

WRITE NOW

Write Now Microstory Contest 2025

Honorable Mentions

Prompt A:



Prompt B:



Grades 5 & 6

"At The Diner" by Eleanor S., Iowa (Prompt B)	3
"Ready as Ever" by Sloan M., Iowa (Prompt A)	4

Grades 7 & 8

"Cue" by Adrian R., Iowa (Prompt A)	5
"Coffee" by Kush K., Texas (Prompt B)	6

Grades 9–12

"Number Eight" by Ella S., Iowa (Prompt B)	7
"Anywhere" by Tilly P., Iowa (Prompt B)	8

Adult (Friend of the University)

"Someday" by Ashley Goodwin, Iowa (Prompt A)	9
"Farewell" by Julia Clark, New York (Prompt B)	10

Adult (University of Iowa Alumni)

"All That Remains is Remembering" by Calan Smidt (05BA, 15MA), Iowa (Prompt B)	11
"Respite" by Juliette Jarabek (24MA), Iowa (Prompt B)	12

“At The Diner” by Eleanor S., Iowa, Prompt B (Grades 5 & 6)

I watched from the corner as the couple drank their tea. They stared into each other's eyes. “I love you, Margarette,” Edward spoke, sipping his tea. “I love you too—Ahh!” She screamed, staring right at me. “What is it dear?” Edward asked, as I ran to safety. “There’s a rat in the corner!” This was quite rude! I’m a mouse! Not a rat! “Tell the waiter!” Margaret screamed, but Edward didn’t need to, that was enough to alert the waiter. They spoke to the waiter, I don’t know what about, since I was already gone from the diner.

“Ready as Ever” by Sloan M., Iowa, Prompt A (Grades 5 & 6)

I stepped into the crowd of people ready to watch Thomas Clark, the most famous billiard player from Iowa. “I can’t believe I get to watch him play!” I practically jumped up and down when he started.

It was almost over. Thomas was ranked just under Phillip Smith. I shifted nervously. He only needed to make the eight ball to win. Everyone waited with bated breath, and then Thomas made it! I hugged my father happily.

“Are you ready to play in the final round of the pool tournament?” I snapped back to the present.

“Ready as ever, Coach Clark!”

“Cue” by Adrian R., Iowa, Prompt A (Grades 7 & 8)

Two hundred men surround a table.

Four hundred eyes study a single man.

He plays an ancient game, from the time of horsemen, kings, and peasants.

Some call it billiards or snooker. They’re wrong, the man knows.

It’s pool, named for gamblers pooling bets for cash.

He surveys the table.

There’s a shot into the top left pocket. A winning one.

He looks for another opening, a better angle. He’ll spend minutes weighing his options, but he’s already decided: hook, line, and sinker.

With deadly precision, the man slams his cue into the ball, as the crowd gasps.

He misses.

“Coffee” by Kush K., Texas, Prompt B (Grades 7 & 8)

I never believed in love until I saw her.

The word gave me flashes of juvenile romantic comedies and cheesy prom pictures. It seemed unserious.

But nothing about this feels unserious:

My heart leaping through my suit. Rushes of adrenaline coursing through my veins, flushing my cheeks.

I gaze at the mass of swaying couples, sipping my coffee, and swivel my head back to her innocent eyes and toothy grin.

I almost think we should join them — that it’s required we make our couple debut on the dance floor.

But truly, all I need is us.

And coffee, of course.

“Number Eight” by Ella S., Iowa, Prompt B (Grades 9-12)

This was the eighth one, and I had yet to come up with an excuse that was convincing enough. Mom was already pressuring me more than she had before, and I knew it would come to a point where I wouldn't get to choose at all.

“This coffee is absolutely divine.”

My eyes snapped back to the conversation as I blinked away my thoughts. “Oh. Yes.”

It was all I said before I noticed his watch. Bingo. It was a fake. There was nothing mom hated worse than fakes. I smiled to myself and took a small bite of food.

“Anywhere” by Tilly P., Iowa, Prompt B (Grades 9-12)

Anywhere, USA, 1956. A radio broadcasts news bulletins in an empty restaurant.

“I didn’t think it would end like this,” he says, sitting at a table in the corner. They smile. It makes it seem normal.

“Me neither,” she remarks, looking out the windows. Meals lay at their tables, abandoned by owners that won’t come back. The air buzzes.

“I’m quite glad that I’m not alone,” he says.

The radio goes quiet quite suddenly. Somewhere, USA, down. The sky lights up with unnatural colors. Any minute now. She nods. He nods back. Their hands clasp tightly.

“Someday” by Ashley Goodwin, Iowa, Prompt A (Adult, Friend of the University)

The crowd of men pressed closer, all eyes on the championship match. A lone woman craned to peer over the sea of crew cuts. Some sneered at Betty, but most were too focused on the game to care. Excited whispers quieted as a man studied the table, cue stick in hand. Betty silently calculated the two final shots. Despite the audience’s murmured confusion, the contender positioned himself just as Betty had anticipated. A low crack sounded and she turned away, thinking:

It could’ve been me.

It should’ve been me.

Maybe someday.

Cheers of celebration erupted from the hall behind her.

“Farewell” by Julia Clark, New York, Prompt B (Adult, Friend of the University)

Reg headed back as everyone left the gravesite. Returning to upturned earth and flowers splayed across Mary’s gravestone, he had something to leave behind.

Reaching out, he let drop a photo. Here they are, a young couple coming of age and coming together. It proved the oft repeated story of how a sixty year bond began as love at first sight in the Iowa Memorial Union with a chance meeting and a simple cup of tea.

He’d known instantly that he wanted to spend his life with her. She’d looked into his eyes and known the same.

“All That Remains is Remembering” by Calan Smidt (05BA, 15MA), Iowa, (Prompt B) (Adult, University of Iowa Alumni)

The Iowa wind had trailed them inside, tousling her hair just so. He offered a napkin and coffee while warming up in the IMU, smiling like he already knew her. They spoke of poetry, war, of futures stirring into their quiet cups. Now, decades later, the beeping slows. Her hand, once soft in his, twitches. The scent of roasted beans returns. She sees him again, young, waiting in that isolated corner. “There you are,” she whispers, eyes glistening, “I’ve been looking.” Then stillness, and silence—except for the echo of footsteps and laughter in a memory that never left.

“Respite” by Juliette Jarabek (24MA), Iowa, (Prompt B) (Adult, University of Iowa Alumni)

We sit elbow to elbow, bridging the table’s dividing corner. Campus is abuzz, demanding and constant and busy.

But right now, it’s just us, soft and breathing. My coffee mug is ceramic comfort, a hearth warming me from palm to bone, throat to soul.

You crack a joke and I snort between sips of coffee, trying not to laugh it all over the tabletop.

You smile.

We have to get to work soon. There are papers to write, lectures to prepare, problems to confront.

But not right now.

It won’t last forever, but it does for now, and that’s enough.