

# Trading Places

The Quay Words 2020

Young Writers Flash Fiction Competition



Free to enter for young writers in two age categories: 10-14 years and 14-18 years

Closing date 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020

**Cash prizes in each age category: first prize £200, second prize £100, third prize £50**

Maximum word count: 500 words in the 10-14 year age-category and 250 words in the 14-18 year age-category

Enter online [here](#)

## Ideas and inspiration from the Bridport Prize

Here are some Flash Fiction tips, aimed at getting your creative ideas flowing, from our friends at the Bridport Prize. [NB the maximum word count for entries to the 14-18 year age-category in the *Trading Places* competition is 250. There is no minimum.] -



Flash Fiction is the art of the very, very short story. It's sometimes called micro fiction or micro stories. Flash Fiction usually has a word limit. This can be as few as 50 words or as many as 500, but always small.

There is a very famous Flash Fiction story written by Ernest Hemingway – "*For sale, baby shoes, never worn.*"

In just six words, a whole world of longing, sadness and pain is opened up. We don't know exactly what has happened, but we can put the pieces together.

As readers – and viewers of films and TV – we're really good at filling in bits of stories we're not told. We don't need things to be over-explained, we can work stuff out for ourselves. We pick up on hints and clues and there is great satisfaction in doing this. Flash Fiction works in the same way. Readers have to fill in the missing bits themselves.

Flash Fiction is a snapshot. It's immediate - a moment in time. It can suggest a larger story, one with a history and possibilities for future development. There can still be compelling characters, plots and conflict but every word in the story has to earn its place. Every word must be absolutely necessary to telling the tiny tale. This makes writing Flash Fiction very different from other forms of story writing. In a novel or short story, you have the luxury of lots of words. You can take your time to describe characters, places, situations and feelings. In a Flash Fiction story, you have to leap right in and start the action. There is no room for an introduction, or lengthy descriptions.



This is what flash fiction and **short story writer Tania Hershman** said when she judged the Bridport Prize Flash Fiction competition in 2014,

*“Grab me immediately, grab me by the collar, by the throat, by the guts, and don't let me go.”* So, start the story in the middle, your clever readers will be able to pick up the rest.

**Award winning novelist Kit de Waal** won the Bridport Flash Fiction competition in 2014 and 2015 and was the Flash Fiction judge in 2017. She said,

*“Flash fiction for me is just the container for a much bigger story. Not only will the flash have a couple of stories within it - the one the reader reads and the one that lies underneath - but it will also have a beginning that stretches back before the story began and goes on way, way into the future. What the flash will do is cut the reader a slice of time and say, ‘Look what happens here and you will know the rest.’ “*

So, why not have a go? Writing a Flash Fiction story is challenging, but it can be lots of fun too and inspiration can come from anywhere – a snippet of overheard conversation, an interesting looking person on the bus, a dream you had.

There's a couple of writing exercises from Tania and Kit here to get you started if you want some ideas to experiment with.

#### **Tania Hershman's writing challenge:**

Pick six books off your shelves, including at least one instruction manual or recipe book, and ideally a couple of poetry collections. Open each book at random, grab a short phrase from each book - without thinking about it - and then write all six prompt phrases at the top of your page. Set aside 20 minutes and write without stopping, trying to use at least two of the prompt phrases in your story, ideally all of them. Don't worry about making sense, see where the story goes!



#### **Kit de Waal's writing challenge**

Look at this picture. Then close your eyes. What can you remember? What is this child hearing? What would you hear? Who gave them the shell? When the child opens its eyes who is there? What happens next? Choose your question. Write 250 words, no more no less.

### **The Bridport Prize**

The Bridport Prize is an international creative writing competition with four categories in poetry, short story, flash fiction and first novels. Established in 1973, it now receives entries from across the world and offers over £20,000 in prize money each year. Winners are published in two annual anthologies. There is a Young Writer Award of £500 for the highest placed writer aged 16 to 24 in the competition. The closing date is 31 May each year. Entries can be made online [here](#)

General queries about the Trading Places (The Quay Words 2020 Young Writers Flash Fiction Competition) can be sent to [customhouse@literatureworks.org.uk](mailto:customhouse@literatureworks.org.uk)