



Can You 'Say It In Six?'

Tellers Trump Twitter Telling Six Word Stories

By Craig "Hackin' Boo" Harrison



Are you a sexta-tellerian?

Everyone is atwitter these days about short form communication — 140 character communiqués, e-bursts and micro-blogs. As storytellers we are masters at painting word pictures long enough to whet listeners' imaginations yet sparse enough our audiences can fill in the fine strokes.

The story goes that Ernest Hemingway was once challenged to pen a six-word story. His response:
"For sale: Baby Shoes. Never Worn."

Over the years, six word speeches, stories, synopses and memoirs have followed. Some have been published in magazines and others in books and on websites. *Smith* magazine spawned the Six-Word Memoirs series of books after collecting close to 1,000 six-word memoirs from famous and obscure contributors which became the "Not Quite What I Was Planning" themed first book. You may have read about it in *The New Yorker* or heard some on NPR's TALK OF THE NATION.

Various groups have launched six-word contests. Teachers have used this idea of flash fiction to engage young students, and some suggest taggers — graffiti artists, have been doing it in fewer than six words!

Here are a few six-word stories from the website for *Smith* magazine:

- ❖ Found on Craigslist: table, apartment, fiancé ¹
- ❖ Class clown. Class president. Town drunk. ²
- ❖ Met wife at her Bachelorlette Party ³

Here are several six-word stories on race, ethnicity and cultural identity from www.TheRaceCardProject.com:

- ❖ Kim you speak such good English!
- ❖ Your name doesn't match your face
- ❖ Moroccan US citizen is African-American
- ❖ Yellow: neither white nor black enough
- ❖ The color of advantage is green

A few years ago, www.SpeakerNetNews.com, a weekly online community of 6,000 speakers, trainers, consultants, coaches and other thought leaders, held a six-word story contest. Here are a few of their winning entries about their profession:

- ❖ Give wisdom away; it returns tenfold
- ❖ Stand up, be great, sit down
- ❖ Tell me a story, I'll listen
- ❖ Whoever tells the stories shapes society ⁴
- ❖ Presentations are verbal and visual ballets
- ❖ Never underestimate the power of words
- ❖ Listening takes place between the ears

Recently I invited storytellers from and beyond NSN to share their own six-word stories. Responses ranged from funny to philosophical, from romantic to risqué.

Here is an assortment of stories shared, including a few of my own:

- ❖ Found: 3 leashes and two dogs ⁵
- ❖ My story told, now becomes yours.
- ❖ I won the Nigerian Lotto again? ⁶
- ❖ Chuckles. Guffaws. Hysterical laughter. Curtain falls. ⁷
- ❖ Hook the audience. Leave them satisfied. ⁸

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- ❖ Once upon the time. The end.
- ❖ They Oppressed. We survived. Let's Eat.⁹
- ❖ He or she becomes a (s)hero.
- ❖ Storyteller occupational hazard, Restless Tongue Syndrome¹⁰
- ❖ Sons of Abraham. Brothers still fighting.
- ❖ We tell. You applaud. That's storytelling.
- ❖ Oakland swaps: There's a hear here.
- ❖ Stories open hearts making new connections.
- ❖ Story true? Is it for you?
- ❖ Stories can be happy or Grimm.
- ❖ Jack and the Devil: Dueling Duo.
- ❖ True or false, it's your story.
- ❖ Stories told. Listeners wondered. Magic made.¹¹
- ❖ I thought there would be cake.¹²
- ❖ Funeral guests gone, naked daughter dances¹³
- ❖ Hey, what does this button do?¹⁴
- ❖ Six words? Can't even say hello.¹⁵
- ❖ War hero. Nightmares. Abuses wife. Suicide.¹⁶
- ❖ Timid child is transformed riding bicycle.¹⁷
- ❖ She was frightened. Love could win.¹⁸
- ❖ City, countryside. Could he have both?¹⁹
- ❖ Window. Looking in. Emptiness fills house²⁰
- ❖ Leaves in autumn, leave them laughing.²¹
- ❖ What, Lassie? Timmy's in the well?!?²²
- ❖ She knew Paris, he knew Oakland.²³
- ❖ No tattoo contains the word future.²⁴
- ❖ Soldiers surrounding me, removing my backpack²⁵
- ❖ She was pretty, a sad curse.²⁶
- ❖ He wanted women, she wanted lovers.²⁷
- ❖ Sing say or play in Oakland²⁸
- ❖ Crown blows out, after Starburst pigout²⁹
- ❖ Human flesh didn't taste that bad.³⁰
- ❖ Daddy held me. Nothing else mattered.³¹
- ❖ A six-word story is born.³²
- ❖ High school football quarterback. Vietnam. Body bag.³³

It's your turn to tell yours. Become a six-shooter! Whether you say it or text it, sing it or sling it, share it in six!



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 Author and storyteller Craig "Hackin' 'Boo" Harrison tells tales of humor and humanity.  
 E-mail him [Craig@HackinBoo.com](mailto:Craig@HackinBoo.com) to share your favorite 6-word story.  
 Says Craig: "I came, I told, I listened."

### CAN YOU NAME THESE STORIES FROM THEIR 6-WORD SYNOPSES?

Illinois teller Linda Gorham ([Linda@LindaGorham.com](mailto:Linda@LindaGorham.com)) shared a quartet of six-word synopses of famous stories. See if you can identify their sources:

1. Ashen Cindy trades cottage for castle.
2. Pigs capture wolf while feigning abandonment.
3. Rumpelstiltskin catches 'attitude' when name revealed.

ANSWERS: 1. Cinderella 2. Three Little Pigs 3. Rumpelstiltskin





**ENDNOTES**

6-word story contributors from pages 1-3:

- |                                                            |                                           |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| 1. Becki Lee ( <i>Smith</i> magazine contest submission)   | 18. Nancy Wang/EthNohTec                  |
| 2. Victor Goad ( <i>Smith</i> magazine contest submission) | 19. Nancy Wang/EthNohTec                  |
| 3. Eddie Matz ( <i>Smith</i> magazine contest submission)  | 20. Lisa Safran                           |
| 4. Plato                                                   | 21. Charlie Chin                          |
| 5. Connie Regan-Blake/www.storywindow.com                  | 22. Steve Shags Shagrin                   |
| 6. Charlie Chin                                            | 23. Charlie Chin                          |
| 7. Ruth Stotter                                            | 24. Charlie Chin                          |
| 8. Ruth Stotter                                            | 25. Roy Schachter                         |
| 9. The story of every Jewish holiday                       | 26. Charlie Chin                          |
| 10. Charlie Chin                                           | 27. Charlie Chin                          |
| 11. Kirk Waller                                            | 28. Newish Oakland Swap of Ed Silberman's |
| 12. Kay deMartini                                          | 29. Carol Nyhoff                          |
| 13. Michael Katz                                           | 30. Charlie Chin                          |
| 14. Steve "Shags" Shagrin                                  | 31. Kirk Waller                           |
| 15. Joel Ben Izzy                                          | 32. Kirk Waller                           |
| 16. Ruth Stotter                                           | 33. Ruth Stotter                          |

*The remaining 6-word stories were penned by Craig*