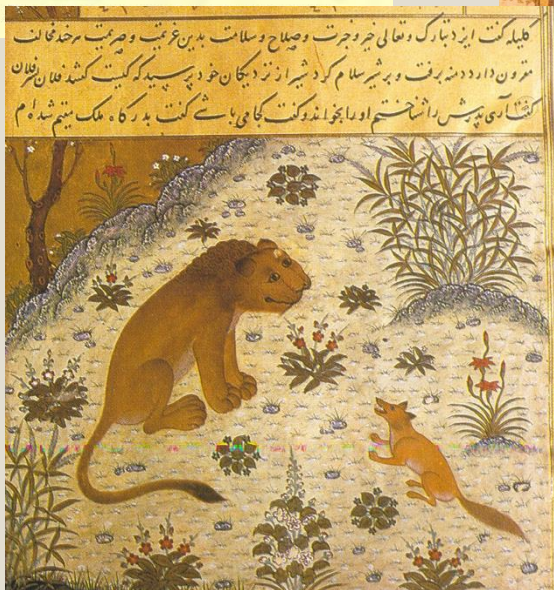
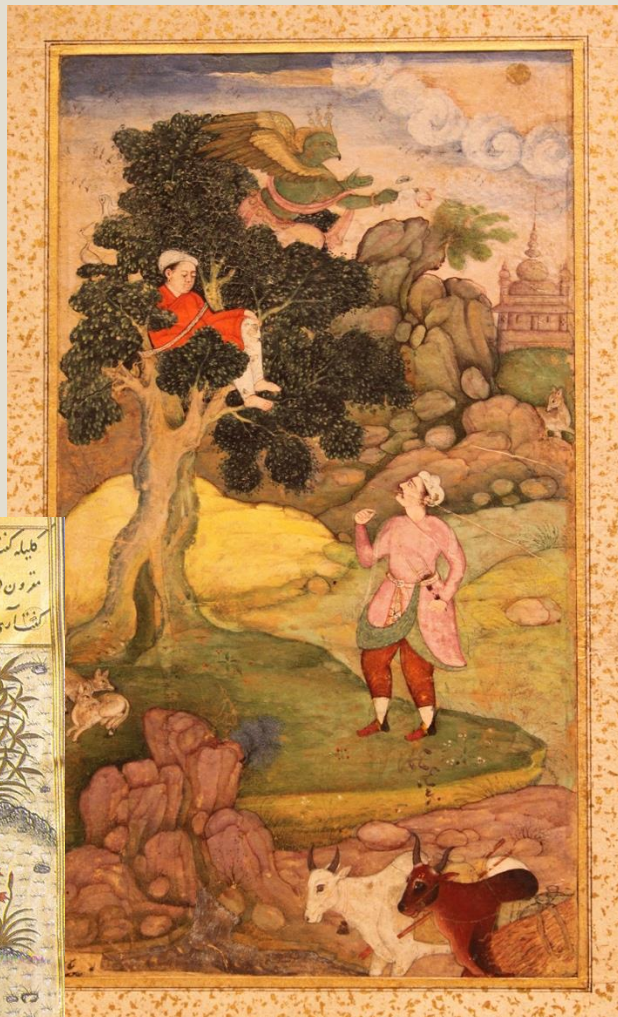




CHARACTERISTICS OF A SHORT STORY

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- Like the novel **genre**, short stories too have **protagonists**. They have **plots** and are narrated from at least one **point of view**.
- Some Attempts at Classification:
 - “Story of Incident” – “course and outcome of events” (Abrams 286)
 - LFMH: premise, quest, and how that turns out
 - LTS: fabular quality, tale-like quality – repetition, central motif repeats
 - “Story of Character” – “state of mind and motivation,” “psychological and moral qualities” of the protagonist (ibid.).
- Some stories have a “balance of interest between external action and character.”
- These are easy and convenient divisions – literature is not a science because it is based on human expression and creativity, and humans (and artists!) are complicated and contradictory in their own respective ways.

Basics

- Magnitude or scale of the short story determines its shape and author's choices.
- Different narrative strategies of the short story:
 - Limited number of characters; “cannot afford the space for the leisurely analysis and sustained development of character” (Abrams 286);
 - Social milieu is not as dense and detailed;
 - Setting is minimal;

Key Differences

- Conflict itself may be longer, but the writer of short stories keeps complications down, resolution of conflict is swift.
- “The central incident is often selected to manifest as much as possible of the protagonist's life and character, and the details are devised to carry maximum import for the development of the plot. This sparseness in the narrative often gives the artistry in a good short story higher visibility than the artistry in the more capacious and loosely structured novel” (286-7).

