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## Shorter Books are Better

Why are only tomes considered books?



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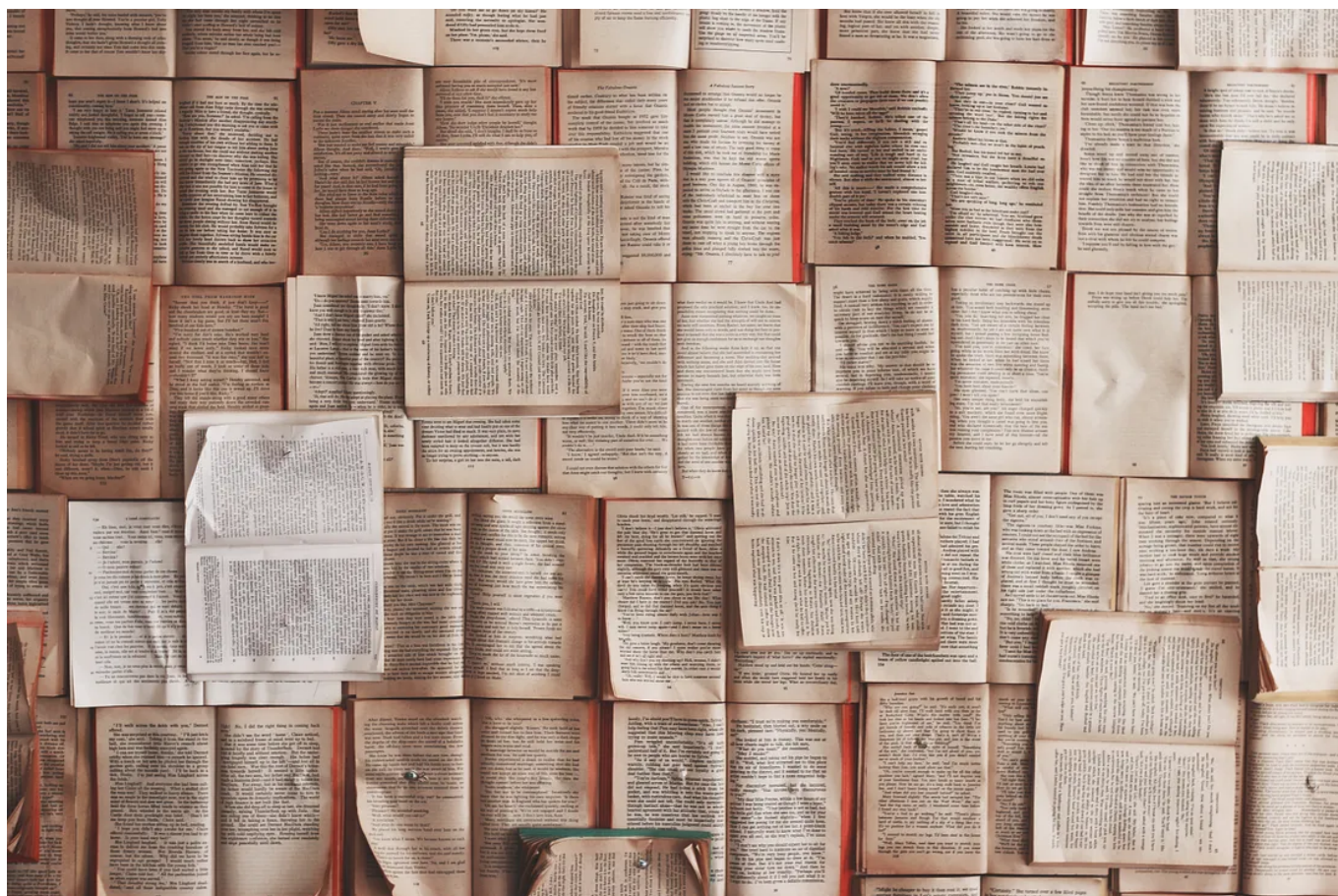


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Books have a certain heft to them when you pick them up. The thickness of them tells you that this world is rich and full of life. Buying the book and taking it home, the

excitement is palpable as you burn through the first 100 pages.

