

INTRODUCTION & INVITATION: Treasure-Troves of 50 Words

The following texts were composed by participants of the HS on *Using the Small Forms of Literature (Mini-Saga, Urban Legend, Fairy Tale) in English Language Teaching for Primary, Special Needs, and Lower Secondary School* at the English Seminar II of Cologne University in the winter term 2012/13.

Readers will find various examples here of the versatility of this youngest of all narrative genres which prescribes only two rules: a text of *exactly* fifty words; a title of a *maximum* of fifteen words. Despite this rigid pattern, the Mini-Saga can be poetic, dialogic, narrative or descriptive. Some are indeed playing tricks with our expectations ("Good Mourning"; "Voyeur"; "The Thing I Fear Most"), ask us to provide the *real* bit ourselves ("50 Words to Leave Your Lover"), defy an unambiguous interpretation ("Bomb Found on Platform Six"), are re-writes of fairy tales providing a fresh reading ("Little Red Riding-Hood"; "Snow White"; "The Red Hood"), take their material from other textual sources and thus offer variations on 'found poetry' ("Ama & Sharon"; "DB") or 'intertextuality' ("I am"; "Three Generations of Geniuses"; "A Day in the Mediterranean"; "Explorin the World"), are reminiscent of the pictorial precision of Imagist verse ("Like Lovers"), or have a surprisingly painful twist and turn ("The Fight"; "Sven").

Although the ambition was not to write 'teachable' texts, it is rewarding to see that most, if not all, of the 'small worlds' invented below are extremely suitable for classroom usage. And, most certainly, they also show the tremendous boost to be found in turning readers into authors....

enjoy.

Dr. G. Nieragden, February 25. 2013

NOTE:

All authors have agreed to having their texts published and uploaded in the present format for further usage by interested parties.

Göran Nieragden – Four Mini-Sagas, 18.01.2013

(punctuation as intended)

1 **50 Words to Leave Your Lover**

what I've always wanted to tell you but never had the courage or found a good time to, but now really feel I can hold it back no more, you know, is that you really, yes, you really and truly sometimes just simply, simply make me want to go and

2 *Le Mot Juste*

That is easier said than done if you think you have to explain it in detail because people constantly ask you to be precise and come to the point, yet there is this need not to run overtime or bore them. Still you often look for

the
one
right
word.

3 **Why It Is Harder To Speak In Verse When You Want To Say Something Important**

When you try to talk in rhymes
you'll find you walk through times
that are a landmine of confusion.
And prose would have seemed better. (25)

All the words you want to choose
might drift apart, run loose,
your thoughts a mere illusion.
And what gets lost is all your matter. (25)

4 Turnings

He sensed that something was wrong. He felt tense, nervous, turned mistrustful and bitter. What used to be good humour turned into harsh cynicism. Sly and cunning he tested all of them until he knew. And then he turned upon them. Just one of his turns, they thought in Denmark.

Big Bang

The very hungry caterpillar was starving.

He found fruit, but he did not like it

Instead he ate chocolate,cookies, hamburgers, fries and ice-cream cones.

In the end he was enormous.

When he tried to hide in his cocoon, it gave a big bang.

The caterpillar was no more.

Voyeur

He was watching her for hours. Her body: so wonderfully formed. Her movements: so gentle. Through the air her sweet-smelling waft was swirling and finally reached his nose. She didn't know him, she didn't even recognize him, and that will be her undoing, thought the cat and caught the mouse.

(Isabelle Gerretz)

Only one word

She was sitting in the uncomfortable chair that has been hers in so long. Since her last count, the number of this room's spiders has increased to 4. Suddenly the silence was broken: "Mum?". After months of waiting – now the most beautiful sound. Her daughter finally got out of coma.

Ellen Jungermann

Sven

How should I have found out?

Don't you read the paper! And it was on facebook.

We forgot you do not use that.

You should have simply used the phone.

Spending five minutes of your life time- telling me that our school friend is dead.

The funeral was on Monday.

By Clara Anderssen (22 years), English student

The Thing I Fear Most

"So a guy comes into a bar..." - "Oh, not that joke again" - "Can you please be quiet, stop interrupting the jester!" *It's always the same with hecklers. I usually don't go to stand-up comedy any more, but this time I brought a gun with me to kill that motherfucking clown.*

ULLA KRÜGER

2013

Hunger

Everyday the same. A coffee, for breakfast the obligatory bagel with ham. Second breakfast at eleven. Lunch at 2 p.m. Tea at four. Dinner ready: seven. Sweets in the evening.

Everyday the same. Nothing to eat for breakfast, not knowing if there will be something else to eat that day.

