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Until the day it didnt The mine is called Kalgara Deep, carved beneath the sun-blasted hills of Western Australia, three hours from the nearest seav, and six from anything you could call a town. Its not on any tourist map. Just a dot behind a red dirt road lined with scrub and... 112 likes 86 Read story Short stories that are small, but they are mighty! With the weight of a novel stripped away, great short stories strike directly at the heart of their topics. Often maligned as the novels poor cousin, the short story medium has produced some of the most beloved works of fiction. From the early-accurate predictions of Ray Bradbury to the spine-chilling thrills of Stephen King and the wildly imaginative worlds of N.K. Jemison, some of the best authors in the business have made their mark writing short stories.Whether the stories are sweeping explorations of the human condition, or slices of life vignettes that move us to tears, short fiction has the power to dazzle from first word to last.Who writes Reedsys short stories?Here at Reedsys, we're looking to foster the next generation of beloved authors. To that end, we've been running a weekly writing contest for over six years and these short stories are the thousands of entries we've received over that time. Our writers come to the contest from all experience levels to hone their skills through consistent practice and friendly feedback. Some of them have even gone on to write and publish novels based on their short story submissions!Discover short stories of all genres and subjectsCentered around themed writing prompts, these short stories range across all forms, genres, and topics of interest. Simply filter by the genre that appeals you most, and discover thousands of stories from promising new writers around the world.Maybe you want to read something new, but dont want to choose a genre? Weve gathered our favorite entries in our literary magazine, Prompted. Each issue is packed with prize-winning stories that have been introduced and edited by a guest editor. Grab a free copy of our first issue here. Who knows, you could even discover your next favorite author before they even hit the big time!(And if youre a writer, consider heading over and entering the short story contest yourself! You may just walk away with the weekly cash prize, plus the chance to appear in Prompted.) If you are on the lookout for great storytelling but dont want to commit to a full-length novel, then short story collections are the answer. Whether its just before bed, during your commute, or waiting to see your doctor, small chunks of time are perfect for reading short stories.Here we have gathered thirty-one of the best short stories and collections, from all sorts of backgrounds and sources, to help you grow your To Be Read pile. For your convenience, we've divided this post into two parts: 1. the ten best free short stories to read right now, and 2. best short story collections. Feel free to jump to the section that you prefer!If you're feeling overwhelmed by the number of great short stories out there, you can also take our 30-second quiz below to narrow it down quickly and get a personalized short story recommendation Which short story should you read next? Discover the perfect short story for you. Takes 30 seconds! Free Short Stories to Read Right NowThese individual short stories are the best of the best and the even better news is that they're available for free online for you to peruse. From classics published in the 1900s to a short story that exploded in late 2017, here are ten of the greatest free short stories for you to read. 1. Lamb to the Slaughter by Roald DahlWhile not exactly a philosophical or potical tale like our first two examples, this twisty short story from Dahl does delve into some shady moral territory. We are introduced to Mary Maloney: a loving wife and dedicated homemaker. In just a few short paragraphs describing how she welcomes her husband home, Dahl makes us sympathize with Mary before a rash act turns her life upside down and takes the reader with her on a dark journey.For those who havent read it, we wont spoil the rest. However, its safe to say that Dahl serves up a fiendish twist on a platter.2. The Lottery by Shirley JacksonA perennial feature in many a high school syllabus, Shirley Jacksons best-known short story clinically details an unusual ritual that takes place in a small town. Theres not exactly a lot of plot to spoil in The Lottery but within a few short pages, Jackson manages to represent the mob mentality that can drive reasonable people to commit heinous acts.3. How to Become a Writer by Lorrie MooreTold in the second person point of view, this story from Moores debut anthology Self-Help takes an honest look at the inner life of a struggling artist. Through the use of an unusual POV, the author manages to turn her reader