The 2024 Short Story & Poetry Contest is open to ages 6 and up. All contest entries submitted through our online Short Story Portal will be published in DTDL’s Short Story Dispenser at the end of the contest. Poetry submissions will be considered for publication on the library’s outdoor walkways. Gift card prizes will be awarded to contest entries receiving the highest scores from our judges.

**Contest Opens: January 2, 2024**  **Submission Deadline: 5 p.m. March 15, 2024**

**Participant Age Brackets:** Youth: Ages 6-12, Teen: Ages 13-17, Adult: Ages 18+

**To submit your story or poem:**
1. Scan the QR code or visit dtdl.org/shortstory.
2. Click 'login' to make a new account or to log in from last year.
3. Click the blue ‘submit’ button and choose the Short Story or Poem category.
4. Type or paste your work into the submission box. Include a title and author’s age. Adults can put "adult" for age. **Entries without identifying information will be disqualified.**
5. Agree to the conditions of submission and click submit.

To submit a typed, hard copy of your work, please bring it to the Adult or Youth desk with the entry form below.

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**Short Story & Poetry Contest**
**2024 Entry Form**

Name ________________________________________________________________

Age (if under 18) _______________ Phone ________________________________

Email Address _________________________________________________________

Title of Work _________________________________________________________

This is a: ☐ Poem or ☐ Short Story

By submitting your work to the Short Story and Poetry Contest, you agree to the contest guidelines. Works may be reproduced for public distribution, displayed at the library, and posted online. DTDL may use each winner’s name and photograph for publicity purposes.

Parent/Participant Signature ____________________________________________
Delta Township District Library’s
Short Story & Poetry Contest
Guidelines

1) Open to all residents of the greater Lansing area, ages 6 and up.

2) Entries should be submitted in English.

3) Maximum length is 8000 characters (including spaces) (about 1100-2000 words).

4) One entry per person and entries must be typed and not handwritten.

5) The work must be fictional, or deal with historical or biographical topics in a literary manner.

6) Any entry that, in the library’s sole and absolute discretion (i) is obscene, profane, lewd, or defamatory; (ii) includes anti-social content; (iii) does not meet the requirements outlined in the Official Rules; or (iv) is otherwise objectionable; may not be considered and may be disqualified.

7) The author declares that they are the sole author of any text they submit, and that this same text is an original creation. The author declares that they control the copyright of the submitted text, meaning that they have never transferred these rights to a third person/entity. All characters must be original. Copyrighted names are not allowed.

8) The author grants a non-exclusive right to the project organizer to reproduce, correct, and publish their stories via Short Story Dispensers, website and in print.

9) The copyright of the work shall remain with the author. The author agrees and acknowledges that in this specific case, publication, and distribution of their work shall not result in the payment of royalties from Short Édition.

10) If a selected winner cannot be contacted, is ineligible, or fails to claim a prize in a timely manner, the prize may be forfeited.

11) The coordinators of the Delta Township District Library project have sole discretion in selecting works for distribution via the Short Story Dispenser, website, and print. They may also reject or remove works from the dispenser without giving any prior notice or justification to the author.

12) The author can also ask for their work to be removed by notifying the project coordinators in writing.

13) The information contained in these official rules is for reference only and is subject to change. DTDL reserves the right to revise, amend, or repeal these basic contest rules at any time.

What’s a Poem? What’s a Story?

There are many different kinds of poetry. There is free verse poetry, which means poems that do not have strict patterns of rhyme or meter. Then there is formal verse, or poems that do have clear patterns of rhyme and meter.

Formal verse itself consists of many forms, such as haiku, sonnet, villanelle, and sestina, just to name a few.

How can you identify something as a poem as opposed to a fictional story? In simple terms, we identify poetry as being in verse, the opposite of prose. Prose and poetry are both kinds of writing, but prose is told in regular wording and sentences while poets make careful choices about word meaning, sound, line endings, and rhyme and meter, in order to create certain emotions in the reader.

A short story is a tale, sometimes based on something true but mostly fictional, that is usually only a few pages in length and, in the case of flash fiction (or short-short stories), a page or less. How a story is put together consists of the following elements: introduction, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution (ending).
Poetry is a written work, usually in groups of lines called stanzas, made up of carefully chosen words to create images or explore an idea in a shorter space than prose. Poems can be formal verse (has clear rhyme and meter), blank verse (has meter but no rhyme), or free verse (has no rhyme or regular meter). Formal verse itself consists of so many kinds, or forms, such as haiku, sonnet, villanelle, and sestina, just to name a few.

**Formal Verse**

Try learning about and writing a new kind of poetic form, such as one of the following: haiku, repetition or refrain, acrostic, cinquain, limerick, list poem, fractured nursery rhyme, or concrete. Or try free verse! Not sure what these forms are? Look them up online or ask a librarian for help. For examples and inspiration, check out DTDL’s poetry collection.

**Alliteration or Tongue Twister Poetry**

Alliteration, or Tongue-Twister Poems, have no predetermined pattern, but are more focused on sounds. Choose a letter to focus on. Some letters are much harder than others! Not every word in your poem has to start with this letter, but have as much of it as you can. An easy way to start is with an animal or two to be in your poem and give them names starting with the matching letter. (i.e. Henrietta Hippo, Lilly Lee the Lion, etc.) Another way to start brainstorming is to make a big list of words that start with/contain the chosen letter or sound. When read aloud, this poem could sound like a tongue twister because of the repetitive sounds. Try reading it really fast!

**Take a Look**

Often, when we look closely at or think about something considered ordinary, we find something to celebrate and sometimes are surprised by the discovery. This process can lead to writing a poem called an ode. Create your own ode to an everyday object by describing it in an interesting way. What is it? How would you describe it to someone who has never seen, felt, or touched it? How might it be important or useful to someone? What did you discover upon taking a closer look at it? Can you illustrate it?

