

A Selection of Short Stories

In the table below, you will see an extract and some associated themes in each short story. All of these short stories are suitable for Transition Year and Leaving Certificate students.

'All Summer in a Day' by Ray Bradbury *It had been raining for seven years; thousands upon thousands of days compounded and filled from one end to the other with rain, with the drum and gush of water, with the sweet crystal fall of showers and the concussion of storms so heavy they were tidal waves come over the islands.*	**THEMES INCLUDE:** BULLYING JEALOUSY REGRET
'Eveline' by James Joyce *Home! She looked round the room, reviewing all its familiar objects which she had dusted once a week for so many years, wondering where on earth all the dust came from. Perhaps she would never see again those familiar objects from which she had never dreamed of being divided.*	**THEMES INCLUDE:** PARALYSIS DUTY FEAR
'First Confession' by Frank O'Connor *But sure, you'll have to go to confession, Jackie! she replied in the same regretful tone. "Sure, if you didn't, the parish priest would be up to the house, looking for you. 'Tisn't, God knows, that I'm not sorry for you. Do you remember the time you tried to kill me with the bread-knife under the table? And the language you used to me?*	**THEMES INCLUDE:** FEAR INNOCENCE AUTHORITY
'The Gift of the Magi' by O.Henry *Of all who give gifts, these two were the most wise. Of all who give and receive gifts, such as they are the most wise. Everywhere they are the wise ones. They are the magi.*	**THEMES INCLUDE:** LOVE SACRIFICE IRONY

'The Clancy Kid' by Colin Barrett

My town is nowhere you have been, but you know its ilk. A roundabout off a national road, an industrial estate, a five-screen Cineplex, a century of pubs packed inside the square mile of the town's limits. The Atlantic is near; the gnarled jawbone of the coastline with its gull-infested promontories is near.

THEMES INCLUDE:
ALIENATION
MASCULINITY
VIOLENCE

'Miss Brill' by Katherine Mansfield

ALTHOUGH it was so brilliantly fine–the blue sky powdered with gold and great spots of light like white wine splashed over the Jardins Publiques–Miss Brill was glad that she had decided on her fur. The air was motionless, but when you opened your mouth there was just a faint chill...

THEMES INCLUDE:
LONELINESS
ILLUSION
ISOLATION

'Two Little Clouds' by Joseph O'Connor

Eddie was the kind of guy I used to attempt to latch on to, back in my early days in London. Hip, facetious, indifferent to convention, he'd shape into the Bunch of Grapes in his shabby denim jacket, in his tattered leather jeans and Sex Pistols T-shirt, his brothel-creeper shoes so utterly grubby it was impossible to picture them having once been clean.

THEMES INCLUDE:
REGRET
DISILLUSIONMENT
MEMORY

'Harrison Bergeron' by Kurt Vonnegut

THE YEAR WAS 2081, and everybody was finally equal. They weren't only equal before God and the law. They were equal every which way. Nobody was smarter than anybody else. Nobody was better looking than anybody else. Nobody was stronger or quicker than anybody else.

THEMES INCLUDE:
EQUALITY
CONFORMITY
POWER

'A Cruelty' By Kevin Barry

A young man recounts a casual sexual relationship marked by emotional detachment and imbalance. The woman involved becomes increasingly vulnerable while the narrator remains indifferent.The story depicts how thoughtlessness and self-interest can cause lasting emotional harm

THEMES INCLUDE:
DETACHMENT
SELFISHNESS
CRUELTY

'Everyday Use' by Alice Walker

MYou've no doubt seen those TV shows where the child who has "made it" is confronted, as a surprise, by her own mother and father, tottering in weakly from backstage. (A pleasant surprise, of course: What would they do if parent and child came on the show only to curse out and insult each other?) On TV mother and child embrace and smile into each other's faces.

THEMES INCLUDE :

HERITAGE

IDENTITY

CONFLICT

'The Buggy' by Roddy Doyle

There were people at the far end of the beach. Some adults, a lot of children. An extended family, maybe—he didn't know. He tried to see if one of the adults was carrying a baby or if there was a toddler—a padded lump—plonked on the sand.

THEMES INCLUDE:

GRIEF

LOSS

SILENCE