Short Story Collections: Read It Like a Novel

Olive Kitteridge—Elizabeth Strout
Olive, a retired schoolteacher, deplores the changes in her little town and doesn’t always recognize the changes in those around her: a lounge musician haunted by a past romance; a former student who has lost the will to live; Olive’s own adult child, who feels tyrannized by her irrational sensitivities; and her husband, Henry, who finds his loyalty to his marriage both a blessing and a curse.

FIC STR

Blackbird House—Alice Hoffman
These interconnected narratives are as intelligent as they are haunting, as luminous as they are unusual. Inside Blackbird House more than a dozen men and women learn how love transforms us and how it is the one lasting element in our lives. The past both dissipates and remains contained inside the rooms of Blackbird House, where there are terrible secrets, inspired beauty, and, above all else, a spirit of coming home.

FIC HOF

Dear Life—Alice Munro
Suffused with Munro’s clarity of vision and her unparalleled gift for storytelling, these tales about departures and beginnings, accidents and dangers, and goings and homecomings both imagined and real, paint a radiant, indelible portrait of how strange, perilous, and extraordinary ordinary life can be.

FIC STR

What Is Not Yours Is Not Yours—Helen Oyeyemi
The key to a house, the key to a heart, the key to a secret – not only unlock elements of characters’ lives, they promise further labyrinths on the other side. In ‘Books and Roses’ one special key opens a library, a garden, and clues to at least two lovers’ fates. ‘Sorry’ Doesn’t Sweeten Her Tea involves a house of locks, where doors can be closed only with a key – with surprising, unobservable developments. Is a key a gate, a gift, or an invitation?

FIC JOY

Interpreters of Maladies—Jhumpa Lahiri
Navigating between the Indian traditions they’ve inherited and the baffling new world, characters seek love beyond the barriers of culture and generations. In "A Temporary Matter," a young Indian-American couple faces the heartbreak of a stillborn birth while their Boston neighborhood copes with a nightly blackout. In the title story, an interpreter guides an American family through the India of their ancestors and hears an astonishing confession.

FIC LAH

Drown—Junot Diaz
With ten stories that move from the barrios of the Dominican Republic to the struggling urban communities of New Jersey, Diaz’s work is unflinching and strong, and these stories crackle with an electric sense of discovery. Diaz evokes a world in which fathers are gone, mothers fight with grim determination for their families and themselves, and the next generation inherits the casual cruelty, devastating ambivalence, and knowing humor of lives circumscribed by poverty and uncertainty.