



O. Henry

Topic Guide for Chronicling America (<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov>)

Introduction

O. Henry (1862-1910), born William Sidney Porter in Greensboro, North Carolina, was a prolific American writer popular during the first decade of the 20th century and well-known for his short stories. "O. Henry" was a pseudonym that Porter began using for works he authored while imprisoned in the Ohio Penitentiary in Columbus, Ohio, after an 1898 indictment for embezzlement. Reviews of his writings compared him to Rudyard Kipling and Charles Dickens, described him as the American Guy de Maupassant, and called his stories works of human comedy. In the years immediately succeeding his death, many of his short stories were reprinted, and his fame escalated further with the revelation of his earlier conviction in a 1916 biography.

Important Dates

- 1862: William Sidney Porter is born in Greensboro, North Carolina.
- 1898-1901: Porter is convicted of embezzlement and served three years of a five year sentence at the Ohio Penitentiary in Columbus, Ohio.
- 1899: "Whistling Dick's Christmas Stocking" is published under the pseudonym "O. Henry."
- 1904: "The Cop and the Anthem" is published.
- 1905: "Gift of the Magi" is published in New York City.
- 1910: "The Ransom of Red Chief" is published.
- June 5, 1910: Porter dies in New York City.
- 1916: Professor Alphonso Smith of the University of Virginia writes O. Henry's biography.

Suggested Search Strategies

- Try using the phrase "O. Henry" or "William Sydney Porter" in an advanced search with any of the following terms: Cop and the Anthem, Gift of the Magi, Ransom of Red Chief, New York, author, writer, fiction, review, embezzlement, Ohio Penitentiary.
- Limit your search to the years between his release from prison in 1901 and his death in 1910 to find quotes from O. Henry or to the years after his death (1910-1922) to find memorials and reprintings of his work.

Sample Articles from Chronicling America

- "[Honor Rested With Author](#)" *Perrysburg Journal* (Perrysburg, OH), June 24, 1910, Image 7, col. 1.
- "[O. Henry's Start](#)" *Bisbee Daily Review* (Bisbee, AZ), October 31, 1916, Image 4, col. 1.
- "[The Unfinished Story...](#)" *Day Book* (Chicago, IL), March 22, 1913, FINAL EDITION, Image 13.
- "[O. Henry Play Hurt in Heat of Footlights](#)" *San Francisco Call* (San Francisco, CA), July 2, 1912, Image 11, col. 1.
- "[O. Henry – The Story of the Author and His Work](#)" *San Francisco Call* (San Francisco, CA), September 5, 1909, Image 7, col. 1-4.
- "[The Gift of the Magi](#)" *Caucasian* (Shreveport, LA), December 12, 1909, Image 7, col. 2-4.
- "[The Snow Man](#)" *Burlington Weekly Free Press* (Burlington, VT), October 19, 1911, Image 15.