

## From the Meaning of a Story to the Meaning of Existence:

### Flash fiction as a tool for logotherapy

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In this paper I wish to establish the claim that the short-short story (also known as “flash fiction”), with all its genre characteristics, can serve as a significant tool for logotherapy. My first step will be to emphasize the existential value of literature in general, as a tool for molding consciousness. In this sense, logotherapy proves to be an immanent channel in the hermeneutic process due to the twofold nature of the notion of meaning itself, the search for a literary meaning leading to the search for an existential meaning imbedded in the text. With such principles of logotherapy in mind, I will show how flash fiction in particular provides a convenient therapeutic domain for inquiring into the meaning of life.

I will examine four short-short stories from different eras and cultures. These stories demonstrate four central aspects of logotherapy: crisis management, mental strengthening, finding a meaning within suffering, and the emphasis of optimism. In my interpretation I will be using two complementary hermeneutic tools, both immanent to flash fiction by the very definition of the genre, namely bridging gaps by posing questions, and unveiling a hidden message in the story. By means of these two methods I will emphasize the logotherapeutic aspect of flash fiction as a natural vehicle for such a reading, as it draws the reader into an existential dialogue.

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