

I am not often attracted to short stories, but this new collection, ***Instead***, makes for an interesting and very good read. In the 10 stories in the book there are no fairy tales or fantasies, no magic or myths; all of them speak of real life, some set in the past and others in present times. They are about the diversity of human lives and relationships and include a wide range of experiences and emotions and show the author to have a deep understanding of what it means to be human.

Sue Hampton is a talented writer of short stories, and each one takes the reader into another world. She introduces the main character and sets the scene with the minimum of words in the first few lines. Immediately the reader is drawn into the story, identifying with the character, and wondering where it will go. What will be the twists and turns? Other characters come on stage and play their part as the story develops. In some, the reader feels confident about the ending; in others less sure and even puzzled when reading the last paragraph. In all the stories the reader is left wanting to know more.

An unexpected component of this book are the short reviews included at the end of each story: appreciative, complimentary, honest and challenging, and introducing new thoughts into the mind of the reader. The stories call out to be read again and again.

A comment I read about this book said: "*Put this one on your 'keep' shelf and buy your friends their own copies.*" That sums up the esteem with which I hold this beautifully written and fascinating book. I want it to be on my 'keep' shelf or even on my bedside table.

Margaret Burbidge
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