

**Impact of Short Stories on the Reading Populace****Wafa Abdullah Dhaifullah Al-Amri<sup>1</sup>**

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**Abstract:** Short stories are short in length, yet they make a big impact on readers because of their accessibility, the different themes they cover, and the feelings that they arouse. Novels have been the most readable literature since the nineteenth century, but short stories gained similar popularity in the twentieth and the twenty-first centuries. This research discusses the reasons that led to this shift in the reading trend of the readers. The research also explores the impact of short stories on the readers arising from their short narrative and focused storyline as compared to its lengthier counterpart – the novel. This study makes use of the Quantitative research method. A questionnaire with eight closed-ended questions was prepared to gauge the responses of the subjects. The target group for this study were students studying English both as general and major courses during the sessions 2023-2024 & 2024-2025, University of Bisha, Saudi Arabia. The variable common in all the subjects was that they were avid readers of English literature. A total of 113 responses were collected. The participants did not vary much in age, education, and sex in order to derive general and conclusive results. Result was derived from the data attained through questionnaire. The study's conclusion highlights the profound influence short stories have on readers' viewpoints and their responses.

**Keywords:** Short Stories, Reader, Literature, Impact, Fiction

**Introduction:** The significance of literature has been recognized long ago, but the impact of short stories on the reading population is a subject that deserves attention. Short stories, with their brief plots and converged themes, have the ability to connect with readers on multiple levels. They have the power to move emotions... and provoke introspection (Oatley, 1999). Short stories can be easily deciphered which makes them a great choice for a reader with limited time or limited attention span. Short stories can be an excellent tool for teaching a language. A study by Gabl et al. (2007) found that reading short stories aloud to students can

help them become more fluent and skilled readers. While short stories have benefits in terms of ease, it is also important to examine its negative qualities. A common belief is that short stories' length limits the depth of character development and plot complexity when compared to longer forms of writing like novels. Also, the condensed form of short stories might not be able to provide the same amount of immersion and escapism that longer works offer. Opponents of this genre make claims regarding its potential flaws. This can lead to differing views among readers and experts about the genuine impact of short stories on the reading population (Al-Alami, 2021).

Short stories have always been a popular genre, compelling readers with their brief but dramatic storytelling. However, more research is required to acknowledge the impact of short stories on the reading population, including how they contribute to language learning, critical thinking abilities, emotional involvement, and overall reading enjoyment. A drawback of short stories is the restricted area for character development and plot twists. Unlike novels, which can explore complicated narratives and multidimensional characters, short stories frequently lack depth. This limitation may impede the reader's capacity to fully immerse themselves in the narrative and engage with the characters on a deeper level, thereby affecting their emotional connection to the story. Another problem is the possibility of abrupt terminations or unresolved conflicts. Because short stories are limited in length, authors may feel compelled to tie up the plot quickly, resulting in rushed or unsatisfying endings for readers. Furthermore, some short stories leave conflicts unresolved, leaving readers feel dissatisfied and taken away from the entire reading experience. Also, the length of short stories may limit the ability to test readers' critical thinking skills. Unlike longer literary works, which can provide rich themes and levels of meaning, short stories may not give enough information for in-depth analysis and interpretation, potentially limiting readers' critical thinking skills. It is essential to address these flaws in order to understand the impact of short stories on the reading population.

**Literature review:** The purpose of this research is to investigate how short stories effect readers in general. Edgar Allan Poe argued that the ability of short stories to leave a single, cohesive imprint on the reader's mind justifies their value (1842). The present study blends the knowledge and perspectives of literary critics, literary historians, and educators about short stories. It explores the ideological and social facets of short stories, looking at how they could provide different aspects and messages. Reading literary works has different affects on readers, according to a study done with college students while examining the impact of short stories on them. Three primary categories can be used to group these impact: no effect, behavioural effects, and cognitive effects. According to the study, reading short stories had a major intellectual influence on the readers, with cognitive impacts being the most commonly reported effects (Ebersole, 1974). Also, the focus on comprehensive literacy in the old educational system hasn't worked to raise literacy standards and may have even discouraged some kids from reading. Short stories have not only influenced its readers but encouraged the people to write as well. Writers' creativity in short stories resulted from their social surroundings and personal life. According to a case study, "The Arabian Nights"

