

WRITE NOW

Write Now Microstory Contest 2023

Celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the University of Iowa Alumni Marching Band

Writing Prompt A:



Writing Prompt B:



Honorable Mentions

Grades 3 & 4

“Untitled” by Ellison R., Iowa

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“Small Moments” by Emily Maldonado, Illinois

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Adult, University of Iowa Alumni

“Trombone 2” by Wayne Bergman (92BBA, 95JD), Iowa

“Marching with the Fossils” by Rob Cline (92BA, 94MAT), Iowa

“The Child No One Could See” by Philip Houseal (78BA), Texas

“This is the Year” by Ryan Kelly (01BA), Arkansas

“Iowa Pride” by Angela Sewalson (19BLS), Iowa

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Grades 3 & 4, Honorable Mention

“Untitled” by Ellison R., Iowa (Prompt A)

I was waiting in line for what felt like hours for the parade, Grayson and I were in really bad moods. The kid in front of us let everyone cut in front of him and therefore us! I was really mad and about to give those kids a piece of my mind but Grayson stopped me to listen before I could go crazy. I heard this tat-tat-tat and a loud “BOOM”. My favorite Iowa Alumni Band was marching in front of us with their funny dance moves! I stopped being mad and started being happy. All’s well that ends well!

“The Boy Who Wanted to Play the Trumpet” by Meadow W., Iowa (Prompt B)

There once was a boy who wanted to play the trumpet.

He asked to be in a competition, but every one said, “you will never make it”. But he said, “I will make it, you will see!”

The next day he practiced all day and the day after that, and the day after that.

Finally, the day of the competition came, and the people said the same thing, and he too said the same thing.

He believed he could and he won.

The power of believing!

Grades 5 & 6, Honorable Mention

“Trumpet” by Sydney M., Iowa (Prompt B)

The crowd cheers louder than anything I have ever heard before. They are cheering for us, the performers, the life of the parade. We start playing, and I feel something new inside me, like two things clicking into place. We are united. Perfectly in harmony with every note we play. The crowd keeps cheering, and I feel stronger than ever before. I play my trumpet as loud as I can, growing louder than even the crowd. I feel amazing. This is amazing. We are amazing. We are a team.

“Step Off” by Emma Y., Iowa (Prompt A)

The old dog wound slowly around people’s legs, working his way toward the center of the crowd. He could hear loud music up ahead.

When he finally reached the source of the noise, he saw a group of men and women, each holding a shiny instrument. The little dog squeezed through the throng to get a better look.

From up close, the marching band was impossibly loud, but the dog crept closer. As he listened to the music, he felt something he hadn’t felt in years.

The old dog raised his head to the sun and howled.

Grades 7 & 8, Honorable Mention

“The Trumpet” by Olivia L., Iowa (Prompt B)

He held the rusty instrument up high, pointing it towards the dazzling sunny blue sky. He felt the old trumpet’s cracks and dents between his fingers. He knew how many generations have held this instrument and played its beautiful music. Now it’s he who must continue the legacy of this charming trumpet. He fiddled with the old valves on the elderly trumpet, each becoming harder to press down thanks to the rust. He didn’t care as the rust equaled memories. Memories of the lively music spewing out of the little trumpet. And he knew, he’s the one making more memories.

“Day of Celebration” by Aleyah P., Iowa (Prompt A)

It is a marvelous day to be an Iowa Marching Band alumni! The sun is rising and gleaming bright, giving me an excellent feeling about today. I have my socks pulled high and my Hawkeye hat on tight! The environment is filled with bliss and celebration from all ages. The glorious sounds of the alumni and their amusing instruments makes me want to march! Memories are flooding back making decrepit bones feel young again. To know this event has been taking place for 50 years makes my heart delighted! My pride in being an Iowa Marching Band alumni is prodigious!

“Photographs, Memories” by Clara U., Iowa (Prompt B)

Stacks of dusty photographs sit at his feet, and a dusted-off pile on the table. He gazes at the one in his hand. For a forty-year-old photo, it’s not in too bad of shape. The edges are slightly yellow, but that’s really it. It’s of him in his younger years, playing his trumpet. He closes his eyes and remembers what it was like. The clear sound that came pouring out, the way his fingers danced so delicately. Many things changed since then, his fingers gnarled, and the trumpet collected years of dust, emanating neglect. Despite that, he smiled now, remembering.

Grades 9-12, Honorable Mention

“His Spirit Soars On” by Edith D., Iowa (Prompt B)

I have no memories of my father, but I will always admire him.

I didn't inherit his athleticism, so I learned trumpet and joined marching band instead.

A hawk soaring overhead reminded me of my father, a game-changer for Hawkeye football. I followed in his footsteps; except I studied music.

When I met my wife, we too had our first memories playing on his field, and we visited Iowa every fall to play in the alumni band.

As the final measures of my life play out, I know that my spirit will stay at Iowa, just like Dad.

“Spirit” by Harper E., Iowa (Prompt A)

The pride and music thrummed through both my heart and veins.

Staring out into the crowd, seeking and living in the thrill of not just one man, but an entire band putting together a spirit of pride, that took on a life of its own and boosted the team's morale, guiding and fighting alongside.

