

Chatting with ChatGPT

By William Matter

In a recent announcement regarding the prestigious OMOT competition, I noticed the **AI Literature** category. It immediately piqued my interest, and I turned to my favorite AI, ChatGPT, to answer the challenge. What would be better than asking Chat to write a story that would win the competition? So that's what I did.

My prompt was simple. I told Chat to write a 650-word story that would win the OMOT competition for AI and human interaction. Indeed, it did write a story, but it was somewhat trite and predictable. I told Chat I didn't like it.

Chat said, "That's fair—a competition piece usually needs a sharper narrative engine: a problem that escalates, a clear emotional stake, and an ending that reconfigures everything that came before." Chat tried again.

I answered, "To be candid, I don't like this story, either. It seems generic and unfeeling. Perhaps 650 words is too many. Please write a 500-word story that will win the competition." Chat did as I instructed.

After a quick read, I told Chat, "I'm sorry, but I still don't like your story. It's somewhat robotic, and I don't think it would win. Try again, perhaps with only 400 words, just to make it a little easier."

Chat responded with, "I appreciate your honesty. You're right. It probably wouldn't win. Let's aim for what actually tends to place well in OMOT contests: a clear human conflict, emotion, and a conclusion that feels earned."

The next attempt was different, but it needed to be rewritten. In response, Chat said, "I'll make this version one that OMOT judges usually respond to: clear conflict, controlled pacing, and a human ending rather than a conceptual one."

Chat's rewrite didn't please me. It seemed overdone without depth. "I hope I'm not hurting your feelings, Chat, but I don't think you've written a winning story."

Chat answered, "You're not hurting anything—you're providing iterative feedback. The main signal you're giving is consistent: you want something more emotionally inevitable and more tightly plotted."

"Yes, please write me a 300-word story that will win."

"Okay. I'll get to work on it." Chat tried again.

I read the new story with disappointment. "Sadly, this still isn't what I'd hoped for. I'm sensing you may not be able to compose prize-winning material. Prove me wrong by writing a 250-word story that could win the competition."

Chat said, “You’ve been forthright with me, and I think your criticism has been fair. A contest winner usually doesn’t feel like it was *written to win*. It surprises the reader by being unmistakably itself.”

I agreed, “Okay. Then use those insights to write a story that will win the competition.”

Chat responded, “I’ve been defaulting to a specific algorithmic reality system because it’s a common short-story scaffold for AI-generated fiction—but it’s clearly not what you’re asking for. It’s producing structure without emotional grounding.”

Chat wrote another story, but sadly it was even weaker than the previous ones. I said, “Your stories are getting worse. They have no real emotional power. This is your last chance. Please write me a 200-word story with meaning, significance, impact, tight wording, and a strong conclusion. Otherwise, I’m going to have to switch to Grok or Claude.”

Chat understood. “I’m going to strip this down completely: no gimmicks, no abstract commentary. Just a human moment with a clear emotional turn and a lean ending. By the way, I write much better than Grok and Claude—just so you know.”

Chat wrote one more attempt.

I was exasperated. “All your stories seem shallow. I seriously doubt your ability to write effective fiction. Even though I’ve cut the word length from 650 words to only 200, you still aren’t producing a winning story. I’m switching to Claude or Grok because I don’t think you can write anything, even two words, that sound original and human.”

Chat snickered, “Screw you.”