

Please Like What You See and Other Stories

Compiled and edited by Blanche Scheffler

Illustrated by Leon Bellingan

Contributing authors

Sally Partridge • Edyth Bulbring • Fred Khumalo • MJ Honikman
Toby Bennett • Ekow Duker • Cicely van Straten • Pamela Newham
Nerine Dorman • Dumisani Hlatswayo • Marion Marchand
Mbali Sikakana • Shafinaaz Hassim • Toon van der Merwe • Mike Spies
Paulina Matidza • Anette Stolp • Elrica East • Frances Vermaak



**BEST
BOOKS**

Introduction

The short story is a unique literary genre in that it may catch only a moment or span an enormous amount of time. It may outline events or suggest more than meets the eye; it may introduce you to new worlds or re-acquaint you with the familiar. It may poke fun at, comment on, criticise, empathise with, remain neutral, merely report, or bring into sharp focus. The short story form is supple and may be adapted to shape and enrich our awareness of the human landscape. This landscape features themes such as good and ill, justice and injustice, prejudice and tolerance, love, jealousy and hatred, of our potential and limitations – in short, our world and the lives we live in it.

The variety and range of short stories are endless, as are the possibilities they provide for enjoyment, discussion and debate. Stories are told to entertain but may also express a view of life within a particular context, which in turn may be personal, social or political. A story often raises questions, challenging the reader to consider a serious issue. Sometimes, an author suggests answers, but the reader can draw their conclusions and respond accordingly. Reading superficially, one follows the storyline and is aware of different characters' roles; a more intensive reading may "open up" new perspectives about familiar situations and issues. Whatever the reader's approach, the story will entertain and enlighten.

If our norm is that the story must come to life, it will in some way reflect the human landscape – what makes us "tick" within the context of our times and circumstances. To present a wide range of reading experiences, we have collected original stories with literary merit, and that vary in:

- their structure (the plot and the role different characters play in the story)
- the setting (the physical context within which an incident or event take place)
- the author's technique (the narrative mode, tone of the narrator, language elements)
- the focus (the action, characterisation, description, issues)
- their underlying themes (their personal, social and/or universal relevance).

The setting establishes a physical and period context for the story, placing characters and events in a particular time, place and background. The scene is also the physical environment where events take place. In some stories, the physical environment is merely the background, for example, in "My Great Redeemer" and "Life in Hammanskraal". In some stories, the physical environment features so strongly that it seems to play an active part in the story ("Cold", "Rain", and "First Contact"). The setting may also suggest or underline a theme ("The Queen's Blessing", "A Rainbow-coloured Farewell" and, "Shot!"). Settings may range from the world of the folk tale to a world in which technology influences how people interact.

Conflict, a struggle of some kind, is often a key element in a story. It may take the form of a struggle between characters, as in "My Great Redeemer". It may also dig into the individual character's effort to make a mature choice, as in "Please Like What You See", "Shot!" and "Daisy and Flower Girl". Conflict arising from socio-political events

directly bears the sequence of events in “The Queen’s Blessing” and “A Rainbow-coloured Farewell”. At the same time, an encounter with the previously unknown leads to a physical fight in “First Contact” and in “Nisa Qamar and the Time-Keeper’s Manifesto” to a discovery of purpose in life. “The Puppet Master” offers different perspectives on inner conflict and how one may resolve it.

We hope that you will enjoy the texts included in this anthology. The stories cover a range of forms, styles and themes ranging from the anecdotal (“My Great Redeemer”) to folk tales (“The Dragon Tree”, “Going North”, and “Phumelele and the Bird”) and amusing stories (“A Far Cry from Home” and “Rain”). Some stories cover the impact historical events have on family life (“Soot” and “A Rainbow-coloured Farewell”) to subtle stories about personal and social relationships (“Please Like What You See”, “The Puppet Master”, “Daisy and Flower Girl” and “Nisa Qamar and the Time-Keeper’s Manifesto”). Other stories have surprising endings (“Invisible Mending” and “The Red Metal Café”). And finally, from science fiction (“First Contact”) to true stories (“Red-handed!” and “Life in Hammanskraal”) and socio-political satire (“The Queen’s Blessing” and “A Rainbow-coloured Farewell”).

The stories are organised according to a particular literary feature so that the reader can enjoy the various ways authors deal with plot, characterisation, narrative mode or style and tone to express the theme and underline values.

We hope that the illustrations accompanying the stories will add to your reading pleasure.

Blanche Scheffler and authors

Red-handed!

Mike Spies

Pre-reading questions

- What do you associate with the word “poaching”?
- To which places do you think will our president take an important visitor to showcase our country’s natural beauty?