This is the heart of it all, the sound of the music echoing through each step the team takes, and encourages and pushes the team to the limit.

The music thrummed for Iowa, and it thrums for you, too.

“Marching Band” by Saanvi S., Iowa (Prompt B)

The sun blinds me as I lift my trumpet up, poised, ready to add my share of music to the symphony that we will play. My trumpet feels heavier than usual, clutched in my clammy hands. I see the swish of the baton, and I start moving methodically. My fingers adroitly dance across the valves. Every instrument produces a harmonious sound and, together, a captivating melody. I feel an indescribable sense of jubilation as the music fills my heart. I play the last note as the crowd erupts into applause. Gratification fills my heart, and I grin.

Adult, Non-Alumni, Honorable Mention

“Joe” by Julia Clark, New York (Prompt B)

Ken realizes he doesn't have to concentrate. Muscle memory will propel him through alumni marching band practice so he drifts back to another time, another drill session, when he was a teen.

As always back then, he sees Joe at his side, trumpets in alignment. He sees Joe at graduation, and a few years later laughing at his cruddy Chevy, then in a tux serving as his best man. Then Joe's standing in his cadet uniform smiling and promising to return.

Ken snaps back to the present, staring at the empty space beside him, just as the band steps off.

“Small Moments” by Emily Maldonado, Illinois (Prompt B)

As the 2004 Hawkeye Marching Band alumni performed for a roaring crowd of tailgaters, Leland's mind wandered away from his audience and towards his trumpet. His fingers wrestled with the corroded valves. He noted the instrument's chestnut hue due to years of oxidizing brass. Discordant notes trickled as he diffidently blared into his mouthpiece. “Sixteen years and two kids later, I'm as rusty as my trumpet”, he pondered internally. Yet, surrounded by his old bandmates while getting to entertain his beloved school once again, Leland looked past these minor discrepancies and centered his mind back to this radiant moment.

“The Sun Also Rises” by Spencer Thompson, South Dakota (Prompt A)

The last thing Ezekiel wanted to do Friday was attend the homecoming parade. Grandpa Cyrus had been gone for eight months, and the idea of spending this revered day without him was detestable. Despite this internal protest, an immaterial power pulled him to the route. There the popcorn tasted sour, candy turned bitter, and the floats had the appeal of drying paint. He'd given up all hope on the day's festivities—that is until the band of old-timers in striped pants came rumbling down the street.

His toe began to tap and, somewhere far off, Cyrus' did, too.

Adult, University of Iowa Alumni, Honorable Mention

“Trombone 2” by Wayne Bergman (92BBA, 95JD), Iowa (Prompt A)

High step? More like medium step at best. As an undergraduate, Bob had existed in semi-obscure as a “Trombone 2.” But now, as a member of the Alumni Marching Band in the annual Homecoming Parade, it was Bob’s time to shine. Sure, his aging joints would be on fire after the arduous parade route covering nearly a mile. And yes, he might miss a note or two. But as he rounded the corner of Washington and Clinton on that crisp, autumn evening, Bob relished the spotlight as he exhorted the crowd to “cheer, cheer, cheer” for his beloved Hawkeyes.

“Marching with the Fossils” by Rob Cline (92BA, 94MAT), Iowa (Prompt A)

“The year I join the fossil band,” I annually told my wife, “is the year I am having a midlife crisis.”

She’d try to cajole me into marching the streets of Iowa City with other former—some nearly *former* in a more permanent sense—members of the Hawkeye Marching Band.

She’d remind me we met in the band—her a bright, brassy trumpeter and me a low, grumbly trombonist who somehow harmonized. She wanted to march with the fossils. I didn’t want to think about the past.

Left alone now, in crisis, I’ll march--bright, brassy, low, grumbly--for her.

“The Child No One Could See” by Philip Houseal (78BA), Texas (Prompt A)

He performed for the child no one could see.

The child no one could see, but that he knew was there. The child standing behind the lamppost 30 years ago, absorbing the belly-blasting blat of the brass, spit out by a 200-legged black and gold dragon wending its way through the raucous streets of the city. A multi-colored musical monster unimagined even in the dreams of a child. A child who decided in march time to grab the horn and join the band that made the music.

“This is the Year” by Ryan Kelly (01BA), Arkansas (Prompt A)

I-O-W-A! I-O-W-A! Fight! Hawks! Fight!

Our drum cadence thundered down Washington as we rounded the corner onto Clinton. While most of my energy was channeled through a yellow trombone, my Excalibur in battle, my striped blazer and mismatched socks certainly radiated the rest.

I passionately gestured toward the Hawkeye faithful.

For the past 50 years an undying love and desire has built to this. Every glide step, every beat, has made me ready. This anniversary year is like no other.

This is the year that football will be played at halftime.

And the year that we will take the rest.

“Iowa Pride” by Angela Sewalson (19BLS), Iowa (Prompt A)

He calls for all to join in the celebration! He rounds the corner, marching with pride beaming from his every move. Iowa fans and alumni have gathered to celebrate the momentous occasion, and I watch with wonder, feeling just as much a part of the group as everyone else around me. He stands out in the sea of black and gold all around us, a picture-perfect united front of tradition. The crowd cheers loudly at his enthusiasm, while the trombones prepare to join the trumpets and drums in song once again.