

Seven Hills Writing Contest

Tallahassee Writers Association

Category: **Short Story**

The short story is a work of fictional prose designed to be read in one sitting. Short stories encourage economy of setting and precise narration. They usually contain only one plot and only a few characters. Maximum word length for this contest is 2,500 words. While there isn't a minimum word limit, stories under 1,000 words may not read as full stories.

Scale: 5 Excellent 4 Very Good 3 Fair 2 Needs Work 1 Poor

The following are simply guidelines. Every piece must be considered on its own merits.

- ___ 1. MECHANICS - Do word count and format conform to contest rules? Is manuscript free of grammatical, spelling and punctuation errors?
- ___ 2. HOOK - Is the reader drawn into the story/character from the beginning?
- ___ 3. PROTAGONIST(S) - Are they interesting and believable? Do they have human weaknesses which make them real, as well as strengths to resolve the story's conflict?
- ___ 4. ANTAGONIST(S) - Are they one-dimensional "cartoon" figures, or do they have enough positive qualities to make them real? Do we get a sense of their motivation?
- ___ 5. TECHNIQUE - Is the point of view consistent, without jarring uncomfortable shifts? Is there a proper balance between showing and telling? Are transitions smooth? Does active voice predominate over the passive?
- ___ 6. LANGUAGE USE - Is the writing fresh and free of cliches? Does the choice of words keep the reader embedded in the story? Does the writer rely on adjectives and adverbs instead of strong nouns and verbs?
- ___ 7. DIALOGUE AND NARRATIVE - Does any dialogue sound natural to the characters and the situation? Does each character have a unique voice? Is there a proper balance between dialogue and narrative?
- ___ 8. SETTING - Does the reader know where and when the story takes place? Can you see, feel, hear and smell the setting? Does it enhance or detract from the story?
- ___ 9. CONFLICT/OBSTACLES - Is the protagonist presented with a need/desire to solve a problem, and obstacles preventing their fulfillment? Are motivations of both protagonist and antagonists strong enough to provide conflict worth reading about?
- ___ 10. RESOLUTION - Does the protagonist grow or learn something during the course of the story? Is there an "aha" moment when the new reality becomes apparent?
- ___ 11. STRUCTURE – Does the structure of the story suit the material? Does it drive the story toward the resolution? Did the writer find the best entry and exit point? Is every scene necessary? Is the ending earned and yet unexpected?
- ___ 12. ORIGINALITY – Does the story seem fresh and original? Does it have its own twists on character, plot, and setting that make it unique?