

# More Classic American Short Stories

**Ambrose Bierce** A Horseman in the Sky

**Kate Chopin** Regret

**James Fenimore Cooper** Eclipse

**Stephen Crane** The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky

**O. Henry** The Cop and the Anthem, The Princess and the Puma, The Whirligig of Life

Read by **Garrick Hagon** and **Liza Ross**



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1	<b>A Horseman in the Sky</b> by <b>Ambrose Bierce</b> (1842–c1914)	4:31
2	The sleeping sentinel in the clump of laurel...	5:42
3	Is it then so terrible to kill an enemy...	3:25
4	At that moment an officer of the Federal force...	5:29
5	<b>Eclipse</b> by <b>James Fenimore Cooper</b> (1789–1851)	3:48
6	And the first movement in the morning...	4:10
7	Our family assembled early.	7:26
8	A painful tragedy had been recently enacted...	5:58
9	When I left the courthouse...	5:13
10	My thoughts turned to the sea.	5:04
11	Thus far the sensation created by this majestic spectacle...	5:45
12	<b>Regret</b> by <b>Kate Chopin</b> (1851–1904)	5:32
13	At night, when she ordered them one and all to bed...	5:44
14	<b>The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky</b> by <b>Stephen Crane</b> (1871–1900)	3:49
15	To the minds of the pair...	3:21
16	As a matter of truth...	2:55
17	The bride looked anxiously at him...	2:47
18	The California Express on the Southern Railway...	1:18
19	Save for the busy drummer and his companions...	2:38
20	‘No, he can’t break down that door,’ replied the barkeeper.	2:45

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21	'You see,' he whispered...	1:09
22	A man in a maroon-colored flannel shirt...	1:56
23	There was no offer of fight; no offer of fight.	2:57
24	Presently there came the spectacle of a man...	0:27
25	Potter and his bride walked sheepishly...	2:49
26	His enemy's face went livid.	3:30
27	<b>The Cop and the Anthem</b> by <b>O. Henry</b> (1862–1910)	6:01
28	Soapy turned off Broadway. It seemed that his route...	6:27
29	Disconsolate, Soapy ceased his unavailing racket.	5:43
30	<b>The Princess and the Puma</b> by <b>O. Henry</b>	3:47
31	One day Ripley Givens rode over to the Double Elm Ranch...	4:23
32	Josefa was standing in her tracks...	4:52
33	Yes, there was even admiration in her gaze now.	5:04
34	<b>The Whirligig of Life</b> by <b>O. Henry</b>	5:36
35	The Justice was just about to hand one of the documents...	4:45
36	The next day came the little red bull...	6:50

**Total time: 2:33:55**

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The stories in this collection reveal America in its rawness, its humour and its natural splendour, presenting a rich panorama of location and character and social detail. These authors loved the land, its history and its people. They knew both the beauty and the toughness of life in emerging America

**Ambrose Bierce** (1842–c.1914) was born in Ohio, educated in Indiana and lived in many different parts of America. He was to become one of the most celebrated short story writers and journalists of his day. A veteran of the Civil War, he wrote realistically and sympathetically of the sufferings of soldiers. His success as a writer of ghost stories may have been prophetic, since he himself disappeared mysteriously on a trip to Mexico in 1914 and was never seen again. In the novel *The Old Gringo* by Carlos Fuentes (1985), the

author imagines what the final days of Ambrose Bierce may have been.

*The Horseman in the Sky* is a dramatic tale of a father and son who find themselves on opposite sides in the Civil War, where the son's fulfilment of his promise to 'do his duty' leads to the inevitable and tragic conclusion.