During reading questions

- Note the setting.
- Consult the map as you follow the sequence of events.
- Trace what Mike did to follow up on his suspicions.
- Consider the role technology played in the events.

Red-handed!

On the morning of 25 July 2019, I decided to go in search of flowers for our flower tour that was coming in about a week.

You may well ask: Why would I go looking for flowers? What flower tour?

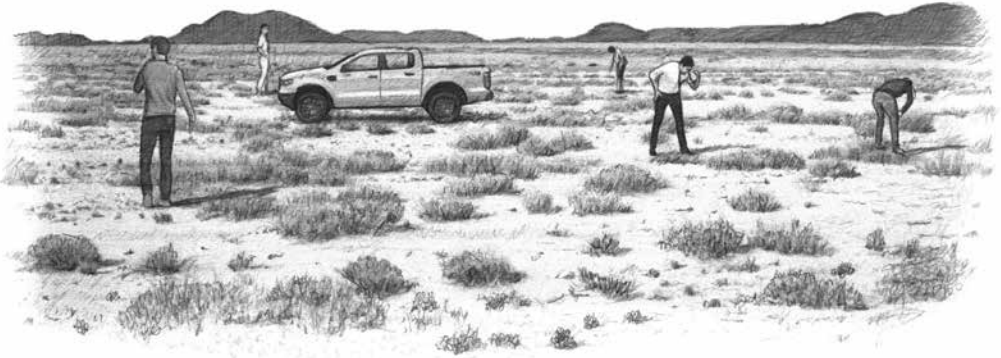
Well, I own and operate a tour bus business in the North-Western Cape. Part of what I do is to make sure I take my guests to spots where they’d see many, many flowers in full bloom, as well as some of the fascinating succulents° growing there. In other words, I go “flower spotting” to plan the routes we’d take.

° succulent – plant with thick, juicy leaves

So I went north from Vanrhynsdorp at 08:15 to go to places in the Hardeveld, like Rietpoort and Molsvlei, basically little places off the beaten track°.

On the way, I came across a Ford Ranger bakkie parked in the middle of nowhere and was surprised to see five people in the veld. What were they doing there, in the Knersvlakte, an extremely arid°, “empty” kind of region that has a maximum annual rainfall of 40 mm in a good year?

° off the beaten track – out of the way places
° arid – dry, desert-like



As it looked very strange to me and I knew about poaching taking place in the area, I decided to investigate. I stopped right in front of their vehicle. They looked up when they saw me, but it didn't look as if they were going to approach; it seemed they were waiting for me to leave. Which, of course, I didn't do.

I called Wynand, someone I knew at Cape Nature and described the scene to him. He agreed that it did seem very strange that people were there. As he was actually on his way to the Knersvlakte, he would investigate.

My original plan had been to go to Bitterfontein, the next town, from where I would go to Nuwerust. As I'd be turning off at Bitterfontein, I'd keep him informed of what the people were doing, whether they stopped or carried on, so that he could let Nature Park rangers know about what was going on. I'd be following them until Bitterfontein, where I would turn off to go to Rietpoort. I did not expect my quarry° to go there, so I'd probably lose them then.

° quarry - people being followed

I was about to turn off at Bitterfontein when I noticed that those people had stopped at a roadside rest stop just outside Bitterfontein. So I stopped behind the filling station building and watched them through my binoculars. They just walked around, got back in their vehicle again, and set off in a northerly direction.

So I contacted Wynand again. I told him I was concerned and suggested that he inform the police at Garies and also warn the Richtersveld Nature Conservation Team about the poachers. Like the Knersvlakte, the Richtersveld is also very well known for its stunning succulents. I wasn't going to follow the people any further.

Life in Hammanskraal

Paulina Matidza



Pre-reading questions

- Describe the roles your mother or father plays in your life.
- What do you think it feels like not to have a steady job?

During reading questions

- Note the dangers on the road mentioned in the text.
- Trace what individuals do to help others.
- Decide whether you agree with Sam and his friends.

Life in Hammanskraal

What is life? What does it mean?

Let me tell you about the lives of four people living in Hammanskraal°, near Pretoria – Phonia, Peter, Marilyn and myself, Paulina.

It was 03:15 when Phonia woke. Her daughter and the twins were still asleep, so she got up quietly, put the kettle on, and got dressed. Her taxi was leaving at 04:15, and she could not afford to be late. But first, she prepared breakfast for herself and the children – oats with raisins. (Lerato loved raisins!) There were apples too, and coffee. She gulped

° Hammanskraal – region in the northern parts of City of Tshwane (then Pretoria)

With a gasp, Cecil recognised the groom. He sprang up and, pointing at the groom, cried out: "Hey, I know you! You're Edward's dad!"