influence suggest that reading short literary works and taking into account the social and biographical context of writers can shed light on how their creative identities developed (Al-Olaqi, 2012). Literature has the ability to affect and shape readers' ideas and viewpoints in addition to providing amusement. Certain well-known authors, such as Poe, have stated that a short story in particular has the power to deeply affect readers (Kidd & Castano, 2013). Literary studies are interested in short story's development as a literary form and how it impacts readers' engagement. Literature provides readers with bodies of evidence that they may apply to their own life. This implies that the act of reading short stories can significantly impact readers' perception, judgment, and comprehension of characters and their conclusions. The literature in this area demonstrates how crucial short stories are influencing readers' attitudes, feelings, and worldview (Prentice et al., 1997). The impact of short stories has been immensely discussed by critics and authors, increasing our understanding of this literary genre. It is safe to say that short stories frequently have nuanced levels of meaning that call for its close examination in order to fully understand the meanings hidden in the text. This viewpoint emphasizes how short stories have the capacity to captivate readers on a deeper level by pushing them to figure out complexities and analyse the story in depth. Furthermore, the enduring power of short stories and their ability to impact the literary landscape has been highlighted by the well-known literary critic, Harold Bloom. According to Bloom's research, short stories are essential to the development of storytelling since they encourage originality and innovation in the field of writing (2005). The current author Roxane Gay provides insight into the social influence of short stories, that focus on gender and identity, in her collection of essays and criticism titled "Bad Feminist" Gay's research explores how different voices and experiences are portrayed in short fiction, revealing how short stories serve as a forum for underrepresented views and narratives (2014). These opinions from authors and critics add significant viewpoint, enhancing our understanding of the influence of short stories on the reader and the literary landscape. Although there is a lot of evidence to support the idea that short stories have a good impact on readers, it's important to take the other side into account. While some readers may find amusement and intellectual stimulation in short stories, others argue that these benefits may not accrue to all readers. It is essential to say that the possible emotional influence of short stories may have been overlooked in favour of the cognitive impacts in earlier research. Some academics believe that short stories' compacted length could limit their capacity to fully captivate readers or offer significant character and story development, resulting in a shallow comprehension of literary themes and concepts. Short stories can elicit strong emotions in readers, which may not always result in a good outcome and could even make them feel uncomfortable or distressed. The concept that short stories have a universal effect is called into question because of the variation in their impact on people from different social and cultural background. To have a thorough knowledge of the influence of short stories on the reading population, it is imperative to take into account these different points of view.

The present study explores the following research questions:

1. What is the impact of short stories on the reading population?
2. How do short stories affect the reading habits of the population?

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3. What are the benefits of reading short stories?  
 4- How is reading short stories different from reading a novel?

**Methodology:** In order to examine the impact of short stories on the reading population, a survey methodology was employed. A questionnaire was prepared that consisted of a series of questions designed to assess various aspects of the participants' reading habits, preferences, and perceived impacts of short stories. The target group for this study were students studying English both as general and major courses during the sessions 2023-2024 & 2024-2025 in University of Bisha, Saudi Arabia. The variable common in all the subjects was that they were avid readers of English literature. A total of 113 responses were collected. The participants did not vary much in age, education, and sex in order to derive general and conclusive results. The survey was sent to the participants using google forms. The survey questions were developed based on the impact of short stories and the factors that may influence readers' perception and engagement with short stories. The survey consisted of closed-ended questions. The questions were used to assess participants' preferences and their motivation for reading short stories. The survey contained the following questions:

- 1- How familiar are you with short stories?
- 2- How often do you read short stories?
- 3- Do you believe that short stories have more emotional and psychological impact on you as compared to novels?
- 4- Do you find short stories more accessible than longer works?
- 5- Which of the following factors draws you towards reading short stories?
- 6- Do you find reading could be more time consuming than entertaining?
- 7- Do you believe that short stories could drift a person from longer reading?
- 8- In your opinion, which of the following factors, while reading short stories, impact children's development?

### Result:

**Table1: Mean, Median, and Standard Deviation of the data**

Question No.	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation
1.	1.9	2	0.57
2.	3.1	3	0.98
3.	2.0	2	0.72
4.	2.0	2	0.89
5.	1.8	1	0.66
6.	2.5	2	0.95
7.	3.9	4	1.02
8.	3.3	3	0.81

Before reviewing the final results, it is important to mention that this questionnaire has been essentially applied on the students of University of Bisha, Saudi Arabia. The subjects were avid readers of English literature and were quite familiar with short stories. The survey consisted of eight questions starting with a question about the participants' familiarity with short stories. The result of the mean, median, and standard deviation of the data can be seen in table 1. Tables 2, 3, 4, 5, & 6 show results of questions 1-8.

