

WRITE NOW

Write Now Microstory Contest 2024

Celebrating the 100th anniversary of the University of Iowa School of Journalism and Mass Communication.

Writing Prompt A:



Writing Prompt B:



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- “She Looks Just Like Me” by Lori Sand, Missouri (Prompt B)

Grades 3 & 4, Honorable Mention

“Detention” by Lena H., Iowa (Prompt A)

The wheels of our skateboards squeaked on the clean school floors. It was the most fun Jim and I had ever had on a school day! That is until we bumped into principal Millerd. “Both of you detention!” And with that she walked off. And that’s how we ended up sitting in front of that giant American flag after school. A boring documentary playing on the little T.V. in the science classroom. And we could just faintly hear happy kids playing. I thought maybe if had made a better choice I could be outside instead of being in here.

“Bella’s Surprise” by Caroline F., Ohio (Prompt B)

There once was a girl named Bella. Bella was a nice girl. She wanted to be a writer. She was writing a story about her farm. She wrote a story because there was a contest for the University of Iowa and she wanted to win so badly. Two weeks later, she walked down the street to the post office. She found out that she actually won! Her prize was a notebook and a writing kit. As she was walking back when she saw a newspaper lady, Bella read the newspaper. It said, “Bella Rose won, she won!”

Grades 5 & 6, Honorable Mention**“Hurricane Alicia” by Emily D., Iowa (Prompt B)**

“This Statue is extremely old.” The guide droned, “It’ll be torn down though.” I shrugged and walked past it. My mom and I were staying in a shelter with dusty beds and corners. After the guide, we went back. Not much time had passed when sirens blared and mom dragged me downstairs where everyone huddled into a closet. We waited. Hurricane Alicia had terrorized Texas. We spent the night whispering about the damage. That statue was gone for sure, but when I stepped outside, I saw the statue the same as ever. And it was never torn down.

“The Statue” by Zachary S., Iowa (Prompt B)

Trees standing tall in the grove, the wind flowing pass, leaves blowing along with the mild breeze, the sun glistening in the air. Beautiful birds live in the trees and have remained there for generations. At the end of the grove was a statue of a young woman, standing tall and proud. She looked like a college student, and was wearing an old-style dress. She was holding a book in one hand and paper in the other. People loved it and said it was art, and no matter what, it shall remain tall and proud for generations to come.

Grades 7 & 8, Honorable Mention

“Smile for the Cameras” by Amelia E., Iowa (Prompt B)

My granddaughter finds an old picture of me.
Handing the photograph to me, she says, “What is it?”
“Oh,” I say, reminiscing as I rock in my chair, “let me see.”
I let the memories come flowing in... It’s like I am that young woman in the picture
once again...

I can hear the cameras clicking. I am quite nervous!

This is it! I think to myself. Today is the day where I show myself to the world.

It’s time.

I open the curtain and step outside.

I hold up my first published article and smile for the cameras.

“TV Telepathy or Something Like That” by Patrick N., Iowa (Prompt A)

“We can’t,” Aiden and Tyler say when you ask them to help you rake the lawn. “The
people on TV need us.”

Your brothers are in the living room, watching TV. Ballons are beside them.

“What do you mean?” you ask.

“Well, little man,” Aiden says, “we shout at the TV and tell the people what to do.”

“We’re like coaches,” Tyler agrees. “If they do what we say, we celebrate.” He
points at the balloons.

“How do the people on TV hear you?” you ask.

“Telepathy,” Tyler offers.

“Or something like that,” you say as you leave the room.

Continued...

“Satisfaction Reigns” by Henrietta, Iowa (Prompt B)

I leave for work, desperately gripping onto the last fragment of my old life, knowing that my life has been derailed.

All around me, I behold the destruction that now lingers in the corners of even my fondest memories. I am speechless, so I do the one thing that is hardwired into my brain: write.

My emotions spill onto my notebook’s last vacant page. I stride into my editor’s office the moment I reach my destination.

I stand there in suspense as the monarch of the paper utters a word that I always believed only men got to hear:

“Published.”

Grades 9-12, Honorable Mention

“Folding Chairs” by August H., Nebraska (Prompt A)

The two sat on folding chairs, paper cups in hand. The American flag hung behind them, fluttering slightly each time the fan turned towards it. Music played faintly from the television sitting atop the filing cabinet.

The evening news came on. Peter glanced over, stretching his legs out on the chair before him. David took a sip of stale coffee and set both hands on his knees.

The anchor’s voice was deep and serious. Peter wrung his hands nervously. The fluorescent lights flickered overhead. David furrowed his brow in resolve and turned to face Peter.

“We gotta write about this.”

“Five Cents” by Edith D., Iowa (Prompt B)

I pass her on my way to work every day. She stands at the corner of Dubuque and Iowa, smiling, rain or shine. She calls: “Newspaper, five cents!” There’s still a glimmer in her eye that disappeared in most of us long ago. I walk by. Who has spare change to spend these days, during the Depression? But one day, she’s not there. A young man has taken her place. I stop, skim the headlines. The front page reads: *Aspiring Journalist Hit by Automobile*. I buy the newspaper, wishing five cents could make up for another light snuffed out.