into a confidante making it abundantly clear that the you the narrator is speaking about is actually herself.This story is a standout, but the entire collection is well worth a read for its insight, humor, and disregard for literary norms.4. Cat Person by Kristen RoupenianIn the Social Media Age, no short story has gone viral the way this New Yorker contribution from Roupenian has. Arriving at the height of #MeToo, it begins with 20-year-old Margot embarking on the early stages of flirtation with an older man, Robert. As she gets to know more about this man (as well as filling in the gaps with her imagination), the power dynamic in their relationship starts to fluctuate.Lauded for its portrayal of Margots inner life and the fears many modern women face when it comes to dating, it also has its fair share of detractors many are critical of the central character, some are downright outraged by the storys success. Still, this story undeniably struck a chord with the reading public, and will likely remain relevant for some time.5. Cathedral by Raymond CarverFirst published in The Atlantic Monthly in 1981, Cathedral is today known as one of Raymond Carvers finest works. When it opens, we meet a narrator whose wife is expecting a visit from an old friend, a blind man. Dissatisfied and distrusting of people not like him, our narrator struggles to connect until the blind man asks him to describe a cathedral to him.Cathedral is one of Carvers own personal favorites, and deservedly so. His characteristic minimalist style is devastating as the narrator builds up to a shattering moment of emotional truth an ultimate reminder that no-one else can capture the quiet sadness of working-class people like him.6. A Good Man Is Hard to Find by Flannery OConnorInnocuously titled, A Good Man Is Hard to Find is nevertheless Flannery OConnors bleakest and most famous work. It begins unassumingly with a Southern family whos planning to go on a road trip. Yet the journey is rudely interrupted when their car overturns on an abandoned dirt road and they are met by an enigmatic group of three men, coming up over the far hill.This short story inspired some strong reactions from the public upon publication and the conversation continues today as to its frank depiction of the nature of good and evil. Again, we wont spoil anything for you, except to say that A Good Man Is Hard to Find is well worth your time.7. Symbols and Signs by Vladimir NabokovThe famous author of Lolita wrote Signs and Symbols in 1948. Its premise is seemingly simple: an elderly couple visits their mentally ill son in the sanatorium in America. Yet their background and trials come into sharp focus as the story develops, until an explosive ending disrupts everyones peace of mind.As you might expect, the somber Symbols and Signs diverges sharply from Lolita in terms of both tone and subject but its ending will keep you awake at night thinking about its implications.8. Sticks by George SaundersNot so much a short story as it is flash fiction, Sticks is written from the perspective of a young man whose father has an unusual habit: dressing up a crucifix thats built of out a metal pole in the yard. One of Americas greatest living short story writers, George Saunders explained: "For two years I'd been driving past a house like the one in the story, imagining the owner as a man more joyful and self-possessed and less self-conscious than myself. Then one day I got sick of him and invented his opposite, and there was the story."The result is a masterful piece of fiction that builds something out of seemingly nothing all in the space of only two paragraphs.9. The Veldt by Ray BradburyIf theres anyone who you can trust to deliver thought-provoking, terrifying science fiction on the regular, its Ray Bradbury. In The Veldt, George and Lydia Hadley have bought an automated house that comes with a nurse, or a virtual reality room. Worried about the nurseys effect on the kids, George and Lydia think about turning off the nurse but the problem is that their children are obsessed with it.As an ominously prescient prediction of the downside of technology, The Veldt is a short and shining example of how Ray Bradbury was an author before his time.10. Flowers for Algernon by Daniel KeyesIn this classic short story, we are privy to the journals of Charlie Gordon, a cleaner with an IQ of 68. ("I really want to learn I want it more even then pepul who are smarter even then me. All my life I wantid to be smart and not dumb.) Charlies luck changes when he is selected for an experiment that purports to turn him into a genius but everything that goes up must come down in the end.Flowers for Algernon won the Hugo Award in 1960 for its groundbreaking presentation. Heartbreaking and rich with subtle poignance, it is likely to remain a staple for centuries to come.Best Short Story Collections to DevourIf you'd like many short stories at your fingertips all at once, short story collections are where you should look. Here, we've collected 21 of the best short story collections along with the standout story in each volume. 