



MODERN PROBLEMS IN EDUCATION AND THEIR SCIENTIFIC
SOLUTIONS

SHORT PROSE GENRES IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY
AMERICAN LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT. This thesis analyzes the developmental tendencies of short prose in twentieth-century American literature. It examines the transformation of the short story, novella, story cycle, and experimental short fiction within the frameworks of modernism, Southern Gothic, minimalism, and postmodernism. The study demonstrates that magazine culture, compact composition, and the need to represent fragmented modern experience were important factors in the development of these genres.

KEYWORDS. American literature, twentieth century, short story, novella, modernism, minimalism, postmodernism, story cycle

INTRODUCTION. Twentieth-century American literature made a substantial contribution to the development of world prose. In particular, short prose genres became effective means of representing the dynamics of social life, psychological transformations, and social crises in a concise and compelling manner. The study of the evolution of these genres remains an important and continuously relevant issue in contemporary literary scholarship.

The short story is one of the most stable yet experimentally open genres in the American literary tradition. By the beginning of the twentieth century, it had already been shaped by the contributions of Edgar Allan Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Bret Harte, and Henry James. In the new century, however, the expansion of mass-market magazines, urban culture, wars, migration, and increasingly visible racial and gender experiences led short prose toward new themes and forms. The Oxford Research Encyclopedia characterizes the short story as a genre sustained in American literary life through magazines and collections and continually transformed across the periods of realism, modernism, and postmodernism.

MAIN PART. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the magazine market played a major role in the popularization of the short story. According to Martin Scofield, the number of magazines publishing short fiction increased significantly during the early decades of the century, helping the short form become both a mass-market genre and a field for artistic experimentation (Scofield, 2006). While writers such as O. Henry popularized the unexpected ending and compact plot, Sherwood Anderson's Winesburg, Ohio expanded the possibilities of the story-cycle form through a sequence of interconnected stories.





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During the modernist period, short prose increasingly shifted from comprehensive narration of events toward fragmented perception, inner discontinuity, and subtext. Ernest Hemingway's concise and outwardly simple prose relied on leaving much of the meaning beneath the surface of the text, while William Faulkner experimented with the complexities of time, memory, and Southern history within the short form. Kasia Boddy interprets the American modernist short story as a genre that reconsidered technical efficiency and connected brevity with artistic complexity (Boddy, 2023).

In the mid-twentieth century, Flannery O'Connor, Eudora Welty, and other writers employed Southern Gothic, religious paradox, violence, and social exclusion through the intense form of the short story. During this period, the strength of short prose increasingly lay in its ability to reveal a major moral or social problem through a single charged situation.

From the 1960s through the 1980s, postmodern experimentation and minimalism emerged as two important directions. Donald Barthelme transformed metafictional, parodic, and fragmented prose into a means of making the nature of storytelling itself a subject of fiction. Raymond Carver, meanwhile, strengthened a minimalist model based on interrupted conversations, economic pressure, and emotional silence in everyday life. Here, brevity was not merely a matter of length; it became an aesthetic form for expressing the fragmentation and insufficiency characteristic of modern human experience.

KEY TENDENCIES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF SHORT PROSE

- Plot and structural evolution: In the early twentieth century, the unexpected resolution or plot twist was prominent in O. Henry's fiction, whereas by the middle of the century greater emphasis had shifted toward the psychological condition of the character and concealed emotional experience.

- The "Iceberg Theory" and minimalism: Ernest Hemingway introduced into short prose the principles of subtext and economy of expression. Beneath the apparent simplicity of the text lies a deeper philosophical and psychological layer.

- Existentialism and modernist representation: In the American short prose of the interwar and postwar periods, loneliness, alienation, and the problem of the Lost Generation became central themes.

By the end of the twentieth century, women writers, African American, Latin American, Asian American, and other literary communities had significantly expanded the canon of the American short story. The short prose of writers such as Toni Cade Bambara, Alice Walker, Amy Tan, and Jhumpa Lahiri brought questions of identity, migration, language, and intergenerational relationships to the center of the genre. As a result, American short prose became not only a field of formal experimentation but also an adaptable space for diverse social voices.

CONCLUSION. In twentieth-century American literature, short prose encompassed a broad range of poetic experimentation, from modernist economy to postmodern fragmentation and minimalist silence. The success of the genre was closely connected with





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its capacity to represent the brief, discontinuous, intense, and often ambiguous experiences of modern life in an appropriate artistic form. For this reason, the short story and related genres remain not secondary but central artistic forms within American literature.

The conclusions of this thesis may serve as a valuable practical resource for understanding the evolution of twentieth-century world literature and the development of short-prose poetics, as well as for conducting comparative studies between the evolution of American short fiction and the development of short-story writing in Uzbek literature.

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