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**An International Multidisciplinary Research e-Journal**

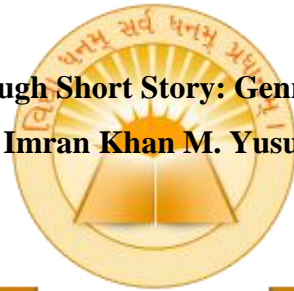
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**ISSN 2454-8596**

[www.vidhyayanaejournal.org](http://www.vidhyayanaejournal.org)

**ELT through Short Story: Genre at Work**

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ISSN 2454-8596

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## An International Multidisciplinary Research e-Journal

### Abstract:

Since ages, Literature has contributed a lot in the development of Human lives and civilization. Be it ancient society of pyramids or the modern technological era of space, Language and Literature have played vital role in building the human world better than it was ever before. Therefore every civilization gives due importance to teaching and learning language(s) in various ways in almost all the sectors. English being a *linguafranka* has influenced the present world a lot. In countries like USA, China, Australia and Canada, the number of students is day by day going up who are learning English as their second language for various purposes. It is a well known fact that India has become a nation which has maximum number of people who use English as their first or second language.

In India, Teaching English, therefore, has got widest platform and lots of research is taking place every year on various methods and theories on and about ways of teaching English. English as a second language can be taught in multiple ways but there are very few amongst them which give exact and expected result. This paper discusses about teaching English language through short story - one of the genres of literature.

Defining short story is not easy. As a teacher one ought to know the difference between the 'story' / 'short story' and 'storytelling'. Moreover, short story as a form can be better taught only if one knows what short story is *not* rather than what it is. Short story does have some similarities like other genres and therefore it is necessary to know how short story is different from other forms. The present research discusses the effective ways of teaching English through short story.

**Keywords: Teaching English, Language, Short story.**

### Lead in:

In the present era where Information and Technology are widely spreading, it has become inevitable for the students to acquire command over language for better communication skills. On one hand, with the rise of modern technical gadgets, teaching and learning English language has become very handy; at the



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same time it has become equally complex and complicated for the students to learn English for their specific purpose. Everyday lots of new applications can be seen on Google play-store which claim to teach English in the easiest and fastest way. Amid this, it is very important to know for the teachers as well as for the learners whether these newly invented ways can really help learners to learn the English they actually need. Secondly the present generation is comparatively more techno savvy and modern technologies are catchier to them. It is therefore not an exaggeration to say that technology seems to be brushing the old established methods of teaching and learning English. It is therefore a right time to see how literary genres can help in teaching English Language. This research revisits how effectively Short Story as a literary genre can be employed to teach English Language.

### Short Story as a literary genre

Defining short story is not as easy as telling it! As an English Language teacher one must know a little more about Short Story as a literary genre before employing it for teaching English. Moreover, short story as a form can be better taught only if one knows what short story is *not* rather than what it is. A teacher without knowing this difference won't be able to deal with short story with full justice.

M.H. Abrams in *A Glossary of Literary Terms* defines short story as: 'A short story is a brief work of prose fiction, and most of the terms for analyzing the component elements, the types, and the various narrative techniques of the novel are applicable to the short story as well...' (286) Alison Davies in the first chapter named *Once Upon a Time of Storytelling in the Classroom* introduces Short Story as: 'Once upon a time there was storytelling. It's hard to pin-point exactly when it started, although I would guess that when first began to communicate he used stories.' (3)

Prof. R B Zala in his Ph.D thesis *Pre Independence Gujarati and Indian English Short Story: A Comparative Study*, mentions,

"The short story is the latest literary form to evolve and yet it is the most impenetrable for the critics and the practitioners with regard to its precise elements, development, structure, techniques, regionalism, abundance influence, and relation with the age old traditions. Today it is the most practiced and published form with the largest readership yet it remains the least discussed and a highly neglected to be taken seriously as a major literary genre."



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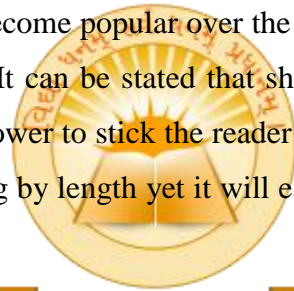
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### Origin of the short story

Though the short story has come of age in this century, its origins lie in fables, in anecdotes, in fairy stories, in short in folklore. In this case the emphasis, naturally, is on “telling” rather than “writing”. Here is an interesting fact – when the first settlers landed on what today is the USA, they kept moving west in search of new or unknown lands. They had lots of tales to tell about their experience, and a good story teller was called a “liar”! It is noteworthy that there were no negative connotations attached to the world in those days.

