

**THE RIVERSIDE
LITERATURE SERIES:
SHORT STORIES**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649704309

The Riverside Literature Series: Short Stories by Leonard B. Moulton

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Cover @ 2017

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LEONARD B. MOULTON

**THE RIVERSIDE
LITERATURE SERIES:
SHORT STORIES**



"NECK AND NECK WITH A BIG WHITE STEER"

(Page 7)

The Riverside Literature Series

SHORT STORIES

SELECTED AND EDITED BY

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BOSTON NEW YORK CHICAGO
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
The Riverside Press Cambridge

T 85.67162

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Dept. of

798.86.750(238)

JUN 26 1915

TRANSFERRED TO
HARVARD COLLEGE LIBRARY

PREFACE

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THE stories in this collection have been chosen, as far as possible, for their portrayal of healthy human experiences that will interest those for whom the book is designed. After long experience in teaching literature to boys and girls, the editor feels that their interest should be the most important factor in determining what they are to read during the earlier part of their high-school course.

The *Suggestions for Study* are arranged under two heads, *Appreciation* and *Technique*. The questions and suggestions under *Appreciation* are designed to arouse the pupil's emotional response to what is essentially human in the story. The questions and suggestions under *Technique* are designed not merely to present the chief principles of art in the construction of the short story, but to present these principles in such a manner that they will aid appreciation and add to the enjoyment of the story.

The *Suggestions for Study* are intended to be stimulating rather than exhaustive. They leave much that may be developed in the recitation by both pupil and teacher.

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INTRODUCTION

TO THE PUPILS

MUCH of your pleasure in life will be found in reading fiction, either in the form of long stories like *Silas Marner* and *Treasure Island*, or in the form of short stories such as this book contains. To find this pleasure in reading stories that are good rather than those that are poor is what is meant by cultivating a taste for good literature. There are so many stories in books and magazines that you may find it hard to choose the best. If you are in earnest about cultivating your taste or appreciation, you will be helped by asking yourself two questions: In the first place, Is the theme of the story worth while? In the second place, Is the story well written?

Nearly every kind of experience possible to human life has been made the theme of a story, but not all stories can be classed as literature. A story that may be called literature must have a theme chosen from among those human experiences that call forth in your own life feelings or emotions that are healthy. The emotion may be a feeling of resentment against what is low and mean in human life. It may be a feeling of merriment over what is humorous. It may be admiration for what is noble and true, or sympathy for sorrow and suffering. The theme of a story is worth while if it gives you a better sense of the beauty of life. The theme in a cheap, sentimental story is not one that can be made into literature. It arouses in your mind false ideas of life. Of course, you may pity the fate of the weeping heroine or admire the bravado

of the hero, who with a lucky shot brings down the villain, but the grounds for your emotions have no worthy cause. Stories with such themes are not worth while. It is not necessary that the theme should be a real experience. It may be possible, or probable, or even impossible, yet your judgment of its worth must be guided by the kind of appeal it makes to you as you read.

Perhaps a few references to the stories in this book may help you. In so simple a narrative as *Riding the Rim Rock*, the thrill of excitement that comes to you from reading the race for life is a healthy emotion. It increases your sense of life. It does you good. So, too, does the feeling of love aroused for Peroxide Jim. In *The Face of the Poor* you feel the worth of high ideals and honest motives, and your admiration for these principles is enhanced, whether you find them in the life of the millionaire or in the life of the poor fruit-vender. *Aunt Cynthia Dallett* will make you think of the kind impulses and the beautiful thoughts that common and unheroic lives may reveal. The laughter excited in *A Hamerton Typewriter* is worth while, for all innocent laughter adds zest and enjoyment to life.

When you find pleasure in the theme of a story, whether long or short, because it stimulates you to think and to act in a healthy manner and arouses in you a response to the joy or the sorrow, the humor or the pathos of life, then you may be sure that you have taken one step in cultivating your taste for good literature.

You come now to the second question that you are to ask yourself — Is the story well written? However good the theme may be, if the story is poorly planned and poorly written, it cannot be called literature. It will take a great deal of study and long and careful

reading to master all the technical principles in the art of story-writing. You may well content yourself at first with trying to appreciate the vividness and the force with which the characters and the action are presented. This vividness or force depends largely upon the choice of words and their arrangement in the sentences. Little by little your pleasure in reading will increase, as you begin to feel the power a writer has to make his characters live in your imagination. The great writer always sets his characters before you by speech and action so that you can promptly make up your mind about their appearance and qualities of character.

These suggestions that have been given will help you appreciate all good stories, whether long or short. Although there are many other principles relating to character, plot, and setting in the long story, or novel, you need not trouble yourself about them at present. You may be interested now in some of the principles underlying the writing of the short story, so that your reading of this book may be done intelligently and with interest.

You will find an excellent discussion of the short story in Chapter X of Bliss Perry's *A Study of Prose Fiction*. If this book is not in your school library, the following principles taken from that chapter may be helpful to you:—

A quotation from Poe, who was a writer of excellent stories, will give you an idea of some of the chief characteristics of a good short story. "A skillful literary artist has constructed a tale. If wise, he has not fashioned his thought to accommodate his incidents; but having conceived, with deliberate care, a certain unique or single effect to be wrought out, he then invents such incidents,— he then combines such events as may best aid him in establishing this preconceived