

## Short Story Writing

Jo Wilkins (joawilkins@mysticpublishersinc.com)

Spring 2026 MAB2

Thursday 12:45-2:15pm

### Objective:

To supply an avenue of creative writing for short stories and strengthen the overall quality of the piece.

### Week 1 – Basic Story Writing

Basic Story writing is accomplished by using the following steps:

- **Beginning**
  - Develop strong characters
  - Use a well-defined plot
  - Present your main character with an insurmountable problem
- **Middle**
  - Main character attempts to solve the problem
  - Failure to succeed brings intensity (3 tries work best)
  - With everything on the line the solution presents itself
- **Ending**
  - Validation brings on the conclusion

**Discussion:** How can we make this pattern work for a short story?

### Week 2 - Short Story Ideas

Nearly any experience can trigger a short story idea. Ultimately, you'll have the best results by tweaking an idea that perks your imagination. But in cases where the student needs help we will go over a few short story ideas:

1. **A painter finds mysterious artwork in their old family home that seems to depict their own life.**
2. **In a world where memories can be bought and sold, a detective is hired to track down a valuable stolen memory.**
3. **In a coastal town known for strange legends, a writer becomes captivated by whispers of a hidden island paradise.**

### Week 3 – Developing characters for a short story.

It may take finesse and a good basic plotline to create an entertaining short story.

1. In order for a short story to be impactful, you have to know your character well. Character building is essential in short stories since your main characters often drive the story.
2. You only have a certain amount of time to show your readers who that person is and you can't do that if *you* don't know who they are.
3. Think about it.
4. If you write a short story about your best friend, whom you've known for many years, versus writing one about someone you just met yesterday, you'll be able to craft a much stronger story about your best friend because you know them so well. Creative writing techniques can help you bring out the best or most compelling things about your characters.

## **Week 4 – Expanding ideas**

**Class Participation:** Free Writing Exercise / no handout

The class will be given prompts and have a limited time to write a paragraph or two for each one.

## **Week 5 – Your First Draft**

A finished draft is better than perfect.

The best way to approach writing a short story or writing anything else is to see the idea in the written word. This is especially the case when it comes to writing short stories. Once you have your outline and know how/where to start writing, drafting the short story in full is your next step. Don't concern yourself with editing or polishing the story. No author can possibly make *good* edits until they know how the story reads.

**Resist the urge to make it perfect.** The process of how to write a short story is rarely one-and-done but usually takes writing, rewriting, and editing to create your best work.

## **Week 6– Editing Your Short Story**

Editing is where the real magic happens when you're writing a short story. We all have this idea in our minds that we'll get it *perfect* the first time and that's just not how writing works. Not so. Most of the time, your first draft is just the bare bones of your story, but through line-editing, developmental edits, and proofreading, it will transform into a viable story.

## **Week 7 – Titling A Short Story**

This can be one of the most difficult things for any book story. The good news? Short story titles are a little less important than titles for novels. They can also be very abstract.

These questions help an author develop a title that not only makes sense but is also intriguing enough to pull readers in while staying true to what the story is about. Learning how to write a short story includes learning how to write a great title. A great title gets readers to pay attention. Put your creative writing skills to work here. Come up with a bunch of different titles and ask your beta group or target audience for feedback.

## **Week 8 – Evaluating Your Short Story**

Every author needs feedback on their work. To create your best work, it's just part of the process when you're learning to write short stories. Feedback from the right people will help you make your short story better. In order to learn and improve and ensure your message is coming across as desired, you need fresh eyes on read through it. Google Docs is a great option to write your short story and get feedback from others all in one place. The fact is, we are too close to our writing. It's impossible to read your story with a critical eye when you're the one who came up with and wrote it in the first place. We need feedback from a beta group to improve the story. Allowing others to read your work and offer feedback is one of the best ways to make sure your story is exactly how you want it. This is why writing partners and even beta readers are so important.

## **Week 9 – Improving the Written Short Story**

The student will bring in a short story they have written for evaluation and critique.

## **Week 10 – Endings**

Nobody likes a story that ends on a major cliffhanger. An unresolved ending is okay sometimes, in fact, that'll likely be the case simply because this is a short story.

But you do want to tie your story up in a way that leaves the reader satisfied, even if they didn't get all the answers. Many times, this means writing a circular ending or using an element from your opening. It's one storytelling strategy of how to write a short story and wrap everything up. This story structure often allows readers to feel as though they've read a complete story versus just a snippet of a larger one.