Tales from the Old Testament, tales from the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* are also precursors of the modern short story. We have to look to the USA for the first short story in English, the pioneer being Edgar Allan Po. He not only wrote short stories, but also set in motion the beginning of theory of short story writing in his review of Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *Twice-Told Tales*.

Short story is a genre which has become popular over the 150 years. One of the reasons of why short story as a genre is famous is its brevity. It can be stated that short story is an amalgamation of in fact the entire major forms of literature. It has a power to stick the reader not only because it is short by length but it is short by thought. Be the short story long by length yet it will earn the readership only because it *is* a short story!



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### ELT through Short Story

Methods and approaches of teaching English as a Second Language are being explored since the time English began to be taught as a global language. English Teachers, linguists, grammarians and academicians have always been in search of some better and innovative ways which can help teachers and learners to make the process of teaching and learning English language as fruitful as possible. The core purpose of teaching and learning English language is basically to make the learner speak as fluently as possible in the target language. In the context of relation between ELT and Short Story, Pardede writes,

“Short stories allow teachers to teach the four skills to all levels of language proficiency. Short stories could be very beneficial materials in ELT reinforcement by using them in learning activities such as, discussion, writing and acting out dialogues.”



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To sharpen the English language skills in the students, Short Story can be the most effective tool in comparison to other literary forms. The first reason is its brevity and its simplicity which attract the students to read, comprehend and for the class discussion. Teacher will have a full scope to involve the students in all the four skills before, during and after teaching the Short Story in an ELT class. If Short Story and Novel are juxtaposed, both the genres have some common features like setting, plot, theme, characters, point of views etc. But because Novel is too long in its length, it is too much time consuming; whereas Short Story is something which can be read in one sitting and be discussed too. In the same context, Charles Duke in one of his articles *Teaching the Short Story* notes,

“The value of using short stories in English classes has been discussed widely. Students find the short story one of the most satisfying of all literary forms, and teachers agree that stories often provide more challenge and hold students’ interest better than other genres. The brevity of short stories makes them ideal for class discussion, and readers of all ability level can finish reading an interesting story within a single class period.”

(62)

In comparison to Poetry and Drama, some class activities can be easily done in the short story class for language skills. Charles R. Duke prescribes six elements of teaching short story creatively in the class room. They are,

- 1) Visualizing the setting
- 2) Seeing conflicts
- 3) Understanding decisions
- 4) Seeing value judgements and conflicts
- 5) Sensing tone and mood
- 6) Seeing character

However, each element plays different role in different short stories and each one them may not be present in all the works, all the elements have helped a lot to the English teachers to break the ice in the ELT class so far.


Stephen Seifert who is a writer, editor, professor of English, blogger and adventurer writes an article under the title *6 Short Stories in English, Perfect for ESL Students of All Level* where in he writes,



“Short stories are great catalysts for bringing English to life. Many ESL students have the vocabulary and grammar know-how but find real-life language usage challenging. Short stories for your students will open their creative English minds as they enjoy an exciting or funny short story..... Employing short stories is also a wonderful break from the formal, more traditional lesson plan or continual textbook learning style. They also get the whole class involved in an exciting way. Gathering your students in a circle and reading a short story offers essential communication they may not find in more traditional, ESL desk learning.”

Stephen concludes his article by writing,

“Utilizing short stories in your classroom is an exceptional, fun and exciting way to build on almost every ESL skill your students need to communicate effectively in English. They will pick up on reading, listening, writing, grammar, discussion, collaboration and even debate....Short stories bring English to life and evoke powerful creativity that encourages ESL students to try new things and learn more.”



### **Conclusion:**

Teaching English is like cooking; so many people know how to cook but very few know how to cook well. There can be as many ways of teaching English as many teachers are teaching English across the globe but it is must to choose the proper way that can give the fruitful result. Short Story is one of those literary forms which have given expected results in ELT class so far. It is further a subject of research how effectively short story can be used for teaching English on a virtual platform.

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