

Short Stories – Do They Sell?

From well before the turn of the 20th century through to the 1940s, the short story was considered to be the most popular form of fictional writing. Indeed, the great authors of the era were all involved in the creation of short fiction. During this period, short fiction would appear in many of the most fashionable publications of the day. Over time, the works of these fantastic wordsmiths normally ended up being compiled in collections that ended up reaching the top of bestselling book lists in many nations the world over.

Beginning in the 1950s and carrying forward to this very day, the popularity of the short fiction genre has taken what might best be described as a “hit.” Over the course of the past fifty years, fewer and fewer people ever consider reading short fiction or short stories. While some magazines have remained faithful to the cause of short fiction and carry stories in their recurring issues, the number of short fiction collections that are published on an annual basis, by traditional publishing houses, has declined steadily. Most industry experts predict that the drop in production of short fiction collections will continue into the foreseeable future.

This historical recapitulation leads to the ultimate question as to whether or not short stories can sell in the 21st century. Beyond this query, this article will also give you an overview of how to write a short story and what steps you can take to break into the highly, highly competitive short story market.

Currently, there remains a loyal following of individuals who enjoy the short story or short fiction genre. Short fiction readers remain avid in two primary areas. These areas include literary fiction and science fiction. Therefore, a writer to specialize in literary or science fiction has a better chance of seeing his or her work in print than would writers who create short fiction in other sectors.

Your best bet in selling short fiction that you have written is to smaller magazines. This includes magazines and primarily literary magazines that are published by colleges and universities. Publications of this type are still involving themselves with short fiction writers. Of course, you need to keep in mind that because of the limited number of magazines that do accept short fiction, competition is fierce for page space.

Some of the major, well established magazines in print today also do publish short fiction. However, in every case, these larger publications simply do not take unsolicited short fiction. In some instances, they will accept short fiction from an agent writer – through the agent. But, in the vast majority of cases, these larger publications invite writers to submit stories to be included on their pages.

If you are dreaming of seeing a collection of your own short fiction in print in book form, you really may be dreaming. While new writers do see collections of their short fiction in print each year, the fact is that it is only a handful of ambitious short fiction writers that ever realize this dream. Publishing companies simply are not publishing short fiction in collected form (from one author) in most instances.



There are a small number of collected works of short fiction from multiple authors that make it into print each year. You in fact would have a far better chance of getting included in such a collection than you would in having your own, personal collection of short fiction published.

Even though the market for short fiction is limited, even though selling your short fiction can be a very, very challenging task, that doesn't mean that you should not write short fiction. Of course, as mentioned, there are some options available to you if you are willing to work hard at selling your short stories. Moreover, spending some time writing short fiction is a perfect way of enhancing your writing abilities. Many writers have said that they became better at their craft overall by spending time on a regular basis crafting and creating short stories.

Another suggestion that many authors who have enjoyed success in writing short fiction and short stories have, is to take the time to read short fiction. In fact, these writers of short fiction go so far as to say that the best short fiction writers actually are those who read more than they write.

There are some other tips and pointers that you need to keep in mind when it comes to writing short fiction. Maintaining focus is one of the most important of these tips. You need to keep well in mind that when you are writing short fiction you have a very limited amount of space to tell appropriately your story. Therefore, you cannot go wandering off on a number of different tangents as you can (and need to do) when you are involved in writing a novel.

Another tip that you need to keep in mind when it comes to writing short fiction is the issue of character development. In a novel, you have a virtually unlimited amount of space to develop characters. However, as you know, the amount of words available to you in a piece of short fiction is so limited that you have to be very efficient in the development of your characters. Well developed characters can make the difference between a well written and a poorly written piece of fiction.

Finally, if you have never written short fiction or short stories before, you may want to take a course before you start on such an endeavour. By enrolling and participating in such a course (or even a writing seminar) you can become better adept at all of the foundational issues surrounding effective short fiction writing. Truly, taking the time to learn more about short fiction writing can lay the groundwork for your own success in this writing genre.

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