Then you hit the subplot that is supposed to help keep the action going but it falls flat. Then you find the author is showing off how cool their character is to you. Then there's a romance angle that feels awkward and out of place like a sex scene in a movie and you're with your dad at the theater. It is then a question pops up in your mind and asks, "Why am I reading this?" Everyone has read a book like this and every reader has that book unfinished on their shelf. Its spine creating shame in their heart as they spent \$25.00 on a promise that did not deliver.

This is why libraries rule.

What the average reader is probably not seeing is that the writer had a tight narrative that was razor-sharp, but their agent or their publisher said they needed a certain word count to make their book a 'real book.' Padding is added in the form of the previously mentioned problems readers run into in their books. Sometimes these notes will create an awesome book, but it can also make a big, fat, stinker.

This is because the book world has it in its brain that you, the reader, want a certain sized book on your bedside table that feels justifiable for them to charge a specific price point. Making books a specific size to meet some mythical word count is a sales-driven choice because books used to be all sorts of lengths and they were still called books. Books like:

- The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe- 36,363
- Fahrenheit 451- 46,118
- The Great Gatsby- 47,094
- The Outsiders- 48,523
- Slaughter-House 5- 49,459
- Lord of the Flies- 59,900

These books would be classified as novellas if they were published today with *Lord of the Flies* being the longest at nearly 60,000 words. If bigger doesn't always mean better then why did smaller books vanish from the publishing landscape? Why are shorter books, novellas, seen as only being good for marketing freebies and tie-ins?

**We don't need 300 pages to tell a 140-page story.**

I don't know who started this, but dammit all, I am going to finish it. More often than not I am bailing on a book because the story its telling can clearly be done in a half the amount of time than what I am enduring. It is a cardinal sin to waste readers' time because if they get burned by fat books that are big for the sake of it then they will no longer return to books.

The average person reads maybe a book a year. If they get burned by picking up one of these *meh* titles and then realizing it is meh they may not return to a book for years. This is bad for all of us since that's one less person reading a book over anything else they can do with their spare time.

In an age where you can play a video game anywhere, on the beach, by the pool, on the plane, spaces once dominated by books, then why do you want to give potential readers the out of, "Eh, I've been burned too many times by books recently. Going to play Clash of Clans instead."

Who made it acceptable to have only big, bulky novels be what is primarily on the bookshelves in most major retailers?

But I have the more contrarian question to ask:

## **Why are shorter books better?**

This is my opinion, but it's an opinion founded on experience from being a bookseller for 5 years, a dyslexic, and a parent.

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those books are usually really large.

And that's the other part, shorter books are usually more taught. They don't have the fat of extra plotlines or characters weighing them down. They are lean and tell the story they want to tell and aren't having to create filler so they qualify for some arbitrary marketing requirement.

Shorter books also allow people to fit reading into their lives. A spot that is growing increasingly shorter as technology begins to wiggle into every nook and cranny of our day.

It's like this, you get home from your 8-hour shift. You eat dinner, talk to your family, put the kids to bed (This will take hours), and when you finally have time to yourself would you rather read Stephen King or binge-watch your favorite tv show that is now on streaming?

More than likely you're going to take the streaming over the reading. It's the modern world and that's why you still haven't finished *Under the Dome* yet.

I'll tell ya though, after reading a few books (novellas), I found myself feeling good. Not only because I felt like I did something with my time rather than just watch something, but also because they had a low barrier to entry. They didn't scream, "I am going to take weeks to read!" when I looked at them on the shelf. When I started reading them I found they were a perfect size to scratch that itch in my brain.

If you're wanting to read but find massive tomes challenging, I highly recommend checking out novellas and shorter books. Here are a few to start with:

- All Systems Red
- Binti
- This Is How You Lose The Time War
- The Wild Robot

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