**Roll-a-Poem**

Explore new writing topics! Choose one speaker or subject. Your poem may be written from that perspective (speaker) or about that noun (subject). A chart with examples is below. Roll a die two times, the first roll determines the row, the second roll determines the column. The intersection of the two rolls determines the subject or speaker to use in your poem.
Elements of a Poem

Though not every poem will have each of these elements, most will, or some variation. Learning the basic characteristics of a poem helps to talk about poetry more confidently and build on each concept learned.

**TITLE**
A title should indicate to the reader what the subject of the poem is. At times, poets can reveal important information not included in the poem itself.

**INTERNAL RHYME**
Rhymes within a line of poetry

**END RHYME**
Rhyming words at the ends of the lines of a poem

**RHYME SCHEME**
The pattern of end rhymes in a poem, written out as letters, such as AABB or ABAB. In this case, the rhyme scheme is ABA in each stanza.

**ENJAMBED LINE**
The sentence or thought continues into the following line(s) without any grammatical stops

**END-STOPPED LINE**
End-stopped lines end a complete thought or phrase with a grammatical marker -- such as with a dash, parenthesis, colon, semi-colon, or period.

**STANZA**
A group of lines in a poem, separated by space from other stanzas, much like a paragraph in prose.

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**Momma Possum**

By: Anwen Drew

My father says she comes at night to hiss and maybe bite. He thinks she's mean, but he's not right!

I told my dad that's not fair, no way! You shouldn't judge a book by its cover. Dad also likes to sleep all day!

She wants to get along with you and visit when she can. She's busy with her babies, faces white as moons.

I like to leave her tasty scraps, a melon rind or two, that she can nibble and share with the riders on her back.

Her teeth and snarl are just a show, to dare for what she has. Her children eat and she says "thanks" with a twitch of her nose.

She has not a snout but an actual nose, a pink button like a cat. Her eyes are large and full of what she knows.

Wait until you see this friend and mother in the tree tonight. With her tail she does better chin-ups than my brother!
A short story is a well-crafted work of fiction that consists only of text (words) and has a clear beginning, middle, and end. See the back of this sheet to learn more about story structure and components.

**Fables**
Some short stories can be categorized as fables. A fable usually has animals as characters and always ends with a moral. A moral is a short lesson on good and bad behavior that instructs on how to behave well. Not all stories need to end with morals but most fables do. Some examples include The Lion and the Mouse and The Tortoise and the Hare. Try writing your own fable! Your protagonist can be an animal that you love and your antagonist can be an animal you dislike. Give them each a name and a unique characteristic, location, or look. Then try using one of these morals for your story: never judge a book by its cover; trust your instincts; treat others as you want to be treated; if you can’t say something nice, don’t say anything; be prepared; or pick another saying or lesson that you’ve been taught.

**Short-Short Stories**
Not ready to write a whole short story yet? Try a short-short story! Flash fiction, or short-short stories, are usually a page or less, maybe even just a few sentences. It may seem simple, but the story should still have many of the same story aspects—setting, introduction, rising action, climax, etc.—included.

**Roll-a-Story**
Explore new writing topics! For each column, roll a die to decide which of each element should be included in your story.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MAIN CHARACTER</th>
<th>TIME SETTING</th>
<th>PHYSICAL SETTING</th>
<th>SOURCE OF CONFLICT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a bus driver</td>
<td>the year you were born</td>
<td>the Pacific Ocean</td>
<td>a velvet pillow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a fish</td>
<td>next week</td>
<td>a country in Africa</td>
<td>a photograph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bigfoot</td>
<td>1933</td>
<td>a New York City apartment</td>
<td>a duck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a woman from the year 2132</td>
<td>the Paleozoic era</td>
<td>the Grand Canyon</td>
<td>a misunderstanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a hairless cat</td>
<td>1982</td>
<td>Lovely Street</td>
<td>peanut butter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a 100-year old man</td>
<td>today</td>
<td>in or near Lake Superior</td>
<td>a winter hat</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
STORY STRUCTURE and Key Story Components

Fiction—a tale told in writing that is all or mostly "made up,"—comes in different lengths. Novels are usually 100 pages or more, short-short or short stories consist of one to a few pages, and novellas fall somewhere in between (shorter than a novel, longer than a short story). All are fiction, however, and as such have similar characteristics. These identifying elements can be thought of as a writer’s bag of tricks, or tools, to help them create the story and tell it in an interesting, engaging way. How a story or novel is put together, the structure, consists of the following five elements: introduction, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution (ending).

**CHARACTER**
The person, place, or thing that populates a fictional story. A character can often be described as a **protagonist**, a "good guy," or an **antagonist**, one who causes trouble for the protagonist.

**SETTING**
Where and often when (in time) a story takes place. Stories can have more than one setting.

**PLOT**
The plot is what happens in a story, in the beginning, middle, and end. Often, the plot consists of **conflict**. This conflict, or struggle, is usually experienced by the main character.

**INTRODUCTION**
the beginning of a story where background information is usually provided, such as where a character lives, what they look like, etc.

**RISING ACTION**
the part of the story near the beginning that moves the plot toward the climax, or Big Moment.

**CLIMAX**
when the tension of a story reaches its peak, the Big Moment, and the story begins to wind down toward the conclusion.

**FALLING ACTION**
the part of the story that occurs after the climax that moves the story toward its conclusion.

**RESOLUTION**
occurs after the climax of a story and moves the audience toward the story’s end.

DID YOU KNOW?
Scholars generally agree that the first modern short stories (as we recognize them today) were from American writers Nathaniel Hawthorne and Edgar Allen Poe.