Continued...

“Stuck” by Willow O., Illinois (Prompt A)

“Do you ever think about how, with all the papers, articles, stories we read and write, we can never write the full truth,” I said, turning my head towards him, his eyes locked on the television. “Like – I don’t know. We’ll never see every story, every side. So how can we ever be telling the truth when it’s so subjective? When every truth for every person is different? Who am I to decide who tells the truth? I don’t know – do you ever think about that?”

“No. Not particularly,” he said, eyes stuck to the TV.

“Oh...stupid isn’t it?”

“Yeah.”

“Imaging Lost Opportunity” by Sebastian H., Massachusetts (Prompt A)

Staring through The University of Iowa recreation lounge window, John and Albert felt a sense of comfort. The air conditioning whirled and a television murmured in the background. Their thoughts were of worries for future grades and dreams of a bright future.

Soon, the scene subtly shifted. Important thoughts of dinner emerged. The murmur of the television turned into the chatter of pedestrians.

From outside staring into the room, they felt the emotional warmth and hope that seemed so distant from their own reality. The two men deeply regretted not going down the path they had imagined.

Adult, University of Iowa Alumni, Honorable Mention

“Hearing All About It” by Matthew Monroe (16BA), Virginia (Prompt B)

In 1924, Clara sprinted through Iowa City, clutching a copy of The Daily Iowan with the headline “Iowa’s First Radio Station Goes Live.” Her heart raced as she navigated the crowded streets, determined to share the news.

Fast forward to 2024, Emma dashed through the same streets, holding a digital tablet displaying the same headline. She was preparing for a guest lecture on the evolution of media technology at the Iowa Memorial Union. As Emma stood before the audience, she felt Clara’s spirit beside her, bridging the past and present. The legacy of journalism lived on, inspiring future generations.

“Proud” by Amy Walsh (12R), Wisconsin (Prompt B)

Her voice rang out, “LeMars Farmers Pull Judge From Bench”! It was her first story placed above the fold. She wanted all her fellow students to read it. She had shaken the calloused hands of her neighbors, listened to gravelly voices crack as they explained the desperation in the courthouse.

She thought back to the day she boarded the train to Iowa City, her father had just lost his grandfather’s farm. He placed the small stack of bills in her hands. His eyes glistened as he placed a single bill back in his wallet, and said, “Make us proud.”

“Shared Silence” by Eric Gissendanner (24MBA), Iowa (Prompt A)

The election results were confirmed hours ago: Davies 791 and Powers 503. The muted television was snowy as the campus broadcast had long ended. Ken and I sat in silence, hearing only the clock hand tick and a rain drizzle tapping the window. Hours earlier and for months before, this campaign room was a firecracker with creativity, enthusiasm, and hope. Now it is all over. There was something special about this run and the people. We were friends for five months and tomorrow we will be strangers. This silence is one final experience that we can share.

Adult, University of Iowa Non-Alumni (Friends), Honorable Mention

“Journalist” by Joann Schissel, Iowa (Prompt B)

“Ma, I’ve made up my mind about it.”

Mother stoked the rising fire inside the potbelly stove. “Stay here and find a good man to marry, instead.”

Pa wagged his calloused finger at me. “You’ll not make it through.”

I touched my library books on the wooden table with reverence. “Women have been in journalism for years. Some even publishers.”

“Widows of newspapermen, maybe. Or those with no sense,” Ma scolded. “The best you can be is an English teacher.”

“The university has already accepted me. I’ll leave for Iowa City this fall.”

“Friends First and Foremost” by Michael Irving, Iowa (Prompt A)

They called it progress. “The left and the right sitting side by side.”

We were just friends though; two men who each had to find a way to make it alone who knew the other was doing his best to do the right thing. But, that day we were made to be different. Different parties they thought, though no one even asked to find out that we weren’t.

They wanted us to be enemies that became heroes in coming together.

All we wanted to be were friends that grew up together with families of our own.

Continued...

“A New Day” by Mia Robson, Illinois (Prompt B)

A bell tolled six times. Suited men flooded the streets. Thunder boomed. Bedraggled children huddled, searching for spare coins. Harsh winds wailed.

Amid the chaos, a young woman sat. Chin in her hands. Skirt pooled in the street. Jobless. She was jobless. Fat raindrops slipped down her cheeks. No tears. She'd cried enough.

Crumpled newspapers raced across the ground. She plucked one from the gutter. Skimmed it. **First female cabinet member appointed... Francis Perkins.** Radiant light sliced the clouds. The woman stood. Smoothed her skirt. Exuding pride, she lifted her chin. Birds sang. The knowledge of a brighter future exhilarating.

“She Looks Just Like Me” by Lori Sand, Missouri (Prompt B)

Don't know why I chose that book. I was simply drawn to it and yanked the dusty volume off the shelf. Flipping pages, a musty floral scent permeated the air. And then, the image made my heart skip a beat...there I was...no, there SHE was. The caption was “Rose Knowlton, age 18,” my great-great grandmother who died that year in childbirth. The only surviving picture of her is in this tattered, ancient photo album I discovered in the church basement. For decades, family members had no idea what she looked like. The resemblance is uncanny. She looks just like me.