HIDE AND SEEK:

A METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SHORT STORY ANTHOLOGY

by

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in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
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Abstract

This hybrid thesis is the companion to the short story anthology written for my creative project, *Hide & Seek*. In order to develop a guide to aid future editors in the short story anthology curation process, this essay examines the history of the short story since the 1900s and the current nature of middle grade literature. The final chapter is laid out as a step-by-step guide on building a short story anthology from concept development through final typesetting with an emphasis on the various stages of text editing and the responsibilities of a project editor.
Lay Summary

The goal of this work is to create an anthology of middle grade fiction short stories centered around the themes ‘hide’ and ‘seek’ by following the guidelines laid out by this hybrid piece in order to simultaneously provide a resource for future editors and serve as an opportunity to gather real-world experience in the field of editing.
Preface

This thesis is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, Kira Shelby Bakst, except for the excerpts from the stories *Edna Talks*, *Library of the Gods*, *Paved in Glass*, and *Simmie Mim*, which belong to their original authors Theresa Gillmore, Jessica Wood, Ren Maguire, and Arno Bohlmeijer respectively.
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And to my perfect parents: you have stood, walked, and run beside me every step of this topsy-turvy adventure, not to mention put up with me for all the years I've existed. I love you both with all my heart and then some. Y'all are the real MVPs.
Dedication

For my Gigi. It isn't what we originally planned, but I hope you like it.
Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Origins of Interest and Motivation Behind Study

Stories have existed for far longer than the written word. Creation myths, moral fables, ‘bedtime stories’, tales of how parents first met—real or imagined, exaggerated or understated, spoken or painted on cave walls, humans have always had and will always have stories to share with one another. Throughout human history there have been a few exceptional storytellers whose names have become known the world over; people like Toni Morrison, William Faulkner, Kit Pearson, and so many others whose ability to bring words to life borders on extraordinary. In centuries past it has been the author, perhaps with the input from friends and family, to write a story ready to be printed upon receipt by the publisher. However, many drafts it took to develop the story in full, they were written by the author and the author alone. Editors were employed to guarantee a piece complied with grammatical standards, or not employed at all. Only recently has the ‘editor’ as a role we know today come into being. Over the past few decades the profession of editor has developed from a simple job intended to guarantee that authors dotted their I’s and crossed their T’s into a career centered around cooperation with authors to develop highly polished stories. The editor is no longer an extraneous figure in the publication process; they are someone trained in the art of scrutinizing texts to offer feedback, suggestions, and commentary from a third-party perspective in order to tell a story that is the best possible version of itself.

The role of editor as co-conspirator in bringing about a new story is what initially interested me in this line of work, and what has kept me enthralled ever since. It is my belief that everyone living in the endless and ever-changing literary world has at least one work that brought them there; one work that so immeasurably changed their outlook on literature and
life that the world never looked quite the same again. It is also my belief that an editor's primary purpose is to help create those works. This dream of being able to help authors share their stories with those who need them (whether they know it or not) is what served as my initial inspiration. However, this hybrid thesis truly began to take shape when I began investigating the various age divisions included under the massive umbrella that is 'children's literature'.

From board books to young adult, every category of children's literature has its own unique characteristics, techniques, affordances and limitations, but the works that most captured my attention were those classified as 'middle grade'. In my own life, these were the books that changed my outlook on reading from being a chore into being my preferred leisure-time activity. Lesser-publicized series like Suzanne Collins’ *The Underland Chronicles*, perennial favorites like Rick Riordan’s *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* and classic teacher picks like S.E. Hinton’s *The Outsiders*: these stories about kids my age living lives I could only dream of served as the portal into literature from which I would never reemerge.

In her landmark article *Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors* Rudine Sims-Bishop said:

“Books are sometimes windows, offering views of worlds that may be real or imagined, familiar or strange...when lighting conditions are just right, however, a window can also be a mirror. Literature transforms the human experience and reflects it back to us, and in that reflection we can see our own lives and experiences as part of the larger human experience. Reading, then, becomes a means of self-affirmation, and readers often seek their mirrors in books,” (Bishop 1990).

In the original context, Bishop used this analogy to preface her call for widespread inclusivity across children's literature in both the characters that we see and the authors sharing their
stories. As a white, middle-class female I have the extreme fortune of being able to see some reflection of myself in any book I take off the shelf. Characters who look like me, characters who act like me, characters who think like me; I have never been short of literary role models. I am and always have been extremely lucky in this regard. I absolutely do not contest or deny Bishop’s claims. Increased diversity in children’s literature is not a goal, it is a necessity, and I cannot stress enough how important it is for every child to be able to see their reflection in the books they read. Seeing my reflection my own books had an undeniably positive effect on me growing up and this effect continues as I look back. There is no way to quantify how much these middle grade stories meant to me during my turbulent “tween” years when, throughout everything, the characters were growing up right beside me. The desire to create something that helps a child experiencing that universal, unavoidable turbulence—even just one child—is what cemented the final idea behind this study. To reach that one child, though, I would need to create a work accessible to everyone.

In 2019, author Kevin Sylvester spoke with six young men ranging from age thirteen to eighteen to discuss why boys tend to read less as they grow older. The interview, aptly titled ‘What do boys read? And why do they stop?’, points to three primary causes: lack of interest, lack of motivation, and lack of time. Max Schindler, 18, perfectly summarizes the situation: “To be honest, most of my buddies don’t read anything. They might read articles on stuff they find interesting, but not books. It’s a time thing. They’d rather watch Netflix. In our culture of instant gratification, you’ll choose what’s easiest and right in front of you,” (18). To try and counteract the inverse relationship between interest and time spent reading, Alex Reppin, 14, says that he is investing more time in reading short stories because “...that way I can still read but don’t have to read as much to get the whole story,” (18). Recent studies by Scholastic support these claims. The Kids and Family Reading Report (KFRR) is a national annual survey of “reading
attitudes and behaviors around reading books for fun," (Kids & Family Reading Report 7th Edition). Scholastic's United States division released its seventh installment of the study in 2019. In it, data reveals that there is a marked drop in reading frequency in children between the ages of eight and nine years old. Specifically, 57% of eight-year-olds reported that they read for fun five to seven days per week (the range used by Scholastic to describe ‘frequent readers’) compared to only 37% of nine-year-olds (Kids & Family Reading Report 7th Edition 2019, 11). Furthermore, Scholastic testifies that not only has this “decline by nine” been noted in every year since the first KFRR's release, data also shows that reading frequency continues to decline as children move through adolescence (6). Scholastic Canada released its first edition of the KFRR in 2017 and conveyed similar findings. Of readers aged six to eight, 50% of children reported being frequent readers; only 37% of nine- to eleven-year-olds and 24% of twelve-to fourteen-year-olds found themselves in the same category (Kids & Family Reading Report Canadian Edition 2017, 13). In relation to the lack of interest mentioned in Sylvester’s article, both the Canadian and United States editions of the KFRR show that almost 50% of children aged six to seventeen have difficulty finding books that they enjoy, and that infrequent readers (defined in both studies as those who read books for fun less than one day a week on average) have significantly more difficulty than frequent readers (Kids & Family Reading Report 7th Edition 2019, 26; Kids & Family Reading Report Canadian Edition 2017, 29). Finally, the United States 2019 KFRR revealed that quick-read formats such as comic books, graphic novels, and magazines are becoming more and more popular with readers aged eight and above (30). These statistics are mirrored by all other Scholastic branches that have completed KFRRs in recent years: Scholastic United Kingdom, Scholastic Australia, and Scholastic India.

The goal behind the creative portion I designed for this hybrid thesis was to aid reluctant and infrequent readers in finding books and stories that interest them, and in doing
so encourage to further explore the literary world. The idea for centering my thesis around the short story arose from a desire to address the issues examined in these studies. Though the exact definition of the short story is up for debate (its exact nature will be examined in depth in Chapter Two), it is undeniably a genre known for its limited length and ability to rapidly engage readers. The brevity of these works is undoubtedly appealing to readers who experience difficulty maintaining focus or interest in longer works, while the active and single plot of the traditional short story appeals to those looking for an enticing read about a special interest topic. The anthological format further suited the goals of the project by providing way to gather a variety of short stories in a single location, making it easier for readers to determine what type(s) of narratives they prefer. With knowledge about what sort of literature they enjoy, those readers would (hopefully) then be able to discover more books and thus increase the frequency that they read.

1.2 Research Focus and Questions

There is a common misconception amongst those outside of, and those new to, commercial publishing that the primary job of an editor is nitpicking the various manuscripts that make their way to an editor’s desk. On the contrary, industry veteran Peter Ginna describes the job as a much more elaborate series of responsibilities:

“...correcting and improving an author’s text is only part of what book editors do. It’s a big slice of the pie, but far from the whole pizza...editors have a special position...[they] are responsible for finding works to publish in the first place, and for steering each one through the serpentine pipeline of the publishing house into the marketplace, tending to the author’s needs (and psyche) along the way...” (2017, 2-3).
In order to provide insight into and experience (to an extent) the job demands of an editor in the modern trade publishing industry, my objective in completing this academic thesis is to answer the question: how does one create an anthology of middle-grade fiction short stories? To do so, my research is focused on three key questions:

1. What qualifies as a short story today, and how have those qualifications evolved over time?
2. What characteristics define middle-grade fiction as a unique genre, and how might those characteristics affect the shape of a standard short story anthology?
3. Assuming that the premise for an anthology has been approved by a managing editor, what would the curation process look like?

The results of this research will be used to compile a guide for any enterprising individual hoping to put together their own short story anthology for middle grade readers. The creative segment of this thesis will be a short story anthology of middle-grade fiction edited by me using the guide I lay out in the academic portion.

1.2.1 Limitations on Scope

Before even beginning this research, a clear distinction had to be made between a ‘short story’ and a ‘story that is short’. The latter is a narrative form that has existed for hundreds of thousands of years (Current-Garcia and Patrick 1974, 3). Spoken fables, parables, creation and other religious myths, fairy tales, folktales, sketches—though all can be said to be roots of modern short story form, this study considers them to be ‘stories which are short’ and will not be covered (DeMarinis 110; March-Russell 2009, 1-11; May 2002, 1-5; Shaw 1983, vii). Every one of these genres has its own fascinating history and deserves a much more in-depth examination than the purposes of this study call for. As such, to avoid diminishing the
importance of these forms in and of themselves, my analysis of the historical development of
the short story will begin with the nineteenth century, when the term first began to appear in
scholarship as the descriptor for a specific type of literature, rather than with its more ancient
origins (Current-Garcia 1974, 4; Drewery 2016, 135-151; March-Russel 2009, 32-42; May
2002, 6-8; Mitchell 2019; Shaw 1983).

