THE SHORT STORY
ANALYSIS AND ENJOYMENT

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A Lion lay asleep in the forest, his great head resting on his paws. A timid little Mouse came upon him unexpectedly, and in her fright and haste to get away, she ran across the Lion's nose.

Roused from his nap, the Lion laid his huge paw angrily on the tiny creature to kill her.

"Spare me!" begged the poor Mouse. "Please let me go, and someday I will surely repay you."

The Lion was much amused to think that a Mouse could ever help him. But he was generous, and he finally let the Mouse go.

Some days later, while stalking his prey in the forest, the Lion was caught in the hunter's net.

Unable to free himself, he filled the forest with his angry roaring. The Mouse knew the voice and quickly found the Lion struggling in the net.

Running to one of the great ropes that bound him, she gnawed and chewed on it until it parted, and soon the Lion was free.

"You laughed when I said I would repay you," said the Mouse. "Now you see that even a Mouse can help a Lion."

The moral is: *A kindness is never wasted.*
The Shepherd Boy and the Wolf

A Shepherd Boy tended his master's Sheep near a dark forest not far from the village. Soon he found life in the pasture very dull. All he could do to amuse himself was to talk to his dog or play on his shepherd's pipe.

One day as he sat watching the Sheep and the quiet forest, and reflecting on what he would do should he see a Wolf, he thought of a plan to amuse himself.

His Master had told him to call for help should a Wolf attack the flock, and the Villagers would drive it away. So now, though he had not seen anything that even looked like a Wolf, he ran toward the village shouting at the top of his voice, "Wolf! Wolf!"

As he expected, the Villagers who heard the cry dropped their work and ran in great excitement to the pasture. But when they got there, they found the Boy doubled up with laughter at the trick he had played on them.

A few days later the Shepherd Boy again shouted, "Wolf! Wolf!" Again, the Villagers ran to help him, only to be laughed at again.

Then one evening as the sun was setting behind the forest and the shadows were creeping out over the pasture, a Wolf really did spring from the underbrush and fall upon the Sheep.

In terror the Boy ran toward the village shouting "Wolf! Wolf!" But though the Villagers heard the cry, they did not run to help him as they had before. "He cannot fool us again," they said.

The Wolf killed a great many of the Boy's sheep and then slipped away into the forest.

The moral is: Liars are not believed even when they speak the truth.
The Appointment in Samarra
(as retold by W. Somerset Maugham [1933])

There was a merchant in Bagdad who sent his servant to market to buy provisions and in a little while the servant came back, white and trembling, and said, Master, just now when I was in the marketplace I was jostled by a woman in the crowd and when I turned I saw it was Death that jostled me. She looked at me and made a threatening gesture, now, lend me your horse, and I will ride away from this city and avoid my fate. I will go to Samarra and there Death will not find me. The merchant lent him his horse, and the servant mounted it, and he dug his spurs in its flanks and as fast as the horse could gallop he went. Then the merchant went down to the marketplace and he saw me standing in the crowd and he came to me and said, Why did you make a threatening gesture to my servant when you saw him this morning? That was not a threatening gesture, I said, it was only a start of surprise. I was astonished to see him in Bagdad, for I had an appointment with him tonight in Samarra.

Augusto Monterroso, The Dinosaur (El dinosaurio)

Cuando despertó, el dinosaurio todavía estaba allí.

When (he/she/it/they) woke up, the dinosaur was still there.
The Gift of the Magi
By O. Henry

"The Gift of the Magi" is a notable short story by O. Henry—one of the most famous short story writers of all times—first published in 1905. The story tells of a young husband and wife and how they deal with the challenge of buying secret Christmas gifts for each other with very little money. As a sentimental story with a moral lesson about gift-giving, it has been popular for adaptation, especially for presentation at Christmas time. The plot and its twist ending are well-known, and the ending is generally considered an example of comic irony.

Plot summary

On Christmas Eve, with only one day left to find a Christmas gift for her husband James Dillingham Young, Della sells her hair for $20 to a nearby hairdresser named Madame Sofronie. She eventually finds a platinum pocket watch chain for Jim's watch for $21 and is satisfied that she has found the perfect gift for Jim.

Later that night, Della admits to Jim that she sold her hair to buy him his present. Jim gives Della her present – a set of combs, useless now that her hair is shortened. Della then shows Jim the chain she bought for him, to which Jim says he sold his watch to get the money to buy her ornamental combs. Although Jim and Della are now left with gifts that neither one can use, they realize how far they are willing to go to show their love for each other, and how priceless their love really is.

The story ends with the narrator comparing the sacrificial gifts of love with those of the Biblical Magi.
THE PERSPECTIVE (POINT OF VIEW) OF THE NARRATOR

First-person
Third-person
Omniscient

Reliable narrator vs. unreliable narrator

Tone
PLOT ELEMENTS

- Exposition
- Action
- Dialogue
- Suspense
- Turning point
- Climax
- Denouement
Open ending vs. closed ending

Implicit theme/message vs. explicit theme/message

LANGUAGE

IRONY