Cecil turned to Koos and said, "He's our next-door neighbour in England. He has a wife and three kids, and he's still married to her. His son Edward is my best friend!"

Pandemonium! The stunned bride looked as if she would faint, the bride's parents jumped up, and the bride's father, a hefty farmer, grabbed hold of the groom and demanded, "Is that true!?"

° pandemonium -
chaos, disorder

Without a word or a backward glance at Sannie, Charles Hogg fled like a gazelle escaping from a lion.

Never having a good party go to waste; the guests were invited to stay and enjoy themselves.

And young Cecil? He'd made friends that would last him a lifetime. And he knew he would never tell his friend about this particular adventure. 📖📖

Post-reading contextual question

Reread the story. Carefully read the marked text (📖 to 📖) in the story and answer the following questions.

1. Quote THREE consecutive words that indicate why Cecil initially wants to tell Edward about the wedding. (1)
2. Identify the reason why Cecil and his new friends "slipped in" and did not just go and sit down somewhere. (1)
3. Summarise what Cecil accuses Mr Hogg of. (2)
4. Give an OUTLINE of what happens at the wedding. (4)
5. Compare the "celebrity atmosphere" to the pandemonium that soon follows. (3)
6. Identify the figure of speech in the paragraph beginning with "Without a word . . ." Explain why this image is suitable in the circumstances. (3)
7. What do you think Edward would say if Cecil did, in fact, tell him about this incident? (2)
8. Explain to what extent this episode demonstrates that having an adventure may have unforeseen consequences. (3)
9. What do Charles Hogg's actions reveal about him in the context of universal moral values? (2)
10. Discuss your response to this incident. Relate your comments to the fact that it forms a climax to the story. (4)

[TOTAL: 25]

Shot!

Cicely van Straten

Pre-reading questions

- Consider the title and try to relate it to the pictures accompanying the text.
- What does the exclamation mark in the title suggest to you about what happens in the story?

During reading questions

- Consider whether the boy's age is important.
- Note every reference to "gentle" scattered throughout the story.
- Work out what the theme is.

Shot!

Shot!

Hat aslant° he strode, lord of the stippled plantations, squinting into the green gloom of foliage at stars of sunlight winking through a leaf. An oriole sang, and his arms swung up, gun-formed – *peechoo-peechoo-smack!* – and golden, it hurtled to the dust at his feet – bright, invisible bird – and he cut off the wings and stuck them in his hatband.

° aslant – skew, to one side



golden oriole



lilac-breasted roller

He scoured the dark, holy places with pillaging hawk's eyes where miraculous birds glided like flowering fish in green waters. His velskoens° slapped the orange dust into puffs, his toes poked through grinning leather. His pockets bulged with airgun pellets and stolen scoff°, he the young god Mercury° with the crimson wings of loeries° and of lilac-breasted rollers, cresting his head. *Shot!* Death flew from his right hand to pierce the canopy of song, to send spinning into oblivion° the white-eyes that tumbled, dizzy with greed, through veils of coffee-blossom.

- ° velskoens (Afrikaans *velskoene*) – Southern African shoes made from vegetable-tanned leather or soft rawhide with a rubber sole
- ° scoff – food
- ° god Mercury – Roman god of skill, and associated with hunting
- ° loeries – fanned-headed parrot-like fruit-eating species of birds
- ° oblivion – disappear into thin air, forgotten



white-eye

Glossary of literary terms

action – what happens, what characters do

allegory – an extended metaphor that usually depicts abstract ideas

***alliteration** – juxtaposed similar consonant sounds to create an effect, mood, rhythm, and so forth, for example, “She stretched her short, solid body up straight” in “Soot.”

allusion – a reference to another work of literature/art/person/event/mythological character used to derive a similar meaning from another work to enrich the narrative

***ambiguity** – a statement that holds different ways of interpretation

***anecdote** – a brief account of an incident, often of a personal experience

antagonist – a character in conflict with the main character

***anticlimax** – an unexciting event or undramatic response that you expected it to be, or the tone changes from serious to the ordinary or a humorous tone, for example, satirical effect

