HOW TO WRITE SHORT STORIES
[with samples]
BY RING W. LARDNER
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STORY LINES

This program is open to high school students of special promise and ability who will be entering grades 10, 11, or 12 next fall or who will just have graduated from high school this spring. Students admitted to the program must have at least a 3.0 cumulative grade point average on a 4.0-point scale or its equivalent.

Tuition is $500. Scholarships are available, but only for students demonstrating true financial need. Admissions are determined on a need-blind basis. No student will be prevented from participating in the program because of inability to pay tuition.

Classes are held at the University of Houston Central Campus, Monday – Friday, except 4 July. This program is meant to be enjoyable, but only for students demonstrating true financial need. Admissions are determined on a need-blind basis. No student will be prevented from participating in the program because of inability to pay tuition.

To apply, fill out the student section of this form and then have a teacher or counselor who knows you well complete the recommendation section. Your teacher or counselor should then mail the completed form along with an official transcript verifying your grades and PSAT scores plus any additional documentation required for scholarship consideration to:

Wonderworks
PO Box 667550
Houston, TX 77266-7550

To ensure full consideration, applications must be received by 2 May; early applications are encouraged.

All applicants will be notified by 23 May; early applicants will be notified sooner. Late applications will be considered only if space remains available. If you have questions or need additional information, e-mail info@wonderworkshouston.org or call 713.301.4882.

Ring Lardner (b. Ringgold Wilmer Lardner, Niles, Michigan, 6 March 1885; d. New York, 25 September 1933) was an American original and one of the discoveries you may be making for the first time this summer in STORY LINES. The title for the collection was suggested by his friend F. Scott Fitzgerald and used despite the objection of another of Fitzgerald’s friends, the critic Edmund Wilson. It includes two of Lardner’s very best stories, “The Golden Honeymoon” and “Some Like Them Cold,” the second of which he also turned into a successful play, June Moon (1931), in collaboration with George S. Kaufman. The (uncredited) illustration is by John Held, Jr., one of the most distinctive graphic talents of the Jazz Age (Fitzgerald named that too). Here is what a few of Lardner’s fans have said about him: Lardner has the habit of catching human beings when they think no one is looking at them...How to Write Short Stories, with zany introductions and his own stories appended as samples, was generally taken as the first proof of his serious talent.

Gibert Selde, The Portable Ring Lardner (Viking 1946)

Interviewer: Were the classics mentioned in The Optimist’s Daughter (i.e., Tennyson, Dickens, and Gibson) in your parents’ library?

Eudora Welty: Yes, they were. Besides Mark Twain, Henry James and Ring Lardner – he’s a classic to me.

Jan Nordby Greutlund, Southern Humanities Review (Summer 1980)

The English tourist in American literature wants above all things something different from what he has at home....But Mr. Lardner is not merely unaware that we differ; he is unaware that we exist....So [he] does not waste a moment when he writes in thinking whether he is using American slang or Shakespeare’s English; whether he is remembering Fielding or forgetting Fielding; whether he is proud of being American or ashamed of not being Japanese; all his mind is on the story. Hence all our minds are on the story. Hence, incidentally, he writes the best prose that has come our way.

Virginia Woolf, “American Fiction,” The Saturday Review of Literature, 1 August 1925

Every good story is of course both a picture and an idea, and the more they are interfused the better the problem is solved.

HENRY JAMES “Guy de Maupassant,” Fortnightly Review, March 1888

...nobody knows anything about the laws of fiction; or what its relation is to life; or to what effects it can lend itself. We can only trust our instincts. If instinct leads one reader to call Scott a storyteller, another to call him a master of romance; if one reader is moved by art, another by life, each is right, and each can pile a card-house of theory on top of his opinion as high as he can go....A book fades like a mist, like a dream. How are we to take a stick and point to that tone, that relation, in the vanishing pages?...


...P. J. Wodehouse...was said to laugh as he wrote. Well, sometimes I do too.

