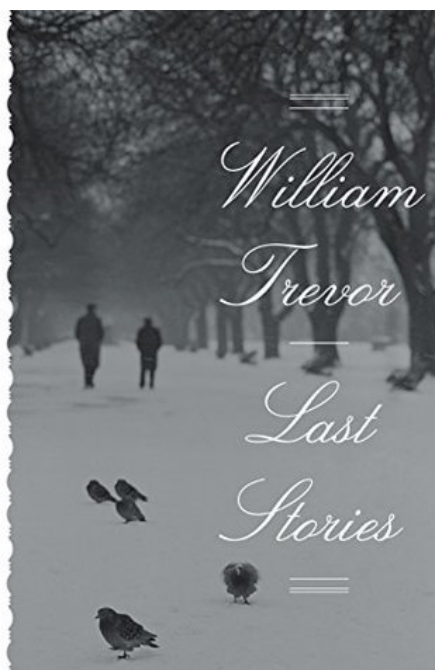




Last Stories

William Trevor

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William Trevor

Last Stories William Trevor

The beloved and acclaimed William Trevor's last ten stories, six of which have never been published

With a career that spanned more than half a century, William Trevor was regarded as one of the greatest writers of short stories in the English language. Now, in *Last Stories*, the admired master storyteller delivers ten exquisitely rendered stories that illuminate the human condition which will surely linger with the reader long after closing the book. Subtle yet powerful, Trevor gives readers insights into the lives of ordinary people, from the relationship between a former teacher and student to the tragic past of a former dancer. With the inclusion of six previously unpublished stories, this special collection is a gift to lovers of short stories and Trevor's many readers.

Last Stories Details

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Author : William Trevor

Format : Kindle Edition 224 pages

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Colin says

I was excited to hear that there was to be a final volume of stories from the great William Trevor who died in 2016 and couldn't wait to get hold of a copy. Now, having got it within a few days of publication, I've read it in just a couple of days, and there will never be another, and I am bereft.

Trevor was a master of the short story. He made this notoriously difficult form look so ridiculously easy that the triumphs of style, character and setting that made his stories work can be overlooked. His stories are peopled by the lonely, the sad and those whom the world has passed by, but Trevor captures the essence of their humanity with sympathy and understanding. Described by more than one reviewer as the Irish Chekhov, he was equally at home in England.

The stories in this final collection are as good as any in the eleven volumes that went before and a couple, Mrs Crasthorpe and At the Caffè Daria are amongst his best.

To mark the publication of Last Stories, Penguin have made a too good to miss offer on the beautiful two volume hardback edition of Trevor's Collected Stories (down from £60 to just £20 for one month only), so although there will never be another book of stories, I've treated myself to it and passed my well-read paperback edition on to a friend. I know that I'll come back to it again and again to read classic stories like The Ballroom of Romance or The Day we got Drunk on Cake.

Chris Maxwell says

I usually love short stories, and I seek them out.

Personally for me, these stories were all quite tedious and despite being very short, were difficult to get through. I should probably have given up, deciding this writer was not for me.

I think my difficulty was that the language is often very clipped and economic, which makes the stories hard to follow without intense, and in my opinion, excessive concentration. There is no lightness, and they are not engaging. There's little or no payoff in the conclusion of the stories to compensate for the effort required in their reading. They just roll on in the same bland style to a stopping point.

Tony says

LAST STORIES. (2018). William Trevor. ****.

This Irish writer passed away about two years ago, and was a big loss to the world of the short story. Although he had written several excellent novels, he was best known for his skill at telling short stories. He was capable of defining his characters in a sentence or two that identified them spot-on. The ten stories collected in this volume are a good example of the writer's skill. If you find these to be as good as I have found them to be, I encourage you to read more of his work – including his novels. Some writers just have the talent to relate to the reader. This author is one of those. Highly recommended.

Mari-Elaine says

From BBC Radio 4 - Book at Bedtime:

The quiet contentment of a music teacher is stirred by the arrival of a new pupil, for whom all will be forgiven.

