



## 100-Word Stories

### **Liz Gallagher / Ice Cream**

The whole shop is pink, except where it's white. The crowd of smoothie-drinking girls at the window table could be laughing at anything. One waves. She tells herself they're in a good mood because it's a sunny Saturday and everyone feels light. She orders. A single scoop chocolate cone. Avoids looking at the scooper guy, who was in her gym class last year. He has seen her in shorts. She pays. Alone at a table, bravely, she anticipates her first taste of summer. Hears one more laugh. Knows this time; they're laughing at her. She walks, gaze on the door, to the trash can. Tosses in her unlicked cone. Feels gray.

### **Kevin Emerson**

Everybody bought the cover story, as attention span was at a premium. Nobody asked Naomi and Alex about that night at Lunette's Beanery on 86<sup>th</sup>, about the nefarious espresso machine, its sinister plot, or the desperate battle waged during a half-hearted November dawn. Only Alex would ever know that Naomi briefly transmogrified her cat into a battle axe; only Naomi that Alex made a star fire from his fingernail clippings. Later, they passed each other coming and going from a school dance, Alex's head in another bandage...but what was there to say? Then it was too close to the holidays so there was all that, and time went by by by...

### **Deb Caletti / Come As You Are**

You see him over your back fence with his guitar, singing his heart out. A kid, swooped hair, Coronas around from the last party. There's a mattress, too. Sometimes he smokes on the roof.

You can read his mind. Kurt Cobain. Nirvana. You saw him posting flyers in the U District—Guitar Player Wanted. Can't suck. He doesn't mean you, though you once had real gigs before the mortgage, the wife. Even she doesn't know how you felt when your music and that crowd were a single heartbeat.

But he does. He knows. And over that fence it happens. Your dreams rise, collide. Together, they make their own immortal song.

### **Writing Prompt**

- Write a story in exactly 100 words – no more, no less
- Write double-spaced
- Count your words as you go
- Optional: Use a first sentence from one of the examples above
- Optional: If you finish a 100-word story, try writing a 25-word story... A 10-word story...

### **Student Examples**

#### **Anai F.**

The bus is packed with people, except where it's not. Mostly old men and women wearing fancy hats and reading old, torn magazines. It's winter...the snow falling peacefully on the streets. More people get on the bus. Nobody speaks. The only sound in the engine...humming, and the occasional announcements of the bus driver. The windows are cold and slightly covered in condensation. I trace snowflakes...like I used to when I was small...in the backseat of my mom's car. The bus comes to a halt. I stand up. Walk down the aisle. Down the small staircase. Into the cold.

#### **Miranda H.**

I missed Claire. The way she laughed. How she walked. When she parted her lips to speak but retreated. I wanted her back...with me.

## Teacher's Notes

Read at least one of the story examples (Liz Gallagher's is a great one to start with). Talk about:

- What happens in the story?
- How does it make you feel?
- How much time elapses from beginning to end?
- What tense is the story written in (present, past, etc.)? What perspective (first, second, third person?)
- Discuss the tone of the story, character development, word choice and/or other conventions as time permits. I like to point out the use of color in this story and how the author moves the story along and makes a transition from the pink/white/brightness of the beginning to the gray feeling at the end.

Look at the other examples if time permits, using the same questions (above) to discuss.

Give the assignment to write a story using exactly 100 words. Discuss the idea of using constraints to power creativity: with only 100 words the writer must be careful to use each word effectively, creating a rich atmosphere, moving the story along, catching the reader's interest and making the reader feel something by the end.

If students finish early, ask them to try writing a story in only 25 words, then in 10 words.

Read some finished stories aloud.