Furthermore, my analyses will be specific to the principles and philosophies put forth by
figures involved with the American short story movement as this is where the bulk of study on
the standard short story has been done. As with the root forms of the short story, various
offshoots of the genre such as the Irish short story, Russian short story, and French short story
each deserve and require their own specialized studies. However, key contributions to the form
by foreign writers will be addressed. Reasons for the disproportionate amount of research
connecting the short story to the United States rather than anywhere else will be explored in
Chapter Two.

1.3 Significance of Study

There is no shortage of literature, formal or informal, about the short story. There are
literally countless genre studies dedicated to examining the landmark writers, works and
periods in the history of the short story. There is an equal if not greater amount of material
intended to teach others how to write a short story. In fact, the proliferation of how-to guides
about creating a successful short story in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries
played a major role in the evolution of the genre. However, in a review of existing literature I
found very few instances where these two categories were combined. Scholarship on the
history and form of the short story tends to focus solely on providing analyses of the
techniques and theories created by foundational short story authors such as Edgar Allen Poe,
Anton Chekov, and Guy de Maupassant, and by prominent contemporary writers like Katherine Mansfield, William Faulkner, and Virginia Woolf. These works look at the short story from a strictly theoretical standpoint, striving to give the short story the same sort of concrete definition that can be given to a novel or a play. Contrarily, the vast library of literature with titles akin to The Art and Craft of the Short Story (DeMarinis 2000) look at the short story from a strictly technical standpoint. In this category of work, the short story Research has shown that children age eight and above are experiencing increasing difficulty finding books that target their personal interests, and at the same time showing a growing preference for quick-read book formats (such as comic books, graphic novels, and magazines) and instant gratification activities (such as video games and video streaming) over lengthier books (KFRR Canadian Edition 2017, 15-21). The academic portion of this thesis will examine the characteristics of the short story and of middle grade literature to determine if the short story might be a possible solution to these phenomena.

1.4 Chapter Summary

In this chapter I laid out my motivations and presented the question I hope to answer by completing this study: how would one go about curating an anthology of middle grade fiction short stories? I then went over the three primary questions I used to guide my research: 1) how has the short story developed into its current form? 2) what characterizes middle grade literature?; and 3) what would the process look like for an editor curating a short story anthology? I explained the ways that I narrowed the scope of my studies in order to focus on the material most applicable to my topic. Finally, I identified the hole in current scholarship that I intend to fill.
Chapter Two will discuss the history of short stories—their roots and their development as a unique literary genre. I will then outline the key features and techniques that have come to define the modern short story. The resulting definition will serve as the basis for the works I include in my anthology. In Chapter Three I will provide a close analysis of middle grade literature and determine how well the short story, as I define it, suits the needs of middle grade readers. Chapter Four will be laid out as a step-by-step guide in which I go through the process of building a short story anthology from conception to typesetting. This academic portion of my hybrid thesis will conclude with a look at the differences between my original expectations and the actual process of curating an anthology of juvenile short stories, and suggestions for further study.
Chapter 2: A Brief History of the Short Story

2.1 Nineteenth Century Origins

It is widely, if not universally, accepted that the first attempt to distinguish the short story as a separate and unique literary genre was made by Edgar Allen Poe in his 1842 review of Nathaniel Hawthorne’s collection *Twice Told Tales*, published in 1837 (Barrett 2009, 7; Birns 2015, 20-21; Boddy 2010, 101; Cox 2016, 1-7; Current-Garcia and Patrick 1974, 1-2; Evans 2019, 227; Lane 2001, 58; March-Russell 2009, 32-42; May 2002, 107; Mitchell 2019, 4; Pong 2019, 76). Hawthorne and other writers, namely Washington Irving and Poe himself, had been writing what would come to be known as short stories for years, had all been categorizing their works under different names, commonly as either sketches, tales, or—most literally—brief narratives (Current-Garcia 1974, 3; DeMarinis 2000, 110). In his review Poe described the trait he believed made up the essence of this new literary form as the ‘unity of impression’:

“...the unity of effect or impression is a point of the greatest importance...this unity cannot be thoroughly preserved in productions whose perusal cannot be completed at one sitting...without unity of impression, the deepest effects [of the tale upon the soul] cannot be brought about...A poem too brief may produce a vivid, but never an intense or enduring impression...Extreme brevity will degenerate into epigrammatism; but the sin of extreme length is even more unpardonable...” (Poe 1842, para. 4).

All this was a verbose way of saying that a true short story cannot be too short, but more important is that it not be too long. Poe held that if the story cannot be read in one sitting then it has failed in its singular goal of leaving a lasting effect on the reader. He goes on to further explain his concept of unity by dividing it into two distinct and indispensable parts: the ‘totality’ of effect and the ‘preconceived effect’. Totality is the core of unity. It is described by
Poe as the “force” that affects the reader when they are able to submerge themselves completely in the tale and remain under its spell from beginning to end without interruption. Compared to the novel, which is described here as ‘objectionable’ because its length inherently allows for interruption at any time, “…in the brief tale...the author is enabled to carry out the fulness of his intention, be what it may. During the hour of perusal, the soul of the reader is at the writer’s control. There are no external or extrinsic influences—resulting from weariness or interruption...” (Poe 1842, para. 5). The other half of unity, the preconceived effect, relates more to the content of the piece. Poe stresses that in this type of narrative the author should be striving for a ‘certain unique or single effect’ to have on the reader. With this effect having been predetermined by the author, every word, sentence, space, and punctuation mark must contribute to creating that impression: “...in the whole composition there should be no word written, of which the tendency, direct or indirect, is not to the one pre-established design...” (Poe 1842, para. 6). With all that said, Poe may have been the first to characterize the genre but he was not the one who gave it its name. The term ‘short story’ comes from an 1885 essay by Brander Matthews in which he uses a capital S and a hyphen to “emphasize the distinction between the Short-story and the story which is merely short,” (Matthews 1974, 33-38). He goes on to second Poe's beliefs, claiming that “…a true Short-story...is the single effect, complete and self-contained...” (Matthews 1974, 33). For decades, the unity of impression remained the defining feature of the short story. However, for all the energy that Edgar Allen Poe and his supporters spent on separating the short story into its own genre of literature, there was one key aspect of narrative storytelling whose presence was never disputed: the plot.

Regardless of the particular effect an author was going for—Edgar Allen Poe built several of his stories around feelings of fear and suspense, exemplified in one of his most famous works, The Fall of the House of Usher—the ‘plot triangle’ remained a central element of
the short story (Boddy 2010, 7-8; Cox 2016, 1-27). Acclaimed early twentieth century author Sherwood Anderson rather brusquely blamed this phenomenon on the fact that “[there is] a general idea that in [early] American storytelling that a story must be built about...that absurd Anglo-Saxon notion that they must point a moral, uplift the people, make better citizens, etc...” (Anderson 1974, 70). In his defense, even a brief review of American literature pre-1880 shows that this is almost always the case. It stands to reason, then, that it was the influence of non-Anglo-Saxon authors that initiated a period of revitalization for the short story during the early 1900s. Equally responsible for the forthcoming literary developments, however, was the rapid industrialization and modernization of American society.

2.2 The ‘Formula’ Story and Commercialization – 1870s through 1920s

The decades between 1890 and 1920 are sometimes called the “Golden Age” of the short story (Cox 2010, 3; May 2002, 14). It was during this time that the short story became a genre dominated by American authors. Even to scholars of the time it was clear that the work of American short story authors was leagues ahead of those elsewhere in the world: “I am not sure that the Americans have not brought the short story nearer perfection in the all-round sense than almost any other people, and for reasons that may be simple and near at hand...The success of American magazines, which is nothing less than prodigious, is only commensurate with their excellence,” (Howells 1892, 131). Though the reasons Mr. Howells speaks of are inextricably interconnected, it is perhaps easiest to analyze each one separately before analyzing their combined effect.

2.2.1 Backdrop: The Second Industrial Revolution

Ironically, considering it is described today as a golden age of literature, the last thirty or so years of the nineteenth century in the United States is known as the “Gilded Age”. Much of
the economic and infrastructural growth that took place throughout the country went unsupervised and unregulated as industry moguls worked to bribe and blackmail officials at all levels of government. Able to get away with cutting corners and paying their workers next to nothing, and taking advantage of improved technology, railroading companies and a variety of other labor-intensive industries (notably textiles and coal) sped up production, lowered costs, and provided jobs. Combined, these elements paved the way for the country to shift from an agrarian society into an industrial one. Inventions like the internal combustion engine, telegraph, telephone and electricity made travel and communication faster than ever before. Life in America came to revolve around speed, and the quickly consumable short story was the perfect form of entertainment to suit this lifestyle.

The publishing industry was not immune to this new lust for speed: “the spread of railways, cheaper postage and paper, advances in printing...and increased literacy were among the many factors that led to the proliferation of publications...” (Boddy 2016, 9). With it so relatively inexpensive to begin a printing business of one’s own the number of local presses skyrocketed across the country, particularly in the rapidly growing cities of the Northeast and Midwest. However, there was some consternation regarding what exactly these presses could profitably print. Up to this point, writing a novel in America, though it had been done, was not an easy or fruitful career path. With no international copyright law to protect foreign authors until 1891, it was far safer for printers to pirate English novels they knew would sell rather than to place their bets on new American novelists (Boddy 2016, 6; U.S Copyright Office). As a result, magazines featuring the formulaic short story and backed by advertising revenue from local and national businesses became a dominant literary form.
2.2.2 The Perfect Formula

So perfectly did the short story fit into this new era of American life that it was called the "blood kinsman of the joy-ride...the supreme art-form of those who believe in the philosophy of quick results," (Cory 1974, 60). With readers eagerly searching for what author Julia Kamysz Lane calls ‘cheap entertainment’ in her 2001 article for Book magazine, magazine editors were keen on collecting as much content as they could as quickly as possible (58). The short story, with its focus on enthralling the reader using a minimal amount of space, was the perfect solution. Only a few decades earlier, Poe had laid out his formula for a great short story. He provided length restrictions (one to two hours reading time), content restrictions (stories must impact the reader emotionally, psychologically or otherwise to leave a lasting impression), and plot restrictions (stories must be complete pieces ending in total closure with all loose ties brought together) that could easily be adapted for whatever style, subject matter and readership an editor was looking for. With the opportunity to be paid (however little) for essentially following directions, aspiring writers were quick to answer editors’ calls. Competition amongst these would-be authors drove “them to greater and greater artistic effort,” (Current-Garcia 1974, 4). Simultaneously, because there were so many magazines available for buyers to choose from, editors became more and more exacting about the shape of the short stories they were willing to accept. Besides maintaining consistency in the type of stories they offered (i.e. ‘romance, crime, courtship, the Horatio Alger rags-to-riches tale, satire’) (Boddy 2016,10), magazines gravitated to providing what most casual readers wanted (and thus what was most profitable): “…the kind of story most in demand was fast-paced and action-centered, one which moved rapidly to a sharp climax and exploded in a ‘surprise’ ending…” (Current-Garcia and Patrick 1974, 45). The magazine industry’s reliance on stable content led readers to anticipate and expect certain features in the short stories they read:
romance stories should end with a happily ever after; crime stories should end with the criminal in custody—even readers of suspense stories knew to expect some sort of dramatic plot-twist, whatever it might be. This has remained a defining feature of genre fiction through today. Magazine editors were searching for short stories that would sell, not ones that tested boundaries—those pieces would not come into fashion until later.

