

WRITEGIRL PLANET

POETRY WORKSHOP

Issue No. 5

Poetry Tips from Experts

OUR SPECIAL GUESTS
SHARE THEIR POETIC
INSIGHTS

Poetry is...

FIND OUT WHAT
MAKES A POEM...A
POEM!

Cliché or Not to Cliché?

HOW TO MAKE YOUR
POEMS UNIQUE

Concrete Poetry

GET YOUR POETRY IN SHAPE!

PLUS

YOUR SELF-CARE
TOOLKIT

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April 25, 2020

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HOW TO USE THIS AT HOME

1 Wiggle your fingers and make circles with your wrists. Take three deep breaths!

2 Grab your journal and a pen. (Or a Post-it – any paper works!)

3 Browse this "WriteGirl Planet" and find something that sparks your interest.

4 Take a break for some hydration!

5 When you feel like you've achieved something, draw a big star on your work! (or just give yourself a pat on the back!)

6 If you start missing WriteGirl workshops, here are some pictures!




MEET OUR SPECIAL GUESTS!

Ashaki M. Jackson

Ashaki M. Jackson is a VONA and Cave Canem alumna. Her work appears in *CURA*, *Obsidian*, *Faultline* and *Prairie Schooner* among other publications. She is the author of two chapter-length collections – *Surveillance* (Writ Large Press) and *Language Lesson* (MIEL). Jackson is co-founder of Women Who Submit, and she serves as an executive editor of *The Offing* magazine. She earned a Creative Writing MFA from Antioch University Los Angeles and a Psychology Doctorate from Claremont Graduate University. Poetry Writing Tip: Looking for a way to refresh your poem? Flip it upside down; rewrite the last line first and see what comes out! Need different colors to include in your poem? Try the Sherwin Williams digital color wall online! There are hundreds of paint colors to choose from like "mariner" and "artifact."

www.ashakijackson.com

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POETRY WRITING TIP: Looking for a way to refresh your poem? Flip it upside down; rewrite the last line first and see what comes out! Need different colors to include in your poem? Try the Sherwin Williams digital color wall online! There are hundreds of paint colors to choose from like "mariner" and "artifact."

Elline Lipkin

Elline Lipkin is a poet, academic and nonfiction writer. Her first book of poems, *The Errant Thread*, was chosen by Eavan Boland for the Kore Press First Book Award. Her second book, *Girls' Studies*, was published by Seal Press. Her poems have been published in various contemporary journals and she has been a resident at Yaddo, the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, and the Dorland Mountain Arts Colony. From 2016-2018, she served as Poet Laureate of Altadena and co-edited the *Altadena Poetry Review*. Currently a Research Scholar with UCLA's Center for the Study of Women, she has taught poetry workshops for Writing Workshops Los Angeles, 826 Valencia, the California Institution for Women, Scripps College, and worked online and in the classroom with a variety of writers.

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POETRY WRITING TIP: Think of poetry as play — experiment with the feel of words, their tones and rhythms, the images they evoke.

MEET OUR SPECIAL GUESTS!

Rachel McLeod Kaminer:

Rachel McLeod Kaminer grew up in the Blue Ridge of the Appalachian Mountains. Her book of poetry *As in the dark, descend* was published with Writ Large Press in 2016. Next up is *Attendance*, a hybrid work of documentary poetry written in collaboration with Rocío Carlos. *Attendance* will appear on *The Operating System* in late 2018. Rachel lives and works in the Los Angeles River basin. She genuinely prefers to communicate via Tumblr messenger. No, really.



POETRY WRITING TIP:

Listen to international poets read out loud! You can't physically travel across the planet right now, but thanks to the internet you can be inspired by poetry around the world.

Janel Pineda

Janel Pineda is a Los Angeles-born poet and the daughter of Salvadoran immigrants. She is an editor and translator for *La Piscucha Magazine*, a multilingual arts, literature and culture magazine created by Salvadoran writers. Janel has performed her poetry internationally in both English and Spanish. As a WriteGirl alumna, her first publication was in a WriteGirl anthology but her poems have since been published in *wildness*, *Latino Book Review* and *The Wandering Song: Central American Writing* in the United States, among others. She is currently pursuing an MA in Creative Writing and Education at Goldsmiths, University of London as a Marshall Scholar.



POETRY WRITING TIP:

The more specific you are, the more your audience can find a way of connecting to your story. You know more than you think you know: begin with observations, reflections, and let your imagination carry you through. Make use of the sounds of words, the scents and feel of your images, and have fun playing with the space on the page!

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 [@Pineda_Janel](https://twitter.com/Pineda_Janel)

MEET OUR SPECIAL GUESTS!