Key Differences

A yacht race!
A yacht race!

- John Barth on Leo Tolstoy's nightmare about the yacht race – *War and Peace* (1872)

A yacht race!
A yacht race!

“Whatever the truth of the yacht-race story, it certainly sounds to me like the bad dream of a novelist, not a short story writer. That the genre of the novel tends toward inclusion, that of the short story toward exclusion, goes without saying” (Barth 26).

A yacht race!
A yacht race!

- Novelists try to see how much they can leave in, and short story writers try to see how much they can leave out →
Central Tenet of the Short Story.

A yacht race!
A yacht race!



R.K. Narayan (1906-2001)

- Creator of the fictional south Indian town of Malgudi
- Major writer of early Indian English literature
- *Swami and Friends* (1935); *Malgudi Days* (1942); *Waiting for the Mahatma* (1955); *The Guide* (1958)



R.K. Narayan (1906-2001)

- Humour, rendering human psychology and human nature into words, compression (and other characteristics of the traditional short story genre – Narayan's work offers a good study of the traditional short story)



R.K. Narayan (1906-2001)

- Middle-class life and characters (wrote about what he knew)
- Usually has a detached narrator, above the events, who does not offer an opinion or analysis, just reports and describes. Makes this more authentic and stimulating and reflective for the reader, who arrives at their own conclusion.

Important Characteristics of a Short Story

Compression

Implicativeness

Rendition

Precise observation

- Compression – condensing a long duration of time or experience.

Important Characteristics of a Short Story

- Compression – condensing a long duration of time or experience.

“Lentina and Babu made frequent visits to the new ground” (Ao 14).

“Once in a while she would tell Babu ...” (ibid.).

“Lentina survived the fierce winter and one clear February morning she rang her bell peremptorily” (15).

“He thought about it for many nights ...” (16).

“By the time the new year came ...” (17).

Important Characteristics of a Short Story

Implicativeness – the avoidance of repetition by implied context, previously provided.

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- “At home his wife served him with a sullen face. He knew she was still angry with him for his remark of the morning. Two casualties for today, Sekhar said to himself. If I practise it for a week, I don’t think I shall have a single friend left” (76).

Important Characteristics of a Short Story

- Rendition, as opposed to mere assertion (showing, instead of telling)

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- Rendition, as opposed to mere assertion (showing, instead of telling)
- ““Oh, I’ve reconsidered it. I must positively have them here tomorrow ...’ A hundred papers in a day! That meant all night’s sitting up! ‘Give me a couple of days, sir ...’
‘No. I must have them tomorrow morning. And remember, every paper must be thoroughly scrutinized’” (76).
- “The incense sticks burnt low” (75).

Important Characteristics of a Short Story

- Precise Observation

Important Characteristics of a Short Story

- Precise observation
- “At home the headmaster proved very ingratiating. He sat Sekhar on a red silk carpet, set before him several dishes of delicacies, and fussed over him as if he were a son-in-law of the house” (74).

Important Characteristics of a Short Story

- **Compression**
- **Implicativeness**
- **Rendition**
- **Precise observation**
- However, these are not the only literary qualities of the short story. Qualities change over a period of time, as different influences and events condition and shape literature.
- So the aesthetic values of a given genre do not remain the same for all time. Artists always push boundaries and see how far they can stretch without breaking. And frequently, they break boundaries and create new ways of writing and telling stories.

Important Characteristics of a Short Story

- Bathos of “Like the Sun”
- Title
- “Truth, he reflected, required as much strength to give as to receive” (75).
- Harischandra
- What do you think of Sekhar’s quest to practice Truth?

- One-sentence short story:
 - “Frame Tale”: Once upon a time, there was a story that began.
- Frame narrative from the frame tale (nested tales):
 - Seven degrees of narrative embeddedness: tale within a tale within a tale within a tale within a tale within a tale!
 - “their concentric plots were rigged for sequential climax-triggering from the inmost out” (Barth 38).

Barth's Postmodern Experiments with Short Story

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