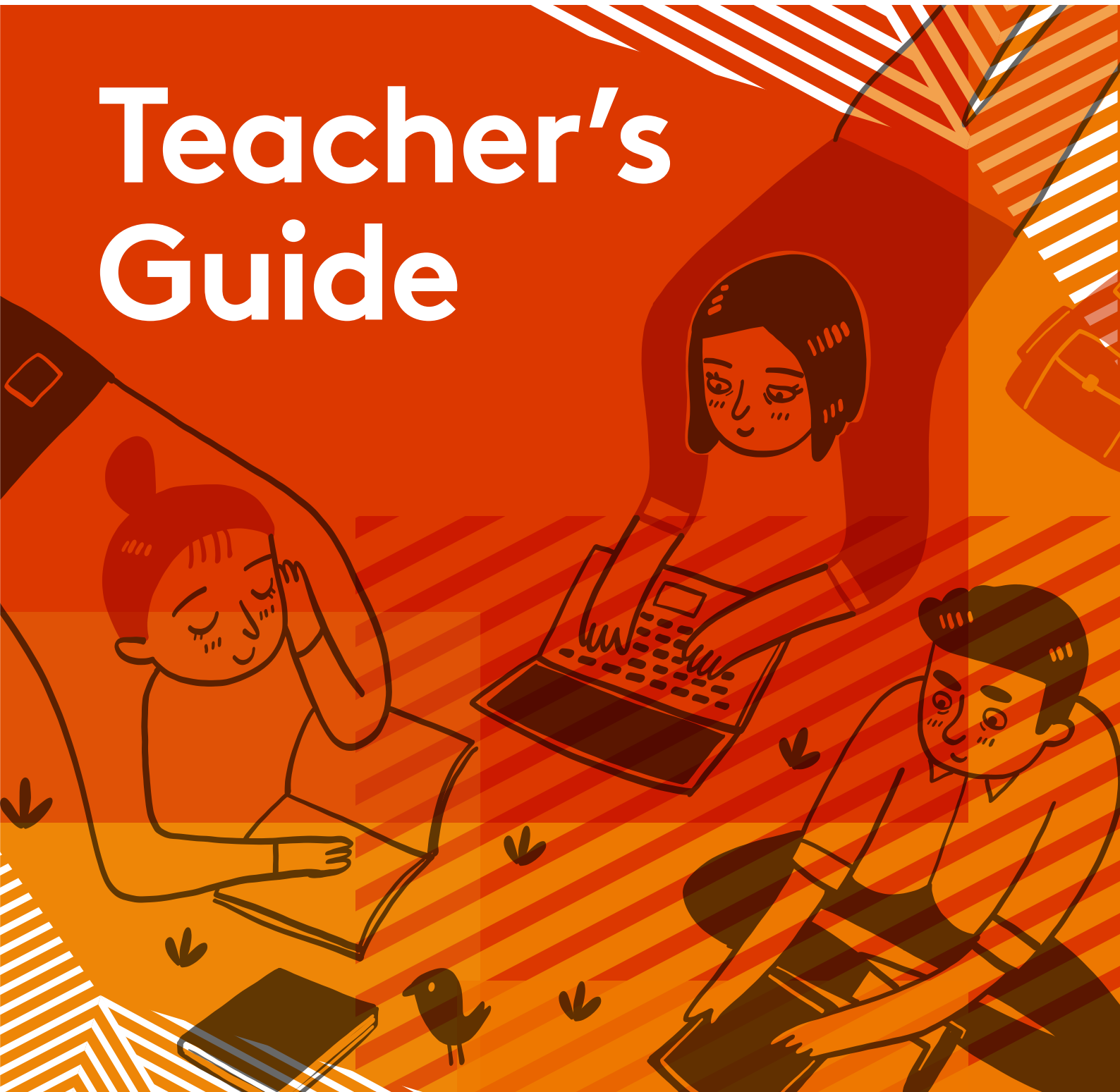


BBC

Young Writers' Award

with Cambridge University

Teacher's Guide



About the Awards

The BBC Young Writers' Award invites young people aged between 14–18 years to submit original short stories of up to 1,000 words.

Each year, a shortlist of five stories is chosen by the judging panel, which includes well-known writers and broadcasters.

The shortlisted young writers have their stories narrated by an actor and recorded for a BBC broadcast, as well as being published in an anthology.

They are also invited to take part in a creative writing workshop with a leading writer – and the winner receives a special one-to-one mentoring session with an author.

The BBC Young Writers' Award was launched as part of the tenth anniversary celebrations for the BBC National Short Story Award with Cambridge University. Aiming to inspire and encourage the next generation of writers, it is part of a wider youth offer which also includes BBC Student Critics.

In this guide, you'll find information about how taking part in the Young Writers' Award can help develop your students' creativity, as well as supporting the curriculum. There are lots of practical ideas and suggestions for getting the most out of the Young Writers' Award,

whether you plan to take part within a classroom setting, or to get students involved informally out of the classroom.

Don't forget to visit the website for all the information about the Young Writers' Award and how to enter, as well as lots of resources to help young people create their entries, plus supporting materials for teachers.

bbc.co.uk/ywa



Why take part?

Supporting creativity

Taking part is a great way to inspire your students' **creative writing**, and is a practical way for them to develop their understanding of the **short story form**.

It also offers a valuable opportunity for them to **develop their own voice**. This is key to their writing, but is also an essential part of **self-expression** which is so important in maintaining positive **mental health** and **wellbeing**.

'Writing can be really helpful for your mental health and wellbeing. It's helpful to get all those thoughts in our brains that swirl around out on paper, so we can actually see what they are. And also it really empowers you, because it's a way of getting your voice heard, and actually just expressing who you are.'