Niamh Cusack reads William Trevor's gentle story of give and take.

'The Piano Teacher's Pupil' is the first of five stories from William Trevor's final and posthumous collection, published this week to coincide with what would have been his 90th Birthday. Often described as the master of the short story, revered by his fellow writers and by his readers, these stories written in the last years of his life, contain all his hallmarks; his piercing observation of human life, his humanity, his elegant prose and distinctive voice.

An Idyll in Winter

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A cartographer returns to an isolated house on the moors where he once passed an idyllic summer tutoring, and reignites a life lasting love.

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Reader Niamh Cusack

Producer Di Speirs.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0b4...>

Deborah says

I always enjoy Trevor's short stories. This is his last collection (he died in 2016), but, fortunately, he was so prolific that there are still a large number of his published collections that I have yet to read. As always these stories deal with seemingly ordinary people in seemingly mundane situations, but he conveys an empathy and depth of feeling that make his characters both familiar and unique. It's almost as though the author was eavesdropping on their conversations and inner musings. A music teacher marvels at her prodigy, not yet realizing that he is also a thief. A young girl in boarding school encounters two older women on the grounds who mysteriously show up at her hockey games and theatrical performances, bringing gifts and acting as though they know her. What is the secret behind their strange affection? An amnesiac man finds a key in his pocket; a hooker follows him home. A crippled man hires two foreigners to paint his house; but can they be trusted? Overall, another quietly surprising, satisfying collection from the Irish master.

Diane S ? says

I've only recently started reading this author, feel in love with his stories, his writing which always shows so much compassion. In this collection, his last, he shows how people fare after life's betrayals, often highlighting loneliness and loss. Some are rather grim, but show a marked insight into the frailty of us all.

I enjoyed all of these, but my three favorites included the first story, The Piano Teachers Pupil. In this story a woman, now in her fifties, considers herself fortunate but is also lonely. She feels a sense of genius skating from the playing of this young man. He has an unfortunate habit though, one that costs the teacher a few material items, but she feels the illicit trade is well worth it as long as she can keep hearing his playing.

The others I liked were a rather grim Mrs. Crasthorpe, two lives that barely intersect will prove unforgettable for one, but in a rather sad way. There was just something in the melancholy tone in which this was written that appealed. I also enjoyed An Idyll in Winter, I felt this was the most compassionately written of them all, as it would be so easy for us to judge and criticize the male character in this one.

I may have come to this author late, and am sad that he is gone, but I do have many of his books still to savor. That is something in which to look forward.

David Curry says

After providing readers with his uniquely wonderful brand of fiction for more than half a century, the Irish-born William Trevor who died at the age of 88 in 2016, has left us a posthumously published final collection of ten memorable stories. Beginning with "The Piano Teacher's Pupil," in which a gifted piano student dazzles his teacher with his skill while stealing objects from her home on each visit, and continuing through "The Women," in which a young girl who has always believed her mother is dead discovers that she is still alive, these final stories show Trevor still in full command of his materials and his art and his uncanny ability to find the beating pulse in quietness.

Here's how "Making Conversation" gets going:

" 'Yes,' Olivia says on the answering system when the doorbell rings in the middle of The Return of the Thin Man. The summons is an irritation on a Sunday afternoon, when it couldn't possibly be the meter man or the postman, and it's most unlikely to be Courtney Haynes, the porter.

"A woman's voice crackles back at her but Olivia can't hear what she says. More distinctly, the dialogue of the film reaches her from the sitting room. 'Cocktail time,' William Powell is saying, and there's the barking of a dog. The man Olivia lives with laughs.

" 'I'm sorry,' Olivia says in the hall. 'I can't quite hear you.'

" 'I'm not used to these answering gadgets.' The woman's voice is clearer now. There is a pause, and then: 'Is my husband there?' "

And there we go.

In a review of the collection in Britain's *The Guardian*, Julian Barnes confides that his literary agent wife told him Trevor "liked to sit on park benches and eavesdrop on conversations," but that he never waited to listen to a whole story, so would get up and move on as soon as he had heard the small amount he needed to trigger his further imaginings.

