

OVERVIEW: AMERICAN SHORT STORY, A BRIEF OVERVIEW

Indigenous American form = movie,

"Artful audacity" = compression + heighten feelings & human responses

Characters fully drawn in few pages (not always so)

Popularity = compression (appeal to private sense in our nature) + Americans have always loved a good yarn (narration)

Craft suffered from growing neglect = demise of newspaper serialization + hunger for banal television "shows"

Short story has thrived in America (free from imitation of Anglo-European forms & from subordination to religious function)

American writers --> first to define short story as specific literary form (different from novel or long narrative poem in length & kind)

American writers --> first to be conscious of working in a particular literary genre, with own rules & values

Edgar Allan Poe (1942) --> critical definitions + reviews of Hawthorne's tales --> formalized nature & demands of short story as new literary form + prose form most suitable for exercise of "ambitious genius" in a writer

Central characteristic = singleness or unity of effect --> subordinating all characters, incidents, and even sentences, to a single purpose + well-constructed story capable of leaving "in the mind of him who contemplates it with a kindred art, a sense of the fullest satisfaction".

Short story = staple (epitome) of American magazine

From World War II --> more popular showcases for short stories disappeared (*Collier's Liberty* & *The Saturday Evening Post*)

Conception of literary form demanding the highest craft --> attracts most talented writers in America

Central irony springs from cluster of frequent themes = loss of illusions (nature of one's own experience/identity) & forging of different identity from insight gained through disillusionment (growth)

Central initiatory process touches on different problems, ideas, and values in American cultural history & detailed observation of manners & social texture & relation to moral values <--> psychological exploration

Abstract impersonal forces of history, of myth, of religion or of social convention intersect with intricate personal details of individual lives

Essence of short story = detail (moment in a character's life can suggest whole life, a day/year suggest whole segment of American history)

Short stories to be read & experienced = act of interpretation

Art relates simultaneously to past, present, and future --> compendium of knowledge about collective past as a people & understand our future