Short stories that I read in the first half of 2017

I find short stories are great to delve into now again for a change of pace. I know some people do not enjoy them as you don't have a long time with the characters or in the world that is created, but I think that this can make it even more interesting. An author can do a lot of things in a short story that is not possible in a novel. I also enjoy writing short stories, so reading them hopefully helps me to improve my ability to write them!

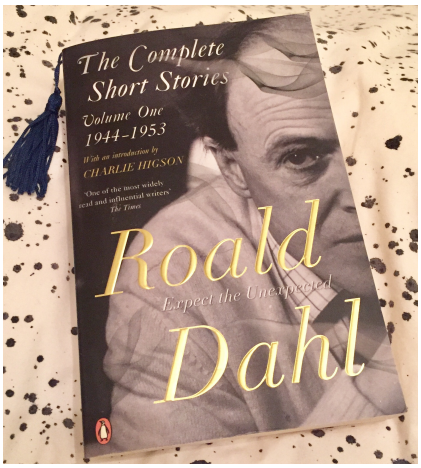
'Aokigahara' by Jennifer Down

I read this story for a take home exam for my creative writing subject. It is amazing. It follows a young woman who travels to Japan under life altering circumstances. It is hard to summarise without giving the plot away, so all I can say is you must read this. There is so much meaning within it, and I am so thankful that I read it in an assessment situation that meant I had to tear it apart and look at it deeply. I recommend you read it at least twice, and look up anything that you are not familiar with so as to reveal more behind this haunting, beautiful and captivating story. I give it *5/5 stars.*

'Black Box' by Jennifer Egan

This story is about a spy who is undercover to gather information for her country. It includes the personal side of spy life, which is not always covered. It is an interesting concept conveyed in a unique way. I did find the plot quite tedious and a little unoriginal at times, though there are some tense spots that kept me reading. This story was originally published through a series of tweets over a number of days on Twitter. I give it *2/5 stars.*

‘Beware of the Dog’ by Roald Dahl

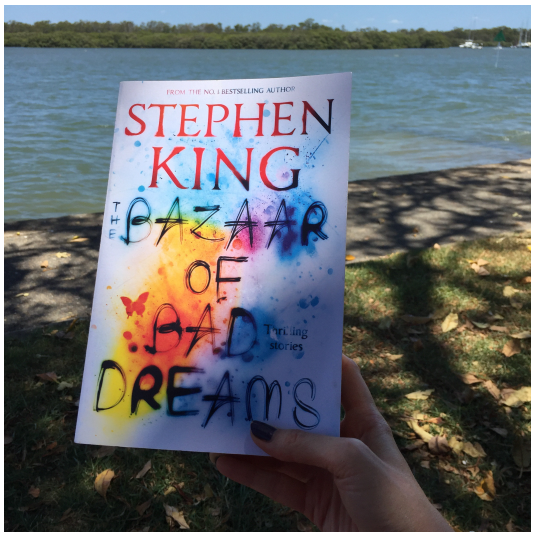


Readers often forget that Ronald Dahl wrote adult fiction alongside the children’s fiction he is well known for. I decided I wanted read some of this, so started with this short story. It is about an English World War II pilot whose plane crashes. It is well written and interesting, and has a good pace and sense of intrigue to it. It inspired the movies 36 Hours and Breaking Point. I recommend giving this a read, and give it *3/5 stars.*

***The Short Stories* – ‘The Signalman’, ‘Mr Testator’s Visitation’, ‘The Bagman’s Story’, ‘Christmas Ghosts’ by Charles Dickens**

I read these four short stories by Charles Dickens as part of a collection from Audible. I did not enjoy them. Maybe I missed something, but I didn’t get anything from these and I felt like a novice could have written them, not a respected author. I know saying that is probably akin to blasphemy, but although I was disappointed by these, I am keen to read more Dickens! I won’t go into detail about what they are about. Basically they are ghost stories, but I just did not find them very mysterious, scary or interesting! Sorry Dickens fans! I give them *2/5 stars.*

‘Mile 81’ by Stephen King



I have not read any of Stephen King's work yet as I have not been too interested in reading horror or thriller, but I thought it was about time to give it a go! So I started with one of his short story collections, The Bazaar of Bad Dreams, and this was the first story. It is about a young boy who tries to prove himself to be one of the cool 'big kids', and goes off exploring. At the same time, something creepy and mysterious is happening at a deserted petrol station.
I had such high expectations for this book, but was a little disappointed by this beginning. It seemed a bit of a simple story for a master such as King. That being said though, it is an effectively unsettling story that has kept popping up in my mind in real life situations, making my skin crawl a little!! I do recommend it, and although it initially lessened my enthusiasm for the collection, I am now looking forward to dipping in again and reading another. I give it *3/5 stars.*

'Hills Like White Elephants' by Ernest Hemingway

On the first read, I did not get this at all, and thought it was boring! When reviewing it in my creative writing class, I was blown away by the intricacies that I had overlooked! It is amazingly detailed with hidden meaning. The slow paced story centres around a conversation that takes place in a cafe in Spain that is not as simple as it may seem. It is an interesting take on a controversial topic, and is well written. If you like stories that make you think, this is for you. I give it *4/5 stars.*

I love short stories, though it seems I have been quite harsh with some of these! Perhaps I had unrealistic expectations because they were written by some of the Greats. However, they were enjoyable. I particularly recommend 'Aokigahara' by

Jennifer Down. Please let me know below in the comments if you have read any of these, or if you plan to! Do you enjoy short stories? Are there any you recommend?