

My Twist on a Tale: Represent!

Tips for Writing and Recording

In this year's My Twist on a Tale competition, we're asking you to shine a light on the page and represent what, and who, you feel are being left out in literature today.

Your piece could be a story, a poem, an article, song lyrics, a letter or even a sound or video recording – whatever excites and inspires you the most.

To help, here are some top tips:

Start thinking

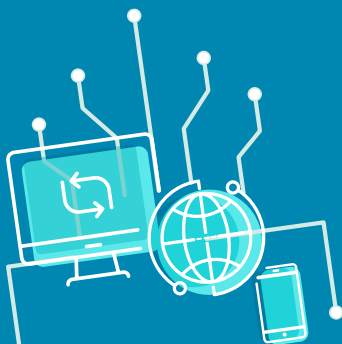
Delve into topics that feel close to your heart – whether that be ethnicity, relationships, gender, ability, poverty, technology, or more.

Your piece could be funny, or thrilling; scary or thought-provoking. It could be a mixture of all these things, of some of them, or of none of them at all!

Have a think about whether your tale will feature any characters. If so, who? Are they humans? Animals? Robots?

Consider whether you want to tell the tale from your perspective or from the perspective of someone – or **something** – else!

Remember: your tale can be made-up (fiction) or totally real (non-fiction). You can tell a true tale, an almost-true tale, have fun expressing your ideas in rhyme, or let your imagination run wild!



My Twist
on a Tale
REPRESENT!



When you've decided the theme and general ideas of your piece, you're ready to...



Start planning

Great creative tales – whatever format they may take – should have an engaging beginning that makes your audience (your reader or listener) feel excited to keep going, plus a satisfying end that makes them really pleased they finished it.

Before you start writing or recording, plan your beginning and ending, then work out how you will get from one to the other. You can often sum up a great tale in four sentences:

- **The set up:** what's the situation at the start of the piece?
- **The conflict:** what's the problem that needs to be solved?
- **The climax:** if you want to add excitement and tension to a piece, the problem almost always needs to get worse before it gets better. It might even seem completely impossible to solve – until...
- **The resolution:** the problem is solved – *or is it?*! Perhaps you would like to end your piece with a cheeky twist in the tale...

Before you start writing or recording, try explaining your piece in just four sentences – and have a good think about them. Will the beginning be engaging? Will the ending be satisfying – even (and especially) if it has a surprise twist? Do the conflict and the climax make sense? Is there tension and excitement? And, if you're creating a poem or rap: will the kind of rhythm and rhyme you choose satisfy your audience too?

It's much easier to work out what you like about your piece – and what could be improved – when it's just four sentences long.

Start creating characters

There may be lots of different characters in your tale, but you'll probably focus on just one or two of them. Your audience may or may not need to know what your characters look like, what they smell like, or how old they are. But your audience definitely needs and wants to know what these characters' *personalities* are like.





How will you show your characters' qualities and characteristics to the reader? We don't truly find out what someone is like because they tell us what they're like. We work it out by noticing how they behave and by hearing what they say.

Show the audience what your characters are like. Don't tell them your main character is powerful – show them being powerful. Don't tell the audience your characters are friendly – show them being friendly. Describe those things for whoever is reading or listening, and they'll feel like they've met and really come to know your characters, whether they exist in real life, or purely in your own imagination.

If you are writing

Before you start, check the word limit for the type of piece you want to write. How many pages or lines is that roughly? Once you've worked that out, forget the word limit for now. Get writing.

Don't worry about spelling and punctuation for now – you can check anything you're not sure about when you've finished. If you're writing on a computer, ignore the wiggly lines underneath those words. Those words may not even make it to your final draft!

Forget everything else – just concentrate on telling the tale you want to tell. Think about the key scenes or moments you want to describe: picture them in your head, and try to recreate them in words so that your readers will see the same thing.

Think about the key dramatic moments in your piece: imagine them as a film and try to recreate that movie on the page so that your readers will see what you see. Remember – forget the word limit! You know roughly how many pages or lines your tale will be – but don't keep counting and stop when you get to the limit. Just share what you want to share.

If you are recording

Once again, My Twist On A Tale is accepting audio entries. All competition winners will be included in an audio collection, as well as in our illustrated book.



If you have special access requirements or would prefer to record your tale, first check the word limit for the type of piece you'd like to create. How long, roughly, does it take you to read that number of words aloud? (You may need a friend or family member to help you find this out, by using a clock or stopwatch).

Once you've calculated this, you will know roughly how long your final piece can be. Then... forget it! Just as if you were writing, the important thing is to say what you want to say, however long it takes. Include all the details, moments and scenes that feel important to the tale. Enjoy the process of getting your narrative out. Then, when you've recorded your first version, you can move on to the next step...

Editing

This is probably the most important part of all types of creative work and storytelling. The editing process is when an average tale becomes something good – and a good tale becomes something great. Read through, or listen to, what you've created. Does every word add something to your piece? Does every sentence say something different to the last? Make a note to get rid of or replace any that don't – unless, of course, you're deliberately repeating things to create rhythm!

If you're writing, take your piece and a pencil into a quiet corner and read it aloud. Lock yourself in the bathroom if you want to be sure no one else can hear! As you read, listen carefully to the sound of your voice.

If you're recording, similarly, take your audio clip to somewhere quiet, where you won't be disturbed or distracted, and then start to listen back.

Whether you're writing or recording, next ask yourself: do you like the sound of what you're saying? Good writing is like good music – it should have a flow to it. Any sentences you think sound wrong, put an X alongside them, or make a note of where in your piece they come up. If you stumble and trip over any sentences as you read – or think something sounds confusing as you listen – there is probably something wrong. Make a note, or put an X alongside them too. Then put your piece out of your mind for at least an hour – or even a day if you have time! Simply leave it to one side and do something else.



When you come back to your piece with fresh ears and eyes, carefully review the first point you marked as a problem. Read, or listen to, that line again. Try describing it in a different way – once, twice or even three different ways – on a new document, a blank piece of paper, or in a new audio file. Which version do you like best? Copy or integrate it into your story. Repeat this for all the moments you've noted that don't feel right to you. Every change you make will improve your piece and help your audience enjoy it more.

When you're happy with what you've created, ask someone else to read or listen, and suggest any changes or improvements. Try not to disagree with them if you feel like they are wrong – ask them to explain what they think you should do, then thank them and decide whether you want to act on their advice or ignore it. It's your piece – so the final decision is yours.

Finally, check your spelling, punctuation and word count. And, if you've written too much, look for the scenes or sentences that your piece can survive without. Cutting them may even make your final tale stronger.

Good luck! Enjoy planning, creating and editing your piece!

#MyTwistonaTale
#Represent!

