

The general theme for this annual project is selected based on a special occasion being marked in the literary calendar for the year in question. The focus theme for 2026 will be the short stories of Agatha Christie as 2026 will mark fifty years since the death of this global icon of the mystery genre. We have chosen words from the titles of her early short stories to build up the list of themes for this year's project. The use of this area of her work makes it easier to incorporate it into a classroom setting with short stories being more accessible than full novels to the current generation of readers. As always, the stories can act as a basis for discussions on creativity, social history, and much more besides.

Although Agatha Christie is more closely associated with the mystery genre, **there is no particular style or genre requirement for the students** when it comes to their own work. Rather, we hope they will use their creativity to showcase a full range of emotions, ideas, and thoughts as they let their imaginations run wild and come up with their original stories.

Students and pupils who would like to write a story to be considered for inclusion in this event should create an original piece of work based on one of the following words:

- **Cheap**
- **Victory**
- **Chocolate**
- **Double**
- **Inheritance**
- **Tea**
- **Submarine**
- **Mist**
- **Signal**
- **Emerald**
- **Thumb**
- **Herb**

Students should come up with their **own title** for their short story but they also should **include a note naming the theme** from this list on which they chose to focus. This will allow different pieces based on the same title to be grouped together so that the differences in the creativity shown will be clear those who are listening to or reading the stories.

The piece of writing can either be entirely fictional or based on a true story or event. It is also up to the writer how the title is interpreted. Mentors should point out that a single title could have many different potential stories connected to it. The important thing is that it is an **entirely original piece**. Those which have a strong resemblance to existing stories, books, films, or episodes of television programmes will not be included in the final selection.

Due to the nature of this writing project, all pieces submitted should be **no more than 100 words**.

HAND-IN DEADLINE: 2nd February 2026

Due to changes in the technology available to students, the organisers of the writing competition will require everyone who puts forward a story **to sign a declaration** to state that the work entered for consideration is entirely their own and that they have not used any online or computer-based writing programmes. This is due to concerns about people using chat bots, AI software, etc. to construct a piece of creative work and then passing it off as their own.

All entrants will declare that their pieces of work are their own original pieces and, if through analysis and checking, it turns out that they have used any computer-based assistance, their stories will be removed from consideration immediately and they will be restricted from entering future competitions.