

Lincoln Book Festival's 50-Word Flash Fiction Competition



Thank you for encouraging your students to take part in Lincoln Book Festival's 2024 Flash Fiction competition!

The festival competition invites budding authors to craft a compelling short story in precisely 50 words. Wannabe wordsmiths can submit their own super short stories on the theme of "generations" for the chance to win an individual £30 prize, and a £50 book token for their school! Shortlisted authors will be invited to Lincoln Book Festival 2024 for an award ceremony on 28th September at the Lincoln Arts Centre. Winners and highly commended runners-up will also have their stories published on the book festival website with the opportunity to read them aloud to audiences during the festival.

The competition challenges authors of any ability to produce an original short story of exactly 50 words – no more and no less – on the chosen theme, which entrants are encouraged to interpret as broadly as they wish. The shortlisting and judging panels will assess entries for creativity, style, structure, plot, characters, dialogue and locations that are reflective of the competition theme of "generations".

Below are some tips for how to use the flash fiction competition in the classroom, and instructions for entering your student's stories into the competition. Categories are Primary (Reception to Year 6); Secondary (Year 7 to Year 11); and Adult (Year 12 upwards – no upper age limit). There will be 5 shortlisted authors in each category, with one final winner chosen from each of the three age groups. Attached with this resource pack are the full terms and conditions and the entry form.

Learning How To Write A Story in 50 words

The following lesson plan has been created to suit students at both Primary and Secondary schools, so there are writing tips for students who are new to writing and those working at a more advanced level.

Normally the main features of a story are:

- A beginning, a middle and an end.
- The story is set in a particular place, or a series of places.
- There are different characters that feature in the story.

- Who is telling the story? Is it a narrator, or is it one or more of the characters in the story? A narrator may use words like “he/she/they” to describe other characters. This is known as speaking in the Third Person. A character may use “I” or “we”, which is known as speaking in the First Person.
- Inverted commas are used to signify dialogue.

However, when writing a very short story of 50 words, some things to think about are:

- Instead of having a beginning, middle and end, do you start in the middle, or leave the story open ended?
- To keep the story short, does it take place in one location, rather than lots of different places?
- Is there a surprise twist to the story? Short stories want to grab the readers attention, which a twist at the end can help with.
- Keep the story simple. The simplest ideas are often the best, and easiest to fit into a few words.
- When writing to a small word count, words become precious so choose them wisely. Think about powerful words such as verbs and adjectives that can pack in lots of meaning or emotion. When editing, are there words which add little to your story that you could delete or rephrase? E.g. you could change “They shouted loudly” to “They barked / screeched / wailed”.

The theme of Generations:

- A generation is a group of people who are all around the same age, who were born around the same time. If we look at a family with grandparents, parents and children, then the grandparents are one generation, parents are another and so forth.
- We sometimes give names to different generations of people, which you may have heard referred too, such as Boomers, Millennials and Gen Z. Those who were born after 2010 are referred to as Generation Alpha!
- You can apply the theme of generations to your story in any way you want. Your story could be inspired by what it’s like to be a child as part of your generation, it could be about two members of the same family who are from different generations, or it could be about time-travelling or people living hundreds of years apart from each other. It doesn’t have to be about people either, it could be about animals, aliens or made-up creatures!

Ideas for creative cues:

- If you’re not sure where to start, what people, animals or stories come to your mind when you think about “generations”?
- You could come up with the story first, or a character’s name, or start with a funny, scary, sad or happy thing you want to happen in the story.
- Think about capturing a mood, atmosphere, and emotion in 50 words.
- Remember to make use of the title to create your story - its words do not count towards the word limit.
- To help pick a title that fits the “generations” theme, you could think about commonalities and similarities that a generation share - music, books, TV programmes, icons, and games.

- What other theme/s do you want your story to have? Examples of themes are death, love, families, school, holidays, weather, animals etc. You can bear it in mind even if it is not mentioned in the story outright!

Further Competition Rules

- Submitted short stories must be original works by the named author, and they must be written by one author. Co-authored works will not be accepted, so children must write on their own and not in a team.
- Only one entry is permitted per author.
- Story titles are not included in the word count. Footnotes and other annotations will be included in the word count. Hyphenated and compound words will be classed as a single word but should be common dictionary uses.
- The Competition closing date for submissions is midnight on 31st August 2024 (BST). No entries will be accepted after this time.

Full Terms and Conditions are attached with this document, which we recommend reading before entering the competition.

How To Send In Your Entries

- Each story must be submitted on the Lincoln Book Festival Flash Fiction Competition 2024 Entry Form, which is attached with this document.
- For schools, when students have a finished 50-word story they are happy to submit for the competition, they should handwrite or type the final story onto the Entry Form provided. At the top of the form, please include the entrants name, age (at time of submission) and school year (eg. Year 7). We can take the school and designated teacher's contact details as their address and contact info. Teachers may use pupils initials or other identifiers in place of the author's name (for data minimisation purposes) provided winning entrants can later be identified by the school.
- Multiple entries from different authors may be collated in a single attachment (e.g. from school class groups) provided a separate form is contained for each entry. Entry forms may be printed and completed by hand then scanned for electronic submission. Incomplete or illegible entry forms cannot be accepted.
- Please submit your completed entry forms in a/multiple Word or PDF file/s to: competitions@lincolnbookfestival.org with the email subject line "Lincoln Book Festival Flash Fiction Competition 2024". We apologise postal submissions cannot be accepted.

If you have any further questions or queries regarding the competition or how to submit entries, please contact our Freelance Engagement Producer Jane Crawshaw at jane@barmpottheatre.com or competitions@lincolnbookfestival.org or call 07857145034.