On the front of the dust jacket for Trevor's final book is a haunting photograph of two darkly clad figures, seen from behind, walking a snowy path, with dark little birds foraging in the snow in the foreground. One can imagine Trevor studying this scene and saying to himself that there's a story there.

Dede says

Dark, yet brilliant jewels from William Trevor.

Perry says

William Trevor's Last Literary Gems, or Jengas

I discovered William Trevor several years ago when listening to the *The New Yorker: Fiction* podcast, from 12/10/07, when Jhumpa Lahiri chose and read Trevor's short story "A Day." You could say, it blew me away. Since then, I've bought and read most of two other of his collections.

Trevor's mastery is not in prose or "structure" in the literary sense of the word. He is a maestro in constructing a story that reveals some human emotion or ice-shattering effects of our homocentric interactions. One way to describe this might be that he erects a Jenga tower of some human condition nudging the reader toward an ending that takes her breath away like a) pulling out the wrong block and all falls down, or b) removing just the right one, leaving her in awe at Trevor's perfection.

Trevor's final focus, in his *Last Stories*, seems primarily on the deception and various varieties of betrayal, and its short- and long-term adverse effects on betrayer, betrayed and those collaterally damaged, and the harm done by one's inability to cope with disappointments flowing from high expectations. As examples, a father's betrayal by deception of a daughter who in turn attempts to betray herself by self-deception; a betrayal borne of pity of a woman without a family or friends; out of pity arises a man's betrayal of his family and an ironic lesson in the pain and cost of unrequited love; how a double betrayal by husband and best friend leads to a betrayal of self and humanity in the black heart of vengeance.

In "Giotto's Angels," which overlies a Dante Eighth Circle special betrayal, Trevor captures the reader with a tale (a bit allegorical possibly) of good versus evil, beauty versus ugliness.

Probably the best of the brilliant bunch is "An Idyll in Winter," in which a married man visits the farm estate of a girl who had fallen head over heels for him when he tutored her maybe ten years in the past. The story delves into the devastating fallout from adultery, but moreso from the girl's inability to accept that love cannot be perfect (maybe especially so for love once unrequited and for love on which a betrayal of another is built), it will not stay a winter white idyll, which leads to the biting and ironic self-rationalization: "...she only wishes the men could know that love unchanged is as it was, is there for him among her shadows, for her in rooms and places as familiar to him as they are to her. She wishes they could know it will not wither,

that there'll be no long slow dying, or love made ordinary."

Highly recommended. If you're on the fence about William Trevor or his talent, I suggest you listen to Jhumpa Lahiri read his short story, "A Day." <https://www.newyorker.com/podcast/fic...>

I've got it on my list to read all of his stories. The literary world has lost a great one.

Vivek Tejuja says

Of all that I have read of William Trevor's work, one thing is certain: There is a sense of magic to his prose. His sentences take you by the hand, lead you on (you give in quite readily as well) and for sure you will never be disappointed. As a reader, you will be at a loss, because you loved every story and that hasn't happened in a while with a short-story collection. You then realize that you after all read Trevor and make a promise to reread the collection and you do. Nothing sweeter than to honour this kind of a promise.

I am obviously referring to Trevor's last collection of stories, posthumously published and aptly titled "Last Stories" (though I think to some extent that was very lazy). "Last Stories" is a collection of stories that is mysterious, enigmatic, sparse and yet spot on – the pace of the prose is languid and easy and somehow has the potential to draw you right into it.

Now to the stories. Trevor wrote of common men and women – those who are lost and are struggling to come to terms with life. I think after Alice Munro, Trevor is hands down my second favourite short-story writer. Every story that I have read by him has left a mark on my mind, heart and life.

