

Fiction Writing - How Short Stories Differ from Novels

by Sharon P Wilson

Short stories and novels are similar in that they both tell stories. However, there are some fundamental differences between the two types of fiction writing.



The most obvious difference is the length or word count. Whilst novels can range from 80,000 words and upwards in length, the short story can be 500 words long although 800 to 1000 words is more common. There are also short stories that can be as brief as 200 words sometimes referred to as flash fiction.

Another way in which short stories and novels differ is the number of characters and background story you can include. For example, with short stories four characters is usually the maximum number that will be acceptable. More than this would make the story too involved and would probably make it more suitable for longer fiction, such as a novella.

On the other hand, a novel can have any number of characters starting with the main protagonist together with minor characters. With longer fiction you have the opportunity to tell an elaborate story that will feature the main components such as plot, subplot, setting and point of view. In a novel you can expand the story to include all five senses; sight, smell, hearing, taste and touch. Thus, engaging your readers in fiction that will be more descriptive and interesting.



In the short story none of this is possible. You have to gain the attention of your reader immediately and give your main protagonist a problem to overcome. This problem or obstacle will have to be resolved by the end of the story. It is important however to leave your readers feeling satisfied with the outcome. This can make short story writing seem more difficult than writing a novel and again highlights the difference between the two.



Point of view is another difference. In a short story the story is told through the eyes of the main character regardless of how many characters that are present. With a novel however, there is more flexibility. The narration can be told in the first person which creates more intimacy, but it can be restrictive experiencing the entire story from the protagonist's point of view.

It is more common for novels to be written in the third person narration point of view. This is a very useful technique in novel writing as you are able to experience the story from the viewpoint of multiple characters, thus creating rich and diverse fiction.

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Sharon Wilson has been studying and researching the art of creative writing for many years. She has a particular leaning towards novel and short story writing. Sharon is keen to help budding writers like herself develop their art and achieve their goals. For more information visit > <https://sharonswriterstidbits.wordpress.com/>

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