



Selected Short Stories

Honoré de Balzac , Sylvia Raphael

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The fifty stories that Balzac wrote during his working life display all the qualities of his novels, and many of them feature the characters that throng the *Comédie Humaine*. Nevertheless, while they do offer an interesting counterpoint to the great novels, the stories as themselves.

For this volume Sylvia Raphael has chosen twelve stories, including *An Incident in the Reign of Terror*, *The Atheist's Mass* and *The Red Inn*. All of them reveal Balzac's ability to excite curiosity, his intuitive grasp of what made other lives tick and his instinctive understanding of the contradictions in human behavior.

El Verdugo --
Domestic peace --
A study in feminine psychology --
An incident in the reign of terror --
The conscript --
The Red Inn --
The purse --
La Grande Brete?che --
A tragedy by the sea --
The atheist's Mass --
Facino Cane --
Pierre Grassou.

Selected Short Stories Details

Date : Published February 24th 1977 by Penguin Classics (first published 1836)

ISBN : 9780140443257

Author : Honoré de Balzac , Sylvia Raphael

Format : Paperback 272 pages

Genre : Short Stories, Fiction, Classics, European Literature, French Literature, Cultural, France, Literature, 19th Century

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Mshelton50 says

Spectacular! I can't remember when I've enjoyed a collection of short stories so much. In these tales, Balzac deals with Parisian high society (e.g., "Domestic Peace"), as well as grinding provincial poverty ("A Tragedy by the Sea"). It may take a reader a minute or two to get into a story, but once in, they'll be hooked. I was moved to tears by "The Atheist's Mass" and "Facino Cane." But Balzac had me laughing out loud in "Pierre Grassou." Honestly, I cannot recommend this little volume highly enough.

Scott Pierce says

One excerpt to draw you in: " writing about Facino Cane, the blind clarinet player from Venice: "Not one of the violent passions which can lead a man to good as well as to evil, make him a criminal or a hero, was absent from that nobly formed, sallow Italian face."

Brian Palmer says

Some of the stories in this are quite haunting, but most of them left me somewhat cold ... the stylistic peculiarities of the writing drowning out the story beneath. I particularly recommend *An Incident in the Reign of Terror*.

Angela Randall says

Would like the dual-language edition: Selected Short Stories (Dual-Language)

Alina D. says

These are not among my favorites, but there are some good ones within. In particular I enjoyed "The Atheist's Mass".

Castorp says

My first venture into the comedie humaine of Balzac, on the urging of the films of Truffaut and Akira Kurosawa, and well just about everybody who ever lived. There are 12 stories in this book, and most are fantastic. Starts off a little slow with the first one, but gets exceedingly better as the selection rolls along, so keep going if you are bored at first. Looking forward to reading the rest of his works, which are so numerous they could provide a reading supply for the next few years. If you haven't read Balzac, but are hoping he is good, this seems like a good place to start. Up next, Louis Lambert..

Mary says

'Liked his short stories enough to read his most famous novel, "Old Goriot."

Peter Mcloughlin says

In these short stories, Balzac captures some of the things that lie underneath social intercourse between various types of peoples and the times they are living. He captures some of the unspoken thoughts that reflect the unmentioned understandings of mental spaces we inhabit. He captures fleeting but important details that are often on our minds.

Edward says

Introduction

- El Verdugo
- Domestic Peace
- A Study in Feminine Psychology
- An Incident in the Reign of Terror
- The Conscript
- The Red Inn
- The Purse
- La Grande Bretèche
- A Tragedy by the Sea
- The Atheist's Mass
- Facino Cane
- Pierre Grassou

Chronology

Further Reading

Natasha says

i love balzac. nothing short of genius.

my favorite stories are The Purse, Tragedy by the Sea, and The Atheist's Mass,

p75: "There is a kind of poverty which the poor can recognize instinctively."

p73: "Boldly she walked through the deserted streets, as if her age were a talisman which was bound to preserve her from any misfortune."

p109: "...gastronomic felicities..."

Vishal says

This book was my introduction to Balzac: a solid, if not wholly spectacular set of short stories with quite diverse themes and premises. Balzac is quite brilliant in laying a foundation of very rich detail and slowly threading the relevance of these details into the fabric of the story, followed often by a surprise twist at the end or an ironic revelation.

Personal favourites among the 12 stories here are The Conscript (about the metaphysical bond between a mother and son with tragic consequences), The Red Inn (where a man wanting to unearth the identity of a murderer becomes complicated by love-doesn't it always?), The Atheists Mass (a heartwarming story about a doctor who proves lack of religion doesn't necessarily mean a lack of faith or gratitude), A Tragedy by the Sea (a lover's vacation near the salt marshes of Breton turns sour when they stumble upon a recluse and discover his tragic secret), and one of my favourites, the chilling La Grande Breteche with shades of Edgar Allan Poe.

Sally says

Contains El Verdugo; Domestic Peace; A Study in Feminine Psychology; An Incident in the Reign of Terror; The Conscript; The Red Inn; The Purse; La Grande Breteche; A Tragedy by the Sea; the Atheist's Mass; Facino Cane and Pierre Grassou.

Reign of Terror has to be among the best; Balzac transports the reader to the snowy and deserted streets of Paris in 1793 where a nervous old woman fears she is being followed ;as a possible former aristocrat her life would be in danger.

A Tragedy by the sea is a horrific tale of a Breton fisherman who spoilt his only son till the latter became unmanageable.

Excellent translation that renders Balzac's prose as if written in English.

Gregory Day says

The Red Inn and An Incident in the Reign of Terror will stay with me forever.

Dagny says

A mix of short stories, including some of the best. I enjoy Sylvia Raphael's translations.

Danielle says

I particularly enjoyed "A Passion in the Desert" and "The Forsaken Woman."
