

# O. Henry

(1862 – 1910)



- O. Henry is the pen name of William Sidney Porter. Some critics say that he is one of the greatest short-story writers in American history.



- Porter was born in Greensboro, North Carolina, on September 11, 1862.





When Porter was three, his mother died. Porter grew up in the home of his aunt, a schoolteacher named Evalina Porter, a strict woman who educated Porter and promoted his interest in art, literature, and writing.

- As a child, Porter was always reading. He read everything from classics to dime novels. His favorite work was One Thousand and One Nights.



- At 15, Porter became an apprentice pharmacist in his uncle's drugstore. Young Porter liked to draw caricatures of customers and to regale them with stories and skits that he wrote himself.





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- The period from 1887 to 1891 was the happiest time in Porter's life. He and 17-year-old Athol Estes started a family. With his wife's support, Porter began to write stories for national magazines.

- To earn extra money, he also took a job as a bookkeeper, a bank teller.





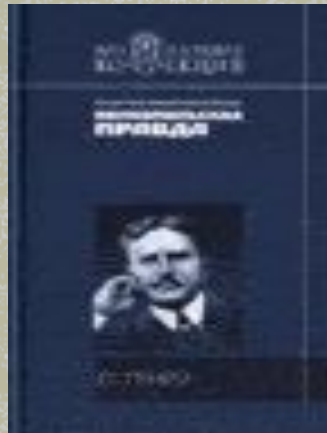


- From 1898 to 1901 Porter was in prison in Columbus, Ohio. He had fourteen stories published under various pseudonyms, but was becoming best known as "O. Henry".

- Porter's most prolific writing period started in 1902, when he moved to New York City to be near his publishers. While there, he wrote 381 short stories.



Porter died on June 5,  
1910. He was buried in the  
Riverside Cemetery in  
Asheville, North Carolina.

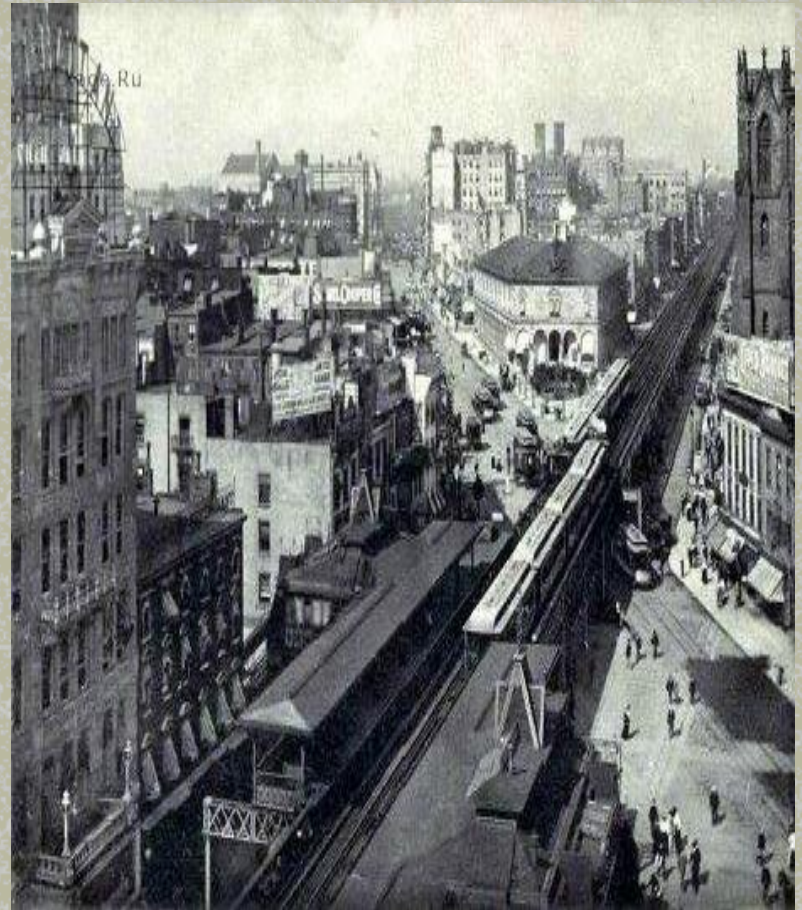




- O. Henry stories are famous for their surprise endings. They are playful, optimistic and well known for witty narration.



- Most of O. Henry's stories are set in his own time, the early years of the 20th century. Many take place in New York City, and deal for the most part with ordinary people: clerks, policemen, waitresses, poor artists.





- Among his most famous stories are: "Cabbages and Kings", "The Four Million", "The Gift of the Magi", "The Cop and the Anthem", "A Retrieved Reformation", "After Twenty Years", "Compliments of the Season", "The Ransom of Red Chief".



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