**Table 2: Percentage and the number of respondents**

Question No.		Very		Somewhat		Not at all
1-How familiar are you with short stories?		18.5% (21)		66.4% (75)		15% (17)
Question No.	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Rarely	Never	
2-How often do you read short stories?	6.2% (7)	21.2% (24)	34.5% (39)	33.6% (38)	4.4% (5)	

Question No.	Strongly agree	agree	undecided	disagree	Strongly disagree
3-Do you believe that short stories have more emotional and psychological impact on you as compared to novels?	18.8% (21)	58.1% (65)	19.7% (22)	3.6% (4)	0% (0)
4-Do you find short stories more accessible than longer works?	31% (35)	44.2% (50)	16.8% (19)	8% (9)	0% (0)

In response to the first question “how familiar are you with short stories?” most of them answered that they are very or somewhat familiar. Only 15% were not into the habit of reading short stories. The second question was “How often do you read short stories?” The data showed that more participants read short stories monthly than those who rarely read or never read it. The reason for this is due to its short length and quick conclusion. The third question shows that most participants believe short stories have unique impact on them, emotionally or psychologically, due to its ability to convey profound messages in a concentrated form, leaving a lasting impression on the readers.

The fourth question asks about the accessibility of short stories. Most participants answered that it's more accessible in comparison to other longer literary works, and this could be due to the fact that short stories are a stable literature in teaching. Short stories can be written faster than novels. This results in huge number of short stories being publicly published and made accessible.

**Table 3: Percentage and the number of respondents**

Question No.	The promise of a complete world in few pages without getting bored	The quick read	Not sure
9- 5- Which of the following factors draws you towards reading short stories?	31.6% (36)	52.6% (60)	15.8% (18)

The fifth question asks about the reasoning behind reading short stories and 84.2% answered that they prefer it because it could be read in a short amount of time without getting drifted or bored.

**Table 4: Percentage and the number of respondents**

Question No.	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	disagree	Strongly disagree
6-Do you find reading novels could be more time consuming than entertaining?	14.3% (16)	42% (47)	26.8% (30)	16.1% (18)	0.9% (1)

**Table 5: Percentage and the number of respondents**

Question No.	Strongly agree	agree	undecided	disagree	Strongly disagree
7-Do you believe that short stories could drift a person from long reading?	14.2% (16)	40.7% (46)	22.1% (25)	21.3% (24)	1.8% (2)

The sixth question asks if novels are more time-consuming than entertaining, which the majority answered yes, and it's possibly because short stories excel in their ability to convey impactful messages concisely and attract a broad readership with a whole story that will be done in a matter of few pages. Novels need a much longer time and concentration which many people do not have and end up leaving the story mid-way. The next question, question 7, takes into consideration the fact that some people get so used to its brevity that any longer or rich material might seem like a complex task for them. Almost all participants agree that short stories could create a habit of expected brevity and easiness which results in laziness in reading longer works.

**Table 6: Percentage and the number of respondents**

Question No.	Enhance language skills	Encourage creativity	Educationally entertaining
8- In your opinion, which of the following factors, while reading short stories, impact children's development?	80.4% (90)	54.5% (61)	47.3% (53)

The final question offers more than one choice. It asks the participants' opinions about the impact of short stories on children's development, the majority agreed that short stories help enhance language skills in children and that is true according to the Saudi blog Twinkl which states that short stories are an excellent approach for children to improve and strengthen their literacy skills (2023). In addition, exposing children to perfect spelling, punctuation, and grammar is an excellent strategy to help them learn these essential abilities since they will learn it correctly from a young age.

**Discussion:** Short stories have long been a beloved form of literature, captivating readers with their compressed narratives and ability to convey powerful messages in a concise manner similar to poetry which “had been the base for all early theories” (Shamim, 2024). Both poetry and novels have been the popular genres of literature until short stories crept in. Short stories with their ability to condense complex themes and emotions into a compact form, hold a significant place in the literary world.

