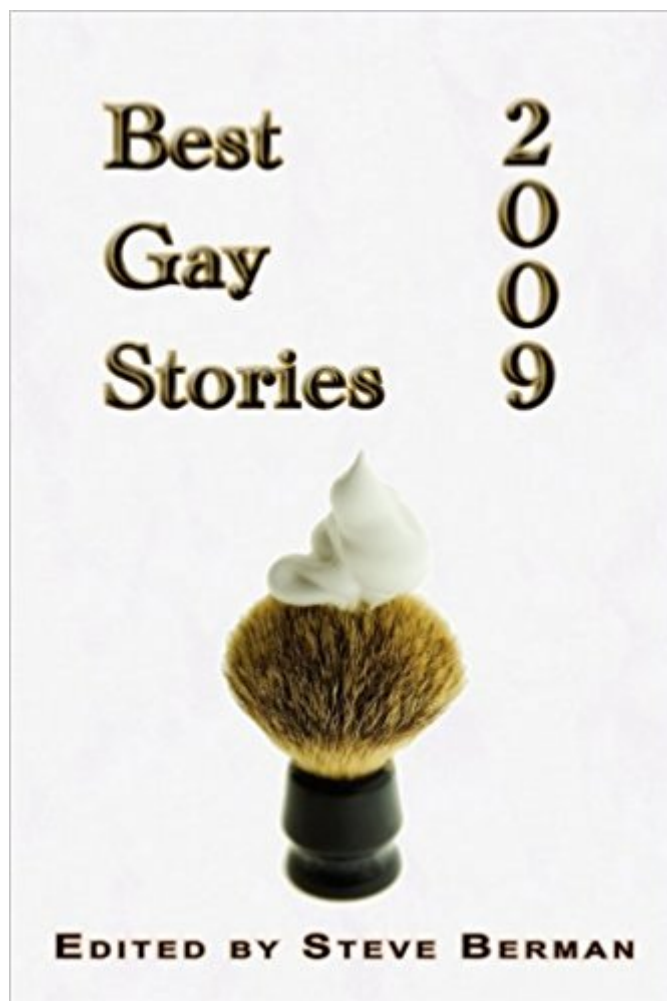


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Best Gay Stories 2009



Synopsis

Best Gay Stories 2009 offers eighteen tales showing the handsome face of gay writing. Noted editor Steve Berman, a finalist for the Gaylactic Spectrum Award and Lambda Literary Award, has spent the past year reading page after page to bring booklovers a collection of the finest stories featuring the pain of first loves and the comfort of old lovers, wistful essays and poignant confessions. These stories, by award-winning authors as well as fresh voices in the field, encompass the range of emotions every gay man feels in his lifetime.

Book Information

Hardcover: 284 pages

Publisher: Lethe Press (November 1, 2009)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1590211499

ISBN-13: 978-1590211496

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.8 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.2 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.0 out of 5 stars 1 customer review

Best Sellers Rank: #11,345,303 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #5 in [Books > Gay & Lesbian > Literature & Fiction > Fiction > Short Stories](#) #42676 in [Books > Gay & Lesbian > Literature & Fiction > Fiction > Gay](#) #376054 in [Books > Literature & Fiction > United States](#)

Customer Reviews

Think of this annual series, now in year two, as a starter kit for readers of gay writing, fiction and otherwise, who might not otherwise have access to the sources from which Berman culled 18 stories. Some are erotic, some are literary, some are romantic, some dabble with fantasy, some tackle coming out a perennial of queer storytelling. There aren't any duds, but highlights include Sam J. Miller's on-target tale about racial insensitivity, "Haunting Your House"; Trebor Healey's elegiac account of a young man memorializing his lover's death; Christopher Schmidt's trilogy of short-shorts observing queer life, "Three Scenes"; Craig Lurance Gidney's recasting of French poet and libertine Arthur Rimbaud, "Strange Alphabets"; and David Levithan's charming account of a teen's babysitting adventure and his encounter with "Starbucks Boy." Anthologies promising the "Best" are entirely subjective; for every story included there are certainly three or four just as good that don't make the cut. But Berman founder and publisher of Lethe Press has a good eye for queer prose, as this quality compilation attests. --Richard Labonte, BookMarksBerman's introduction

makes it clear that by "gay" he means gay men; all the stories are about gay boys and men. A few of the stories are by well-known authors, but most are by lesser known writers. One interesting feature of the volume is the ordering of the stories, which for the most part is chronological by the age of the main characters, from school boys through retired elderly men, including an elderly couple (together since 1956) one of whose members suffers from Alzheimer's. Style and themes are varied. The first story is rather stream of consciousness. A couple of the stories are autobiographical essays. But most are more conventional narratives. Themes run the gamut of gay life. The younger boys suffer bullying and rejection and even rape, but some also advance toward coming out and enjoying gay life. Young and older men suffer but also enjoy the ups and downs of gay relationships. AIDS is important in at least one story. Some stories are sad; some are violent; a few are comical. And others are fun and joyful. A nice feature of this collection is that, unlike most anthologies, the reader doesn't have to skip to the end to learn about each author. Instead, very short bios precede each story. Additionally, the stories are very well written and edited. Not a single typo was encountered. Even if these aren't the "best" gay stories, they are very good and I recommend this anthology for any library and any reader interested in contemporary gay fiction of the shorter variety. --James D. Anderson for the GLBT Roundtable of the American Library Association --This text refers to the Kindle Edition edition.

Lambda Award-nominated editor Steve Berman has been writing stories both queer and strange for many years. He is the author of *Vintage: A Ghost Story* (Haworth) and his work has appeared in the fantasy anthologies *The Faery Reel* and *The Coyote Road*. Mr. Berman is an active member of Science Fiction & Fantasy Writers of America (SFWA).

Should gay stories be judged with the same criteria as straight stories? Of course. Is there such a thing as gay or straight stories? A more difficult question. As a writer, I chose this book to get an idea of what constituted a "best" gay story. The particular taste of the editor is certainly a factor and his take on literary (or fictional) excellence. I had an agenda: I want my gay characters in a novel I am writing to be three dimensional and not cliches. The examples in this collection vary from the banal to the sublime--not unusual in any collection of short stories by different authors, gay or straight. I accomplished my goal, enjoyed many of the stories, learned from them about gay life and just plain life. I won't mention my favorites, since every reader will have his own interests and taste, but the collection in general--if uneven--is an interesting read.

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