

# COLLECTED SHORTER PLAYS Study Guide

**Collected shorter plays** represent a treasure trove for theater enthusiasts, playwrights, students, and scholars alike. These compilations bring together the most impactful, innovative, and memorable shorter works of a playwright or a particular era, offering a condensed yet comprehensive insight into theatrical art. Whether used for educational purposes, performance, or personal exploration, collected shorter plays serve as vital resources that highlight the diversity, creativity, and evolution of dramatic writing across different periods and genres.

## Understanding Collected Shorter Plays

### Definition and Significance

Collected shorter plays are anthologies that compile brief theatrical works, often ranging from one-act plays to short sketches or monologues. Unlike full-length plays, these shorter works typically focus on a single theme, moment, or idea, allowing for intense exploration within a limited timeframe. Their significance lies in:

- Providing accessible entry points for new playwrights
- Showcasing experimental and avant-garde techniques
- Offering versatile pieces suitable for various performance contexts
- Preserving the creative breadth of a playwright's oeuvre

### Historical Context

Throughout theater history, shorter plays have played a crucial role. Ancient Greek playwrights like Euripides and Aristophanes used short scenes or sketches to complement longer works or entertain audiences between acts. In the 19th and 20th centuries, the rise of the one-act play became a prominent form for playwrights like Anton Chekhov, Eugene O'Neill, and Samuel Beckett, who used brevity to distill complex ideas. Modern collections often include works from diverse cultural backgrounds, reflecting the global evolution of the form.

## Advantages of Collecting Shorter Plays

### Educational Benefits

Collected shorter plays serve as excellent teaching tools, offering:

- Variety of themes and styles for classroom analysis
- Opportunities for students to practice performance skills with manageable pieces
- Insights into the development of theatrical language and techniques

## Performance Flexibility

These plays are ideal for:

- Community theater groups seeking manageable productions
- Drama festivals with limited rehearsal time
- Experimental theater projects exploring new concepts

## Preservation of Artistic Voice

Collections often preserve the early or experimental works of renowned playwrights, providing a window into their creative journeys and artistic evolution.

## Key Elements to Consider When Exploring Collected Shorter Plays

### Selection Criteria

When choosing a collection, consider:

- The diversity of themes and styles
- The reputation of the playwright
- The historical or cultural significance
- The suitability for intended performance or study

## Popular Collections and Anthologies

Some renowned collections include:

- "Six Short Plays" by Harold Pinter
- "The Best American Short Plays" series
- "One-Act Plays for All Seasons" edited by various authors
- "Classic Short Plays" anthology featuring works from different eras

## Notable Playwrights Known for Shorter Plays

Many distinguished playwrights have contributed significantly to the form, often through collections of their shorter works.

## Harold Pinter

Pinter's collections exhibit his mastery of dialogue and subtext, with plays like "The Basement" and "The Room" showcasing minimalist storytelling.

## Anton Chekhov

Chekhov's short plays, such as "The Bear" and "The Proposal," exemplify sharp wit and social critique within brief formats.

## Eugene O'Neill

His one-act plays like "Exorcism" and "The Web" explore profound themes within concise structures.

## Sam Shepard

Known for capturing American life, Shepard's shorter works often focus on family dynamics and identity.

## Tips for Creating or Using Collected Shorter Plays

### For Playwrights

- Experiment with concise storytelling to develop strong characters and themes
- Use collections to test new ideas or styles
- Compile your works to showcase your versatility

### For Theater Directors and Performers

- Curate collections that align with your thematic interests or audience
- Use shorter plays for workshop productions or student showcases
- Explore diverse cultural perspectives through international collections

### For Educators

- Incorporate grouped short plays to teach dramatic structure and character development
- Use collections to encourage student creativity and performance skills
- Analyze the thematic and stylistic differences across works

## How to Find and Access Collected Shorter Plays

### Publishing Platforms and Resources

- Bookstores and Libraries: Many publishers offer anthologies focusing on short plays.
- Online Platforms: Websites like Dramatists Play Service, Samuel French, and New Play Exchange provide digital access.
- Academic Databases: JSTOR, ProQuest, and university libraries often host collections and scholarly analyses.
- Theatrical Festivals and Competitions: Many showcase curated collections of short plays.

