



Flash Fiction Writing Resources

[Introduction](#)

[Competition Information](#)

[Introduction to Flash Fiction](#)

[Consider What, Exactly, You Like in Stories](#)

[Write Your Story](#)

[Additional Resources](#)

Introduction

Flash Fiction Competition 2023

99 WORDS: A story in your pocket.

“There was more room to think,” wrote novelist David Gaffney on becoming a flash fiction convert, “more space for the original idea to resonate, fewer unnecessary words to wade through.” Stories of the sudden/mini/micro variety pack the best parts of fiction into brimming, half-pint packages. Come celebrate the art of concision this month, dear writers, and write a story in 99 words or less.

Competition Information

Writing Form: Fiction

Subject Areas: Creative Writing, Literature/English

Length: 99-word maximum

Opens: Monday, August 7

Drafts due for Expert Review: Monday, August 14

Submissions Due: Tuesday, August 22

Introduction to Flash Fiction

Begin by reading our [interview with former guest judge Janelle Milanés](#) who offers specific thoughts on writing flash fiction, as well as excellent writing advice for any genre. On the importance of capturing diverse experiences, Milanés says, “...my ethnicity is not at the forefront of my mind at all times. It happens to be a part of who I am, and in many ways I interact with that on a subconscious level. I want the same authenticity in my books for readers like me.”

Brainstorming Exercise: Jot down some ideas about your character and then, from there, build out some notes on what's going to happen to that character in your story. Here are some questions on characters to help you get started:

- Which character or characters will be part of your 99-word story?
- Do the characters share some qualities with you personally, even if they live in a different time, place, or situation?
- How might you apply some elements of your own identity or lived experience to your characters, in order to make them feel authentic to the reader?

Consider What, Exactly, You Like in Stories

Our blog posts on the winning entries from the [2019](#), [2020](#), and [2021](#) Flash Fiction Competitions reveal not only which pieces the guest judges selected as winners and for honorable mentions, but also what, exactly, they found engaging and well done about each piece. This type of analysis demonstrates the qualities that you might observe in other works of flash fiction that you read, or qualities you might study more closely as you craft your own flash fiction stories.

Annotating Exercise: Choose a story from the [Flash Fiction Exemplars](#). Add comments (digitally or on paper) as you read the story. You can write reactions that span from simple symbols such as a heart for a moment that struck a chord in you or an exclamation point for something that surprised you, to more fully formed thoughts describing your questions, predictions, or appreciations as you read. You might also try mapping out the movement of the story, considering these questions:

- What is the structure?
- How is the writer moving through time?
- When is the writer using scene vs. summary/exposition?
- How is the writer covering so much in so few words?!

Write Your Story

Step One: Review your notes on the character(s) that will be in your story and reflect on the events, setting, point-of-view, and dialogue you might need to draw on to tell your story.

Step Two: Read these top tips on [writing flash fiction from David Gaffney](#) in The Guardian to become even more familiar with flash fiction.

Step Three: Don't limit yourself! As our former guest judge Tara Lynn Masih says, "Don't necessarily write with 99 words in mind...You can write longer, then edit it down." Masih also reminds writers to find joy in the process: "Have fun with the challenge of seeing what does not need to be there, what sentences or words can be cut. You'll be surprised at what you can let go!"

Have faith in your little story, that if it's done well, the reader can read between the lines." Read our [full interview with former guest judge Tara Lynn Masih](#) for more writing tips.

Step Four: Once you've written your story, exchange it with a peer and ask them to annotate it with their reactions. These annotations, completed in person or as a peer review on Write the World, can give you important feedback on the parts of your story that are working well—as well as the places that can be sharpened.

Additional Resources

[From My Desk to Yours With Michael Lydon](#), and this [second post on stories](#)—thoughts from Michael Lydon over the years on what to consider when writing flash fiction

[Flash Fiction Exemplars](#) from Write the World

[Stories in Your Pocket: How to Write Flash Fiction](#) by David Gaffney from The Guardian

[FlashFictionOnline](#)—website and printed monthly journals