


ADVERTISING

AARP Membership & Benefits Members Edition ★ AARP Rewards Hi, Maria 

[Social Security](#) [Medicare](#) [Caregiving](#) [Games](#) [Travel](#) [More...](#)

AAI

 MEMBERS ONLY AARP MEMBERS EDITION™

10 Fantastic Short Story Collections for Your Book Club

No time to read a long novel? A good story can give your group plenty to talk about

By Maria Speidel, AARP

Published February 18, 2025

Feedback

ADVERTISING

AARP Membership & Benefits Members Edition ★ AARP Rewards Hi, Maria 

Social Security Medicare Caregiving Games Travel More...

AAI



AARP (PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE, 5; HARPER COLLINS, 2; MACMILLIAN PUBLISHERS; GETTY IMAGES)

Sometimes you don't get a chance to plow through a whole novel before your book club gathers to discuss it — or maybe you've read it cover to cover, but half the group hasn't gone past the first chapter. Life gets busy. Why not consider a great short story instead?

The short story “offers a complete experience in one sitting,” says Deborah Treisman, the fiction editor at *The New Yorker*, who selects a story for every issue. “You can sit down and have a full experience in half an hour, an hour, and walk away thinking about it. The investment is lower on your part, and the payoff is higher per minute.”



Donate to Grant Life-Changing Wishes

You can be the bridge to unbridled hope and joy for seniors. Give to Wish of a Lifetime®



Membership & Benefits
Members Edition



Hi, Maria



[Social Security](#) [Medicare](#) [Caregiving](#) [Games](#) [Travel](#) [More...](#)

AAI

Here are some collections to consider (we note where some individual stories can be found for free online):

The Best American Short Stories 2024, edited by Lauren Groff and Heidi Pitlor

Pitlor says this collection offers readers a wide selection of new writers to try, and she points to Suzanne Wang, author of “Mall of America.” “It’s about a grandfather who gets locked in a mall,” Pitlor says. “It’s incredibly moving.” And on the lighter side, Pitlor likes Katherine Damm’s [“The Happiest Day of Your Life,”](#) a humorous tale centered on a wedding with dead-on details like a cutesy chalkboard announcing signature bride-and-groom cocktails, predictable first-dance selections, and a well-told tale of a wedding guest’s marriage narrated through his escalating drunkenness and correspondingly overly friendly choice of dance partners. “It’s a funny one,” she says.

You Think It, I’ll Say It, by Curtis Sittenfeld (2018)

From her breakout first novel *Prep* (2005) onward, Curtis Sittenfeld’s privileged oddballs have sweated through various modern dilemmas. The acting out continues in this best-selling collection, which was a Reese’s Book Club pick. In [“The Prairie Wife,”](#) Kirsten, a married lesbian, cyberstalks a former lover who has blown up as an internet lifestyle guru married to a man. Then there’s the posh Dallas couple in [“The World Has](#)

ADVERTISEMENT



Membership & Benefits
Members Edition



Hi, Maria 

Social Security Medicare Caregiving Games Travel More...

AAI

reunion.

ARTICLE CONTINUES AFTER ADVERTISEMENT

Highway Thirteen, by Fiona McFarlane (2024)

Crime fiction (or true crime) book clubs will want to dive into this collection set in Australia and named a best book of the year by *Kirkus* and *The New Yorker*. The 12 fictional stories are centered on, or related to, serial killer Joe Biga – a character based on the real-life Australian murderer Ivan Milat. In [“Hostel,”](#) a story about telling stories, a woman retells a tale that her old friends had recycled for years about how they befriended one of Biga’s future victims outside a Sydney hostel one night. Or at least they think they did. In “Tourists,” a dense forest that was one of Biga’s crime scenes hosts an odd encounter between two coworkers: Lena, a blousy, middle-aged, self-declared “empath,” and Joe, a younger man from payroll with intrusive thoughts.