Darby Price

Darby Price started volunteering with WriteGirl in 2008, a few years before she left L.A. for the East Coast. There, she earned her MFA from George Mason University, where she was a Heritage Fellow and the Poetry Editor for *Phoebe*. Her poems have since appeared in *Beloit Poetry Journal*, *Zócalo Public Square*, *Redivider*, *RHINO*, and *PANK*, among others. Her essay, "A Michael Bay Brain: Encouraging Words for the Working Poet," is forthcoming in the anthology *Far Villages: Welcome Essays for New & Beginner Poets* from Black Lawrence Press. Darby teaches undergraduate writing at UC Irvine, and when she isn't Zoom conferencing, you can find her hanging out with her cats and husbae in Long Beach.

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POETRY WRITING TIP:

- 1) Let the associations between words, images and meaning surprise you - I often go into a poem thinking that it's going to be about one thing, and discover that actually, there was a whole other subject buried in there! Surprise is good - it's the whole delight of poetry.
- 2) Reading is essential. Reading other poets reminds me of what's possible, and it also reminds me that every poet brings their own voice to the page, even if they're writing about similar things. That includes me! I guess what I mean is: reading poetry inspires me, and it also gives me permission to go for it, whatever "it" happens to be on a given day.
- 3) If you get stuck, look around you! I often find good starting points from objects and pictures around me. Then, I just let my imagination fly.

MEET OUR SPECIAL GUESTS!


Sholeh Wolpé

Sholeh Wolpé is an Iranian-born poet, writer and playwright. UCLA's inaugural Writer-in-Residence in 2018, she is presently the current Writer-in-Residence at UC Irvine. Wolpé is the recipient of the 2014 PEN/Heim, 2013 Midwest Book Award, 2010 Lois Roth Persian Translation prize as well as artist fellowships and residencies in the U.S., Mexico, Spain, Australia and Switzerland. Her most recent books include *Keeping Time With Blue Hyacinth* (Univ. of Arkansas Press), and *The Conference of the Birds* (W.W. Norton). Wolpé's literary works number over twelve collections of poetry, books of translations, and anthologies, as well as several plays. She has performed her literary work with world-renowned musicians nationally and internationally.

www.sholehwolpe.com

Upcoming Events:

www.sholehwolpe.com/calendar

 @Sholeh_Wolpe

 @Sholeh_Wolpe

 youtube.com/SholehWolpe



POETRY WRITING TIP:

If you go searching for your poem with your cup empty of all expectations, beliefs and disbeliefs... the world will unfold and fill your cup with jewels. What's in the cup today? Take a look and discard it all. Then lift up your head and look at the world, and at your own self. What do you see?

I like the juxtaposition of poetry and images. Check this out as an example: I was sung into this world, Spanish version of I was sung into this world.

CAREER SPOTLIGHT:

Ellen Lutwak

I've been naming things ever since I was a little girl. Dishes my mom created from leftovers, many, many goldfish, pretend nail polish...I was fascinated by the names of Revlon polish. While I was recognized for my poetry in middle and high school, I majored in journalism at Cal State Northridge. My love of wordplay and persuasion led me to a career in advertising - with close to 20 years in the packaging division of Mattel. What a thrill to discover that my aptitude for puns was a professional skill - naming! There I came up with hundreds of names for dolls, action figures and little cars - as well as product descriptions and instructions. Today, I freelance as Namegirl, working with a diverse range of clients including tech startups, wines for women and real estate developments.

www.ellenlutwak.popslice.com



Just talk about it: A casual chat can prompt the perfect name or title without even thinking about it - although after these many years, my mind is always in naming mode. For instance, a fledgling television production company was launching food programming, and they needed a name in short order. "I've so much to do," bemoaned the owner, "And my plate is already full." I reacted immediately, "Hey, that's a great name!" Hence, **Full Plate Media** was cookin'! Brainstorming gets the creative juices flowing: Naming isn't done in isolation.

Brainstorming gets the creative juices flowing: Naming isn't done in isolation. Brainstorming brings people together and builds teams. Shout out whatever comes to mind. Knock around ideas. There is never a wrong answer. Write down everything on a giant note pad on an easel. Share name ideas with people who have no idea what the project may be.

Play around with words, rhymes and portmanteau: A "portmanteau" is a word formed by combining two different terms to create a new word. A couple of examples: brunch (breakfast + lunch) and cineplex (cinema + complex.)

POETRY IS...



Have you ever read a bad poem?

Bad Poem:

I love you because you are beautiful.
You mean the world to me.
I will love you forever.
You will always be in my heart.

And then thought to yourself - what is poetry, anyway?
Poetry is a free form of writing that expresses your voice and a specific point-of-view.

Poetry does not have to rhyme. Poetry is painting with words. Poetry is being specific and adding details. Poetry is inventing a vibe with words. Poetry does not have to have line breaks and can be one long paragraph. Poetry is using metaphors, personifying and using whatever it takes – similes, sounds, exaggeration and irony, to say what she wants to say, and feel what she wants to feel! Because she is Poetry.

