

The O'Rourke Library & Information Center @ Bishop Fenwick High School  
For more information, contact Diane Smith, Library Director at [dms@fenwick.org](mailto:dms@fenwick.org)

*Turn your summer read experience into One Teen Story Creative Writing Project. Is this the project you want to choose? Use the following FAQ to determine if this approach to reflecting and responding to your summer read experience will give you the best opportunity to share and develop your skills.*

*Please see the grading rubric and the One Teen Story Creative Writing Description Sheet that goes with this option. Don't hesitate to ask for clarification by emailing Ms. Smith at [dms@fenwick.org](mailto:dms@fenwick.org)*

**What should the finished short story look like?** Compose your short story directly into your computer or write using pen and paper and then type it up. Use MSWord ( double space, Times New Roman 12 point type) or a close equivalent and print a copy using standard 8 ½ " by 11" white paper. Make sure that your name and the grade you're entering is on the story. Put your copy into your book bag with the rest of the things you're bringing to school on your first full day.

**How long does my story need to be?** The word count on a short story varies widely. For this project your story should be no less than 1,500 hundred words but less than 3,000. Remember, word count is not about filling a page or keeping the writer and reader busy. Addressing the five elements of a story (character, setting, plot, conflict and theme) can fluctuate. Reaching the minimum of 1,500 words means that you've at least touched on each of the elements. Staying below 3,000 words keeps non-essential words, too many needless adjectives and telling instead of showing your reader to a minimum. If you hope to send your short story to One Teen Story to be considered for publication, your word count needs to meet the submission guidelines of 2,000 -4,500 (see submission guidelines on the web for details).

**How do I get started?** Read the book *The Good Thief* and think about the main ideas and messages the book conveys to you. Organize your thoughts and then start to brainstorm. Loosen up, be creative. Watch how your ideas come together. What are you interested in understanding better? What questions about relationships, identity, survival or family are you curious enough about to want to know more? Stories are written on levels. Tell an action packed adventure and let the underlying messages, if there are any, appear on their own.

**TIP:** This is a fictional story in which imagination helps us explore real human issues. What details of the story move you? How does the action work? Lift your head, look around and start asking questions. How did Hannah Tinti get the reader to turn the page to see what happens next?

**What do we mean when we say write a short story?** Read *The Good Thief* and keep an informal reading journal (notes and quotes that resonate with you) to catch the highlights of the story and its characters. Pay attention to how the story develops. Make notes to yourself about who the main characters are, where the central conflict is, and how it is resolved. Then, look over the *One Teen Story* Creative Writing Project Description Sheet and start thinking about what you want to say and how you'll say it. It seems at times that *The Good Thief* is all over the place with its plot, subplots, characters and adventures but the story is actually very simple and follows the basic elements of a story.

**Where can I get an idea of what we mean when we say, write a short story?** Don't over think it. Basically the structure of a short story consists of five elements that show themselves through exposition, rising action, a climax, some falling action and a resolution. Your goal is to entertain your reader and

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stay within the guidelines of the setting, time period, a theme related to the teen experience and the word count. Have some fun and keep it simple.

**How do I know what to write about in my short story?** Think about *The Good Thief* & prompt and then step out of your comfort zone. Use the prompt you selected to formulate questions you want answers to and find people who might be able to help. If you're writing about sports maybe you need to see what you can learn at the gym or from a coach, if you're writing about family there are people all around you to ask, the poverty theme might motivate you to sit with clients at a food pantry and the service related prompt gives you built in opportunities to learn while being on task.

**Is it likely that the author of *The Good Thief* will read my essay?** Yes! That's the main reason we're asking you to write the essay in ways that could be developed into a One Teen Story online magazine submission. The Hannah Tinti cared enough about New England and some of the things and ideas she was exposed to when she went to school here to include them in *The Good Thief*. She grew up in Salem and the North Shore means a lot to her. Remember, Hannah Tinti is a real person whose family is living only one town over from BFHS. Her writing career has her living in New York City but she's the first to say that BFHS and Salem are with her always. That's a hint that she is interested in people like you and what you think.

**If I have difficulty getting started, what should I do?** Like many tasks, writing a short story is easier when you break it down into manageable steps. Some of them you need to do in order but sometimes you can jump around and do what seems easiest first. Ask yourself, "what would Hannah Tinti do?" Think about the graphics provided on the back of the One Teen Story Creative Writing Description Sheet. Look over your informal reading journal you kept while reading *The Good Thief* and let your own creative juices flow.

***Think about what you're doing....***

- ✓ This is an opportunity to experience what it feels like to write a short story and maybe even decide to submit it somewhere for publication
- ✓ This is a reading reflection project so you are being asked to use a specific theme (on redemption, compassion, finding an identity, living with a disability, or what it truly means to be a family that was brought out in *The Good Thief*)
- ✓ Your setting and time period for your short story is colonial Massachusetts between February 1692 and May 1693 when the witch hysteria overtook Salem
- ✓ Your story should have a teen(s) as characters and be about the teen experience
- ✓ Pick a genres. Your story can be a mystery, a coming of age story, a ghost story or whatever captures your imagination
- ✓ Make your story a of well-written young adult fiction piece of at least 1,500 words but not more than 4,000. Remember, if you decide to submit your completed story to *One Teen Story* or another appropriate publication after grading, there will be time to adapt your story to meet publishers guidelines

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