COMMUNITY

AARP Driver Safety

Help others get on the road to safety as a Driver Safety instructor



Membership & Benefits
Members Edition



Hi, Maria



Social Security Medicare Caregiving Games Travel More...

AAI

In Hale's story, "[Those Are as Brothers](#)," originally published in *Mademoiselle* magazine in 1941, an abused wife finds solidarity with a German Jewish refugee. If funny-sad stories are your thing, try Donald Barthelme's 1974 whirlwind, "[The School](#)." In a brisk four pages, Barthelme chronicles cycles of death and questions of love in a public school classroom.

***The End of the World Is a Cul de Sac*, by Louise Kennedy (2023)**

Kennedy is among the latest wave of hot Irish writers, including Claire Keegan, Paul Murray and Paul Lynch. Her 2022 love story set against the Troubles, *Trespases*, is set to become a TV show starring Gillian Anderson, but in this absorbing collection, she takes readers to modern, post-Troubles, post-Celtic Tiger Ireland. Your group might try the story "Powder," where a young Dubliner named Eithne begrudgingly escorts her dead boyfriend's American mother on a cringey ashes-scattering trip through Ireland's tourist hot spots. In the heartbreaking "Brittle Things," a crab fisherman and his wife keep up appearances while they wait for their young son to say his first word.

***The Best Short Stories 2024: The O. Henry Prize Winners*, edited by Amor Towles and Jenny Minton Quigley**

This year's guest editor, best-selling author Amor Towles (*The Gentleman from Moscow*), has arranged the 20 stories — which, like the previous



Membership & Benefits
Members Edition



Hi, Maria



[Social Security](#) [Medicare](#) [Caregiving](#) [Games](#) [Travel](#) [More...](#)

AAI

the search reveals long-simmering bad feelings toward her grown son and husband.

ARTICLE CONTINUES AFTER ADVERTISEMENT

A Century of Fiction in The New Yorker: 1925-2025, edited by Deborah Treisman (2025)

Treisman curated this collection of 78 stories for the magazine's 100th birthday. "I could not read everything," she says. "We've published more than 13,000 stories." But she read a lot, including everything from classics like J.D. Salinger's "[A Perfect Day for Bananafish](#)" and Shirley Jackson's "[The Lottery](#)" to "[Cat Person](#)," by Kristen Roupenian, about a texting romance gone wrong (a viral sensation when published in 2017). Treisman could not name a favorite (she loves them all). Still, she says not to expect a bookful of famous mid-century male writers writing about "middle-class marital discomfort and boredom ... and stories that end with an epiphany" when thinking about *New Yorker* short stories, which are more varied than that. "If you read through the archives, you find very few."

Will You Please Be Quiet, Please? (1976) and Cathedral (1983), by Raymond Carver

Carver, who died in 1988, was a writer's writer who pushed modern short stories in a realistic direction. "[Cathedral](#)," the title story, about a couple and their blind dinner guest, is considered his masterpiece. Irish writer

Membership & Benefits
Members Edition

Hi, Maria

[Social Security](#) [Medicare](#) [Caregiving](#) [Games](#) [Travel](#) [More...](#)

AAI

***Witness*, by Jamel Brinkley (2023)**

Groff recommends this collection of 10 tight stories set in New York City that won the Maya Angelou Book Award and was one of *The New York Times*' best books of the year. Brinkley's story "A Family," published in *The Best American Short Stories 2018*, is particularly good, with portraits of children and teens feeling their way through the adult world. A little girl in "The Happiest House on Union Street" ricochets up and down the stairs of her Crown Heights townhouse between apartments occupied by her grumpy father and free-spirited uncle. A splintering teenage friend group temporarily coheres when they encounter a neighborhood fixture, an unhoused man known only as Deadass, working at a rabbit rescue. It seems to be a particularly strange sign of the gentrification that has cropped up in their Bed-Stuy neighborhood. "I love Jamel's voice," Groff says. "I think he is delightful."

Maria Speidel is a writer who lives in Los Angeles with a house full of books.

