

Hints & Tips - What are the judges looking for in competition entries?

1. Originality of the premise and how the story is executed.
2. A clear beginning, middle, and ending.
3. Stories which get off to a fast start and stick to the point.
4. A clear resolution that makes sense and is fitting with the tone of the story.
5. A strong, authentic, and distinct voice.
6. Using only the necessary details for understanding the situation.
7. Focus on one idea or problem.
8. Only one or two main characters.
9. A balance of light and shade.
10. Clarity of ideas. It should be clear what is happening throughout the story.
11. The author writes with a sense of authority or confidence.
12. Stories that have been well edited without errors or inconsistencies or repetition of certain words such as *dark*, or putting in unnecessary and repeated adverbs, such as *little* and *soft*.
13. Stories that show, rather than tell.
14. Factual or unfamiliar information that has been thoroughly researched, and not just made up.
15. A setting that is established and maintained throughout the story with a few brushstrokes, or which is implied through dialogue and action.
16. A good balance of dialogue and description of the action and setting.
17. Include fresh and evocative sensory details as a means of increasing reader immersion.
18. A story that has been set out according to competition guidelines – please read the **How to Enter** section of the **Terms & Conditions** for details about this.

Extra notes:

Explore uncommon genres and settings.

Remember - there's no such thing as bad writing, only unfinished writing.