One key element that contributes to the impact of short stories is the ability of the stories to immerse their readers in its fictional world. This immersion allows readers to not only understand the human experiences and social relationships depicted in the stories but also to empathize with the characters and their situations in a considerably short amount of time. Short stories have the potential, like novels, to evoke empathy and emotional connection with the characters and situations portrayed in the narratives. The brevity of these stories challenges authors to craft compelling characters and gripping plots, enabling readers to form profound attachments in a limited space. This emotional engagement offers a unique opportunity for readers to gain insight into diverse perspectives and experiences, ultimately fostering greater empathy and understanding of the human condition. Authors often utilize innovative narrative structures and language choices to convey powerful messages within a limited space. This can enhance readers' appreciation for the nuances of language and storytelling, cultivating a deeper understanding of literary techniques and creativity. The choice of language, the structure of the story, and the way in which the plot unfolds all contribute of the readers' ability to connect with the characters and the events within the story. By understanding these fundamental aspects of short stories and their impact on readers, we can gain deeper insight into how these narratives contribute to the social and moral development of individuals and their beliefs and attitudes. It is through this understanding that we can truly appreciate the profound effects that short stories have on the reading population.

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Previous researches have shown that short stories can also have a transformative effect on readers' beliefs and attitudes about the real world (Gasser et. al, 2022). This is evident in studies that have found shifts in readers' attitudes to become more compatible with the ideas expressed in a narrative after exposure to fiction. Also, the act of engaging with short stories can have a therapeutic benefit. Narrating and sharing personal experiences, including traumatic ones, through a coherent and organized account in the form of short stories can lead to psychological gains. The power of short stories lies not only in their ability to entertain and captivate readers, but also in their potential to shape our understanding of the world.

Through the result of this study, it can be deftly concluded that short stories play a significant role in shaping the reading habits of the population. The accessibility and brevity of short stories make them a popular choice for individuals with limited time for reading. This can lead to more frequent and consistent reading habits among a wider demographic population, including those who may not have the time or patience for longer literary works. The brevity of short stories also allows for a diverse range of voices and narratives to be shared, giving visibility to marginalized communities and underrepresented voices, which can contribute to a more inclusive literary landscape and foster a broader understanding of society as a whole.

While short stories are undoubtedly a beloved form of literature for many, it is important to consider the opposing arguments that questions the extent of their impact on the reading population. Some critics argue that the brevity of short stories may limit their ability to deeply engage readers or to have a lasting impact on their beliefs and attitudes. Unlike novels or longer form of literature, short stories may not provide enough depth or complexity to profoundly influence readers in a significant way. Additionally, it is argued that the transformative effect of short stories on the belief of the readers about the real world may be limited. Critics suggest that while some studies have found shifts in readers' attitudes after exposure to fiction, the long-term impact and sustainability of these changes remains questionable. While the act of engaging with short stories can have a therapeutic benefit, it is crucial to consider that not all readers may experience these benefits. The potential for a short story to evoke emotional responses may vary greatly from person to person.

The findings of this study show that short stories have a significant impact on readers. Through the analysis of the survey taken by the participants, it was observed that short stories not only captivate readers but also entertain them in an intellectual manner. The participants were equally divided in opinion on the question whether short stories could drift a person from long reading, resulting in the conclusion that it is possible for students to pick shorter literary texts in order to be able to read them completely due to their busy time and schedule. The possibility that reading short stories make a person shift from the longer form of narratives in order to save time and energy can also not be overlooked. The study also finds out that the candidates of this study were opinionated regarding the positive implications of reading short stories. They agreed to nearly all the three options that short



stories enhance language skills, encourages creativity as well as are educationally entertaining.

**Conclusion:** The benefits of reading short stories extend far beyond mere entertainment. They offer a unique avenue for emotional connection, intellectual stimulation, and personal growth, making them an invaluable addition to any reading repertoire. Whether as a tool for self-reflection, a source of cultural insight, or as a means of honing literary appreciation, short stories hold a distinct and essential place in the literary world. It is also important to mention that unlike novels or longer literary works, short stories may lack the extensive character development and intricate plotlines that are crucial for deeply engaging readers. This brevity can restrict the exploration of multifaceted themes and nuanced emotions, limiting the impact of the short story on the readers' psyche. It is imperative to weigh these flaws against the merits of short stories to gain a comprehensive understanding of their impact on readers and the literary landscape.

By acknowledging short stories' benefits and limitations, readers and scholars can engage in critical discourse and appraisal, fostering a deeper appreciation of the artfulness inherent in storytelling in a brief format and how it impacts the reading populace. Further research can also be done on the linguistic and stylistic exploration of short stories as also in exploring the intricate psychological processes that are invoked when individuals engage with narrative fiction.

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