

Modern short fiction: stories and quotes



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The Chrysanthemums-Takes place in the Salinas Valley, California, where Steinbeck was born

-Simple sentences and understated vocabulary are packed with meaning

-Almost entirely dialogue

-The readers get to imagine a future for the protagonist

-Themes of Women's Role, Isolation, and Dissatisfaction in Marriage

-Awkward sexual tension between protagonist and visitor
 Summary: The Chrysanthemums
 Elisa Allen is approached by a traveler while working on her garden. The visitor is very masculine and flirty. He is a tinker who travels across the country. Elisa gives the man flowers to take, which he throws out just up the road. Henry, Elisa's husband, takes her to dinner. Elisa realizes how unsatisfied she is and begins crying as the story ends. Elisa

Allen
 Protagonist in " The Chrysanthemums"
 " Look. I know a lady down the road a

piece, has got the nicest garden you ever seen. Got nearly every kind of flower but no chrysanthemums." Tinker to Elisa in " The Chrysanthemums"
 " It would be a lonely life for a woman, ma'am, and a scary life, too." Tinker to

Elisa in " The Chrysanthemums" Sweat-Takes place in Eatonville

-Attention to small town details, local color and dialect

-Follows the life of Delia Jones and her husband, Sykes

-Themes of gender discrimination, marriage, abuse, and faith
 Summary:

Sweat
 Delia Jones, is a washwoman and her husband, Sykes, has disappeared with her horse and cart. Sykes comes home and pretends that a snake is on Delia's shoulder. He treats her like dirt and is sleeping with another woman by the name of Bertha, Delia vows not to let her no-good hubby bring her down. Most of the men in town dislike Sykes—they talk about hanging him,

how much of a womanizer he is, and a bunch of other stuff. Sykes brings a rattlesnake home. Delia asks Sykes to kill it, but of course he won't. One day, the snake escapes and Delia flees the house. Sykes comes home and the snake strikes him with a fatal bite. Delia watches and listens to him suffer, waiting patiently for him to die. Delia Jones

Protagonist of "Sweat" "There's plenty men dat takes a wife lak dey do a joint uh sugar-cane. It's round, juicy an' sweet when dey gits it." Joe Clarke in "Sweat" A Worn Path-"The Atlantic Monthly" first published the story

- short story about an elderly African-American woman who undertakes a familiar journey on a road in a rural area to acquire medicine for her grandson

-emphasizes racial and economic inequalities in the Deep South during the Depression

Summary: A Worn Path An old woman named Phoenix Jackson is walking through the woods into town. On her way she encounters many obstacles, including thorny bushes, barbed wire, and a large dog, among others. She meets a hunter, pocketing a nickel that he drops, and a lady who ties her shoes. Her reason for going to Natchez is to pick up a supply of medicine for her grandson, who accidentally swallowed lye a few years before. She tells the nurse in the hospital that the damage to his throat never fully heals, and every so often his throat will begin to swell shut. It is Old Phoenix's love for her grandson that causes her to face the trial of the journey to town, every time it is necessary, with no questions asked."

Doesn't the gun scare you?" he said, still pointing it.

"No, sir, I seen plenty go off closer by, in my day, and for less than what I done," she said, holding utterly still.

A man Phoenix encounters to Phoenix; "A Worn Path" Phoenix Jackson;
NatchezThe old woman in "A Worn Path" and the city she is traveling toMy
Life with the Wave-Surrealist prose poem

-Uses elements of parable, of the surreal, and of the fantastic to convey realistic feelings of lovers.

-Many qualities the narrator describes in the wave represent those of a woman in love, moved by turbulent passions and ever-changing moods.

Summary: My Life with the WaveA man, while at the beach, is seduced by an ocean wave, which insists on following him home to Mexico City. The man and the wave have a passionate, turbulent, love affair, in which the wave is both adoring and demanding. Because she is lonely, he brings her a school of fish to swim in her waters; but, when he becomes enraged with jealousy of her attentions to the fish, he tries to attack them, and the wave nearly drowns him. After that, his love for the wave turns to "fear and hate." To get away from her, he leaves home for a month. When he returns, he finds that the winter weather has turned the wave into "a statue of ice." With cold malice, he sells the frozen wave to a friend of his, a waiter at a restaurant, who chops the ice into small pieces to be used for cooling drinks. A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings-one of the clearest (and briefest) examples of magical realism

-An angel lands in Pelayo and Elisenda's yardSummary: A Very Old Man with Enormous WingsPelayo and his wife Elisenda, who find an old man with wings in their courtyard after killing crabs in a rainstorm. Pelayo gets his wife, and they try to communicate with him unsuccessfully. They eventually get their neighbor woman, who informs them that the old man is an angel. She tells them that it was on its way for their sick child.

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They put the angel in the chicken coop, and during the middle of the night their child's fever breaks. They decide to let him go, but when they return to the courtyard at dawn the entire community has arrived to see the angel. Father Gonzaga soon arrives, declaring that the old man is a fake. He promises to get the real truth from the higher courts of the church. The news of the angel spreads like wildfire, and the courtyard soon resembles a marketplace. Elisenda then has the idea of charging a 5 cent admission fee for seeing the angel; they are soon rich. Rome takes it time deciding on whether the old man is an angel, and while waiting for their verdict, Father Gonzaga works desperately to restrain the crowd.

