

Short : The Anthology Book

A collection of
interesting short stories
and other stuff from
some surprising and
intelligent people

Edited by Lili Wilkinson

About these notes

The exercises in these notes cover a range of topics that are important in a short story unit: narrative structure, form, character, setting, dialogue, inner dialogue and simile. Students could complete the exercises and produce a class anthology. Alternatively, teachers may use the exercises to stimulate student writing throughout the year.

Readership

Mid primary to mid secondary students.

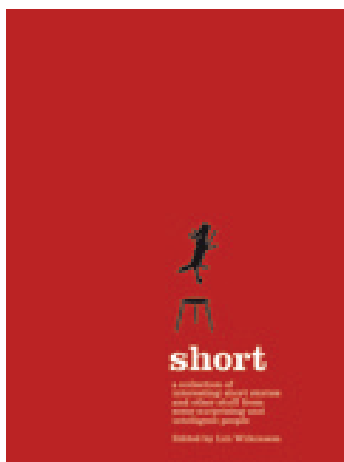
About the book

Short is an anthology of new writing by famous authors, new writers and young writers from Australia and New Zealand. The stories are written in a variety of forms: poems, six word stories, cartoons and traditional narratives.

The content will appeal to both primary and secondary students. Stories range from Andy Griffiths' The Tale of the Three Little Bottoms and the Big Bad Bum to Alicia Sometime's recollections of teenage embarrassment in Bra. There will be something to interest every student in this mix.

The anthology is an invaluable resource for teachers preparing curriculum units on short story. It demonstrates the various forms that a short story can take. It illustrates that ordinary experiences make great reading if written in an engaging way. It is loaded with ideas for student writing.

The most important thing about this anthology is that it includes work from previously unpublished writers. Some contributors are as young as twelve years old. The inclusion of young voices is a great way to enthuse students about the writing process. It proves that publication is possible.

**ENGLISH****Narrative structure**

Read the six word stories by Penni Russon on pages 35 and 36 of Short.

- In groups, discuss common elements between these six word stories and longer narratives.
- As a class compile a list of 'Essential Elements of a Great Story'. (This list can then be used to discuss the short story narrative structure: exposition, conflict, rising conflict and resolution.)
- In pairs, write some six word stories.
- As a class, plan one of Penni Russon's stories as a longer narrative.

Dialogue

Read The Gift by Melinda Szymanik. In this story, the power of speech is very important to the main character and her sister, Renee. The narrator comments that her head will explode if she does not talk!

- What word describes a conversation between two or more people in a story?
- Find some examples of dialogue in The Gift. As a class, discuss why it is important to include some direct speech from characters in your stories. (Students might discuss how dialogue shows important things about character, helps to progress the plot and creates reader interest.)
- Make a list of important things to remember when punctuating direct speech.
- Read Stuck for Words by Michael Panckridge. Write a story about an exciting moment in your life. (You might write about a moment on the football field like Michael does.) Include some interesting dialogue in your story.

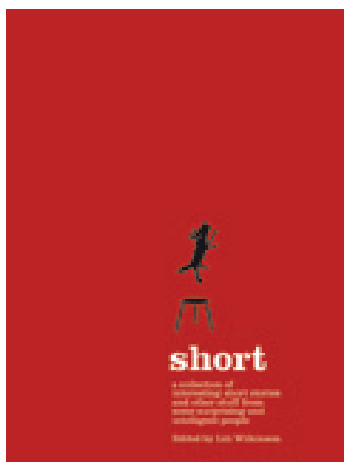
Inner Dialogue

Read In Train by Julia Lawrinson. Most of this story is told through inner dialogue.

- As a class, discuss what you think 'inner dialogue' means. Discuss what purpose it serves in the story In Train.
 - Write a story using the same format as In Train. Some suggestions for characters are listed below.
1. A teacher and a student during detention.
 2. A fish staring out of its bowl at its owner.
 3. A parent and a son or daughter after a fight.

Setting

The stories in Short are almost all set in one place and time.



- Discuss why a writer might decide to limit the number of settings in his or her short story.
- Choose one story in Short and illustrate the work with a picture of its setting.
- In groups, brainstorm interesting places to set a love story, a story about bravery, and a story about death.

Description

Read Homework by Cam Doig. In this story there is a vivid description of a car chasing a boy on in-line skates. My Ending Pose by Madeleine McGlade also begins with a beautiful description.

