

Geraldine Murphy, ed.
**A MOMENTARY STAY:
A SHORT STORY
COLLECTION.**
Don Mills:
Fitzhenry and Whiteside,
1972.
462 pp. \$4.95.

A Momentary Stay is a refreshing change in short story anthologies for schools. The experienced teacher will not find in this bright, strongly-bound paperback the high school "classics." Instead, he will find thirty modern, less familiar, North American and British stories which seem just right for Geraldine Murphy's intended readers: students in junior college and the upper years of secondary school.

The themes of the stories are mature: a child reacts to his accidental shooting of his brother in "The Stone Boy" by Gina Berriault; a young man has his first exposure to sadism in "Torment" by George Garrett; a man begins to understand his brother's involvement with music and drugs in "Sonny's Blues" by James Baldwin. Nevertheless, the young reader can enter each story because he can readily identify with the main character.

The book is organized in six sections, groups of stories which focus on "Pariahs," "Initiates," "Conquerors," "Lovers," "Villains," and "Heroes." Each succeeding section demands more of the reader, so he is encouraged to read at least two stories from each group

before going on. For example, in the first section he may read a story such as John Bell Clayton's "The White Circle," with a clear plot and an adolescent hero. By the last section he should be able to read Hemingway's "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place" in which "nothing happens" and the main character is a middle-aged waiter.

The title comes from the *Selected Prose of Robert Frost* in which Frost defines a story as "a momentary stay against confusion." The introduction and the comments accompanying the stories expand on this idea suggesting that stories (and other "fictions" like art, photography, pantomime, which are used as parallels in this collection) help us "to understand moods, motives, and attitudes and to infer their meanings." (p. x) These sections speak to teacher and student equally, with no condescension, a pleasant change from the typical "introduction to the student." There are no biographical summaries, either, to distract the reader from the story itself.

I think this collection will be appreciated by students because the stories are excellent and the ordering of them makes sense; by teachers because they can assign which stories they wish students to read and also make use of the carefully thought out rationale and discussion questions included by the editor; and by ordinary readers because the anthology will draw their attention to good stories they may have missed elsewhere.

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