

Words for a Greener World

Short Story Writing Competition

Learning Resource Pack

Writing tips and eco-literacy



**ESSEX
BOOK
FESTIVAL**


Essex County Council

ESSEX YEAR
OF
OPPORTUNITY


MANIFESTO
For Essex

Words for a Greener World

Short Story Writing Competition

Essex Book Festival has teamed up with Essex Year of Opportunity to bring you the Words for a Greener World Short Story Competition – open to all schools in Essex.



With the Words for a Greener World short story competition, we aim to inspire children to get writing and use their imagination to focus on the environment, climate change, sustainability and what it means to them.



We want to help support developing children's writing skills and encourage them to express their thoughts and ideas about the climate emergency.



It's simple. All your students need to do is write a story of up to 500 words based around the theme of Climate Change by Friday 12 December.

Closing Date Extended to Friday 16 January 2026

For full details including prizes, terms & conditions and online entry form visit essexbookfestival.org.uk or scan this QR code:



Words for a Greener World

Short Story Writing Competition

Why is Creative Writing Important?



It provides the opportunity to develop literary skills for the future.



It helps develop confidence, commitment and organisational skills.



Writing a story can involve detailed planning, clear communication and setting goals and milestones.



It provides an opportunity for children to express their thoughts and ideas.



Using imagination to develop their own unique stories helps build self-esteem.



Giving children the freedom to work on an activity where there are no wrong answers.

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Short Story Writing Competition

Introducing the theme: **CLIMATE CHANGE**

Why do we write?

To inform, persuade, entertain, explain.

To express feelings.



Talking to children about climate change

Why should we protect our planet? Chat about sustainable actions you take at home or at school to support taking care of the environment e.g. recycling, using less plastic, eating less meat.

Focus on solutions

Discuss positive and inspiring stories you see on the news or in your own community.

Eco-writing

Develop a love for nature and the environment
Get outside, e.g. school playground or local park, and experience nature.

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Short Story Writing Competition

What do you think are the most pressing environmental issues?

The story can be anything to do with climate change. Here are some Climate Change topic prompts to help start the conversation...

Deforestation
Rising sea levels
Recycling
Melting glaciers
Saving energy
Rising temperatures
Reducing plastic
Trees
Wildfires
Planets
Bees
Nature
Sustainable living
Bugs & Insects
Storms
Waste
Transport
Oceans
The next new invention
Butterflies
Solving the climate crisis
Electric cars
Natural habitats
Floods
Climate refugees
Fragile balance
Drought
Pollution
Wildlife
Water conservation
Bikes

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Short Story Writing Competition

The Story Map
Creating a fabulous story...

Ideas



Characters



Setting



Developing
the story



Structure



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Short Story Writing Competition

The Story Map

Ideas



Talk about your ideas. Discuss the theme.
What do you think of when you think of
climate change?
(see prompts on page 5)

Create an ideas map e.g. spider diagram or
bullet points to note down all of your ideas.

Think about how you want people to feel
when reading your story
e.g. happy, inspired, sad, hopeful?

*Weird and inventive ideas
welcome!
There are no limits to
creative writing.*

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The Story Map

Characters



Who is the star of your story? Is it you or someone else you know? Or someone you have made up?

It doesn't have to be human, it could be an animal, a made-up creature, or an object.

How old is your character?

What is your character like?

Where are they from?

What is your character interested in?

What is your character afraid of?

What is their name?

Does your character have a special talent? What is it?

Who are their friends and enemies?

What makes them interesting to the reader? Make your characters relatable.

What does your character look like?

