

The Art of Writing Short

March 16, 2010 12:00 PM Tammy C. Barney
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Amy Hempel, the 25th Zale-Kimmerling Writer-in-Residence at Tulane, has mastered the art of the short story. She once wrote ? and had published ? a story that was one sentence.



"The shorter the better," Amy Hempel said of short stories on Monday (March 15) during a reading in the Kendall Cram Lecture Hall at the Lavin-Bernick Center. (Photo by Cheryl Gerber)

"I love short short stories," Hempel said during a reading on the Tulane uptown campus on Monday (March 15). "The shorter the better."

"Just once in my life ? oh, when have I ever wanted anything just once in my life?" she wrote in "Memoir," the shortest of short stories appearing in *The Dog of The Marriage* (2005).

Hempel is author of four short-story collections and the Briggs-Copeland Lecturer at Harvard University. She is [spending this week](#) at the [Newcomb College Center for Research on Women](#) and visiting classes to talk about her technique as well as give

students advice about their work.

During Monday's hour-long event at the Kendall Cram Lecture Hall in the Lavin-Bernick Center, about 250 people listened intently as Hempel read new stories and a few from her most recent publication, *The Collected Stories of Amy Hempel* (2006). She also took questions from the audience.

When asked about the importance of place in a story, Hempel said, "Place is hugely important to me. Place has character. I've been asking my students to look at what happens in a place that doesn't happen anywhere else. Certainly, anyone writing in New Orleans would understand this. Place is a big deal."

Dana Zale Gerard, a 1985 Newcomb College graduate, established the Zale Writer-in-Residence program in 1985.

An annual gift from the M. B. and Edna Zale Foundation of Dallas made the program possible, and Barnes & Noble College Booksellers has supported it since 2006. This year, Martha McCarty Kimmerling, a 1963 Newcomb College graduate, fully endowed the program, and the name was changed.

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