### Tips for Selecting the Right Collection

- Consider the intended audience and performance context
- Check for licensing and rights information
- Look for collections that include introductions or analysis for better understanding

## Conclusion: The Enduring Value of Collected Shorter Plays

Collected shorter plays continue to play a vital role in the theatrical landscape. They serve as accessible, versatile, and innovative formats that foster creativity, education, and cultural exchange. Whether you are a playwright seeking inspiration, a director looking for manageable productions, or a student eager to explore the art of drama, collections of short plays offer a rich resource. As theater continues to evolve, these anthologies will remain essential for preserving the diversity and vitality of dramatic storytelling, ensuring that the power of brevity continues to inspire audiences and creators worldwide.

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Collected Shorter Plays: An In-Depth Exploration of a Dynamic Literary Form

In the landscape of contemporary theater and dramatic literature, the term collected shorter plays has gained increasing prominence. These compact, potent works often gathered in anthologies or

collections offer unique insights into a playwright's evolving themes, stylistic experimentation, and cultural commentary. Unlike full-length productions, these shorter plays serve as concentrated bursts of theatrical innovation, often reflecting societal tensions, personal introspections, or avant-garde explorations. This article seeks to thoroughly analyze the significance, history, and contemporary relevance of collected shorter plays, illustrating why they have become an essential facet of modern dramaturgy and literary studies.

## Understanding the Nature of Shorter Plays

### Defining Shorter Plays

Shorter plays, frequently referred to as one-act plays, monologues, or vignettes, typically range from a few minutes to around an hour in performance. While the boundaries can be fluid, they generally share certain characteristics:

- Conciseness: Minimalist in length, emphasizing sharp, impactful storytelling.
- Thematic Focus: Often centered on a single idea, conflict, or emotional moment.
- Innovative Structure: Frequently experimental in form, employing non-linear narratives, surrealist techniques, or minimalist staging.
- Accessibility: Designed to be performed in a variety of settings, from academic environments to fringe festivals.

Despite their brevity, these works can be rich in meaning, offering layered narratives compressed into a small theatrical space.

### Historical Origins and Evolution

The tradition of shorter plays has deep roots, tracing back to classical Greek and Roman theater, where skits and dialogues served as interludes or educational tools. The 19th and early 20th centuries saw playwrights like Anton Chekhov and George Bernard Shaw utilize one-act formats to experiment with form and social critique.

In the 20th century, the rise of experimental theater movements such as Absurdism, Surrealism, and Minimalism further propelled the development of shorter plays. Playwrights like Samuel Beckett, Eugène Ionesco, and Harold Pinter crafted compact works that challenged conventional narratives and theatrical expectations.

The proliferation of theater festivals, university programs, and independent production companies in the late 20th and early 21st centuries fostered an environment where collections of shorter plays could be curated, studied, and performed collectively, emphasizing their importance as a cohesive

body of work.

## The Significance of Collected Shorter Plays in Literary and Theatrical Contexts

### Preservation and Accessibility

Collections serve as vital repositories, preserving the voices of diverse playwrights and enabling wider dissemination. They facilitate:

- Educational Use: Allow students and scholars to study a variety of styles and themes within a single volume.
- Performance Flexibility: Directors can select works suitable for different contexts, from classroom exercises to full-scale productions.
- Cultural Documentation: Collections often reflect specific eras, movements, or social issues, acting as cultural snapshots.

### Innovation and Experimentation

Short plays frequently serve as laboratories for theatrical innovation:

- Stylistic Experimentation: Playwrights can explore new techniques without the constraints of longer narratives.
- Thematic Boldness: Concise works often tackle provocative or complex themes head-on, prompting reflection and discussion.
- Collaborative Opportunities: Their brevity makes them ideal for collaborative projects, workshops, and community theater.

### Artistic and Critical Value

Collected shorter plays have become a focus of scholarly interest, highlighting:

- Thematic Cohesion: When curated thoughtfully, collections reveal overarching ideas or contrasting perspectives.
- Evolution of Style: They chart a playwright's development over time.
- Voice Diversity: Collections often showcase voices from different backgrounds, fostering inclusivity.

## Major Collections and Notable Examples

### Historical Collections

Several anthologies have become canonical references:

- "One-Act Plays" by Anton Chekhov: Showcases the master's concise storytelling.
- "The Complete Plays of Eugène Ionesco": Features surrealist miniatures.
- "Samuel Beckett: Selected Short Plays": Highlights the playwright's minimalist aesthetic.