11. A Manual for Cleaning Women by Lucia Berlin Although published only a couple of years ago, the 43 short stories in this posthumous collection were written throughout Berlins entire life. Combining humor, grit, wit, and melancholy, her vibrant short stories follow a series of women in different occupations from cleaning women to ER nurses all struggling to survive. Standout Story: A Manual for Cleaning Women 12. Blow-up and Other Stories by Julio Cortzar First published in 1967 under the title End of the Game and Other Stories, this collection includes fifteen short stories from the Argentine author Julio Cortzar. In it, Cortzar showcases his masterful use of language to tell vivid (if often bizarre) stories that seem to not make much sense at least not at first glance.Standout Story: House Taken Over 13. Drifting House by Krys Lee Published in 2012, this short story collection by Krys Lee offers a poignant glimpse into the Korean immigrant experience. Crossing decades and continents, the stories show children and adults alike as they face their pasts and fight for survival in less than ideal conditions.Standout Story: Drifting House 14. Dubliners by James Joyce If youve ever wondered what life was like in Ireland at the beginning of the 20th century, then look no further. The fifteen short stories in this collection form a vivid image of traditional Irish middle-class life at the height of Irish nationalism, and these middle-class citizens desperate search for identity. Published in 1914, Dubliners was the first outing for several characters who eventually make their way into Ulysses, Joyces magnum opus. Standout Story: The Dead 15. Everything's Eventual: 14 Dark Tales by Stephen King Featuring some truly dark and horrific denouements, this short story collection includes three award-winning stories, one of which won the O. Henry Award for best short story of the year in 1996. Each story also includes personal commentary by King himself!Standout Story: Riding the Bullet 16. Ficciones by Jorge Luis Borges Written between 1941 and 1956, Ficciones compiles the most popular short stories of Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges. First translated into English in 1962, the collection is divided into two parts and contains seventeen different stories full of labyrinths (both literal and metaphorical), philosophical issues, and whole universes where reality blends with myth, legend, history, and fantasy to the point that its nearly impossible to tell whats real and whats not.Standout Story: The Garden of Forking Paths 17. Florida by Lauren Groff With stories spanning towns and even centuries, Florida features a that is none other than that sultry mistress, the Sunshine State. Swamps, hurricanes, snakes, gators, unyielding heat, and permanent swarms of bugs intertwine with the lives of unsuspecting humans in tales of survival, motherhood, and abandonment with a vivid sense of place that is both ingenious and relevant.Standout Story: Above and Below 18. Fragile Things: Short Fictions and Wonders by Neil Gaiman Published in 2006, this collection includes over 30 short stories, poems, and novellas full of Gaimans magical and imaginative creations. It won the Locus Award in 2007 for Best Collection and several of the individual stories have also won the Locus and Hugo Awards.Standout Story: The Flints of Memory Lane 19. Kiss Kiss by Roald Dahl If youre expecting Matilda or Willy Wonka sequels, then think again. While it may be the same author, thats where the similarities end; the twelve stories in this collection are geared toward a much more adult audience, full of sinister undertones and packed with revenge, lies, death, and the darker sides of human nature. Standout Story: The Pig 20. Men Without Women by Haruki Murakami From the author of Norwegian Wood comes this recent collection of seven stories that deal with loss and loneliness. These melancholic tales focus primarily on despairing men who are left to cope with the loss of their loved ones.Standout Story: Samsa in Love 21. Nine Stories by J.D. Salinger Chances are youve heard of Salingers The Catcher in the Rye, but did you know that he also wrote short stories? In this collection youll find (surprise!) nine stories that showcase Salingers brilliant writing the same writing that made his magnum opus a classic of American literature.Standout Story: For Esme - With Love and Squalor 22. Rashmon and Seventeen Other Stories by Ryunosuke Akutagawa With one of the most prestigious Japanese literary prizes named after him, there are few who can match Akutagawas legacy when it comes to short stories. This collection includes eighteen stories that range from traditional tales of Samurai and Shoguns to