Hoping to capitalize on this new group of authors looking to earn a quick buck by writing short fiction, colleges and correspondence schools published dozens of handbooks and manuals to teach and advise both burgeoning and professional writers about the craft of the short story (Current-Garcia and Patrick 1974, 45). These guidebooks laid out every step of the short story writing process, from coming up with an idea and developing characters to marketing and selling completed works. The growth of this ‘how-to write’ book market further promoted commercial magazine culture by encouraging the use of a very specific formula while writing, which led to an even further saturated short story market, increased profits for the industry and so on in a seemingly never-ending cycle. Both markets continued to flourish well into the 1930s, but by the early years of the twentieth century, literary critics were already grumbling that the focus placed on a short story’s appeal to consumers exceeded the focus being placed on literary merit. In a letter written to his sister, who wrote under the penname E.M. Sh., in 1895, Anton Chekov described the phenomenon thusly: “You have a defect and a very serious one. In my opinion it is this: you do not polish your things, and hence they seem frequently to be florid and overloaded. Your works lack the compactness that makes short thinks alive. There is skill in your stories; there is talent, literary sense, but very little art,” (Chekov 1974, 23; Chekov 2010, 146). These words, and the works of Mr. Chekov himself, would help set the tone for the next major stage in the short story’s development.
2.3 Foreign Influences – Late 1880s through 1940s

By the late nineteenth-century, American authors had become dependent on the profitable ‘formula’ story first proposed by Edgar Allen Poe decades prior. In Europe and Russia, however, Poe’s ideas had very little influence. In France, Gustave Flaubert molded the short story into a form best suited to his own preferences. Where Poe relied on depicting the drama of a single event as it led to a fantastic finish, Flaubert used the short story as a vessel to tie together multiple vignettes of very ordinary characters going about their regular, ordinary lives. Mario Praz describes Flaubert’s style in the simplest way possible: “...‘lacking heroes and heroines, attention becomes concentrated on the details of common life, and these aspects of life are closely studied; the most ordinary things, by...being looked at with intensity, acquire an important significance, and intimate beauty of their own, more profound for the very reason that it is muted,’” (Shaw 1983, 60-61). Edgar Allen Poe used his short stories to provide large-format snapshots of a single event and encouraged other short story authors to do the same. Flaubert instead chose to use his short stories as a sort of flipbook of small-format snapshots to share the story of a character’s life, emotions and actions over time. These stylistic techniques had a profound impact on one of Flaubert’s contemporaries, Guy de Maupassant, whom widely respected short story scholar Charles May claimed to be the ‘most important nineteenth-century short story writer’ (May 2002, 9).

Over the course of his life Maupassant penned over three hundred works, the majority of which were short stories (May 2002, 9; Turnell 2019). Just as it happens with many other prolific authors, certain subjects and techniques became staples of his work (Shaw 1983, 19). Under the tutelage of Flaubert, Maupassant developed a preference for writing about everyday life in realistic terms (Shaw 1983, 58). Like Poe, Maupassant became known for his dramatic
flair and impressive surprise endings (May 2002, 9; Shaw 1983 58). His style uniquely melded these two ideologies into one that brought Poe’s high drama into Flaubert’s real life through deep introspection by his characters. It should be noted that it was during the last two or so decades of the 19th century that psychology became an accepted science. The studies of early psychologists like Sigmund Freud and Wilhelm Wundt into the subconscious processes of the human mind were revolutionary, and authors eagerly applied its theories to their own characters. Russian author Anton Chekov is famous for his use of psychology as major element in his short stories. However, it was his introduction of the ‘plotless’ short story to the United States that truly reinvigorated the field.

When translations of Chekov's works began appearing in America in the last decade of the nineteenth century, their differences from the typical American short story were readily apparent (May 2002, 51). For decades, American editors and authors had relied on a formula that produced cleanly packaged short stories—ones that exemplified the ‘unity of impression’—in order to appeal to the readers who would buy their magazines. Foreign writers around the world were not bound by such restrictions and used the short story as a canvas to experiment with various techniques, styles and forms to their heart’s content. Anton Chekov’s short stories became an object of study for many literary critics because of how very different they were from the American style of the time. Henry Seidel Canby, a graduate of and professor at Yale University, summarized the general sentiment of literary critics when he used the word “freedom” to describe Chekov’s method of storytelling (Canby 1974, 55). Contrary to the stories so popular in American magazines, Chekov’s tales had no ending to rush towards or feeling to impress upon readers. In the same essay from 1915, Canby remarks that, “no one seems to have said to Chekov, 'Your stories must move, move, move.' Sometimes, indeed, he pauses outright, as life pauses; sometimes he seems to turn aside, as life turns aside before its
progress is resumed,” (Canby 1974, 55). Alongside many French authors, Russian short stories tended to focus on making the reality that surrounds humanity entertaining rather than on weaving tales by altering reality. This is not at all to say that those newly translated works were not enjoyed by the average reader in the United States—in fact, it was quite the opposite.

Editors were surprised how well consumers responded to Chekov’s meandering, introspective stories. Even more succinct than the short stories they were used to, Chekov’s pieces revolved around characters engaging in self-reflection for its own sake. There were no finales to build up to or loose ends to tie; his stories left readers with no definite ending, forcing them to fill in the story’s blanks with their own thoughts and reactions. Scholars and critics who had just recently been so keen on deriding the short story as something doomed to forever be a ‘popular’ form became intrigued by this new methodology. If the short story was not bound by the laws of plot—if it was not something to be fed to readers, but instead created in cooperation with readers—what could the form become? Faced with these questions, the early decades of the twentieth century became a battleground for the short story. Bitter arguments arose about which type of short story, ‘literary’ or ‘formula’, truly defined the genre, but it would take some time before the more scholarly-minded factions came together to create their own solid definition of the form to pit against the reigning formula story.

2.4 Early Twentieth Century Additions – Realism, Artistry, and the Anthology

Story collections have existed for centuries, ranging in content from the medieval hijinks of Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales (c. late fourteenth century) to the terror inducing tales of Stephen King’s Night Shift (1978). In terms of developing a definition for the short story as a genre of literature, however, there were a few particular collections that turned heads and started discussions. One of these was American author Sherwood Anderson’s Winesburg, Ohio,
published in 1919. An epitome of realism, the collection unites its stories with a shared setting: the small, fictional, yet quintessentially American town of Winesburg, Ohio. Each chapter paints a very sincere picture of rural American life in the early twentieth century through the eyes of various townspeople, and no chapter is left with a perfectly bookended ending. Contrary to other collections of the time, the pieces written for *Winesburg, Ohio*, even though the first few had originally been published separately in magazines, “…were conceived as complimentary parts of a whole, centered in the background of a single community…” (Phillips 1951, 18). Each story could be read, and enjoyed, as a standalone work, but they also could—and were arguably meant to be—read and considered as one unit. This technique was not necessarily new, Irish author James Joyce achieved great fame by using this type of stitched-together style in his 1914 collection *Dubliners*, but critics were divided on their opinions of its application to the short story. Tracing the growth of a character over an extended period had hitherto been a territory claimed by longer forms of literature such as the novel and the epic. The short story had always been used to analyze a single pivotal moment, so what did it mean for the form if they were to turn into works that painted those moments as just that—moments, with pasts, presents, and futures that exceeded the beginning and end of the story? Instead of moving the stories along with events, Anderson builds upon the feelings of his narrators as they move towards an epiphany in what Valerie Shaw calls an “epiphanic narrative”, a style that became beloved by literary critics (199-200). In such epiphanic narratives there are, critically speaking, no definite plot points because no action occurs. Instead of simply telling a story, the short story became a vehicle for analyzing and commenting on human nature, especially on how one's innermost feelings and desires were being affected by the growth of materialism and individualism that resulted from the post-World War I economic boom. Shaw summarizes her discussion on the topic with a statement that cannot be further simplified:
“The technique Anderson uses here is similar to that used by Chekov and Joyce. For modern short story writers, intangible spiritual desires and feelings are contaminated by the material, but both the characters in these stories and their authors must accept the fact that they have only the material with which to communicate desires and feelings. The task of finding concrete ways to communicate emotional states becomes the central problem for most short story writers in the twentieth century,” (61).

As with many other artforms during this chaotic time in history, literature became a field dominated by works that served as commentary on the human condition. As literacy and the demand for ‘cheap entertainment’ increased, so too did the chasm between those who saw the short story as just another format and those who saw it as a potential battleground for authors, critics, and scholars to determine the next exemplary works of high literature. The magazine, save for a prestigious few geared towards more sophisticated audiences, proved to be a casualty in this struggle. In its place, the anthology rose as the short story’s primary vessel.

The charge against the ‘magazine-able’ short story was led by a handful of big-name editors whose tastes redefined the nature of the genre (Boddy 2010, 10). This short history will focus on the most vocal of these individuals, many, if not all, of whose contributions can still be seen in modern day discourse. In what scholar Kasia Boddy calls a ‘rescue mission’, Edward O’Brien was one of the first men to speak out against the commercial formula story, and in 1914 he started to gather what he saw as the year’s best short stories into an annual anthology as a way to protest against popular magazine fiction(10-11). However, it can be argued that in his crusade O’Brien ended up developing just another formula for the short story to be molded around, and that all of the subsequent competing ‘best of’ anthologies that cropped up over the following decades effectively did the same. For O’Brien, the best short stories were those
written with the artistry of a lyrical poem around a core of quintessential 'American-ness' (Boddy 2010, 10-13). His selected works showed a perfect combination of Poe's calls for brevity and intense emotion, of Chekov's idea that a short story does not necessarily need a 'story', and of the overwhelming patriotism that took over the United States following its “win" in World War I. Tying these three together and taking into account humanity's newfound love for psychology, Kasia Boddy summarizes O'Brien's new canon of classic short stories using his own words: “...[the best short stories] rendered with the utmost economy of means the inarticulate thoughts and emotions of the little man in America,” (13). Not all new definitions were so clearly spelled out. Editors of the rising intellectual magazine, Smart Set, chose short stories based on their “appeal to the civilized minority who preferred satirical wit and the occasional foreign author to sentiment and the surprise ending,” (Boddy 2010, 10). Regardless of which camp one fell into, though, it was accepted that an essential element of the short story was ‘completeness’. Whether it was plotted or plotless, literary or commercial, a short story must end in such a way that readers require no additional information. A short story must always leave its readers satisfied (DeMarinis 2000, 96).