### Contemporary Collections

Modern editors and theater companies continue to curate anthologies:

- "The Best American Short Plays" Series: Annually features emerging and established playwrights.
- "Performing the Short Play" (edited by David Hansen): Focuses on innovative contemporary works.
- Festival Collections: Many theater festivals publish anthologies of their curated works, providing insight into current trends.

### Case Study: The Influence of David Ives' Collections

David Ives' plays, often collected in volumes like "All in the Timing," exemplify contemporary mastery of short-form theater. His witty, thought-provoking vignettes demonstrate how brevity can be used for sharp social satire, philosophical inquiry, and linguistic playfulness.

## The Artistic and Thematic Range of Collected Shorter Plays

### Comedy and Satire

Many collections emphasize humor, irony, and social critique:

- Playwrights like Neil Simon and Alan Ayckbourn have produced collections of comic shorts.
- Satirical works often critique political systems, cultural norms, or human folly.

### Drama and Introspection

Some collections feature emotionally intense or psychologically probing plays:

- Harold Pinter's short works explore themes of power, silence, and existential anxiety.
- Monologues addressing identity, trauma, or loss serve as powerful tools for actors and audiences.

## **Experimental and Avant-Garde**

Innovative collections include:

- Surrealist plays that challenge perception.
- Plays employing multimedia, non-traditional staging, or audience participation.

## **Challenges and Critiques of Collected Shorter Plays**

### **Fragmentation and Cohesion**

One challenge in curating collections is achieving thematic or stylistic cohesion. Collections can sometimes feel disjointed if not carefully curated, leading critics to question their overall narrative or conceptual unity.

### **Performance Limitations**

Short plays, while flexible, may lack the depth or complexity of longer works, raising debates about their artistic value and capacity for meaningful engagement.

### **Commercial Viability**

Producing collections can be economically challenging, especially for independent theater companies. The niche appeal of shorter plays requires strategic programming to attract audiences.

## **The Future of Collected Shorter Plays**

### **Digital and Multimedia Integration**

As technology advances, collections are increasingly including plays that incorporate digital media, virtual staging, and interactive elements, expanding the expressive potential of short plays.

### **Global and Diverse Voices**

Emerging collections highlight playwrights from marginalized communities, offering fresh perspectives and fostering inclusivity.

## Educational and Community Engagement

Short plays lend themselves well to educational settings, community workshops, and social activism, making collections vital tools for engagement and advocacy.

## Conclusion: The Enduring Relevance of Collected Shorter Plays

The study and performance of collected shorter plays remain vital to understanding the evolution of modern theater. Their capacity for innovation, accessibility, and thematic depth ensures they continue to resonate with audiences, scholars, and practitioners alike. As the theatrical landscape evolves, embracing new technologies, diverse voices, and experimental forms, collections of short plays serve as both a mirror and a catalyst for artistic exploration. Whether used as pedagogical tools, artistic experiments, or cultural commentaries, these compact works have cemented their place as a dynamic and influential component of dramatic literature.

In essence, collected shorter plays exemplify how brevity does not equate to insignificance; rather, it often amplifies the potency of theatrical expression, inviting audiences into succinct yet profound worlds. Their ongoing relevance underscores the timeless human desire to communicate complex truths within the constraints of a moment, a scene, or a few powerful words.

**Question** What are collected shorter plays, and why are they significant? Collected shorter plays are compilations of concise theatrical works by a playwright, often highlighting their versatility and thematic range. They are significant because they offer a condensed insight into a playwright's style and thematic concerns, making them accessible for study, performance, and appreciation. **Answer** How can reading collected shorter plays enhance understanding of a playwright's overall work? Reading collected shorter plays allows audiences and scholars to observe recurring motifs, stylistic techniques, and thematic explorations in a condensed format, providing a broader understanding of the playwright's creative evolution and literary voice. Are collected shorter plays suitable for beginner theater students? Yes, collected shorter plays are often ideal for beginners because their brevity makes them easier to analyze, memorize, and perform, serving as accessible entry points into theatrical study and performance. What are some notable collections of shorter plays by famous playwrights? Notable collections include Samuel Beckett's 'Endgame and Other Short Plays,' Harold Pinter's 'The Hothouse and Other Plays,' and Anton Chekhov's 'Selected Short Plays,' each showcasing the playwright's mastery in concise storytelling. How do collected shorter plays influence contemporary theater productions? Collected shorter plays provide contemporary theater companies with versatile and manageable works that can be performed in various settings, encouraging innovative staging, diverse casting, and experimental formats, thereby enriching the modern theatrical landscape.

