

WRITEGIRL PLANET

COUNTING ON YOURSELF
ISSUE NO. 13

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WRITER SPOTLIGHT:

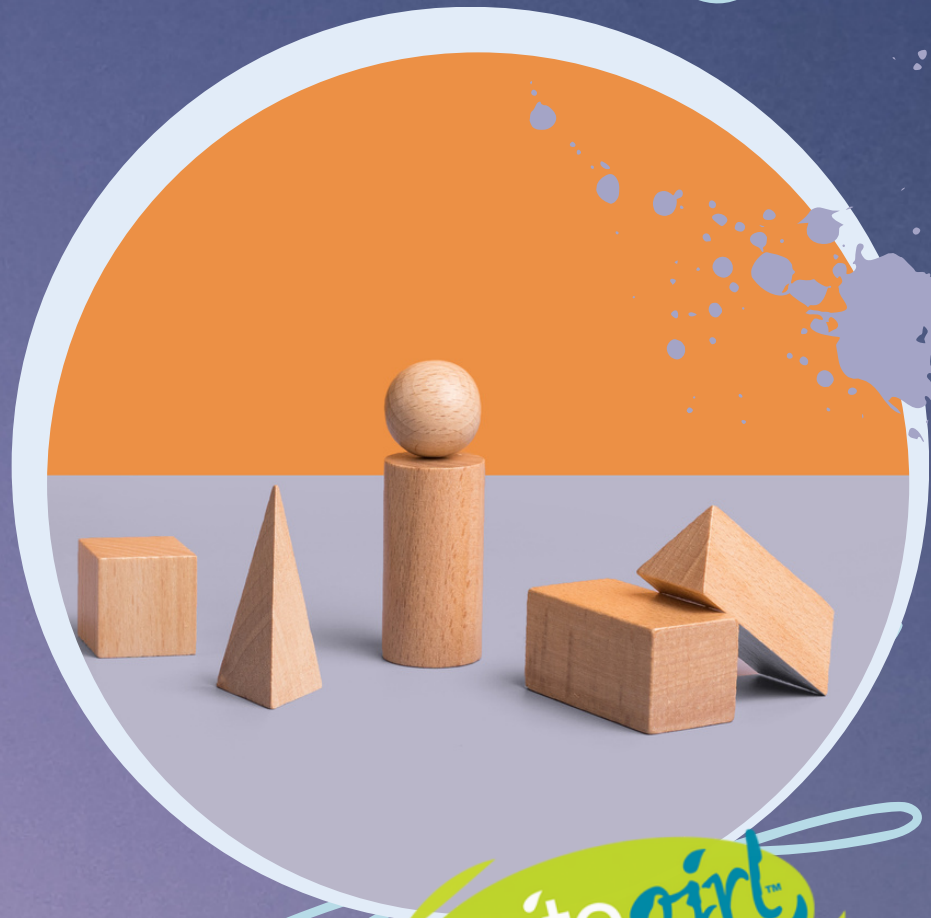
POET AND WRITEGIRL ALUM
SOFÍA AGUILAR

SELF-GUIDED

WRITING ACTIVITY:

POETRY BY THE NUMBERS

**MORE WRITING
ACTIVITIES**



PLUS:

A SELF-CARE MOMENT

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HOW TO USE THIS AT HOME



1 Breathe! Wiggle your fingers.
Wiggle your toes. Take a breath.
You're ready!

2

Now, gather your supplies:

- Your journal! (Or any paper you want to write on.)
- A pen or pencil! Whatever you prefer.
- An open mind. (Good for all occasions.)
- Yourself!
- A comfortable (enough) space to work.

3

Now give yourself a hug,
tell yourself you believe in
yourself, and let's go!



WRITER SPOTLIGHT: SOFÍA AGUILAR

Sofía Aguilar is a Chicana writer and editor based in Los Angeles, California. Her work has appeared in *Los Angeles Times*, *New Orleans Review*, and *Melanin Magazine*, among other publications.

As an alum of WriteGirl and a first-generation college graduate, Sofía earned a BA from Sarah Lawrence College, where she received the Andrea Klein Willison Prize for Poetry. *STREAMING SERVICE: golden shovels made for tv* (2021) is her self-published debut poetry chapbook. Its sequel *STREAMING SERVICE: season two*, also self-published, was released June 28, 2022. You can find her at sofiaaguilar.com.



Instagram and Twitter:
[@sofiaguilar](https://www.instagram.com/sofiaguilar)

WRITING TIP FROM SOFÍA:

Reading your work aloud can help you catch mistakes, inspire new ideas and make your work even stronger!

POPPYTIME BY SOFÍA AGUILAR

here we home on the hillside,
where you have called poppies,
orange, open, to your feet.

i wonder if i ever believed
i'd be here, fallen,
deep diving downwards

into the land i love.
we've gone back five years,
old times for a day.