2.5 Experimenting with Experimentation – The Mid-Twentieth Century Short Story

Enacted soon after the end of World War II, America’s G.I Bill provided free university education for veterans. As a direct result, the number of people attending post-secondary institutions skyrocketed. With more students and more funds to work with, colleges began a second era of reformation for their creative writing departments. This new flood of educated would-be authors led professors to create outlets to showcase their students’ work (and to prove their own worth as professors to tenure committees). This began another magazine revolution, only these innovative literary magazines generally had much smaller circulations
than the commercial magazines that came before them. Writers, professional and amateur alike, could no longer hope or expect to earn a living solely by selling their short stories, and because it no longer guaranteed financial security the short story transformed into a mode used by those who wrote purely for the love of the craft. In essence: there was no longer a reason to keep following anyone’s rules. The short story looped back to its beginnings and became a united genre only in terms of length. Individual authors built their own canonical definitions based on their interpretations of the works and the authors that preceded and inspired them (Clark Mitchell 2019). It follows, then, that there is no group more suited to define the short story than the authors who write them, but to go through the individual opinions and theories of the short story authors of this period would be a herculean task unfeasible for this study. The sheer volume of possible definitions does, however, in and of itself serve as a base for a theory that summarizes the last fifty years of short story criticism: “There are no techniques, no sets of actions, no end effects that automatically qualify for short story status,” (Clark Mitchell 2019, 7). In this statement, Lee Clark Mitchell, backed by scholars Suzanne Ferguson and Norman Friedman among others, posits that the short story has entered a developmental period similar to the American wild west: anything goes as long as there is “some formal or artistic reason for doing so” (Friedman 1989, 23).

2.6 In This Study

Studies on the short story as a form are ongoing, and while it is possible to note similarities in format across the board a distinct link has yet to be found, especially when taking into account the ever-growing divide between ‘commercial’ short stories and ‘literary’ short stories. The purpose behind this brief overview of the history of the short story (with a strong emphasis on its development in the United States) was to establish background
knowledge about the genre. That said: it is important to stress that the following definition is intended to define the short story solely in relation to this project. After much deliberation, it was decided that a work qualified as a short story if it: 1) was a work of fiction; 2) could be read in one sitting by the target audience; 3) was written with the primary intention of entertaining the reader and actively engaged the reader from beginning to end; 4) upon ending, left the reader with all information required to comprehend the events of the story; and 5) maintained a traceable plot from beginning to end. So long as a piece met these requirements it was accepted for consideration for inclusion in the anthology conceived for the creative portion of this thesis. More exacting qualifications will be discussed in Chapter Four.

2.7 Chapter Summary

In this chapter the short story as a genre of literature was examined from a historical perspective. However, the history and development studied was limited to that which occurred in the United States. This was done to narrow the field of research to a manageable size, and because the maturation of the short story is intricately connected to the growth of the United States. As a result, the ‘short story’ most commonly refers to a genre of work either written by American authors or that impressively impacted the work of American authors. Short stories written outside of the United States are typically categorized first by their country of origin and second as a short story, such as with Russian short stories, French short stories, Irish short stories, and Canadian short stories. These groups, though related under the umbrella term ‘short story’, each have their own unique characteristics, and attempting to include the characteristics of every country’s short story is neither feasible nor necessary for the purposes of this study. The chapter was organized into sections based on the major periods of development experienced by the short story as a genre beginning with its origins in the
nineteenth century and continuing through the still-ongoing experimental era that started in the last quarter of the twentieth century. Finally, the chapter was concluded with the presentation of the concrete definition that will be used to classify the works included in this study as short stories.
Chapter 3: Middle Grade Literature

3.1 Defining Middle Grade

The ‘middle’ is not just a hypothetical point in space or moment in time. It is a mood, a gut feeling, and a frame of mind. It is an expression relating how far one has come to the distance one still has to go, regardless of whether that distance is physical, temporal, psychological, or emotional. It makes sense that middle grade literature often contains themes relating to this sense of uncertainty, especially considering its intended readership is experiencing those feelings in real time. But what exactly is middle grade literature, and just who exactly is its audience? Like the short story, the edges of these groups are often blurry.

Largely speaking, publishers, librarians and teachers agree that the audience for middle grade literature is children aged eight to twelve years old (Backes 2004; Black 2019, 46; Birdsall 2003, 28; Cart 2019, 41; Clark and Phillips 2020, 96-7; Forrester 2016, 13; Kole 2015, 54; Maughan 2018, 29; Siscoe 2017, 177). Critic Michael Cart believes that the genre began to appear in the 1970s with what he calls the ‘rise of the middle-school movement’ (Carte 2019, 14). He asserts that increased focus on the ‘developmental needs’ of children not quite at the young adult (YA) stage but old enough to decide they do not want to be called a child—that is, those in the middle—is what brought about the need for literature designed for that group specifically. His argument is perfectly sound: a similar phenomenon is what brought the first YA books to market just a few decades prior. As it matured into the genre it is today, middle grade literature, particularly fiction, has become defined more by its content than by the age label on its cover. The remainder of this chapter will pertain specifically to middle grade fiction because the number of overarching similarities in theme and style are, despite the incredible variety of
sub-genres, far greater than those found in middle grade nonfiction, and are therefore easier to generalize and provide concrete examples for.

The most important characteristic of middle grade fiction is the age of its cast of characters. To be categorized as middle grade, the story must have a protagonist the same age as or slightly older than the intended audience (Backes 2004). The reason for this is simple: readers of all ages invariably desire to engage with characters experiencing the same trials and tribulations that they are. In reading about people that are reflections of themselves, readers are easily able to jump into the story and go along for the ride regardless of whether or not they are solving a mystery, going on an adventure to save the world, or just trying to outsmart the school bully. Remember in elementary school when the middle schooler living down the street was the coolest person you knew? The same goes for characters older than the reader in their books—they become role models, examples of the exciting possibilities the next few years will bring. After all, what ten-year-old reading *Harry Potter* for the first time does not secretly spend the year hoping their letter from Hogwarts will arrive on their eleventh birthday?

The second defining characteristic of middle grade fiction is its use of certain themes. Historical fiction, science fiction, mystery, realism, adventure, fantasy: every type of story is possible under the umbrella of ‘middle grade’, but there will always be similar underlying topics, ideas, and questions. At their most general, these subjects can be classified under headings of ‘confusion’ or ‘conflict’ (Kole 2015). The life of a tween is a period marked by changes both internally and externally (Backes 2004; Birdsall 2013; Faust, Ennis, and Hodge 2014; Kole 2015; Maughan 2018). All successful middle grade fiction mirrors those sorts of experiences. Mary Kole describes some of the most common struggles of the ‘tween-age’ (eight to twelve) years:
“You want to be loyal to your family, but you also start to crave independence from them. You want to define yourself as an individual, but you also want to fit in with friends and social groups at school. You feel that pull to go [italics in original]—grow up, make big choices, be unique—but also to stay [italics in original]—be a kid, be safe, have things decided for you...During this time, you start to make tough choices and wrong choices, and pay the consequences of your actions and decisions...Gone is the innocent freedom of being a kid. In its place is the awkward feeling that they’re being watched and judged and doing everything wrong...” (54).

These words echo a 2004 article entitled *Know Your Young Audiences* by author and publisher Laura Backes. In it, Backes tracks the common middle grade themes of identity building and belonging across five very different middle grade titles. Despite differences in characters and storylines, each book features a protagonist “…searching for their own identity, dreaming of acceptance by their peers or arguing with their parents...[longing] for the safety net of supportive family and friends” (Backes 2004). In each of the five stories reviewed the characters face their own personal obstacles and triumph in the end. This ‘end on a high note’ type of conclusion is the standard for middle grade novels. During a period of their lives where everything is up in the air, this genre is designed to provide readers with a sense of hope, or at the very least anticipation, for the future. This even applies to serial books that end in frustrating cliffhangers: the installation may end in the middle of a conflict, but in doing so they encourage readers to look forward to finding out what will happen next. Middle grade literature is all about making it to the other side and growing up along the way. The tween-age years are a period of life full of changes—some positive, some negative—meant to one learn more about and discover new parts of oneself. In middle grade literature, “hope is essential...” (Siscoe 2017, 186).
3.2 Current Trends

Just as with every other part of life, fads come and go in the world of literature. Today, the most popular sub-types of middle-grade books are those that feature diverse casts and those that include multi-modal elements (Maughan 2018, 39-45; Maughan 2019; Reid and Serafini 2018, 32; Thomas 2018, 14). The former has been a steadily growing feature of the genre for decades. Multi-modal elements, specifically an increase in illustrations and graphics, entered the scene more recently but have quickly become one of the major qualities sought out by editors and publishers when it comes to acquiring new content.

For middle grade books, the name of the game has become representation. The face of the classroom is no longer the homogenous white, middle-class slate it once was (Bishop 1990, 1; Forrester 2016, 13; Johnson, Koss and Martinez 2018, 570-571; Thomas 2018, 14; Tschida, Ryan and Ticknor 2014, 29), and publishers are keen taking advantage of the zeitgeist by releasing content that reflects this new world. Groups that have a long history of being pushed to the sidelines (and who unfortunately still face those oppressive forces in many instances) are now being celebrated. In a genre created for children who are starting to find their place and make their way in the world, this wave of inclusivity is infinitely important. Characters of color, characters with physical differences, neurodivergent characters, characters with disabilities, and LGBT+ characters are finally being given leading roles, and in doing so are not only creating mirrors but opening windows and sliding glass doors. Strong writing and gripping storylines remain a key ingredient for success according to interviews with both middle grade readers and authors (Birdsall 2013; Maughan 2018, 38-39; Sylvester 2019), but works that pair those characteristics with explicit representation of diverse peoples are the ones that find themselves shooting to the top of best-sellers lists.
Multimodality in books is not anything new: picture books, touch-and-feel books, and pop-up books, among many others, have been enjoyed by young children for over a century. However, only in the most recent decade or so have multimodal elements been more thoroughly incorporated into works for older readers. In a 2018 study of the middle-grade multimodal novel, researchers Stephanie Reid and Frank Serafini lay out three different groups in which a multimodal novel might find itself. The first is ‘word-dominant’ texts in which images ‘enhance…and amplify the meaning’ of surrounding words but could not carry the story alone, and whose absence would not detract from a reader’s comprehension of the narrative (Reid and Serafini 36). The second is made up of ‘interdependent’ texts in which imagery and words must be taken together in order to create the ‘complete narrative’—these are works where neither text nor image can stand alone and still carry the same meaning (38). Their final category can be described as ‘scrapbook’ texts where the story is told exclusively through images. In scrapbook texts, text is almost exclusively seen as an element of the imagery such as in a screenshot of a website or email, words on a notebook page, or a newspaper clipping (39). Regardless of category, multimodal books tie image and text together to create, expand on and emphasize information where a standard format text would exclusively use text with no visual element.