All through the book what tugged at my heart is loneliness and longing that is consistent in almost every story. "Mrs Crasthorpe" is about a middle-aged widow who is only seeking companionship, only to be rebuffed later on in the story by a widower. It definitely broke my heart and that too with luscious prose at its center. And then there is "The Piano Teacher's Pupil" which is perhaps the most cheerful story of the collection. Miss Nightingale is the protagonist of this story who has known a bit about disappointment in her life, who in her fifties is almost reminiscing about her sixteen-year-old affair with a married man. Like I said, loneliness and longing are at the heart of every story in this collection and Trevor doesn't let you forget that.

In "At the Caffè Daria" a wife whose husband left her for her best friend, renews her relationship with friend, after the husband's death. And then there is "The Unknown Girl" featuring Emily, a housecleaner who commits suicide after speaking of love to the son of the house. William Trevor knows the harshness of the real world and yet somehow his characters never let go of some hope, in whatever way and manner, even in death so to say.

His stories spell disaster, confusion and loss of innocence (if there was any) for his characters. They grow-up but perhaps a little later. Or they also grow-up a little sooner than expected. Life is unfair and unkind to them and yet they are survivors all along. "Last Stories" will remind you of his genius and make you wonder why he had to leave us so soon. A beauty of a book.

Dan Friedman says

Graceful, lovely, often surprising. Masterful until he stopped writing.

Michael Rieman says

William Trevor's final collection of stories is dazzling, despite the fact that the stories describe states of melancholy and solitude that touch depths in our hearts. A piano teacher faces the likelihood that a prized student has been stealing small items from her. House painters face a mysterious disappearance in "The Crippled Man." A restorer of art work, in "Giotto's Angels," has an odd encounter with a prostitute. A woman in "At the Caffè Daria" meets the former friend who had taken a former lover. In my personal favorite, "A Winter Idyll," a cartographer who had once been a tutor to a young woman on a farm, returns there and finds himself so drawn to the young woman and the place itself that he leaves his wife and children. These stories are resonant with the small and large upheavals of our lives, yet presented in a way which is precise, understated, and haunting. I suppose it is the beautiful structure of the sentences which provides much of the aesthetic pleasure of these tales. They are simply elegant!

Underneath the elegance of the stories is the sense that life will be endured--somehow--though there are deaths and some senses of finality. The cartographer in "A Winter Idyll" says at one point "We live with consequences. We have to, and we can." Trevor sometimes suggests those consequences, and sometimes makes one wonder how exactly we can live with them--if indeed we can. There is ambiguity in many of these tales, but there is no ambiguity about the mastery of Trevor's story telling.

I will have to be sure to return to his earlier stories and novels.

Laura says

From BBC Radio 4 - Book at Bedtime:

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*Reader Niamh Cusack
Producer Di Speirs.*

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0b4...>

Liz says

This is a book that you can freely judge by its cover, because the stories inside are just as lovely and wistful as the wintry scene on the front. In fact, this was an unplanned read - of a series of short stories no less, something that I mostly shy away from - that I picked up solely because I was drawn to the way it looked.

As the first thing I've read by William Trevor, I found it to be an unexpected treat. While these are not the happiest of stories, they evoked feelings in me that I recognized at a very deep level. I think this is where Trevor's gift is; telling these profoundly human stories, showing us to be the selfish, deceitful, lonely, vulnerable, and lovable creatures that we are. I think there is something in here that will resonate with almost every single reader, whether they're willing to admit it or not.

True to what I feel the nature of a short story must be, each of these begins in a place about which you know very little. I enjoyed that feeling of dawning realization as the stories unfolded, sometimes a subtle feeling, other times more abrupt. It's easy to make assumptions about where you think the author is taking things but trust me, he will not make it that easy for you!

If I had to pick a favorite in this collection it would be *An Idyll in Winter*, which encompasses so many different reactions and emotions that I could relate to, that it warrants a second reading someday. And after the serendipitous discovery of these stories, I'll be searching out previous works by the sadly, recently deceased William Trevor.

Theresa says

Beautifully crafted, elegiac stories--not my favorites of his that I've read, but have plans to get to more. Like several other GR readers, I think *Idyll of Winter* was superb. Trevor makes humans of all sorts interesting and worth knowing, even when they are not so likable.
