



The Quay Words 2024 Young Writers Flash Fiction Competition

Free to enter for young writers in two age categories: 10-14 years and 14-18 years

Closing date 12th May 2024

Cash prizes in each age category: first prize £200, second prize £100, third prize £50

Maximum word count: 500 words in the 10-14 year age category and 250 words in the 14-18 year age-category

Enter online [here](#)

About Flash Fiction

Flash fiction is a very short story – usually no more than a few hundred words. But despite being very short, a successful flash still transports the reader somewhere new, has a complete plot (a beginning, middle and end), expresses a range of emotions and can often surprise you!

Tips for getting started

1. You can start by taking inspiration from things around you, or perhaps pick a name and a place to write about.
2. After experimenting with ideas pick one that really speaks to you, find a central theme you want to explore and see if you can come up with a beginning, middle and end.
3. Your first draft might be longer than the word limit, that's okay! The editing is as important as the initial writing.
4. Think about the words you've chosen, are they all necessary for telling your story? What can you cut?

Ideas for the Theme

We're interested in reading your 'key' words – that means we want every word to count. As long as you're telling us a fascinating story you can write about whatever you like, the important thing is the telling.

However, if you want some inspiration you could also think about the other definition of a key. What can keys unlock? What story will you unlock with your writing?



Take a look at this image – what might be behind the door or doors that these keys open? What does the letter say below them? Who might have held them, or even crafted them? We’re looking forward to reading the words you set free!

Ideas and inspiration from the [Bridport Prize](#)
Here are some Flash Fiction tips, aimed at getting your creative ideas flowing, from our friends at the Bridport Prize.



Flash Fiction is the art of the very, very short story. It’s sometimes called micro fiction or micro stories. Flash Fiction usually has a word limit. This can be as few as 50 words or as many as 500, but always small.

There is a very famous Flash Fiction story written by Ernest Hemmingway – *“For sale, baby shoes, never worn.”*

In just six words, a whole world of longing, sadness and pain is opened up. We don’t know exactly what has happened, but we can put the pieces together.

This is what flash fiction and [short story writer Tania Hershman](#) said when she judged the Bridport Prize Flash Fiction competition in 2014,

“Grab me immediately, grab me by the collar, by the throat, by the guts, and don't let me go.” So, start the story in the middle, your clever readers will be able to pick up the rest.

[Award winning novelist Kit de Waal](#) won the Bridport Flash Fiction competition in 2014 and 2015 and was the Flash Fiction judge in 2017. She said,

“Flash fiction for me is just the container for a much bigger story. Not only will the flash have a couple of stories within it - the one the reader reads and the one that lies underneath - but it will also have a beginning that stretches back before the story began and goes on way, way into the future. What the flash will do is cut the reader a slice of time and say, ‘Look what happens here and you will know the rest.’ ”

So, why not have a go? Writing a Flash Fiction story is challenging, but it can be lots of fun too and inspiration can come from anywhere – a snippet of overheard conversation, an interesting looking person on the bus, a dream you had.

There’s a couple of writing exercises from Tania and Kit here to get you started if you want some ideas to experiment with.

Tania Hershman’s writing challenge:

Pick six books off your shelves, including at least one instruction manual or recipe book, and ideally a couple of poetry collections. Open each book at random, grab a short phrase from each book - without thinking about it - and then write all six prompt phrases at the top of your page. Set aside 20 minutes and write without stopping, trying to use at least two of the prompt phrases in your story, ideally all of them. Don't worry about making sense, see where the story goes!



Kit de Waal's writing challenge

Look at this picture. Then close your eyes. What can you remember? What is this child hearing? What would you hear? Who gave them the shell? When the child opens its eyes who is there? What happens next? Choose your question. Write 250 words, no more no less.

The Bridport Prize

The Bridport Prize is an international creative writing competition with four categories in poetry, short story, flash fiction and first novels. Established in 1973, it now receives entries from across the world and offers over £20,000 in prize money each year. Winners are published in two annual anthologies. There is a Young Writer Award of £500 for the highest placed writer aged 16 to 24 in the competition. The closing date is 31 May each year. Entries can be made online [here](#)

General queries about the Quay Words 2024 Young Writers Flash Fiction Competition) can be sent to quaywords@literatureworks.org.uk

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