are all set in Salinas, California, where  Steinbeck was born.</p>	<p><i>The Long Valley</i> (1938)</p>	<p>The Chrysanthemums</p> <p>The Red Pony</p> <p>The Murder</p>

Many of these writers' short stories are available in simplified readers (e.g. Macmillan Readers, Oxford Bookworms Library, Penguin Longman Readers).