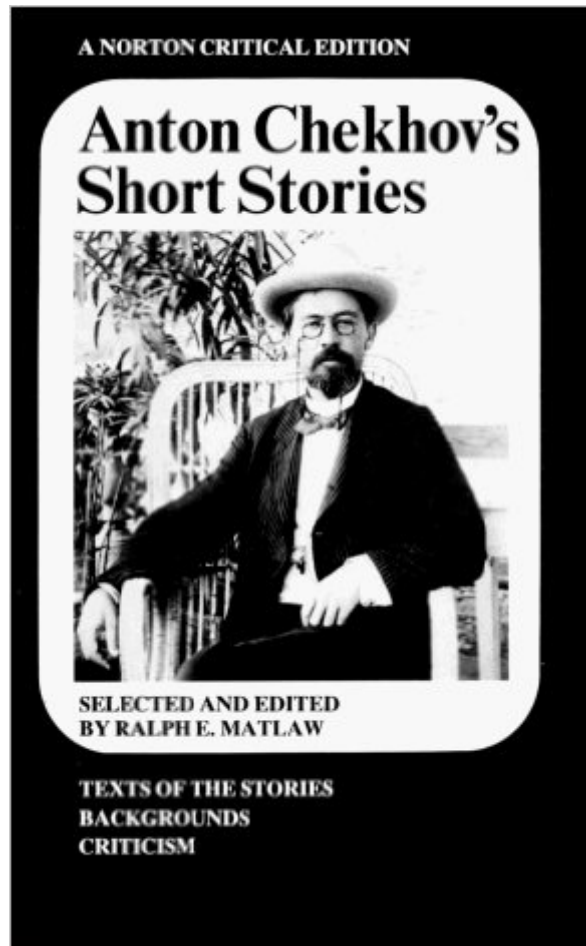


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Anton Chekhov's Short Stories (Norton Critical Editions)



Synopsis

The thirty-four stories in this volume span Chekhov's creative career. They present a wide spectrum of comic and serious themes and a variety of techniques. (His short novels, available in another Norton volume, *Seven Short Novels by Chekhov*, have been omitted.) Two of the stories have been translated for this edition by Professor Matlaw; the other translations, by Constance Garnett, Ivy Litvinov, and Marian Fell, have been revised in accordance with contemporary usage. Footnotes have been supplied wherever necessary to explain peculiarities of Russian life and the historical era in which Chekhov lived and wrote. "Backgrounds" includes a rich selection of Chekhov's letters, in new translations by Professor Matlaw, and Gorky's celebrated essay on Chekhov, translated by Ivy Litvinov. The critical essays offer general views of Chekhov's art and achievement and detailed analyses of particular stories. The critics are D. S. Mirsky, A. B. Derman (whose essay has been translated from the Russian especially for this edition), Renato Poggioli, Gleb Struve, Donald Rayfield, Karl Kramer, Virginia Llewellyn Smith, and Nils Ake Nilsson. A Selected Bibliography directs readers to resources for further study.

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Customer Reviews

I have always loved reading the work of a writer along with critical essays that provide richer insights into the work. Such an anthology brings both great stories and serious analysis of the work together. This edition also contains some of Chekhov's memorable correspondence. After reading many Chekhov stories I think it is possible to venture a few generalizations about the essence of his art.

First of all he is a great creator of human character, of idiosyncratic individuals. He too is a master of depicting the clash between the inner dream and longing of the individual and the cruel reality that he faces. The child Vanka who desperately writes letters to his grandfather in the hope of escaping a life of virtual slavery is a prominent example in this work. Chekhov is a writer with a great heart and great feeling for the inner emotions of his characters. And he creates in the reader a sympathy for those characters. Consider the story 'The Darling' in which a woman's loving and caring and positive nature, a nature which totally supports and takes upon herself the husband or in the end the imagined step-child she cares for, persists through the various individuals who are part of her life. Chekhov is the writer who makes us feel the twilight poignance of life, the great heartbreak of human souls in longing and disappointment. So many of his characters are dreamers, longing for a reality which the crude tough world before them either ignores or violently contradicts. I think that in an age in which people talk about 'post-character literature' it is important to see how much of a great writer's greatness is in the creation of characters, vibrant human beings that the reader can identify with. Chekhov is also the great portrayer of human folly, and does this with irony and humor.

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