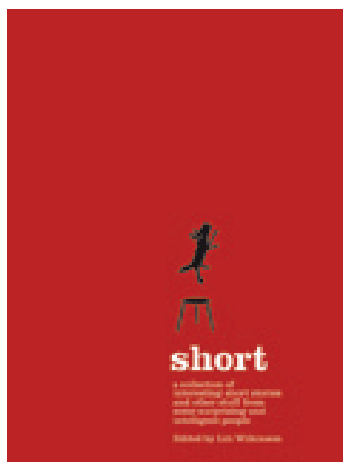
- Discuss what makes these descriptions interesting or exciting.
- As a class, brainstorm some exciting moments that you could describe in a story. (For example, playing football, sky diving, surfing, a first kiss, being chased by a dog or dancing on stage.)
- Choose one of these moments and compile a list of words or phrases that describe the experience. Remember to describe the moment using the five senses.
- Turn your description into a short story. Use the same format as Cam Doig's story: start at an exciting moment and finish your story as soon as the excitement has stopped.

Similes

The stories in Short describe people and situations using original similes.

- What is a simile?
- In pairs, find examples of two interesting similes in Short.
- As a class, discuss what makes a successful simile. (It is accurate and original.)
- In pairs, make up your own similes. Be creative. Be original. If you're stuck, start by matching a word from 'Column One' with a fitting description from 'Column Two' to create a simile. For example, 'He had teeth like a broken fence.'

| COLUMN ONE | COLUMN 2 |
|---------------|--------------|
| Hair | Tissue |
| Skin | Clouds |
| Teeth | Watermelon |
| Farts | Car Exhaust |
| A Morning Sky | Broken Fence |

**Character**

Read *The Amazing Human Canvas* by Karen Tayleur.

- The description of Spike is so real that he steps off the page. How does the writer achieve this?
- Draw a picture of Spike. Include a thought balloon with an example of something he would say.
- Write your own description of a character. You might start by describing someone you know and then extend the description by adding in some fictional details. Remember to use some interesting similes.
- Plan a story about your character. Like Karen Tayleur has done, set your story in one place. Give your character a problem. Decide on an unexpected way to solve your character's problem.

Fairytales

Some of the writers in *Short* have used fairytale content or form as the basis for a new story. For example, read *The Tale of the Three Little Bottoms* and *the Big Bad Bum* by Andy Griffiths, illustrated by Terry Denton, *A Break for Freedom* by Nicola Kimpton and *Prince Freak* by Paul Gartside.

- As a class, discuss ways that you could use fairytales to create new stories.
- Write and illustrate your own story based on a fairytale.

Scary stories

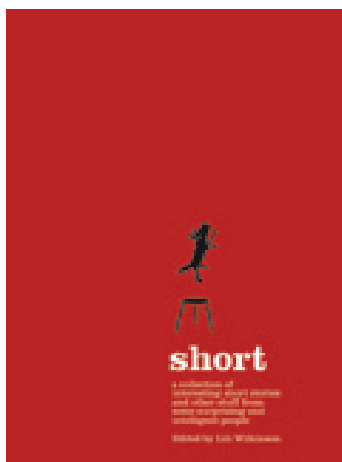
Read some scary stories in *Short* such as *The House* by Barry Jonsberg, *Four and Twenty Blackbirds* by Samantha Tidy and *The White Boat* by Kate Constable.

- As a class, discuss how the writers have created suspense in their stories.
- Discuss why Barry Jonsberg might have used such short sentences in *The House*.
- As a class, discuss which scary ending you liked the most. Give reasons for your answer.
- Write your own suspenseful story using techniques to heighten the tension. (Techniques that could be used include short sentences, a spooky setting and an open ending.)

Creative punctuation

Read *The Match* by Michael Pryor.

- Write a two sentence story.
- Write a one sentence story.
- Write a story where every sentence is only two words long.

**Superheroes**

Sue Lawson and Michael Gerard Bauer use superheroes to inspire their stories. Invent a new superhero and sidekick and create a cartoon about their adventures.

Poetry

Read Haiku by Meredith Costain.

- What is a Haiku?
- Write your own Haiku, following the appropriate conventions.

Read If by Jill McDougall.

- Make a list of six nouns.
- Swap your list with someone in the class.
- Write a poem using the nouns you have been given, following Jill McDougall's format in If.

Read High Flyers by Bill Nagelkerke and Mouse and Swallow by Cassandra Golds.

- Discuss why the authors have set out their poems in unusual ways.
- Write a poem where the layout mirrors the topic.

Read The Killer Rabbits by Connor O'Brien, illustrated by Heath McKenzie.

- Write a scary poem that rhymes. Draw some pictures to make your readers even more afraid!

Read Ambition by Steven Herrick.