**Related keywords:** short plays, one-act plays, playwrights, theatrical scripts, drama snippets, monologues, scene collections, dramatic sketches, mini plays, performance scripts

## The shorter writings

**the shorter writings** have long been an essential part of literary history, offering writers a compact yet powerful way to communicate ideas, emotions, and stories. These concise forms of expression have evolved through centuries, adapting to changing cultural and technological landscapes. Whether in the form of essays, poems, aphorisms, or flash fiction, shorter writings serve as a gateway for both writers and readers to engage with content that is quick to consume yet rich in meaning. In this comprehensive guide, we will explore the different types of shorter writings, their significance in the literary world, tips for writing effective short pieces, and how they continue to influence modern communication.

## Understanding Shorter Writings

### Definition and Characteristics

Shorter writings are literary or textual works characterized by brevity and conciseness. Unlike long-form novels or comprehensive treatises, these writings aim to convey their message in a limited number of words, often emphasizing clarity, precision, and impact. Key characteristics include:

- Compactness
- Focused themes
- Emotional or intellectual punch
- Often open to interpretation

### Historical Context

Throughout history, shorter writings have played pivotal roles in various cultural contexts:

- Ancient aphorisms and proverbs served as wisdom-sharing tools.
- Medieval epigrams and poetry condensed complex ideas into succinct lines.
- The rise of print media in the 19th and 20th centuries popularized short stories, essays, and poems as accessible forms of entertainment and education.

- The digital age has further amplified their importance, especially with the advent of social media, where brevity is often necessary.

## Types of Shorter Writings

### Poetry

Poetry is perhaps the most celebrated form of shorter writing. Its structured use of meter, rhyme, and literary devices allows poets to evoke deep emotions within a limited space. Notable forms include:

- Haiku: A traditional Japanese form with 17 syllables, capturing moments of nature or emotion.
- Sonnets: 14-line poems with specific meter and rhyme schemes.
- Free verse: Poems without a fixed pattern, emphasizing brevity and impact.

### Flash Fiction

Flash fiction, also known as microfiction or sudden fiction, consists of very short stories, typically under 1,000 words. Despite their length, they often feature:

- Strong characters
- Pivotal moments
- A twist or revelation at the end

### Short Essays and Articles

These are concise explorations of a particular topic, designed to inform or persuade efficiently. They are often used in journalism, opinion pieces, or personal reflections.

### Aphorisms and Proverbs

These are succinct statements that express truth, wisdom, or cultural beliefs in a memorable way. Examples include:

- "Less is more."
- "Knowledge is power."

### Epigrams and Quotations

Short, witty statements or memorable quotes that capture complex ideas in a few words. They are frequently used in speeches, literature, and social media.

## The Significance of Shorter Writings in Literature and Communication

### Advantages of Shorter Writings

Shorter writings offer numerous benefits:

- Accessibility: Easy to read and understand, appealing to a broad audience.
- Impact: Can deliver a powerful message quickly.
- Flexibility: Suitable for various platforms and contexts.
- Encouragement of Reflection: Often invite interpretation and personal connection.

### Role in Modern Media and Digital Communication

The digital era has revolutionized how shorter writings are utilized:

- Social media platforms (Twitter, Instagram, TikTok) thrive on brief content.
- Microblogging and status updates facilitate rapid dissemination of ideas.
- Memes, quotes, and short videos are modern adaptations of concise storytelling.

### Educational and Inspirational Uses

Short writings are frequently employed in education to:

- Summarize complex concepts
- Inspire motivation
- Serve as memorables for teaching moral or philosophical lessons

## Tips for Writing Effective Shorter Writings

### 1. Be Clear and Precise

Eliminate unnecessary words. Focus on conveying your core message with clarity.

### 2. Use Strong Language and Literary Devices

Employ metaphors, similes, alliteration, or rhyme to enhance memorability and emotional impact.

