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.

This being the case, I was very impressed, not only with the number of entries, but with the diversity and depth of creativity of those brave writers that entered the competition. Any writer will tell you that putting forward one’s work for the scrutiny of others is a painful process, and I would just like to say that those who were not picked for the final line-up must not despair or feel any sense of rejection. Writing is a very subjective business, and if someone else had judged the competition they may have come up with very different results. So don’t feel disheartened; keep writing!

I loved the images that were used to stimulate the creative juices and the amazed at the variety of stories that they inspired. My own personal favourite was the old photograph of the cowboy settlers; each of their faces told their own story.

It took many readings and re-readings to choose the final line-up as each entry had its own merits and many showed a wonderful grasp of imagery and imagination, taking me on unforeseen journeys which is exactly what a reader wants in a story; less of the mundane and more of the fantastical. Because of this I suffered something of a dilemma in my choices as some showed a greater degree of originality whilst others less so, but were better written and kept more to the remit of being flash fiction.

Caroline Clough