

# How to Write Flash Fiction that Doesn't SUCK

By Holly Lisle

## Lesson 1

### Most Flash Fiction Sucks

Most flash fiction has nothing to say, and says it badly. Most of it consists of two utterly pointless typewritten pages of loathsome, boring, or torpid characters doing meaningless things randomly, purposelessly, and to no end.

If you've read more than a few flash fiction stories, you've read the stories I'm talking about.

I hope you haven't written it, but if you have, this will help you not do that anymore. Better yet, if you have, you can use this course to take apart the flash stories you've already written, figure out why they're bad, and fix them.

So first let's define the Flash Fiction Target—what you're hoping to achieve when you write a 500-word story.

If you are telling a story, it has to have the following four components.

1. A beginning that presents a character we care about with something he desires passionately, and a problem standing in the way of his getting it,
2. A middle in which the problem gets worse, and in which the character's passionate desire slips out of his reach,
3. An ending in which the character either beats the problem and moves toward achieving his desire, or fails, and moves

further from it,

4. Meaning—the Reason Why for telling the story in the first place. (“So someone will give me money” is sufficient reason for a writer to write a story, but is not sufficient reason for a story to exist.)

This is straightforward, and clear. Without any of these four elements, you have not written a story.

The trick with flash fiction is that you have to do all of that in 500 words or fewer.

You want to leave your reader with a clear sense of having received something valuable for the time he has spent with your story. Even if he did not spend a dime to read it, you want him to think, That was wonderful. Or terrifying, amazing, shocking, moving, unexpected. That mattered....

(continued in the class)

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