

Collection of Flash Texts

"August 6, 1945 at 8:15 a.m. in Hiroshima"

His tiny legs straining to push the pedals, a three-year-old boy tries out his first tricycle, a gift for his birthday.

A white cat bathes lazily in a garden.

As she sits in a streetcar ambling along the tracks, a young woman fights back tears and wrings her hands.

Two brothers in matching hats walk away from the market, carrying a heavy yoke with baskets of vegetables.

A bird dives and skims the surface of the Motoyasugawa River, leaving a small ripple where he briefly touched the water.

A blinding flash fills the sky.

"Memaw"

Purple thumbs shucking peas, cornbread on the kitchen counter, "I reckon..." "...over yonder" "Well, I'll be," hand on hip, waving a finger at me for sassing my mother, chocolate chip cookies (pecan meal--secret ingredient), applying delicate powder from a pink tin with a big feathery pouf, toast with a spoonful of jelly and a fried egg on Saturday morning, the spare bedroom that smells like cedar, reclining in an old green metal lawn chair in the backyard, dominoes on the kitchen table, pink lipstick, carefully applied, homemade pickles and canned tomatoes in mason jars, sirens blaring, climbing down the ladder of the tornado shelter holding a kerosene lamp, gently rocking in the recliner, feet barely touching the floor.

"How to Write a Very Short Story"

1. Before you begin, make yourself a cup of very hot coffee or tea. Use your oldest mug, preferably one with a chip on the lip. As a warm-up exercise, burn your mouth. Write down how it feels.

2. Ask yourself some questions to put your writing in context. Who is it for? Will anyone actually read it, and do you care if anyone does or not? What do you want it to do? Answer these questions honestly, then proceed.
3. Show, don't tell. Provide images, not descriptions. Instead of "The girl was sad," write, "The girl trudged down the sidewalk, shoulders slumped, dragging her bookbag along the ground behind her like a sad little canvas dog."
4. On a similar note, avoid adverbs. They're lazy. I could have written that the girl "walked slowly" down the sidewalk," but "trudged" is more concise and more interesting.
5. Break rules. Do something weird, like include a character who is in the wrong time period, or write the whole story in questions, or make the narrator contradict herself at the end. Readers like surprises.
6. Keep it simple. This is a very short story you're writing, after all--you don't have room to create a sprawling narrative. Describe one fleeting moment, or one person--only what you need to serve your purposes (which you considered already in Step 2).
7. Once you are finished with the first draft, take out some of the more obvious details. Don't tell the whole story. Let the reader figure it out.
8. Lock up the very short story somewhere and don't look at it for two weeks. After two weeks, take it out and read it again. Look for places to make it more concise, more specific, less obvious. Make changes with a green pen.
9. Repeat Step 8 until you are satisfied or tired of looking at that story, whichever comes first.