

— Text:Ur — The New Book of Masks

Discussion Questions

1. How would you describe the tone of Nadia Gregor's short story "Faure, Envenomed, Dictates"? What stylistic devices (tone, sentence structure, repetition, etc.) does the writer use to establish the tone of this story? In what ways do these stylistic devices complicate, mirror, or raise questions about the subject matter of Gregor's story?
2. In Christine Boyka Kluge's story "Parchment and Twigs," the mother tells her parchment and twig children fairy tales before putting them to bed. Would you classify this story as a fairy tale? If not, in which genre (prose poetry, flash fiction, narrative, etc.) would you place it and why?
3. Tom Miller's "The Fifth Tale: When the Devil Met Baldrick Beckenbauer," the author makes use of an intricate web of footnotes to the main text, at times elaborating, digressing, and commenting on the plot of the story. What do you learn about the narrator and plot of the piece through the use of footnotes that is not present in the main text?
4. In Toiya Kristen Finley's story, how does the idea of characters that "live life as background noise" redefine the idea of the short-story protagonist? In what ways is her definition of who can be a sympathetic or heroic character different from that of other fiction writers?
5. In what ways does Sarah Totten's use of typography in "Bluecoat Jack" help the reader experience the plot of the story? How do these experimental techniques change in the pacing of the narrative, match the subject matter, and give way to additional instances of irony?
6. In what ways do the stories in the anthology that don't use typography, footnotes, or other unexpected formal devices (such as Joe Murphy's "Bitter Almonds and Absinthe" and Darren Speegle's "Peace Rituals") still manage to convey their stories in an experimental fashion?
7. How does the use of dashes, caps, italics and typography affect how Joshua Cohen's story "Last Transmission, or Man With a Robotic Ermine" affect how the story is read aloud? Describe the type of rhythm and tone these devices create within the narrative. What does this new type of narrative say about where the short story genre is head in the future?
8. Describe the narrative voices that comprise Jay Lake and Ruth Nestvold's short story "Incipit." In what ways do these different narrative styles complicate and compliment one another?