autobiographical accounts, all of which combine the humor, cynicism, and rich imagery that characterize Akutagawas writing.Standout Story: In a Bamboo Grove 23. Runaway by Alice Munro This award-winning collection features eight stories by Canadian author Alice Munro. With straightforward and accessible prose, Munro tells stories of women and their relationships with strong themes of love, friendship, and motherhood, among others. Aply named, the idea of running away is another theme found throughout these stories.Standout Story: Runaway 24. Strange Pilgrims by Gabriel Garca Mrquez Written between 1976 and 1982, the twelve stories in this collection have one theme that joins them: Latin Americans adrift in Europe. Using the magical realism that characterizes most of his writing, Garca Mrquez, a giant in Latin literature, explores the feelings of melancholy, wonder, sorrow, and ambition that define the migrant experience.Standout Story: The Trail of Your Blood in the Snow 25. The Collected Stories by Grace Paley This 1994 National Book Award finalist brings together stories from The Little Disturbances of Man, Enormous Changes at the Last Minutes, and Later the Same Day, three previous collections by Paley. With changing points of view and a poignant voice, this collection features character-driven stories that intertwine humor with social and political issues as we follow the lives and relationships of people living in the Bronx.Standout Story: A Man Told Me the Story of His Life 26. The Complete Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway by Ernest Hemingway This posthumous collection is divided into three parts and includes all seventy of Hemingways short stories definitely a treat for all short story lovers out there. The first part contains all the stories from First Forty-Nine Stories. The second one contains stories published in other books, magazines, or independently throughout the authors life. The third one is a collection of seven previously unpublished stories, some of which are unfinished or are excerpts. In his short fiction, Hemingway paints a vivid image of human nature though happiness and loss that will keep readers turning pages.Standout Story: Hills Like White Elephants 27. The Complete Stories by Flannery OConnor Published posthumously in 1972, OConnors Complete Stories actually won the National Book Award that same year. This collection includes 31stories, twelve of which had never been included in any of OConnors previous collections. They are told from the perspective of characters from the American South, as they deal with social issues like racism, religious hypocrisy, gender roles, and more.Standout Story: A Good Man is Hard to Find 28. The Essential Tales of Chekhov by Anton Chekhov With a rich narrative that provides social commentary and depicts frequent class conflicts, this volume collects twenty of the two hundred short stories that Chekhov wrote throughout his short life. All the stories in the collection were written between 1886 and 1899 the authors most fruitful years and although they are over one hundred years old today, they capture life in such a way that still feel relevant and fresh.Standout Story: The Lady with the Dog 29. The Refugees by Viet Thanh Nguyen From Pulitzer Prize winner Thank Nguyen comes this collection of eight short stories that are all about immigration, in particular that of Vietnamese refugees who have moved to the US. However, instead of describing the hardships of their trips, Nguyen focuses on the lives theyve established in their new country. Each story demonstrates a unique immigrant experience as characters move between cultures, countries, relationships, memories, and emotions.Standout Story: Id Love You to Want Me 30. The Thing Around Your Neck by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie This collection of twelve short stories by award-winning writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie takes place in Nigeria, the authors birthplace, as well as the United States. The stories showcase the lives of men, women, and children who have either immigrated to the U.S. or have family who have done so, and how their experiences have shaped their individual relationships along the way.Standout Story: The Thing Around Your Neck 31. The Youngest Doll by Rosario Ferr Rosario Ferre is one of the most influential women writers in the Spanish language. The sixteen stories in this collection display a masterful use of language and fertile imagination, while criticizing and deconstructing the roles of hispanic women in a very traditional and patriarchal society. Ferrs stories are set in Puerto Rico, her native country, and the author herself translated her own works.Standout Story: When Women Love Men***Ready to write your own short story? Check out these short story ideas for all your inspiration needs.

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