

William Sydney Porter (1862-1910), who wrote under the pseudonym of O. Henry, was born in North Carolina.

His only formal education was to attend his Aunt Lina's school until the age of fifteen, where he developed his lifelong love of books.

By 1881 he was a licensed pharmacist.

However, within a year, on the recommendation of a medical colleague of his Father's, Porter moved to La Salle County in Texas for two years herding sheep.

During this time, Webster's Unabridged Dictionary was his constant companion, and Porter gained a knowledge of ranch life that he later incorporated into many of his short stories.

He then moved to Austin for three years, and during this time the first recorded use of his pseudonym appeared, allegedly derived from his habit of calling "Oh, Henry" to a family cat.

In 1887, Porter married Athol Estes.

He worked as a draftsman, then as a bank teller for the First National Bank.

In 1894 Porter founded his own humor weekly, the "Rolling Stone", a venture that failed within a year, and later wrote a column for the Houston Daily Post.

In the meantime, the First National Bank was examined, and the subsequent indictment of 1886 stated that Porter had embezzled funds.

Porter then fled to New Orleans, and later to Honduras, leaving his wife and child in Austin. He returned in 1897 because of his wife's continued ill-health, however she died six months later. Then, in 1898 Porter was found guilty and sentenced to five years imprisonment in Ohio.

At the age of thirty five, he entered prison as a defeated man; he had lost his job, his home, his wife, and finally his freedom.

He emerged from prison three years later, reborn as O.Henry, the pseudonym he now used to hide his true identity.

He wrote at least twelve stories in jail, and after re-gaining his freedom, went to New York City, where he published more than 300 stories and gained fame as America's favorite short Story writer.

Porter married again in 1907, but after months of poor health, he died in New York City at the age of forty-eight in 1910.O.Henry's stories have been translated all over the world.