EUDORA WELTY interviewed by Jean Todd Freeman, 1977

There are many bungalows as well as mansions in the house of fiction, each raised according to its author’s own lights (though sometimes with an eye to movie rights). This summer we can lend you the keys to some of the best small houses for overnight and weekend reads – short stories, long stories, and occasional short novels. This page-turning, time-share assortment of spell-binding stories will be further explored, one-by-one, in short lectures and longer reflections/discussions each morning before lunch. After lunch, a film based on a short fiction source will be introduced, screened and discussed.

The authors you read will include some of the usual suspects – Gogol, Flaubert, de Maupassant, Chekhov, Woolf, Welty – and others who may come as a surprise – Lardner, Chandler, Wodehouse, Lampedusa, Philip Roth, Barthelme, Munro, McMurtry, Trevor and Lahiri. None of them should bore you. Same goes for the movies.

You’ll also have the opportunity to try your own hand/keyboard at short fiction, but reading is the heart of the matter. As Eudora Welty said: “I think always I loved writing because I loved reading. I don’t mean I get my stories out of books – I don’t. They spring from living. And not that I literally take things from real life, but it’s living that makes me want to write, not reading – although it’s reading that makes me love writing.” Try it and see.

For avid readers only.

This program is made possible in part by support from Houston Endowment Inc. and The Brown Foundation.
To be completed by the student:
Which program are you applying for? (circle one)
☐ Yes ☐ No

1. General Information
   - Name (last, first, middle)
   - Address
   - City/zip code
   - Telephone
   - Fax (if any)
   - Sex
   - High school
   - Grade you will enter fall 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th, college
graduate?
   - Mother/female guardian’s name
   - Father/male guardian’s name
   - Occupation
   - Address
   - E-mail (your own or that of a parent or teacher – specify)
   - Date of birth
   - Telephone (home, cell)
   - E-mail address
   - Title
   - Signature of parent or guardian
   - School district
   - Address
   - City/zip code
   - Name (last, first, middle)
   - Sex
   - Address
   - Title
   - Signature of school official
   - Printed name of school official

2. Need-based financial aid
   - To be completed by the student and parent or guardian ONLY if applying for financial aid:
     - Do you receive a federally subsidized free or reduced-cost lunch at school? ☐ Yes ☐ No
     - Have you seen a school official verify below?
       - Signature of school official
       - Printed name of school official

   - SSN

3. Academic profile
   - To be filled out by a teacher who knows you well and/or a counselor. Your teacher or counselor should then mail this application, along with an official transcript and unofficial copies of PSAT score reports plus any supporting documentation for financial aid, directly to:
     WONDERWORKS, PO Box 667550
     Houston, Texas 77266-7550

Your application cannot be processed without an official transcript and PSAT scores.

4. Early applications
   - Applications due no later than May 2016. Early decisions for 2016-17 will be announced on or before May 20. Admission is limited to students who demonstrate financial need according to criteria specified in the financial aid section of the application form. To sustain this policy, no other financial aid is offered apart from need-based tuition waivers.

5. Financial aid
   - For full consideration, applications must be received by 2 May 2016; all applicants will be notified of acceptance by 30 May. Early applications are encouraged and will receive early decisions. If you have further questions, please e-mail info@wonderworkshouston.org or call 713.301.4882.

6. How to apply
   - Applications due no later than 2 May 2016. Early decisions for early applications!

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WONDERWORKS Summer 2016
P.O. Box 667550   Houston, Texas 77266-7550
www.wonderworkshouston.org

BONUS!

College Essay Workshop
18-21 July
An interactive opportunity to brainstorm, organize, develop, and refine preliminary responses to one or several of the common application essay prompts for 2016-17. Students will examine, discuss, and practice writing multiple drafts of each prompt (or prompts) of their choosing. Some out-of-class writing will be required. Available only to students who successfully complete any of the Wonderworks Summer 2016 programs.
M-Th, 10 AM – 4 PM; FREE

Wonderworks Summer 2016 is produced in collaboration with the
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