- XY

Strange Flowers – Not really...

Ingrid Schmickler

It is Friday afternoon, a rainy day. In a big city somewhere, the doorbell rings. "Who is that?" she wonders not expecting anyone. A strange lady hands her a bouquet of flowers. After reading the card, she knows that she has great friends at the other end of the world!!!

Kerstin Plake

As if...

“That’s total bullshit!! Why should there be a fat, old bloke fulfilling all good children’s wishes? And that on a sleigh and in only one night? I’m laughing my head off!! There is no Santa Claus!” says the Easter bunny to his friend and continues hiding Easter eggs.

Little red riding-hood

Rubinia was sent away to see her grandmother who lived in the woods. On her way, Rubinia made the acquaintance of Wolff. Having chatted with him a long time, she arrived at her grandmothers’ one hour delayed. Had she arrived earlier, she would have been able to save a life.

Jana Schröder

Cycling

Girl coming from south-west, cycling. Time was short, she hastened. Someone was waiting.

“Excuse me lady, get off your bike!” She, puzzled, decelerated, got off the bike. People starring, walking by, engines so loud, the voice came: “Young lady, you crossed the road. You remember the traffic light?”, “Yes, sir!”

(Henriette Otto)

Never Ending Questions

Mother puts her son to bed. “Mummy, why has Daddy left us alone?”

“Because Mummy and Daddy quarreled all the time.”

“Why?”

“Because we don’t love each other any longer.”

“Why?”

“Because feelings can change.”

“Why?”

While the mother is thinking about an answer, her son has already fallen asleep.

author: Kirsten Schmidt

Sometimes you get lucky

She was late. Really late!

It was the last flight and she didn’t feel like spending the night at the airport. She spotted a clock -only twenty minutes left. She ran as fast as she could. When she reached the gate she suddenly stopped and smiled -her flight was delayed.

DB

Ladies and Gentlemen on platform 1,
Welcome to Cologne central station, your next connections...
Attention, don't leave your luggage unattended!
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Intercity Express from Cologne to Munich is now arriving on platform 4 ...
Please take care, while the train is approaching.
Thank you, for traveling with Deutsche Bahn.

The Fight

I went to primary school with him. We grew older. He was my best friend. Then he kind of lost it. Got into fights a lot. We grew apart. One and a half years ago he got diagnosed: brain tumor. Again, he fought, but this time he did not win.

© *Sarah Hesse*

The perfect listener (*Lars Bieker*)

I am the perfect listener.
I might be taciturn, but I would never turn my back on you.
You are in my mind, but out of sight.
I hear everybody's cries, lies, wants, needs, beliefs.
Knock knock. Nobody home. But the lights are on.
I am alone.
Somehow overdose – comatose.

Snow White

There she lays. Disgusted. No wonder she woke up, now confronted with those wet, muddy lips. This is supposed to be the love of her life? The One to rescue her from the Queen? No! She slapped Prince Charming. "I am just much too pretty for this kind of guy."

Anke Barten

Meta Mini-Saga

I sit in front of my computer because I have to write a short story. But it must be a special short story. It must be the shortest short story of the world. I exactly need fifty words. But I have no idea. I count. Five words to go: finished.

The Perfect Man

Granny always told me to watch out for THE perfect man: tall, blond, blue eyes, and most important: rich!

I went throughout the world, looking out for THIS man.

I met him: small, brown hair, black eyes, and, most important: poor,

He showed me one essential thing: deep and eternal love.

By Lisa Brücher

Weekend

She is dancing, she feels the beat, the rhythm.

Music and lights surround her.

She is laughing and enjoys the music, she has fun.

Nothing grieves her.

Suddenly, a disturbing sound.

Mini-Saga entries
Version February 25th 2013

The music vanishes, the light disappears.

It is the alarm. 6 o'clock in the morning. Monday.

Weekend is over.

(Vera van Bonn)

Bomb found on platform six

A couple stands on platform six.

They cuddle and flirt - absolutely absorbed by each other,
looking forward to a long planned journey.

A man comes by and leaves a huge bag next to the couple.

No one realises it's not theirs.

A ticking noise comes from inside. Klick...

Nothing

Isabel Schmidt

Running for my life

Everyone is running after me like I stole the crown jewels. Young and old, big and small, tough
and weak. And all wearing their armour.

They all want to stop me before I cross the line.

Only a couple more yards- my muscles start to tighten.

Totally exhausted I cross the line and the referee holds his arms to the sky: Touchdown!

