

## Primary Writing Guide

This manual is designed to help guide students and teachers through the short story writing process. It includes some tips on crafting a story, an editing checklist, a page of suggested written or visual prompts to stimulate creative thinking and a marking criteria. There are many approaches to crafting a creative story. Start early enough to draft your writing. Start early enough to produce your most polished writing. You'll be surprised at how much you can improve your work by drafting, editing and refining.

### What makes a good story?

An [opener that attracts attention](#), e.g. Bang! The door shut. There was no way out.

A [compelling storyline that moves your readers along](#). They will want to know what is going to happen and they won't want to put your story down.

A [believable plot](#). No coincidences or clichés. e.g. It was just a dream... (*Wizard of Oz* did this so you can't!)

[Interesting, believable characters](#). The reader needs to feel like they know the main characters and can build a good picture of them in their mind. They also need to care what happens to them.

[Action](#). You can achieve this by choosing good verbs e.g. pouncing, stalking, whacking, grinning.

[Description](#). [Clever use of adjectives and nouns](#) e.g. don't just say "the bird was in the tree" when you can say "the cockatoo balanced on the branch of the paperbark gum". This gives us a better picture of what you are saying.

[Dialogue – real, not forced](#). Listen to the way people speak at school, in the playground, in the supermarket, at home.

[Showing not telling](#). [This is one of the most important points. Don't tell us what happened – show us!](#) You can do this by giving lots of detail. Include dialogue. Imagine you are there and show us what you can see, hear, smell, touch or taste. Instead of: *The man went to the shop* try *The crusty old storeman limped slowly to the corner store*. You now have some atmosphere, mood and a character that we care about.

A [satisfying ending](#). Your story should "sit down" at the end. The reader should feel satisfied that whatever problem you set up in the beginning has been dealt with in some way. (The character should have looked at the problem and dealt with it in their own way.)

## Editing checklist

You've finished your first draft. Congratulations!

Now put your story down for at least 24 hours to let it "settle". Come back with a fresh view. This is when the big errors will be obvious. First of all, make a copy of your original story if you are using a computer. Now, read your story out loud. Listen carefully to how it sounds. Note any parts when the story doesn't flow well, or where the meaning is unclear. Be honest and be prepared to delete or cross out words, sentences or even paragraphs. The best writers do this.

Now read it again and consider these points:

- Is the story engaging? Does it make you feel excited, sad, amused...?
- Does the plot make sense? Do I need to explain anything more clearly? (Did I rush to get to the end?)
- Check the following carefully: **Orientation**: Does the opening paragraph hook the reader? **Body**: Do I have a strong crisis, complication or problem? Do the series of events provide enough detail? **Conclusion**: Does my story end? Will the reader be satisfied?
- Have I "shown" the reader what happened – not "told" them?
- Are my characters interesting and believable? Will the reader feel like they know my characters?
- Are all the characters necessary to support the plot?
- Will the reader feel as though they are part of the story? Have I created a realistic setting?
- Does the language I have chosen help the reader to imagine and feel what I am describing? Is there a better vocabulary choice or technique I could use?
- Do I have enough dialogue? Does the dialogue make the story move along? Have I used a new line for each new speaker? Is the character's voice authentic?
- Have I used paragraphs to structure my story effectively?
- Have I used a variety of simple and complex sentences?
- Have I used connecting words and phrases to link sentences together?
- Is the tense I have chosen to use, consistent throughout my story?
- Have I punctuated all my sentences correctly? (Capital letters for proper nouns, full stops between sentences, quotation marks etc)
- Have I checked my spelling? (Use the dictionary. Don't rely on spell check)

## Ideas and suggestions to get you started

This year, we have decided not to have a theme, however if you are struggling for ideas, you may find some of the ideas below useful for getting you started. These are suggestions only. They are **not a requirement** of the competition.

- Someone knocks on your door. When you open it, the person standing there looks exactly like you...
- You are watching TV when a character calls someone on the phone. Your phone starts ringing...
- The day after attending a funeral, you see the person who died on a busy street. When they notice you looking, they disappear into the nearest shop...
- When you walk off your plane into the airport after a family holiday, you enter into a media frenzy. It appears you are famous...
- You tell a white lie to cover for a friend. Your web of lies gets out of control...

## Visual Prompts



## Primary Marking Criteria

The criteria assessed in the writing task are:

Criterion	1	2	3
1. <b>Reader Engagement</b> – The writer’s capacity to engage and affect the reader.			
2. <b>Structure</b> – Effective structure that includes an orientation, complication and resolution			
3. <b>Expression</b> - Construction of grammatically correct sentences and paragraphs appropriate spelling and punctuation.			
4. <b>Characterisation</b> – The portrayal and development of character.			
5. <b>Setting</b> - The development of a sense of place and context.			
6. <b>Vocabulary</b> – The range and precision of the language used.			
7. <b>Techniques</b> - The use of effective structural and language techniques such as: – plot twist/circular plot/in media res etc. – figurative language: personification, simile, metaphor, allegory etc. – alliteration, onomatopoeia etc. – effective use of dialogue – evoking an emotional response – building tension – subject/verb agreement – tense consistency – showing, not telling			