**Kate Chopin**, nee Kate O'Flaherty, (1851–1904), was born in St. Louis, Missouri, of Irish and French Creole descent. She attended the Sacred Heart Academy and after graduation married Oscar Chopin. They settled first in New Orleans and later in Cloutierville Louisiana. Surrounded by Cajun culture, Kate found much material for her future writing. Oscar died in 1884 and Kate moved back to St. Louis, where she began writing to support her children. She was immediately successful and her stories about New Orleans and the bayou

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country, appeared in various periodicals such as *Atlantic Monthly*. An early feminist, Kate was ahead of her time. Her best-known work, *The Awakening* outraged the critics for depicting a woman who dares to explore her own sexuality. She wrote: 'Perhaps it is better to wake up after all, even to suffer; than to remain a dupe to illusions all one's life.'

Kate Chopin's short story, *Regret*, focuses on Mamzelle Aurelie, a strong resilient spinster of fifty, who proudly manages a farm on her own. She is contented with her life until four children are sent to live with her while their mother is away. Her growing attachment to the children and their eventual departure arouse emotions in Mamzelle Aurelie that she is not able to contain.

**James Fenimore Cooper** (1789–1851), one of the country's most popular novelists, wrote numerous historical romances, the most famous being *The Last of the Mohicans*. Born into an eminent family in New York state, he attended Yale College at the age of 14 until a prank on a fellow student caused him to be expelled. He joined the merchant marine and then the US Navy where he gained the knowledge of

seamanship revealed in his many sea tales. He married well and became a gentleman farmer before achieving success as a writer with his story of the American Revolution, *The Spy*, in 1821. More success followed with the first of his *Leatherstocking Tales* featuring the frontiersman Natty Bumppo. Translated into many languages, Cooper was often called 'The American Walter Scott'.

Twenty-five years after the event, Cooper wrote an account of the great eclipse which he witnessed in 1806. In *Eclipse*, he describes in affectionate detail his town's excitement at the first 'fiery light glowing among the branches of the forest', the feverish activity of the wildlife and the changing spectacle in the landscape. The optimism of the day is contrasted with the misery of a condemned man in the local jail watching the event through a cell window.

**Stephen Crane**, (1871–1900), who grew up in a prosperous family near New York City, left university to live rough in The Bowery, where he researched his first and unsuccessful novel, *Maggie, A Girl of the Streets*. His second work, *The Red Badge of Courage*, which brought him international fame, depicted the horrors of

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the American Civil War. His interest in men's experience of war led him to Cuba to report on their War of Independence. He later was to cover the Spanish American War, and the Greco-Turkish War. In 1897 Crane settled in England with his mistress, Cora Taylor, the former owner of a Jacksonville brothel. An exhausting and stressful life-style led to his death from tuberculosis at the early age of twenty-eight.

In *The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky*, Crane creates a vivid western melodrama. With a minimum of descriptive flourishes and an economical use of naturalistic dialogue, he creates recognizable, sympathetic characters and hints at a change in the society of the west at the beginning of the 20th century. Jack Potter, the sheriff of Yellow Sky, is returning home from San Antonio with a new bride. When he arrives he has to face a stand-off with the belligerent hellraiser, Scratchy Wilson. Since Jack is unarmed he has to subdue the old rowdy not with a gun but with his new marital status. The west has for a moment become domesticated.

**O. Henry**, (1862–1910), a master of the short story, was born William Sidney

Porter in North Carolina. He first worked as a pharmacist in his uncle's drugstore, then moved to Texas where he was hired as a sheep herder and ranch hand. After he married and became a father, Porter took a job as a bank teller and began writing professionally for the *Houston Post*. In 1897, shortly after his wife died of tuberculosis, Porter was found guilty of embezzling funds and was sent to a penitentiary. While in prison Porter began publishing stories to support his daughter, using the name O. Henry to disguise his true identity. After his release, O. Henry moved to New York and soon became one of America's most popular short story writers. His use of a clever twist in the narrative leading to a surprise ending was referred to as an 'O. Henry Ending'. Marrying again in 1907 he found temporary happiness but then succumbed to alcoholism and died aged forty-seven.