Christian Kugele

Mrt.nr. 5363721

Mini-Saga by Rita Weiß

Amy & Sharon

“I was looking to the sky (...)”1

“Facing the morning eye to eye (...)”2

“ We must be the change we wish (...)”3

“Break through the surface

Reach for my hand (...)”4

“I cannot betray my kind

They are here-It’s my time (...)”5 „

“Nothing can hold me (...)”6

“Are you the one? (...)”7

“I hear them calling. (...)”8

1,5,6,8 “Swimming Home” lyrics by Evanescence

2,7 “Are You The One?” lyrics by Within Temptation

3,4 “See Who I Am” lyrics by Within Temptation

A Day in the Mediterranean

The taxi rolled through the Mediterranean landscape. Houses were covered with pink bougainvillea, butterflies rested on rocks and people flooded the beaches with laughter. Gentle breezes stroke the drivers’ face through the open window.

“Thank god that I left New York in 1976” Travis Bickle thought and closed his eyes.

Die dunkle Macht

Der Dolmetscher blickte aus seiner Glaskabine auf die kostümierten Gestalten. Nun versammelten sie sich und reckten ihre Fäuste in die Höhe.

„Am 4. Mai sind wir bei euch!“ übersetzte er und schaltete das Mikrofon aus. Zufrieden biss er in sein Brötchen. Die Star-Wars Premiere hatte er gut über die Bühne gebracht.

The Dream

The sunny Florida beach, some palm trees and the girl he loved. Where was he? He was not sure but this wasn't important. Actually, he had always dreamed of that. Suddenly the alarm clock rang and he awoke. All disappeared. In fact, it had been a wonderful dream.

The Red Hood

So there is this dealer we call grandma. He is waiting for his usual package. Thomas Wolf is supposed to fetch it for him. But Wolf takes the package and delivers it into the Red Hood, and the Red Hood is no good. Grandma tells Jack Hunter to kill Wolf.

Simon k.

I am...

I'm...

Human. An orphan. A handsome man. A Billionaire. A Womanizer. Well trained. Strong. Athletic. Clever. Inventive. Mysterious. Dark. Mainly nocturnal. Well equipped. Technologically superior. A Savior. Justice. Fighting crime. A retaliator.

I'm...

Na na na na na na na,

Na na na na na na na,

Coffee Grounds

What brings the future? How will it be?

Is it an ongoing struggle I see?

Thanks god, it is not! Now I can calm down.

And have some more coffee with milk, hot and brown.

Soothsaying is hard, I can tell you that.

Sometimes my coffee makes me feel sad...

CHRISTIAN WEINERT

Three Generations of Geniuses

“Just one more thing... You did extraordinary well in the knotty case of the Hound of the Baskervilles, Mr. Holmes.”

“Thank you very much, my dear Lieutenant Columbo.”

“I couldn't have done this...”

“Why not, Adrian? You are a very good detective.”

“But 19th century England's germs...”

(Both sighing) “...Monk...”

CHRISTIAN WEINERT

Like Lovers

She showed me her drawings. Beautiful.
Something pumped energy inside me.
We were talking like lovers do.
We were walking on silver sand.
We were dreaming of the things we'd take
and of the effects they would make.
She comes. She comes in colours, and makes me feel
so enlightened.

Jerome Marshall

She teaches English to 32 males in jail

I was checking the attendance list. "Not telling you nuthin'!" "Okay, you speak English already?"
But no reply, I went on reading the attendance list. Suddenly Mr Nuthin got up, walked up to me,
past me and behind me.
Mr Nuthin returned to his seat, smiled. "Misses, tell me somethin'!"

Jerome Marshall

Good Mourning

Arrived in London, a town of music, enjoyment – no more unfulfilled dreams. Work in a music studio. Will call from a red phone box, yay! Am paid for playing own stuff, not that bad! Awaiting the big break–through – it will come, hands down. Bye.

There's truth in every second line.

Michael Kaiser

Isn't it ironic?

Gamla Stan, Stockholm's picturesque Old Town, was covered under a cold white blanket. The snow crunched under Knut's winter boots as he mandered. "What must it be like for a little helpless creature getting crushed by a shoe from above?", he thought as a Christmas tree from above buried him.

Michael Kaiser

ID'd

The baseball bat hit me at my right temple unexpectedly, but with such force that before I lost consciousness I was only able to ask myself if the homicide squad would also order to take my fingerprints and compare them with the ones of the offender on the murder weapon.

Michael Kaiser

Exploring the World

Little Miss Sunshine wanted to explore the world. Grabbed her suitcase and headed the horizon with big steps. Her heart was full of joy and excitement when she met the old wise man Mister Klaus.

“Travelling helps you find yourself and most of the time you end up in couples.”

Katrin Simunovic