WRITING EXPERIMENT:

REFLECT & REMEMBER

Think about a time when there was a beautiful, perhaps even magical sound. Where were you? What were you doing? Write about that time, and try to include at least one sound you remember!

FUN FACTS ABOUT SOUND:

- Did you know the cry of a human baby is louder than a car horn? It's about 115 decibels, while a car horn is only around 107-109 decibels.
- The majority of cows that listen to music end up producing more milk than those who do not. What kind of music do you think cows like?
- Sound can travel four times faster in water than in air because the particles in water are closer together.
- Sound can't travel in space because there aren't any molecules to vibrate. So if you were watching the Death Star explode it would be totally silent!
- The average range of human hearing is 20 hertz to 20,000 hertz, but mice can hear from 1 to 100 kilohertz, into the ultrasonic frequency.

WRITING EXPERIMENT:

LISTEN & REMEMBER:

We asked the WriteGirl Community to tell us about the sounds in their environment. They heard:

- Quiet, silence, stillness...
- Wind in the leaves.
- The foreboding thrum of cicadas!
- The sound of someone moving things in the next room. Bang, bloop...
- Music playing.
- The fan spinning.
- A dog's shrill barking.
- Keyboard clicks.
- Birds chirping.
- The rustling of leaves.
- Air conditioner.
- A car driving by, fast.
- Wind chimes in the backyard.
- The chatting of the neighbors.

1 Take a second to be quiet and listen to what is around you.

- What can you hear?
- How many different sounds do you hear right now?

2

In your journal, make a list of the sounds that you hear. Describe them.

- Are they loud or quiet?
- How do they make you feel?
- What memories do they bring up for you?

3

Then...take a few minutes to rearrange your thoughts about sound into a poem or story.

US... BY THE NUMBERS

Our lives contain lots of numbers. Let's explore them. We asked the WriteGirl Community to share some things they did recently, and quantify them in terms of numbers. Here are some of their activities, incorporating numbers:

Woke up to **3** alarms in the morning. • Picked **1** lemon from my lemon tree in my backyard. • Worked for **8** hours. • Took a nap for **2** hours. • Worked on **2** very different articles. • Spent **3** hours at the pool. • Cut up **1** cantaloupe, took the dog for **1** walk (so far), and read **40** pages in a book. • Watched **1** movie today with my sister. • Wrote **1** page of my novel. • Played **1** music-based rhythm game, and achieved a combo score of **300**, fixed **4** pillows in my room. • Hung out with **2** friends. • Was told I was going to wait **45** minutes because I was behind **6** people, but it ended up being **15** minutes because **4** people realized they didn't have their paperwork. • Stayed in bed for **30** minutes after I initially woke up, hung up **5** new decorations in my room, and put **2** different types of cream cheese on different sides of my bagel. • Waited **2** hours so I could watch the *Ms. Marvel* finale with my friends. • Talked to **3** friends. • Did **1** Zoom meeting. • Worked on **2** ridiculously long assignments.

WRITING EXPERIMENT:

COUNT ON ME!

Your turn! How have numbers shown up in your life today? Describe a few of your activities, using numbers in each phrase or sentence.

For instance, today, I:

- Drank 5 cups of tea.
- Went on a walk for 40 minutes.
- Ate 1 bowl of Raisin Bran.
- Made 2 phone calls.
- Exchanged 10+ text messages with my best friend.

1

Write at least 5 specific things you did today that you can quantify in numbers. They could be simple or complicated. It could be things you ate or drank, or people you talked to, or things you did on your computer or device.

2

Next level: Expand your list to ten different sentences or phrases, including more activities from the past week or month, then take a few minutes to rearrange them to create a poem.

WRITING EXPERIMENT:

USING NUMBERS AS A POETRY DEVICE

Incorporating numbers in your poetry is a great way to make your writing specific and to help your readers visualize and relate to your ideas, imagery and storytelling. Here is one poem that weaves numbers into every stanza. As you read this poem, think about what the theme of the poem might be. Also, what happens at the end of the poem? How does it make you feel?

NUMBERS BY MARY CORNISH

I like the generosity of numbers.
The way, for example,
they are willing to count
anything or anyone:
two pickles, one door to the room,
eight dancers dressed as swans.

I like the domesticity of addition—
add two cups of milk and stir—
the sense of plenty: six plums
on the ground, three more
falling from the tree.

And multiplication's school
of fish times fish,
whose silver bodies breed
beneath the shadow
of a boat.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

Even subtraction is never loss,
just addition somewhere else:
five sparrows take away two,
the two in someone else's
garden now.

There's an amplitude to long division,
as it opens Chinese take-out
box by paper box,
inside every folded cookie
a new fortune.