### **3. Focus on a Single Idea or Theme**

Avoid overloading your short piece with multiple messages; instead, hone in on one central idea.

### **4. Revise and Edit Ruthlessly**

Refine your writing to ensure every word serves a purpose. Cutting excess can strengthen your work.

### **5. Practice Brevity in Different Forms**

Experiment with various formats like haikus, aphorisms, or flash fiction to develop versatility.

## **The Impact of Shorter Writings Today**

### **Promotion of Creativity and Innovation**

Constraints often foster creativity. Writers find innovative ways to communicate within a limited space, leading to inventive uses of language and form.

### **Enhancing Cultural and Social Dialogue**

Shorter writings like quotes and memes can quickly spread cultural sentiments, influence public opinion, and spark social movements.

### **Supporting Mental Well-being and Reflection**

Brief meditative or inspirational writings can serve as daily affirmations or reminders, promoting mindfulness and positivity.

## **Conclusion**

The shorter writings continue to hold a vital place in both literary tradition and contemporary communication. Their ability to distill complex ideas into accessible, impactful snippets makes them invaluable in our fast-paced world. Whether through poetry, stories, aphorisms, or social media posts, shorter writings challenge writers to be concise, creative, and purposeful. As technology advances and the demand for quick yet meaningful content grows, the art of shorter writing remains as relevant and powerful as ever. Embracing this form can enrich personal expression, foster cultural dialogue, and inspire new generations of writers and readers alike.

## Understanding the Shorter Writings: A Comprehensive Guide to Concise Literary and Creative Forms

In the landscape of literature and creative expression, the shorter writings stand out as a vital and versatile genre. These compact pieces—ranging from flash fiction to poetry, essays, and microblog posts—serve as powerful vessels for conveying ideas, emotions, and stories within a limited word count. Despite their brevity, they demand a high level of precision and craft, often leaving a lasting impression on the reader. This guide aims to explore the various types of shorter writings, their significance, techniques for mastery, and how they fit into the broader world of literary and creative arts.

### What Are Shorter Writings?

The shorter writings refer to any literary or creative work characterized by a condensed form. Unlike novels or lengthy essays, these pieces prioritize brevity, often distilling complex themes into a few words or pages. The essence of shorter writings lies in their ability to evoke emotion, provoke thought, or tell a story with minimal words, making them accessible and impactful.

### Types of Shorter Writings

- Flash Fiction: Extremely short stories, typically under 1,000 words, focusing on a single incident or moment.
- Poetry: Concise, rhythmic language expressing feelings or ideas, from haikus to sonnets.
- Personal Essays: Short reflections or narratives centered around personal insights or experiences.
- Microblog Posts & Social Media Content: Brief updates, quotes, or observations shared online.
- Prose Poems: Hybrid forms that blend poetic language with prose structure.
- Aphorisms and Sayings: Sharp, memorable statements or observations.

### The Significance of Shorter Writings

#### Accessibility and Engagement

Shorter writings are accessible to a broad audience, requiring less time commitment. They fit easily into busy schedules, making them ideal for quick reflection or inspiration.

#### Artistic Challenge and Skill

Crafting compelling shorter pieces demands mastery of language, economy, and nuance. Writers

must be precise, choosing words that pack a punch and create vivid imagery or emotion.

### Cultural and Social Impact

In the digital age, shorter writings thrive on social media platforms, influencing popular culture and shaping public discourse through memes, tweets, and micro-stories.

### Techniques for Creating Effective Shorter Writings

Mastering the art of concise writing involves specific strategies. Here are key techniques to hone your craft:

- Focus on a Single Moment or Idea

Condense your message by narrowing your focus. Instead of trying to cover too much ground, choose one core theme or moment to explore deeply.

- Use Precise Language

Every word counts. Opt for strong, specific words that evoke imagery or emotion without unnecessary elaboration.

- Show, Don't Tell

Use vivid descriptions and actions to imply feelings or themes, allowing readers to interpret beneath the surface.

- Embrace Ambiguity and Open-Endedness

Leaving some elements open-ended invites engagement and personal interpretation, common in poetry and flash fiction.

- Edit Ruthlessly

Trim excess words and refine your work to its essential components. Editing is crucial in short-form writing to maintain clarity and impact.

