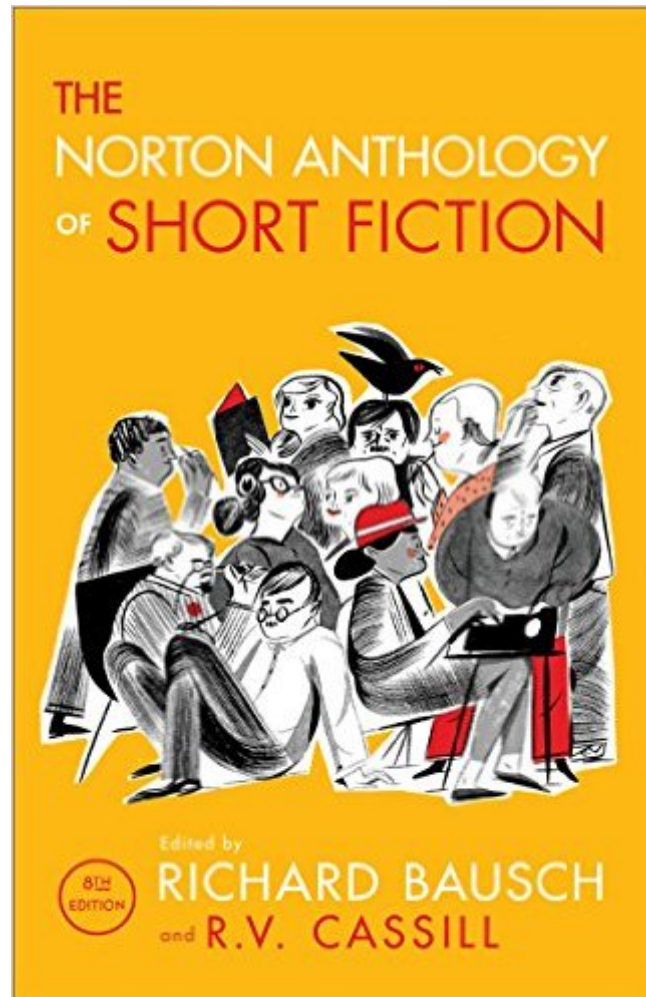


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# The Norton Anthology Of Short Fiction (Eighth Edition)



## Synopsis

One of the most celebrated writers and teachers of fiction, Richard Bausch, pairs his insight and inspiration with Norton's trusted editorial standards to deliver the finest teaching anthology available. The Norton Anthology of Short Fiction features 152 works—many of them new to this edition—by 130 authors, offering a broad collection of short stories with the most thoughtful annotations and apparatus on the market. With a new Authors in Depth feature, an extensive Reviews and Commentaries section, and expanded coverage of Writers on Writing, the Eighth Edition provides a wealth of criticism of key works and authors, as well as the opportunity to look deeper into the craft of fiction.

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## Customer Reviews

Too often, fiction anthologies look exactly the same because they rely on the same old stories: Joyce's "Araby," John Updike's "A&P," Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily." And even when these conservative, non-risk-taking anthologies try and embrace more contemporary voices, again, the choices tend to be the same: Raymond Carver's "Cathedral," Alice Walker's "Everyday Use," Jamaica Kincaid's "Girl." Don't misunderstand me, many of these often-anthologized stories are terrific, but as an English Instructor, I grow frustrated with anthology after anthology that fails to stand out. Even though Norton is a giant in the field of literary anthologies, I was pleasantly surprised to see that the content of the Norton Anthology of Short Fiction was a terrific mix of old and new. Better still, editors Richard Bausch and R.V. Cassill often choose fresh stories that haven't been

anthologized to death. Thus, instead of publishing Margaret Atwood's terrific (but too-anthologized) "Rape Fantasies," they instead include "Death by Landscape." Instead of Bernard Malamud's "The Magic Barrel," they include "Angel Levine." And although the classic heavies are well-represented (Faulkner, Hemingway, Gilman, Chopin, Poe, Chekhov), there's a healthy (and I mean HEALTHY) dose of fantastic contemporary writers: Stuart Dybek, Barry Hannah, Amny Hempel, Louise Erdrich, Bharati Mukherjee, and on, and on, and on. And unlike other weak anthologies that I've seen, where the editors try to fold in contemporary voices but pick weaker stories by those voices, Bausch and Cassill have carefully selected fine, fine contemporary works. The instructor, student, or general reader who chooses to slowly make his/her way through the stories in this collection will be rewarded with a nuanced, broad vision of fiction's landscape.

Writers, especially beginning writers, interested in short stories should take a good glance at this anthology. The book draws from a wide selection of international literature leaning towards the contemporary (stories written within the last 20 - 30 years) rather than the modern or classics of the short story genre. The beginning briefly covers some common ideas about action, plot, complication, point of view, indirection, the part and the whole and coherence followed up by questions suitable for classroom discussions. The bulk of the book comes from stories chosen by the editors who wish to believe that even if you bother to read every selection in the book, you as a reader may finish reading the book but the book, the stories themselves may not be finished with you, their ideas staying with you long after the book has been sold back to a college usedbook store or disposed of in some other way. Finally, the last hundred pages deal with writing literature criticism as well as the act of writing itself in short, brief excerpts written by several of the writers who are included in the collection. Although it is on the pricey side, it is a good reference for those interested in short story writing. Another anthology to consider is *The Art of the Story* edited by Daniel Halpern which is much less expensive and more contemporary than the Norton Anthology.

The short stories in this collection are excellent. However, I wish that at the end of each story, there would be 2-3 questions to help guide the reader's analysis. Some of the stories are really out there and I sometimes found myself puzzled upon completing a story. Some of the stories have an accompanying essay which analyzes the work. However, these essays are scarce. Even worse, the essays are attached to short stories that are well-known such as the "Heart of Darkness" by Joseph Conrad. There is plenty written about these famous stories that can be found on the internet. The less famous stories, which don't have accompanying essays, have almost no criticism written about

them. A couple "guide questions" at the end of the story would not have added much to the length of the anthology. Of course, if you are using this collection in a college course, you don't need analysis included in the collection because your teacher or class discussion can help clarify the story. Another problem I have with the collection is that the date the story was written are not included with the story. The dates the stories were written are contained in a separate section of the book. Thus, it is annoying to flip to this section and then to flip back to the story itself. At the beginning of each story, the editors of the collection have included a short synopsis about the author's life and writing career. This adds much to the collection. The editors also include helpful footnotes that explain era-specific words and phrases. The anthology also contains useful essays regarding writing about short fiction. Overall, this book is wonderful. Hopefully in future editions, my concerns can be addressed.

This anthology has some excellent selections, with intelligent choices made as to which works of certain authors to present (Faulkner's are amazing) and a wonderful variety of styles and subjects. As to Cassill himself being a "master" of the short story, however, that may be undue praise, and his own addition to the collection (rather presumptuous and inappropriate for the editor) would have been better replaced by more worthy possibilities. Jack London is unpardonably nowhere to be found. Yet on the whole worth a space on your shelf.

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