

Who is Alice Munro?

Canadian short story writer who was born in 1931 in Canada. Her father was a farmer and her mother was a schoolteacher. She is of Irish and Scottish descent. She began writing as a teenager, publishing her first story, "The Dimensions of a Shadow", in 1950 while studying English and Journalism at the University of Western Ontario.

In 1951, she left the university to marry fellow student James Munro. In 1963, the couple opened Munro's Books, where she wrote secretly. She had four daughters Sheila (1953), Catherine (1955), Jenny (1957) and Andrea (1966); Catherine died 15 hours after birth. Alice was divorced in 1972 and she got married again in 1976 to Gerald Fremlin.

In 1968, Munro published her first collection of stories, *Dance of the Happy Shades*, which was highly acclaimed and achieved great success. Since then, she has created hundreds of short-stories and received plenty of awards and honours.

She won the Man Booker International Prize in 2009, honoring her lifetime body of work. In 2013 she won the Nobel Prize in Literature at the age of 82 and the Swedish Academy called her "a master of the contemporary short story". She is the thirteenth woman who won it since 1901 and the first author awarded for writing tales.

Munro's work has been described as having revolutionized the architecture of short stories, especially in its tendency to move forward and backward in time. Her stories have been said to "embed more than announce, reveal more than parade.

Munro's prose reveals the ambiguities of life: "ironic and serious at the same time," "mottoes of godliness and honor and flaming bigotry," "special, useless knowledge," "tones of shrill and happy outrage," "the bad taste, the heartlessness, the joy of it."

Why short stories?

"Why do I like to write short stories? Well, I certainly didn't intend to. I was going to write a novel. And still! I still come up with ideas for novels. And I even start novels. But something happens to them. They break up. I look at what I really want to do with the material, and it never turns out to be a novel.

But when I was younger, it was simply a matter of expediency. I had small children, I didn't have any help. Some of this was before the days of automatic washing machines, if you can actually believe it. There was no way I could get that kind of time. I couldn't look ahead and say, this is going to take me a year, because I thought every moment something might happen that would take all time away from me.

Reading Club - Session I

Alice Munro Short Stories

So I wrote in bits and pieces with a limited time expectation. Perhaps I got used to thinking of my material in terms of things that worked that way. And then when I got a little more time, I started writing these odder stories, which branch out a lot.”

Alice Munro

This time we will read...

The story chosen for this first session will be *Runaway*, published in the magazine *New Yorker* in 2003. Afterwards, it was included in a book of short stories titled as well *Runaway*. Some of the other stories inspired Pedro Almodóvar to write its movies *La piel que habito* and *Julieta*.

You can find *Runaway* in this link: <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2003/08/11/runaway-4>

More Short Stories

If you are interested, you can find more works of this author in the next two links:

<http://www.openculture.com/2013/10/read-14-short-stories-from-nobel-prize-winning-writer-alice-munro-free-online.html>

<https://nothingintherulebook.com/2016/12/08/16-short-stories-by-alice-munro-you-can-read-for-free-right-now/>