O. Henry said: 'There are stories in everything. I've got some of my best yarns from park benches, lamp posts, and newspaper stands.' His witty narratives re-create for us the spirit of an age: *The Cop and the Anthem* is the story of Soapy, a homeless New Yorker, who seeks shelter for

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the winter in a penal institution. Soapy's elaborate schemes to get himself arrested are all doomed to failure until fate, in the form of a burly policeman, intervenes. *The Princess and the Puma* is a spoof on mediaeval tales of damsels in distress and heroic knights. O. Henry's knight is a cowboy and the damsel is the hard-riding, sharp-shooting daughter of a rancher. *The Whirligig of Life* is set in Tennessee where a hillbilly couple ask a Justice of the Peace for a 'divo'ce' because they 'can't git along together nohow'. The wily Justice settles the dispute with a trick or two of his own.

**Notes by Garrick Hagon and Liza Ross**



**Garrick Hagon** has appeared in many films including *Batman*, *Star Wars*, *Cry Freedom*, *Anthony and Cleopatra*, and *Fatherland*. His television credits include *A Perfect Spy*, *The Nightmare Years*, *Henry V*, *The Chief* and *Love Hurts*. On London's West End he played Chris Keller in *All My Sons*, and he is a frequent story reader for the BBC. He also reads *The Sea-Wolf*, *The Call of the Wild*, *Classic American Poetry* and *Huckleberry Finn* for Naxos AudioBooks.



**Liza Ross** has appeared on stage in the West End and in repertory across the country, including *Wings* and *The Front Stage* at the Royal National Theatre. Her many TV appearances include *After the War*, *Poor Little Rich Girl*, *Two's Company* and *The Month of the Doctors*. Her film work has included *Batman* and the *Shadowchasers*. She works extensively as a voice artist. Among her Naxos AudioBooks recordings are: *The Awakening*, *Anne of Green Gables*, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*.



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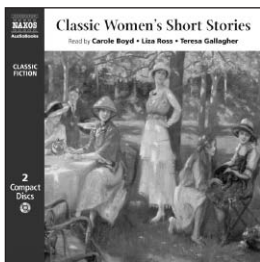


### Classic American Short Stories

(Bierce, Crane, Twain, London, O. Henry)

read by William Roberts

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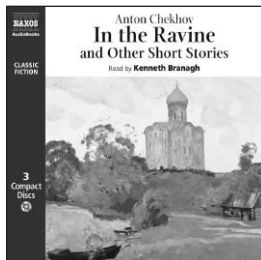


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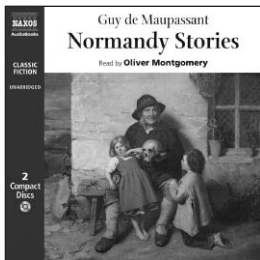


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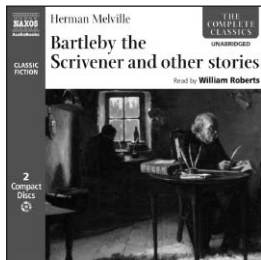
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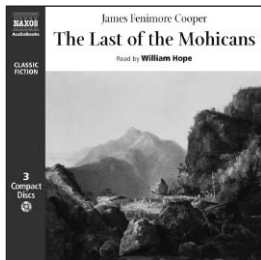
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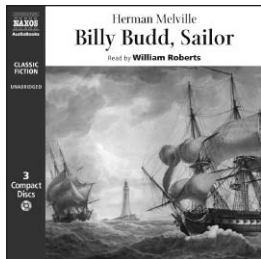
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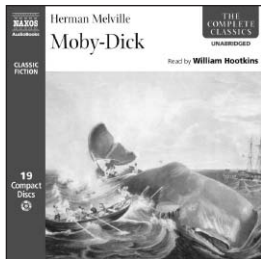
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Here are seven engaging stories from master American writers of the 19th century. They vary from an unusual Ambrose Bierce tale of a family encounter in the Civil War to a reflective moment in the life of a woman without children, forced to look after children, told by Kate Chopin. Humour and human drama is here, as well as an elegiac description of an eclipse by James Fenimore Cooper. Read with sensitivity and skill by Garrick Hagon and Liza Ross.

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