Dr Radha Modgil
BBC Radio 1 *Life Hacks*

The Award can also give students an opportunity to **respond creatively to the world around them**. Students can use their writing to explore the communities they live in, or the broader political context that surrounds them. Engaging with other students taking part in the Award, or interacting with judges online, is a valuable **uniting experience**.

What's more, entering a writing competition provides young people **with a deadline and a real-life purpose to write**, knowing that

their work will be read by judges and perhaps their stories might be recorded and broadcast or published.

Supporting the curriculum

Taking part offers students a chance to explore the holistic writing process, as well as creative editing and revision through group discussion, sharing of work and critical analysis of other writers.

There will be opportunities for not only writing but revising, editing, proofreading and improving grammar and vocabulary for coherence, consistency, clarity and overall effectiveness.

Writing a short story to submit provides students with an opportunity to write accurately, fluently, effectively and at length for pleasure.

It's an ideal opportunity to explore style, setting, structure, characterisation, imagery and language use as well as writing at length, writing imaginatively,

expanding vocabulary and using figurative language.

'Research clearly demonstrates the value of an authentic audience for students' work in terms of their confidence as developing writers. But getting involved in writing creatively can also support students' development as critical readers. For young people approaching GCSE and A level literature exams, getting to grips with the nuts and bolts of writerly decision-making can transform their understanding of other writers' choices of language, structure and form, enhancing their critical skills as well as their prose.'

Dr Elizabeth Rawlinson-Mills
Cambridge University Faculty of Education

'My previous shortlist experience really fuelled my writing. Hearing so many amazing people... praise my writing had a huge impact on me, and for the first time, a career as a writer seemed to be a realistic prospect.'

Lottie Mills

Shortlisted for the Young Writers' Award in 2018 and winner in 2020.



How can we get the most out of the Young Writers' Award?

In the classroom

Look together at the stories shortlisted for the previous year's BBC National Short Story Award or BBC Young Writers' Award. After reading or listening to all the stories, vote for which you thought were the best in different categories, such as imagery, dialogue, beginnings or endings. Ask students to defend their choices, making an informed personal response. Discuss students' favourites and compare overall opinions.

Try some fun creative writing exercises together: look at our **'Getting started'** for ideas. Model writing yourself by taking part too – it's powerful to see adults writing, redrafting and experimenting with their own creativity.

For schools lucky enough to have access to external support from writers, such as planned author visits or a writer in residence, ask the writer you are working with if they can get involved. Could they run a workshop to help build ideas for short stories and help students craft theirs?

Try putting students in small groups to be **'beta readers'** for each other, sharing their drafts. Encourage students to critique each other's work and give each other helpful notes.

Encourage students to start writing their own stories, using our **'Writing a short story'** guide to help if you wish. Talk about some different short story structure ideas and get students to keep these in mind as they write.

Celebrate the finished stories by making them into a book – this could be anything from photocopying and stapling the collection in school, to using an online print-on-demand service. Alternatively, share the stories on your school website.

Think about other ways to share the finished stories. You could hold an evening reading event where students read their stories aloud or incorporate short story readings into other cultural events. Or make a podcast of the readings to share with other students or parents and carers.



How can we get the most out of the Young Writers' Award?

Out of the classroom

Encourage peer engagement outside class by setting up online groups where students can share work in progress and provide feedback to each other. Discuss feedback guidelines and agree these before the group is set up, and then post the rules in the group and, if necessary, appoint a group admin.

Students could use the story starters in the **'Writing a short story'** guide and set a new task every week for each other, then share their responses.



Encourage students to read or listen to short stories for inspiration: try our resource **'Try these short stories'** for some ideas. You could even start a weekly short story reading group in the school library, where you take it in turns to choose a short story for everyone to read, then discuss what you thought.

Establish a weekly creative writing group, where students can share writing tips and or try out writing exercises. The BBC Young Writers' Award could form a starting point for a group which then continues beyond the competition.

Suggest students visit the local library or bookshop to look at the short story collections and anthologies available. Which books caught their eye and why?

Challenge students to research reviews of new short story releases, interviews with short story writers, or short story prizes. Explore writing websites and podcasts, or follow favourite authors on social media for writing tips and an insight into the creative process.

Look out for online creative writing workshops or talks offered by literary festivals or literary organisations which students could attend.



Next steps

How can we take part?

Visit the website bbc.co.uk/ywa for all the information you need on how and when students can submit their finished stories – including instructions, closing dates, Terms & Conditions and Privacy Notice.

You'll also find lots of ideas, tips and advice for young writers – plus resources for teachers to help support your students to create their entries.

BBC Student Critics with Cambridge University

Looking for more ways to explore short stories? Why not challenge your students to read and critique exciting new short fiction by signing up to take part in BBC Student Critics.

Aimed at 16–18 year olds, BBC Student Critics allows students to flex their critical muscles by reading, listening, discussing and critiquing the stories shortlisted for the annual BBC National Short Story Award with Cambridge University.

Taking place each year in September, BBC Student Critics can form a fun introductory or bridging unit for the beginning of the school year. Read the BBC National Short Story Award shortlisted stories, discuss them as a group, choose your favourites, and then host a listening party to hear the winner announced live on BBC Radio 4's *Front Row*.

Visit the website to find our Student Critics resources – or to sign up to express interest in an enhanced experience, including an online event with writers and judges, and free copies of the BBC National Short Story Award anthology for your students: bbc.co.uk/teach/student-critics/zxhqdp3

LISTEN UP

Short Stories on BBC Sounds

Listen to hundreds of short stories on BBC Sounds including timeless classics and stories shortlisted for the BBC National Short Story Award with Cambridge University.

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(search: 'short story')



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