

FLASH FICTION

TEN TIPS FOR YOUNG WRITERS

INTRODUCTION

Flash fiction outwardly appears to be the easy option in creative writing. It is not. Although less daunting than attempting the large number of words a novel requires, flash fiction is by no means a simple genre to master. In the space of a few hundred words the writer must convey atmosphere, feelings, a sense of place and time, not to mention a plot, characters, and a structure of a beginning, a middle, and an emotionally satisfying end.

TIPS

1. Take time to study the images then choose the one that appeals most to you. It may have curious characters, or an evocative setting, or tells of a magical journey. The chosen image may just be used as inspiration for an idea. You don't have to describe exactly what is going on in the picture. Think of it more as an aid to help your imagination get started. You could pick one character from the image and write about them. Or you could use the theme of the image, e.g. a farewell parting. Or you could use the landscape described by the image. Don't start writing straight away. Make notes. No writer starts a work without jotting down ideas for the plot, people's names and characteristics, descriptions, etc.
2. Imagine a world – this might be based on the image you have chosen, or may be completely imagined. Note down what it looks like – what time is it in, where it is, what does it sound like, smell like, what colours are dominant?
3. Identify your hero. This is the person (could be an animal!) whose story you are going to tell. You are going to see your imagined world through their eyes – this is called “point of view”.
4. What is your hero's mission in your story? Does he/she have to get somewhere in a hurry to fulfil a goal? Do they have to find something, solve a problem, or achieve something to fulfil their goal? Ask yourself the “what if” question – what if your hero has to rescue his/her family from an evil tyrant? What if a legion of ghosts was threatening to take over the

world, and only the hero can save it? What if the world suddenly started going back in time, and the hero has to stop it before it explodes?

5. Think about how your hero is going to achieve their mission. This is your plot. This is the journey on which you take your hero.
6. Now you can start to write your story. Think about the beginning. Every story needs a “hook” at its start to get the reader’s interest and get them to read on. What exciting event kicks off your story? It may be a discovery that changes their lives, such as someone stealing something from them that they need to get back, or finding that they have a magical power, or they have lost a loved one and need to find them.
7. Remember you have only a few hundred words so you need to get into the action as quick as possible. For flash fiction you don’t need to go into huge long descriptive passages but you still need to paint a picture of where it is all taking place. You can give your characters depth by using dialogue which helps to tell us what is going on, and how the characters are reacting to it.
8. Show not tell – for example;- instead of writing - Tom was very scared and gasped with shock, just say;- “Oh NO!” gasped Tom. It is a lot less boring and keeps the reader engaged with the story.
9. The last paragraph needs to be your ending which should tie up the story convincingly. In other words, the hero should have reached his/her goal, saved the world, found his/her family, etc. And try to have a line or two about what happens next – do they go off into the sunset happily, or if you are not going for a happy ending – why isn’t the hero now happy?
10. EDIT – go over your story at least three times. Reading it aloud helps – you can tell where the writing doesn’t flow quite so well. Use spellcheck to get rid of the spelling mistakes and punctuation errors.

GOOD LUCK!