The crowd leaves on its own, however, when a carnival boasting a Spider-Girl arrives in town. Spectators are allowed to question her, and she tells them how she was turned into a tarantula one night for disobeying her parents. This appeals to the masses more than an old winged man who ignores the people around him. Thus, the curious crowds soon leave the angel for the spider, leaving Pelayo's courtyard deserted.

Pelayo and Elisenda build a mansion with all the money they have accumulated. They neglect the angel and prevent their child from getting too close to the chicken coop. He soon becomes a part of their life, and they no longer fear him. The child visits him often. After a while the chicken coop breaks, and they allow him to move around their house, although it causes Elisenda much distress. He gets increasingly frail and sickly, and they fear that he will die. He recovers, however, and one day Elisenda watches him fly away, to her great relief.

" His only supernatural virtue seemed to be patience. Especially during the first days, when the hens pecked at him, searching for the stellar parasites that proliferated in his wings, and the cripples pulled out feathers to touch their defective parts with, and even the most merciful threw stones at him, trying to get him to rise so they could see him standing." Narrator; " A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings" The Handsomest Drowned Man in the World- Tells the tale of a small, coastal fishing village (presumably in Latin America) interrupted by the arrival of a dead body washed up by the waves

-Theme of Remembrance and Masculinity

-Another example of Magical Realism

-The story explores what it means to be " great"

-This story explores the blurring between myth/reality

Summary: The Handsomest Drowned Man in the World [http://www. shmoop.](http://www.shmoop.com/handsomest-drowned-man/summary.html)

[com/handsomest-drowned-man/summary. html](http://www.shmoop.com/handsomest-drowned-man/summary.html) Esteban What did the village

decide the man's name was in " The Handsomest Drowned Man in the

World"? The Country Husband-Focuses on the problems of everyday people

-Takes place in Shady Hill, New York (a suburb of NYC)

-It is set in the suburbs, features a character at a crossroads, and reveals the

spiritual bankruptcy of many aspects of suburban life. Summary: The

Country Husband Story about Francis Weed, who has a very social-minded

wife 4 children & a nice home in the suburbs. Tells how he barely escapes

death in an airplane crash & how his family is too absorbed in their own

affairs to hear his story. Francis falls in love with their baby-sitter, a very

young girl. He is upset to learn that she is engaged to a young lad in the

community. His wife threatens to leave him after a quarrel, but they are

reconciled. Francis still loves the baby-sitter & wonders what to do. Finally,

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he goes to a psychiatrist. A week later, it is seen that everything is about the same at home. Francis is happy. The psychiatrist has recommended woodwork as a therapy & he is busy making a table. Francis Weed
The name of the protagonist in "The Country Husband" Separating-The affluent Maples are getting a divorce, but they cannot decide on the right time to tell their four children

-The story deals with an ordinary middle-class American family which is exposed to corruption from inside in the person of the husband and father.

-Themes of Marriage, Self-interest, and Everyday people
Summary:

Separating
[http://www. gradesaver. com/a-and-p-and-other-stories/study-guide/summary-separating](http://www.gradesaver.com/a-and-p-and-other-stories/study-guide/summary-separating)
Richard and Joan Maples
The names of the parents getting a divorce in "Separating" Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?
-Oates dedicated the story to Bob Dylan

-features a female protagonist struggling with adolescence who finds herself in a dangerous situation

-Themes of Maturity, Fantasy versus Reality
Summary: Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been? [http://www. sparknotes. com/short-stories/where-are-you-going-where-have-you-been/summary. html](http://www.sparknotes.com/short-stories/where-are-you-going-where-have-you-been/summary.html)
A dangerous figure who comes to Connie's house and threatens her in "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" He speaks calmly and quietly to Connie, which makes him seem even more threatening, and in an ambiguous scene near the end of the story, he may attack her inside her home. He ultimately convinces Connie to get in the car with him. Who is Arnold Friend and what short story does he appear? What We Talk About When We Talk About Love-Carver grew up watching his father struggle with alcoholism, which shows up in his stories

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- Focuses on middle-class, often blue-collar people who are struggling with hard truths, disappointments, inertia, and small glimmers of hope in their ordinary lives
 - Carver's most famous story and is often regarded as the epitome of the dirty-realism school.
 - constructed almost entirely from dialogue
 - Main theme is The Elusive Nature of Love
- Summary: What We Talk About When We Talk About Love
- [http://www. sparknotes. com/short-stories/what-we-talk-about-when-we-talk-about-love/summary. html](http://www.sparknotes.com/short-stories/what-we-talk-about-when-we-talk-about-love/summary.html)" And the terrible thing, the terrible thing is, but the good thing too, the saving grace, you might say, is that if something happened to one of us tomorrow, I think . . . the other person, would grieve for a while, you know, but then the surviving party would go out and love again, have someone else soon enough." Mel to his friends; Mel says that he knows he used to love Marjorie, his ex-wife, even though he hates her now; " What We Talk About When We Talk About Love" Magical Realism most commonly used and refers to literature in particular that portrays magical or unreal elements as a natural part in an otherwise realistic or mundane environment.
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