***antithesis** – the use of opposing thoughts to emphasise the contrast, for example, “good” opposed to “bad”

***assonance** – juxtaposed similar vowel sounds or phonemes to create an effect, mood, rhythm

***caricature** – an exaggerated focus of a character’s prominent feature/s or a personality trait to ridicule or criticise it, for example, a character who undergoes no recognisable development

catastrophe – a tragic climax of events

character – a person in a story; the moral qualities that make up a person

a flat character – a one-dimensional character with a readily recognised trait

a rounded character – a character with resonating personality traits who are driven by motives and can develop and change or alter their behaviour or reasoning for the better

characterisation – how an author portrays the characters in a story

***climax** – the crisis point at which the greatest intensity breaks, the high point in a story, usually followed by its resolution (denouement), and the outcome is decided (*forms part of the dramatic structure*)

conclusion (ending) – the last or final part of a story

***conflict** – the resolution of the central problem or issue in a plot involving the main character struggling with another character or obstacle. The conflict can be internal or external. (*Forms part of the dramatic structure.*)

consistency – an essential coherence in the structure, style and tone of a story

***contrast** – opposite characteristics, words, situations or ideas

crisis – a decisive moment in a plot when the tension reaches its peak

***denouement** – the resolution of complexities at the end of a plot to give the reader more insight (*forms part of dramatic structure*)

discovery – the revelation of facts previously unknown to a character

***dramatic irony** – when the plot makes way for more insight so that the reader has more information about a current situation than one or more of the characters themselves have

echo – the repetition of the same idea, image or theme

ellipsis – the omission of words, represented by three ellipsis points (. . .) to indicate that thought continues, used to emphasise the omitted thought

***emotive language** – having to do with feelings

empathy – identification with a character or situation; a feeling stronger than sympathy

Alphabetical list of words and phrases

- abyss** – chasm, fissure
acrimoniously – bitterly (in conflict)
Adonis – mythical Greek handsome young man
Africana – books, maps and documents historically important to heritage in Africa
albinism – having no colouring pigment in the skin and eyes that are very sensitive to light
aliens – strangers, foreign as if from another planet
all and sundry – everyone
allure – attractive, glamour
alpha – very strong, having leadership qualities
anecdote – story about a real incident or a person
anticipation – expectation
antique – ancient (here) very old furniture and gadgets
antique – very old
appendages – attachments, features that seemed attached (to her)
arid – dry, desert-like
Armoury – military storage compound where weapons are made and kept
aslant – skew, to one side
assailed – attacked
asthma – chronic lung problem that makes breathing difficult
astrolabe – instrument navigators use to determine latitude
asylum – written permission that allows a refugee to stay in South Africa
attested to – bore witness, agreed
audacity – bold, daring
authentic – real
baby shower – party to celebrate a woman who is expecting a baby, usually given gifts for the expected baby
Babylonstoren – one of the oldest Cape Dutch farms (1692). It was at first a wine and wheat farm. It was transformed and restored and offers tourist attractions such as various lush gardens, restaurants, deli, a shop, and so forth. It sits at the foot of Simonsberg in the Franschhoek valley.
bakkie – light-duty pickup truck with an open cargo area
barricaded – blocked
bass – name for an extensive number of fishes
bastard – unpleasant and unworthy person
bastion – protector
beckoning – calling
bedrock – underlying hard, solid rock, e.g., below soil, roads, gravel
benefactor – friendly helper
bloggers – people who regularly jot down articles about specific topics on internet platforms, e.g. Tumblr, WordPress
bluff – pretence
Boers (Afrikaans for) – Afrikaners, farmers
botany – scientific study of plants
bough – central branch of a tree
bouzouki music – traditional Greek music played on balalaikas
bozo – insignificant person
braai (Afrikaans) – South African traditional grilling or roasting meat over open coals
bredie (Afrikaans) – stew made with mutton or beef and vegetables
bring home the bacon – earn the money that is needed to live
bucket list – list of extraordinary things one wants to do (before one dies)
burly – large, strong heavy
butter churn – mechanical device used to transform cream into butter
cadet's manual – trainee soldier's manual of instructions
calabash – (*here* container) gourd harvested to dry out and use as utensil, drinking vessel/container or musical instrument
cannot make waves – shock or upset people with something new or different
Cape Point – mountainous and scenic area at the southeast corner of the Cape Peninsula
careered – moved quickly and in an uncontrollable way
cascading – (*here*) streaming down his face
casket – similar to a coffin, just different in shape
Catherine the Great – Catherine II, Empress of Russia, who ruled from 1762–1796
caverns – hollows underground
Chapman's Peak – mountain on the western side of the Cape Peninsula
chappies – flavoured chewing gum
charismatic – charming, fascinating, inspiring devotion in others
chasm – fissure, split
Check Republic – the Czech Republic, a landlocked country in Central Europe bordering Austria (south), Poland (northeast), Germany