In what Publisher’s Weekly contributing editor calls ‘the wake of the Wimpy Kid’ (a series of scrapbook texts first published in 2007), multimodal format books have become a favorite amongst middle grade readers over the past ten years (Alverson 2018; Maughan 2018, 39-40; Maughan 2019, 24; Maughan 2020; Reid and Serafini 2018; Sylvester 2019, 18-19). Data from within the publishing industry reflects this positive trend. Publisher Penguin Random House has on their website a function that enables viewers to go through their most recent publications for a particular age group across all of their imprints. As of April 17 2020, the
publisher listed 383 works under the tag ‘middle grade’, with the earliest published on October 22 2019 and the most recent published on April 17 2020 (Penguin Random House). Of those, 115 were nonfiction titles, and a vast majority contained significant percentages of illustrated or graphic content. Of the remaining 269 fiction titles, over half (139) contained significant percentages of multimodal content, with 54% of those titles specifically tagged as ‘graphic novel’ or ‘illustrated novel’. Numbers do not lie: multimodality is undeniably on the up-and-up in middle grade literature. However, the same cannot be said for the anthology.

### 3.3 Short Stories and the Anthology in the Middle Grades

The short story anthology has taken over the young adult (YA) literature scene the past few years (Jensen 2019; Jensen 2020). Many of these anthologies have come about because of the increased push for representation in children’s literature by organizations such as We Need Diverse Books and the Cooperative Children’s Book Center. The anthology is well-suited for this sort of movement because it is, by definition, a collection of different voices. As such, just as is true with people, there is no end to the variety of anthologies that can, do, and will come to exist. They can explore controversial topics like diversity within diversity, explored in *Black Enough: Stories of Being Black and Young in America* edited by Ibi Zoboi, or mental health, as in *Don’t Call Me Crazy* edited by Kelly Jensen (Jensen 2018). They can be as whimsical as *Zombies vs. Unicorns* edited by Holly Black and Justine Larbalestier, unnerving as *Grim* edited by Christine Johnson, as heartfelt like *Chicken Soup for the Teenage Soul* by Jack Canfield, Mark Victor Hansen and Kimberly Kirberger, or any other combination of feelings you can imagine. For any given theme, topic, or general idea there is almost certainly a YA anthology that covers it. Despite this accessibility, the anthology has not yet made inroads into popular middle grade literature.
It seems logical that short stories like those described above would interest any age group, but somehow this does not seem to be the case. According to the Penguin Random House webpage referenced earlier, out of the 383 middle grade books published between late-October 2019 and mid-April 2020 there was only one work classified as an anthology (Penguin Random House). Publisher’s Weekly began to release a list of its editors’ top 50 favorite children’s books of the year in 2016. Since its inception, only once has a middle grade anthology made it on the list (Publishers Weekly 2016; 2017; 2018; 2019). The Vancouver Public Library (VPL) is considered one of the best public library systems in the world (LA Times; Vancouver Sun; The Straight), yet a search through its extensive catalogue for works tagged as “short story”, “anthology”, and “children” between the years 2000 and 2020 yields only 18 unique titles. Furthermore, closer examination showed that four of those titles had been mislabeled, bringing the total number of middle grade anthologies (that have been published within the past 20 years) held by the esteemed VPL to a dismal 14. There are two possible explanations for this dearth in content. The first is that recently published middle grade short stories are simply not as plentiful as their YA counterparts. Lists of the “Top Short Stories for Middle Schoolers” cultivated by parents, teachers, and librarians bountiful, and they all primarily feature works from the early- to mid-twentieth century (Allen 2020; AmericanLiterature.com; Read Me A Story, Ink; Waters 2018; We Are Teachers 2019). Some of the more frequently cited authors are Edgar Allen Poe, Washington Irving, Gary Soto, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Jack London, H.G. Wells, Rudyard Kipling, and O. Henry. Excepting Gary Soto, each one of these authors was born in the nineteenth century. These individuals did not just write short stories but were active figures in defining the genre in the first place. The second possible explanation is that lists of middle grade anthologies or collections tend to treat the two as a single category despite the distinct difference between them: collections have a single author, anthologies have several.
This lack of distinction can make it difficult for middle grade anthologies to stand out as a unique subgroup of literature in the same way that YA anthologies have done. Having said all this, not all hope is lost.

A number of middle grade short story anthologies have found their way into the limelight. In an episode of her podcast “Books Between”, fifth grade teacher Corinna Allen names a few: *Funny Girl: Funniest. Stories. Ever.* edited by Betsy Bird (2017), *Flying Lessons and Other Stories* edited by Ellen Oh (2001, re-released 2017), the *Guys Read* series edited by Jon Scieszka, the *Explorer* series edited by Kazu Kibuishi, and *Because of Shoe and Other Dog Stories* edited by Ann M. Martin (2012) (Allen 2017). The BookTrust, an charitable organization based in the United Kingdom whose goal is to provide books, resources and support for children, has a page on their website recommending middle grade short story collections and anthologies that clearly distinguishes between the two groups, and features several books that are not commonly mentioned by other sources, such as *Make More Noise!* edited by the publisher Nosy Crow (2018), *Quest* edited by Daniel Hahn (2017), and *Doctor Who: 11 Doctors, 11 Stories* published by Puffin Books in 2015. The moral of the story: middle grade short story anthologies have historically not been given the attention they deserve, but authors, editors and publishers are not giving up on them yet.

3.4: Chapter Summary

In this chapter I looked at some of the defining characteristics of middle grade literature: its target audience, typical themes, plots, and endings, and current trends. In the second section, I briefly analyzed the most popular trends in middle grade literature today, diversity and multimodality. The final section acknowledged the surprising lack of recently published middle grade short story anthologies and provided some possible examples for why
this shortage exists. Using information gathered over the course of the study on the nature of short stories and middle grade literature, the next chapter examines the process of creating a middle grade short story anthology from start to finish.
Chapter 4: Step by Step: How to Curate an Anthology

4.1 Introduction

Several how-to guides on curating a general anthology can be found by performing a quick Internet search. However, those that I unearthed while determining my methodology for this hybrid thesis provide primarily surface-level step-by-step instructions for individuals preparing an anthology for immediate publication. These guides are typically formatted as informal blog posts listing the basic stages of development in chronological order with little if any attention paid to the finer details within each step. They often begin with a brief definition of an anthology and then rapidly move through the main steps of creating one: decide on a theme, reach out to authors, negotiate contracts with said authors, market the project to publishers, edit, and promote the anthology leading up to publication. Nowhere in these guides is there any specific advice or instruction regarding the process of developing actual content.

The purpose of this chapter is to contribute to those existing guides by expressly outlining the process of building a short story anthology from the perspective of an editor. As opposed to current literature, the step-by-step guide that follows provides a closer look at ways to develop restrictions for participating short stories to follow, narrow down the submission pool, edit, and typeset completed pieces. To facilitate use with existing resources, this chapter is written in a similarly informal language style.

4.2 Setting Boundaries

There may be themes or ideas commonly used by editors putting together an anthology, but the truth is that no two anthologies are the same. Every anthology is one-of-a-kind, whether it is yet another anthology of scary stories or the world’s first look at life in the rainforest told from the perspectives of various species of snake that live there. An anthology is
made unique by the choices its editor makes, and the first of those choices comes before any writing is actually done. The editor must define exactly what they are looking for—their intended audience, what type of anthology it will be, how many works will be included, how long the included works should be, how works will be selected, what genre the works will be or whether the anthology will represent one genre exclusively, and how the works will be tied together. To create the anthology that makes up the creative portion of this hybrid thesis, the first questions I answered were the who, what, and how of it. I determined my audience, my content, and my uniting factor: middle grade short stories with themes about hiding, seeking or both. Using these answers, the next step is developing the parameters for authors to follow while writing.

Before finding work to put in anthology you need to know exactly what you are looking for. This starts with clearing up any ambiguity related to content and intended audience. The short story is not a clear-cut form with a widely accepted set of rules. This meant that, as editor, I needed to define exactly what a short story would be for this project. Through research on the genre’s origins, developments, major authors and biggest criticisms, I determined that, for the purposes of this endeavor, a work classified as a short story if: 1) it is between 1000 and 8000 words in length; 2) is written with the primary intention of entertaining the reader; 3) actively engages the reader from beginning to end; 4) the story can effectively serve as a standalone piece (the reader does not need any prior knowledge to understand the narrative); 5) any conflicts presented by the narrative are resolved by the conclusion of the story; 6) upon ending, leaves the reader with all information required to comprehend the events of the story; and 6) maintains a plot from beginning to end. By defining your audience, you provide yourself with even more criteria for selection. In my case, a middle grade readership determined the sort of content that is acceptable and what is not. For this anthology, a short story classified as middle
grade if: 1) its content is appropriate for children aged eight to twelve (no excessively violent, sexual, or otherwise ‘adult’ content); 2) it involves underlying themes typical of middle grade literature such as belonging, identity and discovery; and 3) meets and does not exceed the reading comprehension level of an average reader between the ages of eight to twelve. With the ‘what’ and ‘who’ restrictions set, the only remaining question before you can start to gather submissions is how to unite the anthology into a cohesive unit.

