

# WEST BERKSHIRE MUSEUM

## West Berkshire Museum short story competition 2020

### Calling all young budding writers to get ready and get your #WriteOn!

This summer West Berkshire Museum are running an exciting short story competition for young people. It's a chance for young writers to create their own story inspired by eight very different museum objects (pictured below).

We have included some basic information about each object, but you can have fun finding out more about them. Your story can be a maximum of 500 words in length and of any genre, such as science fiction, mysteries and detective, or fairy tales and myths, to name but a few. Whatever the genre, the challenge is to include every object in the narrative – let your imagination run wild! If you're not certain how to start your story, please see the 'top tips for short story writing' factsheet.

There will be two categories: 7-11 years, and 12-16 years. One entry per writer.

Please submit your entry by email to [clare.bromley@westberks.gov.uk](mailto:clare.bromley@westberks.gov.uk) including your name, age, title of your story, word count, and a contact email and/or telephone number of a parent/carer. Alternatively, you can drop in your entry at the museum reception desk (addressed to the Learning and Participation Officer).

The winning entries from each category and a few other select stories will be showcased in a special exhibition in Gallery 5 of West Berkshire Museum in September. All exhibited stories will receive a 50% discount on one item in the museum gift shop. The first prize and runner-up competition winners will be awarded one item from the West Berkshire Museum gift shop up to the value of £20. **The deadline for all entries is 4pm on Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> August 2020.**

Good luck budding writers! #SpinaYarn #MuseumStories #CuratingTales #YoungCurators

#### Terms and conditions:

The judges' decision is final. The unrestricted rights to publish, print and display any of the competition entries will be held and retained by West Berkshire Heritage.

#### First row from left to right:

Ancient Egyptian ushabti figure, about 3000 years old. They were usually placed in the tombs of the deceased. Where does this appear in your story?

Stag beetle brooch decorated with turquoise beads. Perhaps this a clue or hidden treasure?

Roman thumb pot, found in Thatcham, that contained a coin. It is thought it might have been used as a child's rattle. Perhaps you find evidence this is true?

Clockwork gramophone player manufactured by HMV in the late 1920s. The oak base has a drawer for storing records. Does one of its records play a secret message?

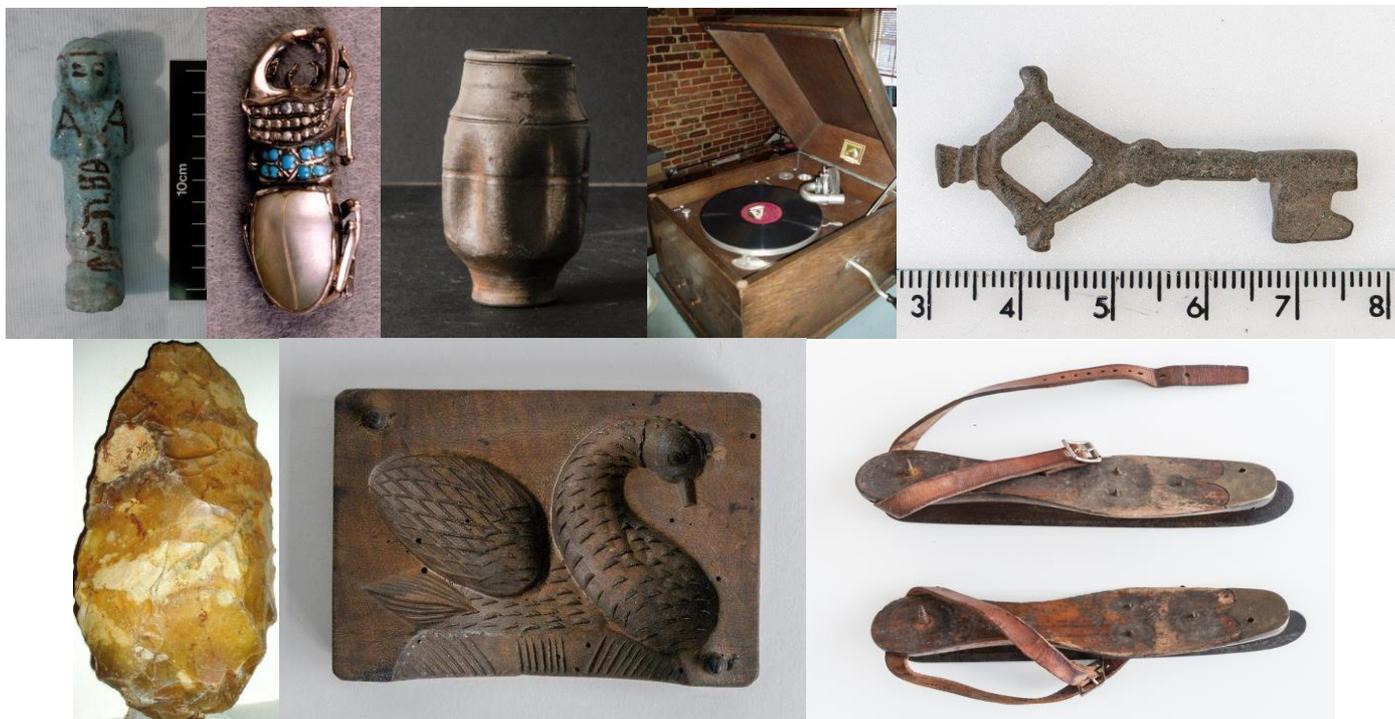
Small medieval casket key. What does this key unlock?

#### Second row from left to right:

A hand axe made from flint and dating from the early Stone Age. How will you use this tool in your story?

Half of a two-piece wooden mould, used for shaping butter. Do you use this item as it was intended or in a very different way?

Wood and metal ice skates that were put over top of shoes or boots, about 150 years old. How might these be useful to your story?



# Top tips for short story writing

Writing a short story can be both creative and fun, but also challenging. One way to overcome this challenge is to plan the story before you start. You can structure the story from beginning to end so making the writing process easier. Here's how to do this:

## Think of one or more ideas

Re-read your favourite book. What do you like and enjoy about it? This could provide ideas for what you might like to include in your story. Can you think of an alternative ending for your favourite book? This could also be the basis for your story. Alternatively, you can write a story based on a real-life experience such as a past adventure or outing with a friend.

## Create a main character and a setting

Think about the people (known as 'characters') who will appear in your story. There is often a main character around which the story revolves. Is your main character a child, an adult or an animal? Will your story be set locally, in outer space, in the past or the future?

## The opening scene

All stories have a beginning, middle and end. Use the ideas you thought of and expand them to create an opening scene (beginning). You might like to include what's interesting about your main character. For instance, s/he is a magical being with wild hair who is lost, but can create portals to travel from one place to another.

## The conflict

A story needs conflict to make it interesting. Think about one or two of your favourite books and identify the conflict within them. Here are some examples of conflict: the introduction of a new character who disagrees with the main character; the main character enters a forest and is attacked by wild plants; the main character questions whether they are making the correct decision or taking the correct course of action; the main character needs to find a way to prove their worth or influence a group of people.

## The turning point

The turning point is usually around the middle of the story and makes the story even more interesting to the reader. It needs to be something the reader would least expect. For example, your main character suddenly discovers that they are actually from another planet or have a magical power.

## The resolution

You now need a resolution to your story – this tells us how the conflict is resolved or dealt with. You might also like to link your conflict with your turning point for added interest. If so, you will need to tie-up any and all loose ends in both respects to create a good resolution.

## The end

A good ending is also essential. You might like to say what happened to your main character after the conflict is resolved or dealt with. Did they achieve something, or did they learn an important lesson as a result?