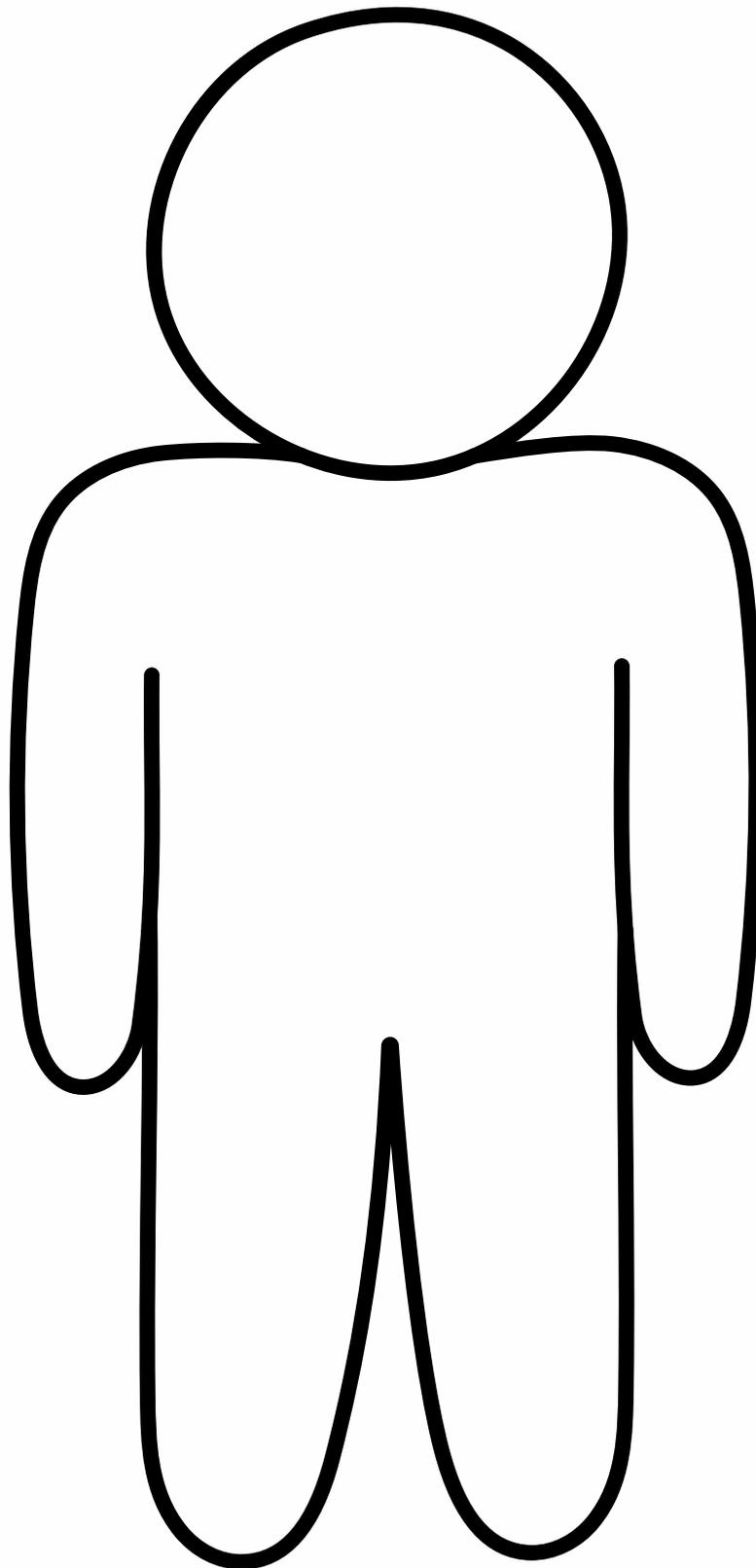
TIP: Use interesting vocabulary and similes.

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Use this template to draw each of your characters.

On the outside of the body write down words/phrases to describe how your character appears to others.

On the inside of the body write down what is going on inside your character – this includes their thoughts, feelings and emotions.



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The Story Map

Setting



Where is your story going to be set?
Somewhere you know?
Or somewhere you've never been?
Or a place you've created?

Is it set on earth or another planet?
You could make up a whole new world.

Is it set in the present, or past, or future?

Use the senses:
What can you see?
Hear?
Smell?
Taste?
Feel?

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The Story Map

Developing
the story



Who is your main character?

What is the main plot of the story?

What does your character know about their surroundings?

How did your character end up in the setting?

What does the character want?

Who or what is trying to stop them?

How do they get what they want?