The engaging aspect about a short story anthology is that the possibilities are endless. The chains that bind the included works can be made of literally anything. Maybe all of the authors involved in the project belong to a single group of people; maybe every story is about an animal; maybe the stories share a common setting like the American Wild West or genre like science fiction; maybe each work is written in second-person perspective— with short story anthologies the sky is the limit. Find what you are passionate about and start there: what sort of stories did you enjoy as a child? What stories did you wish for? Keeping in mind the restrictions set by having a middle grade audience, I decided that the works in my anthology would be related by a common theme: the relationship between the seemingly disparate concepts of ‘hide’ and ‘seek’. Children in the middle grade reading group are just beginning to situate themselves in the world around them. The end of elementary school through the beginning of high school is a period marked by the realization that, by existing, you are being perceived by others, and deciding how exactly you want to deal with that fact. Some people choose to blend into the herd— to hide part of themselves— to fit in and remain below the radar; others choose to embrace their interests— to search for themselves— with no thought to how their peers might act. Often, people find themselves in the middle and create separate personas to suit the situation— a self that can be expressed when among friends or family, and a façade to use around others. Truly, ‘hiding’ and ‘searching’ are two sides of the same coin
when it comes to the middle grade experience. My goal was to gather stories that held this idea at their core. Beyond these constraints I wanted to give authors total freedom over their content. With a clear idea of the anthology finally in mind, the next step in the process is to find the stories that will fill it.

4.3 From Submission to Invitation

Now it is time to find the content creators who will help bring the anthology to life.

There are two ways to elicit submissions for an anthology of any kind: an open call or personal invitation. An open call for submission involves spreading the word about the project to reach any potentially interested parties. On the contrary, personal invitations are notes sent to specific parties explaining the project and inviting them to take part. For my project I decided to use a combination of the two.

In today’s digital world, one of the best ways to reach others is by using the internet. I started by creating a website to use as a base of operations for the submission process. Using the website creation tool Wix.com, I designed a website to suit the project: images relating to books and creative writing, a color scheme that made brighter colors in background images pop to create a feeling of lightheartedness, clear fonts to make information as accessible as the anthology’s premise, and tight organization to subtly impress upon visitors the professional nature of the project. Equally, if not slightly more, important than the layout is the actual information you provide. Generate interest in your project using language that excites potential participants and gets them thinking about what kind of story they could contribute. Use an engaging voice to explain the project’s background, purpose, and parameters. It is imperative to provide your credentials in order to gain the trust of potential participants; in my case, I did this by embedding hyperlinks that led to official sources with information on my past and
current degree programs as well as to the professors and authors who had graciously agreed to guide and work with me to put the project together. Though not necessary, I would strongly recommend offering incentives to encourage participation. Finally, be sure to include contact information and explanations on how to submit a piece for consideration throughout the website—without this, there is no way you will get any submissions in the first place!

With a central information hub in place, the next step is to spread the word about the project. To do so I utilized both old and new media. With the help of friends, the link to my website was shared on multiple social media platforms and paper flyers with information about the project and how to submit a story were hung around my city, undergraduate university, and current university in locations with high foot traffic (figs. 1.1 & 1.2). However, the majority of participants were brought in as a result of the submission software I chose: Submittable. Submittable is a website that advertises posted projects to its community of users and provides a simple and secure avenue for submission. Using a tag-based search function, users are guided to open projects that suit their interests. The second avenue to recruit participation is through personal invitations. In my case, I drafted letters to popular middle grade authors in my community that briefly introduced my project and invited them to participate (fig. 1.3). For this sort of communication both quality and quantity are vital. Errors in grammar and syntax or ambiguous wording will cause recipients to question your professional ability, and the fewer invitations you send the fewer acceptances you will receive in return. One of the constraints I placed on participants was a strict submission window and project timeline to give both myself and the authors I would be working with deadlines to keep in mind and help keep the entire process moving forward. Once the submission window ends, the evaluation process can begin.
As hard as you may try to be objective when it comes to evaluating a piece of creative writing, it is an activity that is unavoidably subjective. Jonathan Karp jokes that:

“All the editors acquiring for the five major adult trade publishers wouldn’t even fill a Broadway theater, and if you asked them afterward what they thought of the show they just saw together, they would probably disagree on just about everything—the quality of the work, whether it was too long or too short, whether the leading man was annoying or charming, and whether the show would run for a week or a year;” (31).

Luckily, as the sole editor of your anthology your opinion is the only one that matters. To keep my evaluations as non-biased as possible I laid out a brief evaluation form to guarantee every work would be analyzed through the same lens (fig. 1.4). Stories were given a score out of ten based on their originality (in both content and format), relevancy to the theme of the anthology, and quality of writing. However, I also followed Mr. Karp’s first rule of acquisition: “Love it…if you don’t feel intrigued or excited by the prospect…then you shouldn’t acquire it, no matter how much business sense it might seem to make,” (32). This sentiment is echoed by many veteran editors in the world of trade publishing (Gill 2017, 160-165; 165; Ginna 2017, 25; Thompson 2010, 131). Editing, just like writing, is a creative endeavor. If you do not feel passion for your work it will be apparent to the reader, just as an audience can tell if a musician does not truly have their heart in their music regardless of how perfectly they play. Some submissions were better than others in their technical skill, but preference was given to the pieces that I personally felt strongly about and saw potential for. As an editor there is no definite answer on whether you should acquire a work; it comes down to trusting your gut and having confidence in your decisions. Each submission was read three times: first for an initial impression, second to fill out the evaluation form, and third to note any final thoughts. Once all submissions had been scored, accepted authors were sent official invitations to participate (fig. 1.5). Upon receiving confirmation of an author’s desire to be involved in the
project, you can start the most fun part of creating an anthology: editing the stories and bringing them to life.

4.4 Digging In

Before you make a single note on someone’s draft remember that you, as the editor, are a collaborator—not the author: “It’s the author’s book, not the editor’s; the editor should be working to help the author write and revise the best book that he or she means to write. The editor should not impose a voice, a vision, a point of view, or a too-aggressive critical approach that leaves no room for praise and disables the author’s confidence and creativity…” (Witte 2017, 98). Your job is to work together with your authors, not for them or in lieu of them. Forgetting this fact is lethal for an editor, and it can irreparably damage your working relationships. You should never belittle or tear the piece apart limb by limb. Sometimes a story needs to be broken down completely before being built back up—it happens—but a good editor does so with kindness and understanding. Editing is about serving as the author’s advisor; offering suggestions, questioning inconsistencies, highlighting strong bits of prose, and politely pointing out sections that could use some work. You and your author have the same goal: to make this story the best it can possibly be. Work with them, not against them, and you will cross the finish line with shining colors. To provide a clearer view of the various rounds of editing, and to show how every story will need different levels of intervention, I use examples from a few of the pieces chosen to be included in the anthology developed for this study—Hide & Seek.

4.4.1 Developmental Editing

Sometimes referred to as substantive or content editing, the developmental editing stage is the time for an editor to focus on the big picture (Ginna 2017, 8-9; Miller 2017, 61; Witte 2017, 96). Questions, suggestions, and comments should relate to the story’s plot and
structure. If the chronology is unclear or contradictory, if there is ‘fluff’ or extraneous material that needs to be cut, if there are issues with pacing or characterization, or if any holes or loose threads are visible in the story’s plot, this is the time to coordinate with the author to rectify the problem (Miller 2017, 61). Rather than tackling everything at once, the developmental phase is about handling the most pressing issues. Concentration should be on helping the author write a story that flows well and makes sense. Perfect grammar will not make up for a plot riddled with holes and flat characters. It is a common practice for editors to go through a draft more than once: “once for structure and logic, and once for [spelling, punctuation, grammar and expression] ...” (Saller 2017, 111). This strategy can make a developmental editor’s job easier in the short-term by helping to spotlight one or two larger concerns at a time rather than all at once, but more time-consuming in the long run depending on how many separate read-throughs are necessary to address every problem. Being able to switch quickly and efficiently from large-scale to small-scale problems in an invaluable skill for an editor, but as with all skills it takes time and practice to master. As one goes through a story it is likely that any number of grammatical errors will jump out at anyone reading with a critical eye. It would be prudent to note these in the text so that they can be easily found later, but keep in mind that developmental editing is a job undertaken at the macro scale. To begin this phase, take a look at the similarities between the style of the anthology—short story—and the audience—middle grade (Table 1). See what qualities are shared by both and which contradict each other. To create a proper middle grade short story, it is imperative to make sure the two genres overlap perfectly. Otherwise, you will either have something that is one but not the other, or something that is neither of them at all. To ensure that each story followed all pre-established guidelines, I developed a chart to use as a quick reference sheet while reading (table 1).
### Table 1: Characteristics of a middle grade short story

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Short Story</th>
<th>Both</th>
<th>Middle Grade Fiction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Fits the mood and subject matter, and inspires a specific emotional reaction from your reader</td>
<td>• Despite some restrictions, authors have considerable freedom in regard to genre, plot, and setting.</td>
<td>• Appropriate for children aged eight to twelve.</td>
<td>• Involves underlying themes typical of middle grade literature such as belonging, identity and discovery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• MUST be confined to an incident or group of incidents that would only be 'incidental' in a novel. HOWEVER: This does not mean a short story cannot be based on an idea that could well form the theme of a novel.</td>
<td>• Dramatic segment of a character's growth or life</td>
<td>• Meets and does not exceed the reading comprehension level of an average reader aged eight to twelve</td>
<td>• May be written for any number of reasons (to entertain, to teach, to inspire, to pose moral questions, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Written to entertain</td>
<td>• Actively engages the reader from beginning to end</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Does not belittle or infantilize reader; gives the reader credit for being able to draw conclusions.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Maintains a plot from beginning to end.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Author’s primary intention is to tell a story</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ending</td>
<td>• Ends satisfactorily: narrative question is answered honestly, fairly, does not leave reader feeling cheated or frustrated.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• upon ending, leaves the reader with all information required to comprehend the events of the story.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• any conflicts presented by the narrative are resolved by the conclusion of the story.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Frequently open-ended; reader can easily imagine further exploration of the story’s world.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Style</td>
<td>• 1000 and 8000 words in length</td>
<td>• Keep paragraphs short. Long ones make heavy reading and give a dull appearance to the page.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• the story can effectively serve as a standalone piece</td>
<td>• The reader identifies emotionally with the main character(s) and becomes involved in the action of the story.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Standard grammatical rules apply, but form is determined by author.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 1: Characteristics of a middle grade short story**
The first piece I will examine is entitled *Edna Talks* by Theresa Gillmore. Her initial submission did exactly what it was supposed to: it suited the anthology, was well written, and piqued my curiosity. In Edna’s world everyone is born with a gift called ‘spirit sight’ that allows them to see and communicate with the ghosts of those who have passed away. The story’s first draft was successful in telling the story of a singular instance in Edna’s life, but while building Edna and her story the author unintentionally left a few gaps in the logic of the story's world. In a short story the goal is to include what is necessary for comprehension of that story, nothing more, nothing less. Below is one comment left on the first draft of *Edna Talks*:

In this excerpt an essential piece of information is presented: there is a young man unable to see the dead as the result of some illness. In the context of a short story this explanation is the bare minimum needed, but the phrasing, specifically the word “some”, inadvertently raises questions for the reader: does the ‘odd illness’ have specific symptoms or effects, or does it affect everyone equally? This information is not essential to the plot, but clarification would fill out the story, improve readers’ knowledge of this world and draw further sympathy to the young man’s plight.
This is the same excerpt as it stands in the final copy:

Across from them, a young man sat with only one spirit by his side. He kept his head down and nodded a couple of times, but not in the spirit’s direction. His long hair fluttered over his face, covering his eyes.