[← More From Members Edition](#)

You Might Also Like

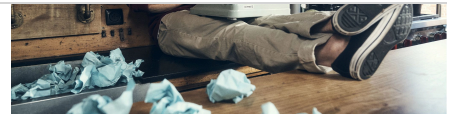
AARP® Membership & Benefits Members Edition ★ AARP Rewards Hi, Maria 

[Social Security](#) [Medicare](#) [Caregiving](#) [Games](#) [Travel](#) [More...](#)

AAI

Bad Cook'

The dynamic science-nerd chef chats about his new book 'Food for Thought,' what makes a good cook and eating weird things as a kid



 MEMBERS ONLY

Can Your Thoughts Change the Trajectory of Your Life?

She saw manifestation as just another self-improvement tactic – and then the coincidences started stacking up



 MEMBERS ONLY

Most Popular

HEALTH

Do You Still Need a Mammogram After 75?

HEALTH

7 Cancers Linked to Alcohol Use

MONEY

Amazon Prime vs. Walmart Plus: How Do These Rival Memberships Compare?

POLITICS-SOCIETY

ADVERTISEMENT



Membership & Benefits
Members Edition



Hi, Maria



[Social Security](#) [Medicare](#) [Caregiving](#) [Games](#) [Travel](#) [More...](#)

AAI



Get **The Daily** for news that matters

The latest in health, money, entertainment, jobs, and travel each weekday!

[Subscribe](#)

[See All Newsletters](#)

[Privacy Hub](#)

Recommended For You



MEMBERS ONLY



MEMBERS ONLY



MEMBERS ONLY



MEMBERS ONLY

25 Birthday Food Freebies

ADVERTISEMENT

AARP Membership & Benefits Members Edition ★ AARP Rewards Hi, Maria 

[Social Security](#) [Medicare](#) [Caregiving](#) [Games](#) [Travel](#) [More...](#)

AAI



Benefits Recommended For You

[See All >](#)



 MEMBERS ONLY

SHOPPING & GROCERIES

AARP Members Edition™...

Dozens of different recipe...



ENTERTAINMENT

AARP Games

Play free online games and...



 MEMBERS ONLY

TRAVEL

DoubleTree by Hilton™

Up to 10% off and late checkout...



 MEMBERS ONLY

INSURANCE

Allstate Roadside

Roadside protection...

ADVERTISEMENT

HOT DEALS

SAVE MONEY WITH THESE LIMITED-TIME OFFERS

ADVERTISEMENT

 Membership & Benefits
Members Edition

★ AARP Rewards

Hi, Maria 

[Social Security](#) [Medicare](#) [Caregiving](#) [Games](#) [Travel](#) [More...](#)

AAI

- [About Us](#)
- [Donate](#)
- [Volunteer](#)
- [Membership](#)
- [AARP Rewards](#)
- [Advertise with AARP](#)
- [Contact Us](#)
- [Careers at AARP](#)
- [AARP Services Inc.](#)
- [Policy & Research](#)
- [Newsletters](#)
- [AARP In Your City](#)

ADVERTISEMENT



Membership & Benefits
Members Edition



Hi, Maria



[Social Security](#) [Medicare](#) [Caregiving](#) [Games](#) [Travel](#) [More...](#)

AAI

[Senior Planet | OATS](#)

[AgeTech Collaborative™](#)

[Legal Counsel for the Elderly](#)

[Sitemap](#)

[AARP Privacy Hub](#)

[Terms of Service](#)

[Accessibility Statement](#)

[AARP Rewards Terms & Conditions](#)

[Copyright Information](#)

[Vulnerability Disclosure Program](#)

[Ad Choices](#)

ADVERTISEMENT

AARP® Membership & Benefits
Members Edition

★ AARP Rewards

Hi, Maria 

[Social Security](#)
[Medicare](#)
[Caregiving](#)
[Games](#)
[Travel](#)
[More...](#)

AAI