## How Shorter Writings Fit Into the Broader Literary Landscape

Despite their brevity, shorter writings are deeply interconnected with other forms of literature and creative expression.

### As a Starting Point for Writers

They serve as excellent exercises for developing writing skills?honing economy of language, clarity, and emotional impact.

### As a Reflection of Cultural Trends

Shorter writings mirror societal shifts, capturing contemporary voices and issues swiftly and poignantly.

### As a Gateway to Longer Works

Many authors begin with short pieces to test ideas, themes, or styles before embarking on longer projects.

### Practical Tips for Writers Interested in Shorter Writings

If you're looking to dive into the world of shorter writings, consider these practical steps:

- Read Widely: Explore collections of flash fiction, poetry anthologies, and microblogs to understand different styles.
- Write Regularly: Practice crafting short pieces frequently to develop your voice and economy.
- Participate in Writing Challenges: Join prompts like NaNoWriMo's flash fiction challenges or poetry contests.
- Share Your Work: Use blogs, social media, or literary magazines to publish and receive feedback.
- Study the Masters: Analyze works by writers renowned for their concise style, such as Raymond Carver, Emily Dickinson, or Bash?.

## Common Formats and Examples of Shorter Writings

### Flash Fiction

- Typically under 1,000 words.

- Focuses on a snapshot or pivotal moment.
- Example: A story that captures a fleeting encounter that changes a character's life.

## Haiku

- A three-line poem with a 5-7-5 syllable pattern.
- Emphasizes nature, seasons, or moments of insight.

## Microblog Posts

- Tweets, Instagram captions, or TikTok scripts.
- Often combine humor, commentary, or personal reflection.

## Aphorisms

- Short, witty statements offering insight or wisdom.
- Example: "Less is more." by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe

## Challenges and Rewards of Shorter Writings

### Challenges

- Limited space to develop themes, characters, or arguments.
- Risk of ambiguity or superficiality if not crafted carefully.
- Competition for attention in a crowded digital space.

### Rewards

- Immediate engagement and impact.
- Development of a sharp, disciplined writing style.
- Ability to communicate universal truths succinctly.

## Conclusion: The Power of Less

The shorter writings demonstrate that brevity is not a limitation but a strength. They challenge writers to distill complex ideas into their essence, crafting pieces that resonate beyond their size.

Whether it's a poignant poem, a flash fiction story, or a social media post, shorter writings continue to shape the way we communicate, reflect, and connect. Embracing this form can enrich your writing practice and open new avenues for creative expression.

Whether you're a seasoned writer or a curious newcomer, exploring the art of shorter writings offers a rewarding journey into the heart of concise storytelling and poetic craft. Start small, write often, and discover the immense possibilities within brevity.

**Question** What are shorter writings in literary terms? Shorter writings refer to concise pieces of literature such as essays, poems, short stories, or articles that convey ideas or stories in a brief format. **Why are shorter writings popular in today's digital age?** They are popular because they are quick to read, easily shareable on social media, and effective for capturing attention in a fast-paced information environment. **What are some common forms of shorter writings?** Common forms include tweets, microblogs, short poems like haikus, flash fiction, and brief opinion articles. **How can shorter writings be effective in communication?** They distill complex ideas into clear, impactful messages that can quickly inform, entertain, or persuade readers. **What are the key elements of successful shorter writings?** Clarity, brevity, strong imagery or language, and a compelling message are key elements. **How can writers improve their shorter writings?** By practicing brevity, focusing on a single idea or theme, using precise language, and editing ruthlessly for conciseness. **Are shorter writings suitable for academic purposes?** While less common, shorter writings like abstracts, summaries, or opinion pieces are valuable in academic contexts for conveying key points efficiently. **What role do shorter writings play in social media platforms?** They serve as a primary format for engaging audiences, sharing ideas quickly, and fostering community interaction. **Can shorter writings be as impactful as longer pieces?** Yes, when well-crafted, they can deliver powerful messages and evoke strong emotions despite their brevity. **What are some famous examples of shorter writings in literature?** Examples include haikus by Bashō, aphorisms by Nietzsche, and flash fiction stories by authors like Lydia Davis.

**Related keywords:** essays, articles, essays collection, short essays, brief writings, short articles, prose pieces, concise essays, mini writings, literary snippets

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