

Dear Writers,

In 1847 Charlotte Bronte shocked readers when she revealed the greatest secret in literary history in her novel *Jane Eyre*. The beauty of secrets in literature is that you can only reveal them by indulging in reading, which makes the gossip so much more enjoyable! Did you work it out before the author revealed it? Or were you keeping it close to your chest; hiding it along with the protagonist?

Secrets are a handy plot device, they can shock the reader, or characters, but in all cases, they move the story forwards and often hold the crux of a story. Think of the *Chronicles of Narnia*, a whole secret world hidden behind wardrobe doors, or *Matilda* revealing to Miss Honey her magic powers. With modern technology and social media, secret keeping has taken on a whole new life. Everyone shares everything, but still people are exposed online and are 'cancelled' over things that they never intended to be public. Maybe consider how you keep secrets in this new online world, or how secrets were kept before Instagram and Snapchat took over.

We already know it's going to be an exciting year for entries, and the judges are eager to read your work. So, we invite you to challenge yourself to think outside the box!

I tell my secret? No indeed, not I: Perhaps someday, who knows? But not today; it froze, and blows, and snows, And you're too curious: fie! You want to hear it? well: Only, my secret's mine, and I won't tell.

- Christina Rossetti

What secrets do you have to tell?



Theme: The Secret We invite your students to write either a short story or a poem on the theme of 'The Secret'. They are encouraged to be as imaginative as they like and take their inspiration from examples in literature – Jane Eyre, The Secret Garden, Chronicles of Narnia– or from their own experiences. We are looking for tales of any approach to 'the secret' be it about a secret place, a personal secret, trying to undercover a mystery, a secret club or a secret identity.

There are 2 categories – Short Story and Poem

Word Count: Maximum words: 500 Minimum words: 100

Age groups: There are three age groups

KS1 - yrs 1&2 KS2 - yrs 3&4 KS2 - yrs 5&6

There will be separate winners in each age range for short stories and poetry.

Teacher selection: Teachers are asked to screen all entries and only submit a maximum of 3 entries per category for each age group specified above.

(i.e. 3 for poetry and 3 for short story per age group)

Entries MUST be typewritten or could be refused entry.

The following details MUST be at the top of each entry:

Name:

Age:

School:

Year Group:

Title of Story:

Criteria

The theme 'The Secret' should be interpreted in whichever way the writer chooses – be it serious, humorous, moving, or thrilling – the key is that the writer has enjoyed crafting the piece and has illustrated where the theme has taken their imagination. The secret is a very broad theme and we encourage all writers to think outside the box (unless their secret is hidden in one).

The writer will not be penalized for grammar and spelling; however, the best way is to plan work before writing it and checking and editing before submission.

Please encourage students to work independently without the help of parents and teachers. Innovation and creativity is important so don't be tempted to guide too much in terms of structure/opening sentences etc.

What the judges look for:

- Imagination • Creativity & originality • Energy & life • Structure; beginning, middle & end

Please ensure that entrants' work is their own original creation.

Judges Our judges are a team of professional writers and educationalists: Chair: Ariel Kahn, University of Roehampton

Polly Simmonds, Head of Creative Learning, Polka Theatre, Lindsey Barraclough, Author, Maria Garcia, Merton Libraries, Julian Butler, Musician & Writer, Sydney James, Wimbledon BookFest.

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