

TRURO CENTER



FOR THE ARTS

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The Wondrously Short Tale: Exploring Flash Fiction

Instructors: **Cheryl Pappas**

Monday – Friday

August 19 - 23

1pm – 4pm

5 sessions

Location: Main Campus, 10 Meetinghouse Road, Truro

Materials List

Bring the following materials to the first day of class:

- You need only to bring a notebook and pen
- It is best to have access to a computer at home to type up stories written during the day – which you will then email to the instructor to be distributed the following day of the workshop.
- Before the workshop begins, please read the following stories (attached)
 - “The Wedding Picture” - Jayne Anne Phillips
 - “The Cough” - Harry Holmes
 - “The Outing” - Lydia Davis

***We are sorry but you cannot put contaminated liquids down the drains or dump any materials on Castle Hill premises.
All cleaning products and contaminated liquid - paint water, solvents, etc. - need to go home with you.***

The Cough

Harry Humes

Our young father walked Ash Alley whistling “Rescue the Perishing,” but already he carried mine tunnels in his black-streaked breath. It was like first sleet against an attic window. My mother would look at him, her lips a line of impatience and fear. “Your lungs will soon be stone,” she said. “It’s good money, Dorse. It’s our only money.”

Some of the men who stopped at our house to see my father had tongues like fish that stuck out between words. Gray-faced, shoulders bony, they all seemed about to cave in. My mother would leave the room, her lips thinner than ever, but the cough followed her across the linoleum, down cellar steps, hunkered close when she planted sage and primrose. The cough was like a child. It was always hungry. It demanded attention. It woke us up at odd times and sat in the good chair by the window. In the winter, it trailed behind my father like a peacock feather on a woman’s hat.

One summer he told us we were on a planet going nowhere fast. He made a model he called an orrery, and showed us how the heavens worked. The center was bright and hung there like one of my mother’s peony blossoms. “That there’s what pushes it,” he said. “And that’s what made the coal.”

We looked at him and nodded, but we had our own ideas about what made it go. We could hear it behind the least little thing.

The Wedding Picture

Jayne Anne Phillips

My mother's ankles curve from the hem of the white suit as if the bones were water. Under the cloth her body in its olive skin unfolds. The black hair, the porcelain neck, the red mouth that barely shows its teeth. My mother's eyes are round and wide as a light behind her skin burns them to coals. Her heart makes a sound that no one hears. The sound says each fetus floats, an island in the womb.

My father stands beside her in his brown suit and two-tone shoes. He stands also by the plane in New Guinea in 1944. On its side there is a girl on a swing wearing spike heels and short shorts. Her breasts balloon; the sky opens inside them. Yellow hair smooth as a cat's, she is swinging out to him. He glimmers, blinded by the light. Now his big fingers curl inward. He is trying to hold something.

In her hands the snowy Bible hums, nuns swarming a honeyed cell. The husband is an afterthought. Five years since the high school lover crumpled on the bathroom floor, his sweet heart raw. She's twenty-three, her mother's sick, it's time. My father's heart pounds, a bell in a wrestler's chest. He is almost forty and the lilies are trumpeting. Rising from his shoulders, the cross grows pale and loses its arms in their heads.

The Outing

Lydia Davis

An outburst of anger near the road, a refusal to speak on the path, a silence in the pine woods, a silence across the old railroad bridge, an attempt to be friendly in the water, a refusal to end the argument on the flat stones, a cry of anger on the steep bank of dirt, a weeping among the bushes.