

The People's Friend

Fiction

BEFORE YOU START

THE "Friend" buys hundreds of short stories every year, and with a very distinctive, individual approach to both fiction and features, it is essential that before you start . . .

READ THE MAGAZINE AND STUDY THE MARKET.

1 "Friend" readers range in age from about thirty to well over eighty. They like being entertained — and dislike being depressed. They like realistic material, but not so realistic — with sex, violence, drugs, drink, etc — that they are frightened or saddened.

2 They still believe in the sanctity of marriage and the importance of the family.

3 Our readers like people — ordinary people, with problems they can sympathise with, and in situations they can relate to. They're optimistic — they like to see something good coming out of a situation, or the redeeming side of a character.

4 They're practical women — and men — with ordinary interests and hobbies. They're always willing to give a neighbour a helping hand and enjoy being with a group of friends.

5 Yes — they are traditionalist. And proud of it! So they like to see their values reflected in their "Friend". Many say that's exactly how they regard the magazine — as a friend.

So please, read "The People's Friend" for several weeks. Then, try to work out how the authors have achieved what we want. But don't just write a carbon copy of something already published. Try to be original and creative.

SHORT STORIES

OUR stories are 1200, 2000 and 3000 words long, although stories of up to 4000 words are welcome for our specials. Deeper, more emotional, stories tend to need more space than lighter ones.

And don't forget our famous 10,000 word crime thrillers!

Our readers like reading about people of any age. Don't fall into the trap of thinking we only use stories about grans and grandads, widows and widowers. Our readers also enjoy stories with up-to-date, young themes. And remember, romance isn't only for the young! There's always a place for the lighthearted and humorous, too.

"Modern" themes like divorce or single parent families must be treated sympathetically and tactfully. And we'd rarely show divorce happening "on stage" in a short story — or a serial.

We're always looking for good Christmas stories (as well as other seasonal material) but beware the wellworn themes! Be original and try to reflect the real spirit of Christmas.



So what don't the readers enjoy?

Well, they've made it clear they don't want to read depressing, or bitter, stories, or stories that shock or disgust or upset because of their graphic content. And avoid the story with a twist in the tale that misleads or cheats. Any twist has to be credible — and emotional.

Readers like to have a chuckle, or a lump in the throat, at the end of a story. But remember, they prefer to laugh *with* people rather than at them.

They like to know how a character feels, as well as what he, or she, is doing. Write from the heart as well as the head — so that the emotion of the situation comes across strongly. And the ending has to be satisfying.

We rarely use stories from the viewpoint of animals or inanimate objects.

In the author's byline we frequently describe our stories as tender . . . touching . . . moving . . . amusing . . . charming . . . All words with positive feelings behind them.

Your raw material is people. Our readers want to identify with your characters, believe in them, their problems and the situations. If they can't get close to a character, or that character does or says something unconvincing, they'll lose interest. Your job is to keep the reader reading. ■

Stories should be sent to: **People's Friend,
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peoplesfriend@dcthomson.co.uk**

**Payment
is on
acceptance**