

# Young Tasmanian Writers' Prize

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## Frequently asked questions

### *WHAT ARE THE KEY ELEMENTS TO WRITING A SUCCESSFUL STORY?*

For every reader this is subjective, but all past judges have suggested the following:

- **USE LANGUAGE CAREFULLY FROM START TO FINISH:** The drafting and editing stages provide you with opportunities to extend your vocabulary and to use language for effect. This includes varying sentence length and style and choosing words for effect and impact.
- **PRESENT AN INTERESTING STORY ARC:** Whilst a novel can have various arcs, for a short story you want to focus on one key arc where the reader can see how the tension or conflict(s) builds and how this is resolved in some way.
- **ENGAGE THE READER WITH YOUR CHARACTER(S):** Make your character(s) interesting, convincing and well defined. In order to develop a living, breathing, multi-faceted character, it is important to know more about the character than you will ever use in your story.

### *IS THE WORD LIMIT IMPORTANT?*

Yes. Stories that contain less than the minimum or more than the maximum will not be judged.

### *HOW IMPORTANT IS THE OPENING SENTENCE OR PARAGRAPH?*

The start of your story should catch your reader's attention with the unusual, the unexpected, an action or a conflict. Begin with tension and immediacy. The goal is to hook the reader from the start.

### *SHOULD I INCLUDE DIALOGUE IN MY STORY?*

This is up to you. Dialogue is what your characters say to each other (or to themselves). Make your readers hear the pauses between the sentences and ensure that the dialogue is meaningful. Note that too much dialogue can sometimes take away from the story.

### *WHOSE POINT OF VIEW SHOULD I WRITE FROM?*

Again this is a choice you need to make as a writer. Point of view is the narration of the story from the perspective of first, second or third person. As a writer, you need to determine who is going to tell the story and how much information is available for the narrator to reveal in the short story. The narrator can be directly involved in the action subjectively, or the narrator might only report the action objectively.

### *DO I NEED TO GIVE MY STORY A SETTING OR CONTEXT?*

Setting includes the time, location, context and atmosphere where the plot takes place. Remember to combine setting with characterisation and plot. You should include enough detail to let your readers picture the scene, but only use details that add something to the story. A strategy is to use two or more senses in your descriptions of setting and to let your reader experience the location the way your characters do.

*THE YOUNG TASMANIAN WRITERS' PRIZE* is a literary competition and it's your opportunity to show your understanding of literary devices such as figurative language, personification, juxtaposition, foreshadowing and so forth. Use this competition as an opportunity to experiment with, and learn more about, such devices. Most importantly, have fun as a writer and craft a story of which you are proud!