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The Story Map

Structure



The beginning

Introduce the main characters and setting
Grab the readers attention – start with a bang.

Build-up

Start small and work your way up to the main event.
Build momentum.

The dilemma / problem

The main event.
Include conflict and obstacles.
How does the main event change the main character?

The turning point / resolution

Drawing to a conclusion - resolve conflicts and tie up
loose ends.

The end

Leave a lasting impression on the reader.
Plot twist? Lingering question?

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Now you have your story planned out it is time to put pen to paper!!

A few tips to help you along the way...

Find YOUR voice – Don't worry about what other people think...write the story you would love to read.

Be Adventurous – a great story is packed with adventure. Let your imagination go wild.

Remember...

Your story must be no more than 500 words.

Your story must be based around the theme of climate change.



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Finding the right words

Synonyms

Two words that have exactly or nearly the same meaning.

E.g. Small – tiny, miniscule, little, compact, mini, minute.

Use synonyms to help vary your vocabulary and avoid repeating the same words.



Activity: Think of synonyms for the following:
Nice, Big, Bad, Said, Happy, Strong

Similes

Describe something by comparing one thing to something else.

E.g. She was as brave as a lion.

Use similes to make a description more exciting and impactful.



Activity: Think of similes for the following: He ran like ...
She jumped like ... He flew like ...

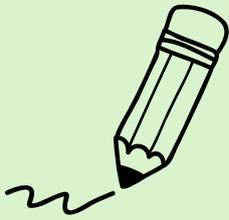
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Show, don't tell

Don't tell your reader what to think. Show the emotion and let the reader feel it.

E.g. Instead of saying your character is cold, describe them pulling their collar up, tightening their scarf, shoving their hands deep in their pockets, turning their face away from the wind, pulling their hat down.



Activity:

Write down as many ways as you can think of to show each of the following emotions:

angry
excited
sad
afraid
hot
tired
confused

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Finishing your story

Make sure your story is the best it can be by reading it back and editing and revising bits that could be improved.

You could try reading it to yourself in front of a mirror, videoing yourself reading your story, and/or reading it to somebody else to get their feedback.

Activity: Editing and Revising Checklist



Does it make sense? Is the story well-organised?	
Have I used the correct punctuation? Is the title, proper nouns, and first word of each sentence capitalised? Does each sentence end with a punctuation mark?	
Have I spelt things correctly, especially tricky words and commonly confused words e.g. there, their, they're / to, too, two	
Does the opening grab the reader's attention?	
Do I have different sentence starters?	
Is my vocabulary interesting?	

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Useful Resources

How to write stories with children, and why it matters.
penguin.co.uk/discover/articles/how-parents-help-children-write-stories

Unicef – Talking to your child about climate change: How to engage children on the issue with hope and positivity.
<https://www.unicef.org/parenting/talking-your-child-about-climate-change>

Royal Botanic Gardens Kew - Quick activities, videos and teaching resources about nature, plants and protecting our planet.
[Royal Botanic Gardens Kew – Taster Resources](#)

NASA Climate Kids - What is Climate Change?
<https://climatekids.nasa.gov/climate-change-meaning/>

Video: Call to Learning for Climate Education | Global Goals
[Call To Learning for Climate Education | Global Goals](#)

Video: Essex Book Festival Manifesto For Essex & Chelmsford City Council: councils must act on climate concerns of county's young people
<https://youtu.be/JcpRWvs1Zcw>

BBC How to Talk with children about climate change
<https://youtu.be/Ym2uyC6kVIs?si=SZkOGKiorZbouFkU>

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Or scan this QR code



Open to all schools in Essex.

Prizes include a bundle of books for your school, book vouchers and stories to be published online.

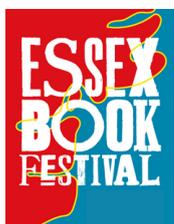
All your students need to do is write a story of up to 500 words, based around the theme of **Climate Change by Friday 16 January 2026.**

Age categories:

7 - 11 year olds

12-16 year olds

Each participating school to select a max of two entries per class.



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Contact: hello@essexbookfestival.org.uk

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