Edna leaned closer to Bertha and said in a pitiful voice, “He can’t see the dead. Poor thing. He must have that illness, what are they calling it again? Dispirit Syndrome? The one that makes you lose your spirit sight. He pretends he can see by nodding. See, like that,” Edna pointed, “but you can tell he can’t. He’s turning his head away from that spirit as she talks. See?

Figure 2: Developmental editing sample 2

Here, in the same amount of space as before, the ‘odd’ illness has been given a name and is tied directly to the young man’s loss of spirit sight. By cutting the ambiguity, the reality of the story’s setting becomes stronger and Edna’s character is given more authority. The reader can now more easily visualize this world where such an illness is well-known and can place more trust in Edna as a narrator because she is confident in her words.

Here is a second excerpt where the information provided could cause confusion:

Bertha granted.

“Yes, I guess you’re right. Best not say anything. He looks depressed. Having others know you lost your perceptual vision might throw him to the brink of suicide.” Edna sighed and watched the ghostly woman, hands cupped in her lap, trying to speak to the poor man. How lonely it must have been, unable to speak to the loved ones at their side.

Figure 3: Developmental editing sample 3

Issues with sentence structure aside, in this sentence the reader is suddenly told that Dispirit Syndrome is so stigmatized that some would consider choosing death over life if others knew the truth. Just a sentence ago Dispirit Syndrome was something that caused loss of spiritual sight; now it is something that is potentially fatal. This information adds drama to the plot and explains the young man’s demeanor but is dropped into the reader’s lap with no introduction or warning. In other words, this section could use a bit more development. Below is the same
The author has provided context for the conflict (those with spirit sight versus those without) by explaining that the Dispirited are often stigmatized. The implication has become that, should the young man know others can tell he is Dispirited, he might feel even more isolated. This is much more age-appropriate than the first draft where being known as Dispirited can be life-threatening. It also strongly aligns with the larger themes of modern middle grade literature that emphasize inclusivity and understanding. Through Edna, readers are encouraged to put themselves in someone else's shoes. The young man is different, not dirty or contagious, and deserves to be treated like anyone else.

As much as it is about filling holes where information is needed, developmental editing is also about cutting excess, especially when it comes to a short story. In Silent Earthlings Do Exist by Kailey Warner, ‘trimming the fat’ was a large part of the process during the first phases of editing. In this story, a quirky eighth grader named Mae learns an upsetting secret about someone in her class and must decide for herself what course of action to take. Mae is a loveable character, but she too often shares with the reader information that has nothing to do with the story at hand. About halfway through the original piece there is a scene where Mae is
alone in her room going over the day’s events in her head. However, before doing so she gives the reader a brief autobiography:

My room is more like a closet. There’s just enough space room for my bed and some shelves built into the wall against the landlord’s wishes. Not that he has to know. I have a light bulb that I turn on by pulling a chain. I mostly leave it off, because I like the dark. It’s more comforting that way.

I stretched out on my bed in the dark. I closed my eyes, but I kept seeing Natalie’s scars in my mind. I rolled around for a while. Rain was pounding hard on the roof. Raining cats and dogs, as the saying goes. I tried to think of kittens landing softly on my roof and dripping gracefully down the drain pipes, ending the city-wide kitten famine. The mayor would issue an edict ordering all families to adopt at least seven baby kittens to keep them off the streets. I tried to imagine what each of my kittens would look like and what I would name them, but I just couldn’t.

I was used to imagining things to make myself feel better. When I was about five years old, I lost my babysitter when my grandma moved to Florida with her boyfriend, so my mom left me at the apartment while she worked – sometimes days, sometimes nights, sometimes both. I invented imaginary kittens and other friends to keep me company, so I wouldn’t have to eat dinner alone, or watch TV alone, or do anything alone, really. There wasn’t much to do inside the apartment, so I made up adventures for my imaginary friends and me. My favorite game was imagining that we were spies creeping around invisible lasers in the kitchen and sneaking down the hallway to disable a bomb before the microwave timer went off, fighting off at least one batch of ninjas on our way.

I had that jumpy feeling again, and no matter what I thought about, I couldn’t get rid of it. I had seen Natalie’s scars. I couldn't imagine her pain away.

I took out my phone and opened Google. My fingers lingered over the screen. I decided to type what I really wanted to ask.

*What to do when a friend is hurting themselves?*
I read in the soft glow of my phone screen for hours. The more I read, the more I felt both uneasy and confident. Several sites had a lot of really good ideas, it seemed – approach the friend with kindness, ask out of concern and not curiosity, tell an adult. It felt good to know what I could do, but it was also scary that I had to be the one to do it. I had never taken responsibility for so much as a pet fish – how was I supposed to handle a delicate human life? There were so many ways that my attempts to help could go wrong. If I talked to Natalie, she could think that I’m just being nosy, or she could get really angry. But if I didn’t talk to Natalie, would she be okay?

I wanted Christina’s help. She hadn’t answered any of my texts or calls. It was Wednesday, so she was probably at youth group. I felt really alone. There was no way I could imagine myself out of this situation, because there was no way that I could ignore it. And who could I imagine to help me?

I fell asleep with questions still swirling in my mind like the nausea in my stomach.

In a larger work I would be happy to see Mae’s character filled out through musings like these that reveal her past and explain her somewhat eccentric thought processes. In a short story about her coming up with a plan of action to help a friend, however, it is unnecessary background information. The reader does not need to know how Mae imagines rain as kittens or how her grandmother moved away in order to understand this story. Not only is the information extraneous but it actively distracts the reader from the actual plot of the story which is about how Mae is coping with finding out that a classmate self-harms and trying to decide whether to get involved. In the first draft this scene unfolds over two full pages. In the final copy it has been pared down to just half a page:
Every story edited for this project, fifteen in total, went through two rounds of this sort of large-scale substantive editing. During the second round, while attending to any major changes the authors had made to their second draft, I began to scale down and analyze works on a sentence-by-sentence basis to eliminate any glaring errors in grammar and syntax and query the author about anything that was confusing or unclear. This next stage is known as line editing.

“I stretched out on my bed in the dark. I closed my eyes, but I kept seeing Natalie’s scars in my mind. I had that jumpy feeling again, and no matter what I thought about I couldn’t get rid of it. I took out my phone and opened Google. My fingers lingered over the screen. I decided to type what I really wanted to ask:

*What to do when a friend is hurting themselves?*

I read in the soft glow of my phone screen for hours. Several sites had a lot of really good ideas: approach the friend with kindness, ask out of concern and not curiosity, tell an adult. It felt good to know I could do something, but it was also scary that I had to be the one to do it. I had never taken responsibility for so much as a pet fish—how was I supposed to handle a situation like this? There were so many ways that my attempts to help could go wrong. If I talked to Natalie she could think that I’m just being nosy, or she could get really angry at me for butting in. But if I didn’t talk to her, would she be okay? I fell asleep with questions still swirling in my mind and butterflies still doing flips in my stomach.”
4.4.2 Line Editing

Sometimes done simultaneously with developmental editing, line editing is the process of going through a manuscript line by line searching for both issues to query and notable moments to praise. More specifically, line editing covers a vast range of duties including but not limited to:

“[attending to] issues with phrasing, word choice, and syntax; suggesting deleting or transposing words, phrases, or entire paragraphs, querying the chronology or any inconsistencies of style, tone, or content, or whether dialogue rings true; asking the author to clarify material that confuses or to add needed information; noting transitions that need work; suggesting rewrites on the sentence level; and correcting punctuation, spelling, and grammar and making sure that tenses agree,” (Miller 2017, 62).

Generally, line editing is what people first think of when they think about ‘editing’ as a practice. At this point any major rewrites should have already occurred. There should not be any additional significant changes made to the story. This, to me, is the most fun part of the process. Whether the second draft has changed substantially from the first or there are only a handful of suggestions to make, line editing is when you really get to whip out the red pen and challenge the author to reach their full potential. The remainder of this section will go over various examples of line editing from a few of the second and third (final) drafts of stories included in my anthology.

The screenshots that follow are of the second and third drafts (respectively) of the story *Paved in Glass* by Ren Maguire. Set in a post-apocalyptic world ravaged by a war between humans and androids, *Paved in Glass* follows Tea and Eleven as they search for Haven, a hidden oasis where humans and ‘bots live together in peace. This piece was a delight to work with
because it was so rich with potential. Ren did an amazing job building the story’s world and characters and was very open to hearing my ideas about how to truly bring the story to life. In this sequence I suggested an alteration to the story’s physical form:

This simple change in font is enough to emphasize the story’s atmosphere and build a world around the reader before they even begin to read. This edit has little to do with the plot and the change does not have any effect on Tea or Eleven, but the cooperation between editor and author to breathe life into a manuscript a perfect example of line editing at work. The next screencap, also from the second draft of Paved in Glass, shows three additional examples of how line editing is used to address a manuscript on a micro level. In the third line from the top a bit of redundant information has been cut to eliminate excess space. Farther down, queries about a specific bit of the manuscript are noted and clearly phrased for the author’s consideration:
The final two examples below show how line editing is used to approach grammatical errors. *Library of the Gods* by Jessica Wood is an action-packed adventure where Saros, a teenaged thief with self-proclaimed attitude problems, goes to the literal end of the earth to escape her pursuers. The story is exciting from beginning to end and Saros' inner dialogue provides nonstop comedy, but as with any story minor inconsistencies are bound to pop up:

"I est you." They passed a few more cases before he spoke again. "You should be glad that I am willing to listen. It's been a long time since I last had a rider."

He dropped the information so casually, yet the jigsaw slamming together in Saros'

In this case, the character speaking in the bolded font, a wyvern named Force, uses both formal and informal verb tenses in the same breath. Speech patterns are something unique to every character, and switching up that pattern without warning can be enough to break a reader's
concentration. Throughout the story Force speaks very formally, making the sudden shift to a contracted verb form (“it’s” rather than the properly conjugated “it has”) quite jarring.

