

Writing Flash Fiction - hints and tips

Unfamiliar with flash fiction? Not sure what is required? Here is an example from a previous year:

Everyone's on a journey...

"It's going to be tricky," he thought, "but I've prepared well."

His recently passed wife's rucksack crammed with supplies, maps and notes, and weeks of planning under his belt, he was ready.

At 76, and alone for the first time, a trip to the supermarket was to be today's Everest.

The challenge for any writer of Flash Fiction is to grab your readers in a very short space of time. Every word is vital. A good Flash Fiction piece should tell a story. It should have a beginning, a middle and an end. Here are some thoughts to help you:

- If you are writing for a competition, it must be on the theme given. If you write something that doesn't fulfil the brief, just put it on one side for another time.
- A good theme will let you be very creative, so before you start, think of a number of ideas. 'If Only' could be about an un hoped for ending, a regret, a dream or aspiration. To impress the judges you want to be as creative as you can.
- It should have something of a character, even if you can't do much in 50 words. In the story above, we get to know quite a lot about the person concerned - he is old, he is widowed, he is perhaps infirm or just frightened.
- It needs a plot, to tell a story. Here is a winning story from last year's theme of 'If Only':
- **A year younger**
If only I was a year younger, I wouldn't be here, bound to this mud clogged trench waiting to die. I wouldn't be cursed to lie looking at the shells arcing above, will one hit me today? Or will my heart be pierced by their cold steel bayonets, if only... *Bobby Derbyshire*
- It should have a good ending. Strong starts are often easy, but you need a pay-off for your story. Something to grab your readers' attention. Here is another example from another previous year's winner:
- **Worlds**
"Come with me," he said, "and I will show you worlds." And he did: lapis palaces and red rock caves; deep sea trenches and coral gardens; wind carved deserts and disappearing ice. When he died he left me his books. Now I travel the pages alone and think of him. *Sherri Turner*

There are many sites on the internet to help you - try <http://fiftywordstories.com/stories> for some examples, or <http://scottishbooktrust.com/reading/the-50-word-fiction-competition> for more useful advice.