- Write a poem about a time when you achieved something that seemed small to everyone else but was important to you. (For example, learning to swim, riding a bike or giving a speech.) Follow the non-rhyming format that Steven Herrick has used in his poem.

Read The Cause of Death by Lucy Ferguson.

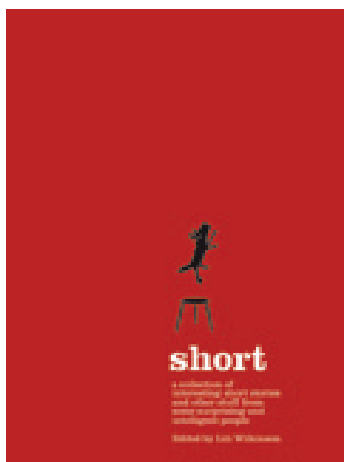
- As a class discuss some of the issues that concern the poet.
- As a class, discuss some local and global issues that concern you.
- Write a poem about one of these issues.

Read Flirting with Members of the Periodic Table by Jessica Bates.

- Write a poem or a story about what kitchen appliances might say to each other when you are not in the room.

Read Insanities by Emily Adlam.

- Write a poem that begins with her line: 'The sun is stretching out glowing golden tightropes for us to walk on.' You could include stanzas about the sky, the birds, the wind and the grass.

**Extraordinary stories from ordinary experiences**

Many authors in *Short* have written funny stories based on things that have happened to them. Examples are *Bra* by Alicia Sometimes, *Meeting Ben* by Julia Lawrinson, *The Dare* by Esther Crowley and *The Victory* by Cameron Nunn.

- In groups, discuss how to make an ordinary experience interesting for readers. (Interesting language, humour, the exploration of shared experience.)
- In small groups, share some of your funny, embarrassing or frightening life experiences.
- As a class, discuss how one of these life experiences could be structured as a story.
- Write a story about an ordinary experience. Make it extraordinary for your reader like the writers have done in *Short*.

A Twist

Many stories in *Short* have unexpected endings. Read *The Chair* by Veronica Williams.

- How does the writer 'trick' the reader at the beginning of the story?
- Write a short story like Veronica Williams where you do not reveal the narrator's location until the end.
- Share your story with the class. Have you succeeded in your aim to keep the reader guessing?

BOOK FEATURES AND FORMAT

Short has many features that are important in an anthology. Locate the following features in the text:

- Table of Contents
- Page numbers
- Story titles and author names
- Contributor biographies (About the Creators)

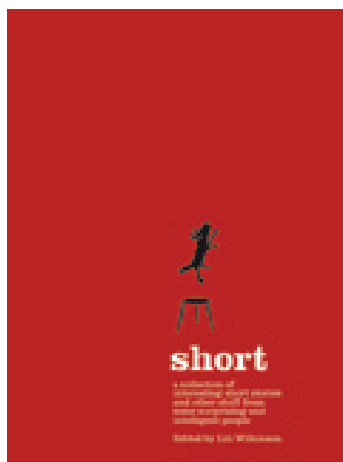
As a class, create your own short story anthology. You could use some of the features of this book or design a completely new format.

VISUAL LITERACY

Look at the photograph on page 141 of the text. Make a list of some things that you learn about the girls from this photograph. Write a short journal entry about what these girls might have been thinking when the photograph was taken.

DRAMA

In groups, choose one of the stories in *Short* and write it as a script. Perform your play to the class.

**CREATIVE ARTS**

Stories can take many forms. Look at the following cartoons:

- They Came from the Sink by Simmone Howell
- Pickle Man by Connor O'Brien
- Monday by Trudy White
- Attack of the Vampire Sock by Adam Ford
- Dream Music by Kim Fleming

Create a story in the form of a comic or picture. You might like to make a comic based on The Rat Swallower by Kirsty Murray or Snail Mail by Chris Miles.

SOSE/HISTORY

The proceeds from the sale of Short go to Big Brothers Big Sisters – an organisation that matches mentors and role-models with young people who need them. Research this organisation and create a PowerPoint presentation to educate the community about why it is important.

Read The Moonlight Cat by Carole Wilkinson. Write a story that is set in the past. A good idea is to set your story in an era that you have studied in History this year.

Read Androcles and the Boa Constrictor by Bill Condon, illustrated by Richard Morden. Research some more tales that have a moral at the end. Write and illustrate your own story with a funny moral.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

You will find information about the contributors in the 'About Creators' section in the back of the text. (You'll notice that some of the contributors are younger than you expect.)

Write your own author biography to be included as part of your anthology.