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Congratulations to everyone who entered A Story in Miniature in 2025 – thinking about creative writing is daring; actually, writing down your story is courageous; entering it in a competition is bravery itself. Why? Because creative writing at its heart is an act in vulnerability. We all put a little bit of ourselves on the page every time we write. So congratulations on being brave! The next step is to be brave over and over and over again by continuing to dare to write.

Your pieces covered an incredible range of topics, with unique narrative voices, compelling storylines and perspectives, and arresting descriptions that drew me into and held me in your stories. Short stories are considered one of the hardest forms of creative writing because of the limited word count, and you all judiciously used your word count to share a story that matters to you to tell. This is why writers write!

Following are my top tips to remember when writing short fiction. The shorter the piece, the more these tips are important for delivering a compelling, stand-out piece of creative writing.

- Remember you're telling a story; ensure you deliver a plot. Describing a setting, moment or memory by itself isn't enough, it can be a great starting point to inspire you, but readers need a story arc with a beginning, middle and end to shape it and keep us hooked. So, tell us about your crazy Uncle Bazza but build a plot around him so we get to know him through the story.
- All stories have some sort of inciting incident – the conflict that drives the plot. In short fiction, starting in the middle of that conflict can be highly effective.
- Open with a compelling hook (an interesting sentence that intrigues the reader). It doesn't need to be long; it does need to make the reader want to keep reading.

- Use dialogue (including inner dialogue) to convey character and plot. How people speak and think tells us so much about them, and dialogue allows you to move the plot forward while showing us who they are.
- Use figurative and descriptive language – all the language devices you've learnt about in class! – to show rather than tell the reader about the scene and emotions. A good indicator that you are telling is if you use the words 'was', 'were', 'is', or 'are' a lot.
- Write what you want to convey, then edit your work to say it as succinctly as possible, so you're making use of every single word.
- Write your story, then set it aside for a day or two. When you come back, critique it as hard as you can. And finally, proofread it! Typos and incorrect words distract the reader from the quality of your story.
- Read as much fiction as you can, across as many genres as you can. Think about what makes a story good (or not!) for you.

I know it is hard to find the time to write creatively when our lives are so busy, but writing is a muscle that needs exercise to get stronger and stronger. If you're stuck for ideas, there are lots of prompt engines online that can offer you a starting point to write from. Here are some interesting ways to practice your writing:

- Turn a 500-word short story into a 100-word piece of micro-fiction, without losing the plot or characters.
- Take a story written in third person and rewrite in first person or change a story from past tense to present tense (or vice versa).
- Take another writer's short story, then rewrite it in your own voice. (Just don't submit it in class or for a competition!)

Congratulations again to all the absolute legends who entered!