But in *Simmie Mim* by Arno Bohlmeijer, this issue can be seen in the reverse:

When Lana comes home, Simmie always runs up to her. But today Lana is home late. How strange that Simmie is not racing to say hello. She doesn’t hear him at all. She drops her coat and calls out, “Simmie?”

She takes her shoes off and sings, “Simmie Mim? *No hide-and-seek, Come out* please. Or are you sound asleep?”

Hey, it’s it’s weird that he hasn’t touched his food. Is he sick *somewhere in a corner somewhere?*

Lana calls his name and looks for him, in the living-room, bathroom, bedroom, kitchen... There are lots of little spots, where cats can curl up. *They think of the craziest things!*

“Simmie? It’s alright, you’ve never been a bad cat, you haven’t done anything wrong. Only-sa... If you can mew, I’ll come to you.”

Lana even checks every box and drawer. She’s afraid to go on the balcony, but she has to. “Simmie Mim? This isn’t a prank, is it? Please, don’t scare me...”

When Lana *finds-sees knows* that Simmie is not on the balcony, she’s all *almost faintly from fear.* She peers over the edge and looks out *on every side in every direction. It’s just as if the Finch in the birch tree is birds are dead silent. Lana wants to call for Simmie at the top of her voice, but it breaks.*

Her Simmie is gone. She can’t believe it, but it’s real—he’s. He’s gone.

*Figure 9: Line editing sample 5*

English is not Mr. Bohlmeijer’s first language. As a result, he tends to prefer using standard, proper grammar in his writing rather than the informal or slang speech common amongst native speakers. However, in this context it would be odd for the character, a young girl named Lana who has just gotten home from school, to speak as though she were in a professional setting. For this story it was necessary to embrace the idea that there are no set rules when it comes to language and style to produce a piece that flowed naturally. Line editing is used here
to maintain Mr. Bohlmeijer's innovative mix of first and third person perspectives while ensuring that the language sounds natural and that Lana’s speech patterns suit her character.

4.5 Bringing It All Together

By the third round of editing most stories had reached a point where all remaining edits pertained to grammatical inconsistencies and errors in punctuation. These final changes fall under a category known as copyediting where a manuscript is (theoretically) cleared of all remaining language-based errors and prepared to be sent to a typesetter for printing. However, because of the incredibly versatile natures of the English language, the short story form, and the middle grade genre, copyediting manuscripts for this project was less of a concrete check for ‘yes, this sentence is grammatically correct’ or ‘no, this punctuation mark is not in the right place’ and more of a conversation between editor and author to address specific problem areas and determine what phrasing and style would best impress upon the reader the author’s intended meaning and tone for the scene. Once all potential errors have been addressed and a manuscript has been deemed satisfactory by both author and editor it can be marked as complete and readied for print.

This process is typically referred to as ‘typesetting’ (Miller 2017, 59-68). At this point no further changes are made to the text unless a glaring error somehow slipped through the cracks. When a document is ‘typeset’ it is organized to make sure that the page will look the way the author intended it to when printed. This involves managing margins, checking spacing between lines and paragraphs, triple-checking font and text size, and generally confirming that the on-screen document will transfer properly to a printed page.

For a project being prepared for public release, setting the master document also involves cooperation with the project’s production or art director. Even though every individual book
has been formatted to suit its own needs, it is more than likely not going to share the same font sizes, spacing, margins, or even page size as the hard copy. To give an example, many authors use word processing programs whose dimensions are pre-set to match those of a standard piece of printer paper (eight and a half inches by eleven inches), but if you visualize the bookshelves at your local bookstore or library—how many books are that large? A major component of typesetting is following the blueprints laid out by the book designer to guarantee that text will be scaled to fit the new print format properly while maintaining any unique elements of design deliberately included in the original work. The same concerns apply for projects slotted for digital release. In these cases, typesetting will include an additional step where the work must be coded in such a way that will guarantee that it will appear as it should on any screen regardless of the screen’s size. Typesetting my anthology followed the same procedure on a much simpler scale. All stories submitted for my project were required to follow format standards set by the Modern Language Association: point 12 size Times New Roman font, double spacing between lines, left alignment, and one-inch margins on a document with the dimensions of an average sheet of printer paper. Given that the final anthology would follow the same standards, this would make the transition to the final copy a reasonably straightforward task.

Before combining them pieces into a single document, though, careful consideration must be given to the order in which the stories will be organized. There are any number of ways to do this: alphabetically, by length, by sub-genre, by overarching theme ('hide', 'seek' or 'both'), by quality, or any other organization method one may think of. For the purposes of this anthology, the first and last slots were filled based on a mixture of personal preference, strength of writing, and the pervasive mood of the piece. *Library of the Gods* is an action-packed and comedic story that does an excellent job of engaging the reader. The idea behind using it as
the introductory story was to excite readers and put them in a mindset to continue reading the anthology past the first story. In contrast, *Simmie Mim* is written with a quiet, poetic rhythm. There is tension in the story, but as the reader nears the end peace is restored in the narrative and the scene almost seems to fade to black as the screen does at the end of a movie. The remaining twelve stories were largely organized based on their style and pacing. Works with more conflict-based narratives were placed in the beginning of the anthology in order of increasing tension with softer, more thought-provoking stories in slots eleven through fourteen to ease readers out of the experience. Once every piece has been successfully transferred, the master document itself must be typeset and gone through line by line to make sure everything has maintained its original form.

### 4.6 Final Remarks on the Use of This Guide

Every published text has gone through some degree of editing. Different genres may have their own unique stages but the overall process and end-goal of creating a perfected product, remains the same. The types of editing explained in this guide can be used by future editors of any type of work, whether it be a picture book or an academic paper. Very rarely will an editor encounter a piece that raises no questions and whose language cannot be tweaked to make the author’s voice just the slightest bit stronger. That said, the guide is specifically targeted towards those working with middle grade fiction short stories (however small that group may be). The works and commentary examined here were provided as examples of what sort of questions to ask of authors and of oneself before, during, and after editing, but are by no means a comprehensive list of techniques. Just as every story is its own, every editor has a unique style that can only be found through time and practice. My hope is that this guide will serve as a helpful addition to existing literature on both editing in general and on editing short fiction.
anthologies specifically, and that any future editors looking for resources on the trade can benefit from its instructions.

4.7 Chapter Summary

In this chapter I detailed the process of developing a middle grade short story anthology. First, specifications for inclusion in the anthology were determined and disseminated via social media and paper flyers to spread awareness of the project and attract interested parties. Individual authors were also sent direct invitations to participate. Following an open submission period of approximately four months, submissions were evaluated and selected based on their attention to the themes of the anthology, creativity, and quality of writing. Each story passed through three phases of editing with attention gradually narrowed down from analyses of the major components of the piece (developmental editing) to sentence-level queries and corrections (line editing). Works were marked as complete, typeset and locked to prevent further changes once the author approved of all final copyedits. The project was finalized by arranging all fourteen stories into a master document.
Chapter 5: Conclusion

The development of this thesis was a long, wild, and bumpy adventure that started with a simple question: “what might a reluctant reader need to see to find even a spark of interest about the literary world?” I wanted to create something that could potentially lead a child to find something—a genre, a style, an author—anything that they would enjoy reading. That is why I strove to build an anthology with wide appeal. The stories selected for inclusion in the project were purposely chosen to be an eclectic mix of genres, voices, and lengths, all adhering to a theme that would resonate with a large group of potential readers (middle graders) and sticking to a format accessible to readers of any level (the short story). Accomplishing this goal turned out to be easier said than done.

The research required for this project was far more extensive than I originally believed. Not only did I need to familiarize myself with the ins and outs of two entire branches of literature, the short story and books for middle grade, I also needed to understand the entire publishing process, from acquisition to distribution, in order to form an idea of what it would take to create a book of my own. I had not anticipated how deeply involved a book’s editor is in the production process. Trade publishing is no longer the field it was in the twentieth century where the publisher was king, and authors saw themselves as lucky to have their work accepted. Today, authors and their agents hold the power it takes to be able to fight for the money and respect they deserve. Furthermore, an editor is no longer a figure that exists for the sole purpose of perfecting an author’s grammar. An editor is the author’s representative and partner, and for that partnership to be successful requires maintaining not just a civil relationship but one that is deeply personal and built on mutual trust and respect. This sort of relationship is difficult enough to develop with one stranger, much less the fifteen individuals I
had the privilege of working with. Editing is not a job that requires only an extensive
knowledge of the English language. It is a trade that necessitates deep-seated empathy, a true
love of literature and its readers, and an all-encompassing understanding of the publication
process, including the marketing and economic side of the business that you thought you had
avoided by choosing a career field in the liberal arts. All of this aside, everything I learned
throughout the process is invaluable.

Moving forward, there are several possible routes for further research that I believe
would positively contribute to the existing body of research available on the short story. As
examined in Chapter Two, is the short story is a genre of literature that has existed for
millennia and yet only became ‘mainstream’ a less than two hundred years ago. The short story
proper may have begun in the United States, but it rapidly spread around the world.
Everywhere it went the short story morphed into a literature reflective of the culture and
history of its authors. It would be fascinating to follow the development of the short story (as I
traced its growth in the United States) in the other countries where the short story became
representative of its people and literary spirit such as France, Russia, Ireland, and Canada. To
this day short stories across the globe, and indeed even within individual countries, feature
some of the most unique and innovative literary styles to date, and will doubtlessly continue to
do so as the debate over what constitutes a short story rages on. I also believe it would be
worthwhile to examine the ways in which the short story is suited for combination with other
genres of literature in the same way that I argue it lends itself to middle grade works.

In closing, I would like to present the two ideas that drove this project from the
beginning. The first is that, according to most if not all critics, the short story is a form that
requires a satisfying, book-ending finale. To me, the key word in that definition is ‘require’: just
because a reader feels that ‘all that can be said has been said’, does not mean they cannot or will not want more. This is the point of the open-ended story: it is just a snapshot of a larger world. This snapshot may be given edges, however blurry they might be, but that does not mean it must leave the reader with no desire to learn more. My overarching goal with this anthology was to give reluctant readers an array of stories that might interest them in further literary exploration. I wanted to reach out to those readers to help them discover something they want to read whether that be slice-of-life stories like Gabrielle Prendergast’s Lunchbot or stories set in fantastical worlds like Rachel Craft’s Yara and the Witch Queen. Finally, I always kept at the front of my mind this quote from Cecil Hunt written all the way back in 1934:

“Remember that the function of the short story is to interest the reader. That may be done by instructing him, by mystifying him, by amusing him, by terrifying him. There are a dozen routes. The goal is constant.”
Bibliography