And I never fail to be surprised
by the gift of an odd remainder,
footloose at the end:
forty-seven divided by eleven equals four,
with three remaining.

Three boys beyond their mother's call,
two Italians off to the sea,
one sock that isn't anywhere you look.

Author bio: Poet Mary Cornish is a former children's book author and illustrator, as well as a professor of creative writing at Western Washington University.

WRITING EXPERIMENT:

TEN Q'S ABOUT YOU

In your journal, write your own answers to the following questions. Do your best to write in full sentences! Feel free to skip any questions you can't or don't want to answer. (This is for you, after all.)

1. Write about your birth order. Were you the first born, or the first to arrive in your family? Last? Only child? How do you think that impacts you?
2. How much sleep did you get last night? How many hours? How many hours do you usually need, and why?
3. How tall are you? How do you feel about your height?
4. How old are you? How do you feel about your age?
5. What things can you think of that you have done more than 100 times? For example, maybe you've eaten breakfast more than 100 times. What else? Make a list of everything you can think of that you have done at least 100 times!
6. What is something you have only done once? Write a little about that.
7. What is the hottest outdoor temperature you have ever experienced? Where were you? Tell us about that time.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

8. What is something you collect, and how many of those things do you have, roughly? If you don't collect anything, you could write about how many pairs of shoes you have, or t-shirts, or text messages. You could also write about an item you cherish and how much it weighs....or perhaps something you do at a specific time of day.

9. What is an address you have memorized? Write down the number and street, and tell us about that place! It could be home, work, a restaurant...a past place you lived... Whatever!

10. What are three things you want to do in the future? Be specific!

Hopefully you are starting to see how many numbers are around us all the time, and how much data we create and connect with every single day.

Take a few moments to read through your answers to these ten questions. Then, write a self-portrait paragraph or poem that uses some of these answers. Your poem can be written in short lines, like a freeform poem, or you could write it as a paragraph, as a prose poem. Write today's version of a self-portrait poem or prose piece that describes some aspects of you, featuring numbers and quantities.

SOME WRITING TIPS:

- Feel free to add, omit, rearrange or embellish as you go.
- Put on some quiet music!
- Set a timer for 8 minutes. (Suggested!)
- Remember - you don't need to include everything! Maybe you just pick five sentences you think are the strongest, put them into some kind of order and create a poem that way.
- You could also focus on one of your responses to just one of the questions, and that becomes a self-portrait of sorts, focusing on one element.
- You could incorporate some of what you wrote from other writing experiments in this issue.

Here are some example self-portrait poems to inspire you.

SELF-CARE MOMENT: QUICK RELEASE

Whew! Realizing how many numbers are in our lives can be exhausting. Rejuvenate yourself with this quick activity.

The eyes are intimately connected to the neural network. Through gentle movement of the eyes we access the neural pathways to de-program, or defrag, the brain.

Here's what to do:

- Hold your head still and find a spot to look at on your right side.
 - Find a spot to look at on your left side.
 - Move your eyes gently from the right spot to the left spot.
- You'll begin to feel yourself getting calmer.
 - Repeat until your eyes tire out.
 - Once your eyes feel tired, squeeze them tight and open them three times.
 - Then take three deep breaths, inhaling through the nose and exhaling through the mouth.

TAH-DAH! YOU'RE REFRESHED. (Hopefully.)

FREEWRTING TIME!

○ TIME TO LET YOURSELF GO, AND FREE UP YOUR MIND!

Freewriting means putting your pen or pencil to the page and writing without editing, revising or stopping. Put on some quiet music, set a timer for 5 minutes, and let yourself write freely!

YOUR 5 MINUTES START NOW!



THREADS!

● THIS ISSUE OF THE WRITEGIRL PLANET WAS INSPIRED BY A WRITEGIRL WRITING WEDNESDAY WORKSHOP

At the end of every WriteGirl workshop, everyone has the chance to share their reflections in what we call THREADS. Threads help connect us to each other.

Here are some threads from the WriteGirl Community:

- *I often say: “I write: I don’t do numbers” So it was very cool to hear how numbers can shape writing, and how context can shape numbers!*
- *I loved the number-filled self portraits shared today!*
- *I “hate” numbers, but maybe now I love them just a little bit. 😊*
- *I loved hearing everyone's personal life told through numbers, and numbers are considered normally to be cold/robotic/inhuman.*
- *One thing that I liked was the combination of math and art! I frankly think that the division is ridiculous, especially since both are awesome. (My favorite conspiracy theory is that the division was artificially constructed by the business majors.)*
- *I loved the community of WriteGirl today and always.*

SEND YOUR WRITING TO US!

Visit the [WriteGirl Clubhouse Page](#) to submit
your creative work!



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