**English 10 Name:**

**Mr. Fisher**

**Tips for Writing a Good Short Story: Let’s Get Some Advice From Real Authors:**

**Kurt Vonnegut’s Opinion:**

*Kurt Vonnegut created some of the most outrageously memorable novels of our time, such as Cat’s Cradle, Breakfast of Champions, Player Piano and Slaughterhouse Five. His work is a mesh of contradictions: both science fiction and literary, dark and funny, classic and counter-culture, warm-blooded and very cool. And it’s all completely unique. With his customary wisdom and wit, Vonnegut put forth 8 basics of what he calls Creative Writing 101:*

1. Use the time of a total stranger in such a way that he or she will not feel the time was wasted.
2. Give the reader at least one character he or she can root for.
3. Every character should want something, even if it is only a glass of water.
4. Every sentence must do one of two things—reveal character or advance the action.
5. Start as close to the end as possible.
6. Be a sadist. No matter how sweet and innocent your leading characters, make awful things happen to them—in order that the reader may see what they are made of.
7. Write to please just one person. If you open a window and make love to the world, so to speak, your story will get pneumonia.
8. Give your readers as much information as possible as soon as possible. To heck with suspense. Readers should have such complete understanding of what is going on, where and why, that they could finish the story themselves, should cockroaches eat the last few pages.

The greatest American short story writer of my generation was Flannery O’Connor (1925-1964). She broke practically every one of my rules but the first. Great writers tend to do that.

**Neil Gaiman’s Opinion:**

*Neil Gaiman has become so popular he is often considered the “rock star” of the literary world. He has even married independent rock musician Amanda Palmer! He trades mostly in science fiction and fantasy in a variety of forms: novels, children’s books, graphic novels, comic books, and film. Among his trend-setting works are Coraline, The Graveyard Book and The Sandman series. He takes readers, of all ages, to the very edge of imagination.*

My 8 Good Writing Practices:

1. Write.
2. Put one word after another. Find the right word, put it down.
3. Finish what you're writing. Whatever you have to do to finish it, finish it.
4. Put it aside. Read it pretending you’ve never read it before. Show it to friends whose opinion you respect and who like the kind of thing that this is.
5. Remember: when people tell you something’s wrong or doesn’t work for them, they are almost always right. When they tell you exactly what they think is wrong and how to fix it, they are almost always wrong.
6. Fix it. Remember that, sooner or later, before it ever reaches perfection, you will have to let it go and move on and start to write the next thing. Perfection is like chasing the horizon. Keep moving.
7. Laugh at your own jokes.
8. The main rule of writing is that if you do it with enough assurance and confidence, you’re allowed to do whatever you like. (That may be a rule for life as well as for writing. But it’s definitely true for writing.) So write your story as it needs to be written. Write it honestly, and tell it as best you can. I'm not sure that there are any other rules. Not ones that matter.

**Zadie Smith’s Opinion:**

*Zadie Smith rocked the literary world in her late twenties with her novel White Teeth, a look into various lives in contemporary multicultural London. She followed this up with the novels The Autograph Man and On Beauty, and she is also a leading light in literary criticism. She is considered one of the freshest and most ambitious voices of her generation.*

10 Good Writing Habits

1. When still a child, make sure you read a lot of books. Spend more time doing this than anything else.
2. When an adult, try to read your own work as a stranger would read it, or even better, as an enemy would.
3. Don’t romanticize your “vocation.” You can either write good sentences or you can’t. There is no “writer's lifestyle.” All that matters is what you leave on the page.
4. Avoid your weaknesses. But do this without telling yourself that the things you can’t do aren’t worth doing. Don’t mask self-doubt with contempt.
5. Leave a decent space of time between writing something and editing it.
6. Avoid cliques, gangs, groups. The presence of a crowd won’t make your writing any better than it is.
7. Work on a computer that is disconnected from the Internet.
8. Protect the time and space in which you write. Keep everybody away from it, even the people who are most important to you.
9. Don’t confuse honors with achievement.
10. Tell the truth through whichever veil comes to hand—but tell it. Resign yourself to the lifelong sadness that comes from never being satisfied.

**Mr. Fisher’s Opinion:**

*Mr. Fisher is not a short story writer, or even well-renowned writer of literature. That being said, he actually was an award-winning community-news reporter and wrote fantasy sports columns for rotoworld.com, foxsports.com, and usatoday.com. Still, his real qualifications stem from the fact that…well…he assigned this essay. So, yeah, his ideas are important. Right?*

**5.5 Tips for Writing Short Stories that Impress Teachers:**

1. Follow the directions that are given.
2. Write about a subject that interests you. If you like cars, include them. If you like biology, set the story in a lab. You are creating a new world. Make it one you care about. This will make it easier to write your short story.
3. Don’t try to do too much! In fact, don’t tell the whole story. Imagine a full story. Then, think about the most important scene in the story. Take that, and write about that moment.
4. The best writing communicates your ideas clearly and accurately. Use good vocabulary to get your thoughts across, not to just use “big words.” Crisp, clear writing is better that hard-to-read, confusing word play.
5. Don’t think too much. Just write! Then, go back and think really, really hard while you edit. Sadly, most people do this backwards.
6. If you learn anything about writing, it should be this…