|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **1** | **30** | **The russian revolution** | **Great structure, strong writing, audience engagement, author voice, some oversimplification, watch editing** |
| **2** | **11** | **My first ever goal** | **Fantastic voice, great emotions, simple effective story, but poor editing. Loved the loop back at the end.** |
| **3** | **18** | **The decision** | **More sophisticated writing style and genre, great vocab, good structure, but needed more story development. Grammar is strongest.** |
| **HC** | **16** | **The curious boy** | **Great character development, imaginative story idea, needed a more thorough edit and more satisfying ending - e.g. looping back to the 'i will show them'** |

I narrowed down my top 16, then my top 9 and finally my top 4. During that process, I’ve popped a few pointers (below) for you to share.

Let me know if you need anything else. I hope things are going well at your end.

Warm wishes,

Kate

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Kapai e te mahi!

Well done everyone. It was a tonne of fun reading your creative entries and very hard to judge!

Every story had strengths, as well as opportunities to improve. Even the winners! So let’s help you out for next year:

* **Stay within the word limit**. Unfortunately, a number of strong entries were immediately disqualified because they didn’t observe the word limit. Whenever you are given a limit in a competition, stick to it.
* **Submit a full story**. If I was judging Best Paragraph, there would have been a different line up of winners. You need a strong introduction, middle, and a satisfying ending, as well as strong writing. Too many wonderful stories missed a middle or had a heavy start and limited words left for their ending. Share the words around!
* **Paint a picture.** Imagine your setting, your character, and your story line. Now, put what you imagine into your story. Stories that gave great descriptions were immediately in my first shortlist. But be warned - make sure your describing words fit! Don’t just throw them in for the sake of it.
* **Avoid story leaps** - As a reader, I like to be walked through the story instead of being jumped from one scene to the next. For example, ‘suddenly’ is a fantastic word but best used with some build up. Use some of your word limit to do that. Dialogue can be a great way to walk your readers along.
* **For extra flavour, add emotions.** I was really delighted every time one of the stories had their characters react to a situation. Give it a go! If the ship is sinking; they’ve found treasure; they’ve discovered an unusual species; or they trip over; weave in some reaction e.g. they jumped back in fright; he stared with surprise; he dug faster and faster. It makes for a much more exciting story!
* **Edit edit edit.** It’s simple, but important. It’s also an easy fix for you! Just go through everything very carefully before pressing submit. As well as checking grammar, check that things in your story are consistent all the way through.

Take a look at your story. Could any of these tips make it stronger? If so, this is going to make judging much, much harder for 2025! :)