Uh-oh, did we just write a prose poem?



Check out this poem from a WriteGirl mentee. Notice all the great sensory details she includes.

July Rain

By Phoebe Perkins, age 16

I can still smell the river, dominating all my senses; its rough, almost severe smell, not bad, not good, just home.

I can feel the humidity cling to my skin as I drive past the brightly colored homes, each one bigger than the last, giving me a feeling of a simpler time.

I can still picture the lightning illuminating the sky like a stage light, too bright – an artificial sun. The gray clouds fade into one another as the sound of wind chimes, the sound of familiarity, is picked up by the growing wind... and suddenly it is over.

EXPLORING POETRY AND PLACE

My Place

Write a poem describing where you live. What does it look like? What does it smell like? What does it feel like? Try using your 6th sense! (That gut feeling is the 6th sense.) Have you ever thought about how the idea of “place” can impact you? Think about how the concept of “place” can be more than just a physical location. See if you can include alliteration. (Alliteration is the occurrence of the same letter or sound at the beginning of adjacent or closely connected words. For example: WriteGirl writers write every day.)



Shared Wisdom

What are some beliefs that represent where you are from? What phrases, words or sayings are important to you, or to members of your family or even one of your friends? Put them all together to create a poem of family / community wisdom and shared ideas.



Baby, It's Cold Outside

Describe the weather right now – with as much detail as possible! Can you figure out which direction the wind is blowing? What is in the north, south, east and west of you? Write a poem that is all about the current weather, and your current location. Think about including specific words related to weather and direction. Did you know that there are many different words to describe clouds, like Noctilucent clouds that form in the Mesosphere?

[Check out this website](#), used by aviators.



EXPLORING POETRY AND PLACE

Looking For a New Word to Try?

Ambiance (vibes)

Cobblestones (old style sidewalk)

Rustic (country, plain, raw)

Illuminated (glowing, lit up)

Evocative (bringing strong feeling to mind)

Opulent (luxurious, fancy)

Archway (big open doorway)

Curvature (the state of being curved...)

Reminiscent (when something reminds you of ___)

Vantage Point (a place with a good view)

Extra Poetry Experiment:

Give us the Skinny

Write a super skinny poem with only one word per line down the page. Think about a topic that would be suitable for this kind of skinny poetry writing activity. Maybe a poem about being nervous to speak in front of an audience? Maybe a poem about a long drive down a long narrow highway?



CLICHÉ OR NOT TO CLICHÉ?

THE ANSWER IS NOT TO CLICHÉ!

Clichés are phrases that are often repeated. They are used so often that they sort of get worn out.

They represent common feelings about relatable experiences, but are totally overused.

Cliché phrases

Never judge a book by its cover
Actions speak louder than words
Better safe than sorry
The grass is greener on the other side
Third time's the charm
As beautiful as a rose
Sparkle like diamonds

Individual words can become overused and cliché too.

Words that can be cliché:

Nice
Pretty
Happy
Heart
Angels
Soulmate
Flowers
Darkness
Butterfly
Blossom

Watch Out for Los Angeles Clichés:

General traffic
Delicious food, without details
Landmarks without any other details
Yoga-Practicing Vegetarians
Smog!
Pacific Ocean, without any other details
Palm trees, palm trees, palm trees

How to Uniquify/Individualize these Clichés:

The key to avoiding clichés is to include specific details that you observed with your own senses.



Here's a good example of a poem about LA that includes a lot of specific details and place names and sensory details. Even the first line, "I was grown in Los Angeles," is written without the cliché of just saying, "I grew up in Los Angeles."

The LA Girl

By Addissyn House, age 16

I was grown in Los Angeles,
raised hipster by Abbot Kinney, Kashi, and Kale,
christened on Main Street and baptised on Hollywood Boulevard.
I was born into a pastime of exploring,
beginning with cracks in concrete and
graffiti on the worn out walls of my neighborhood.
I was fed intelligence straight off the LA Times, online,
fell in love with movies telling me
to break the mold I am in love with.
I sang nursery rhymes of honking horns and
was kissed goodnight by a shadowy sky,
where unanswered dreams float, waiting to be fulfilled.
Los Angeles has given me my dreams
in the shape of sunsets against the Manhattan Beach Pier
and mourning doves cooing on my balcony.
She gave me rowdy teenage boys and loyal best friends,
going to poetry slams and book festivals in Santa Monica.
I've got my name in a book all thanks to Los Angeles.
And so, I live in Los Angeles,
travelling towards success with CoolHaus ice cream sammies
along Sepulveda Boulevard where it meets Jeff.
I am growing in a cultural melting pot,
listening and watching the brave women of Los Angeles
make me into an LA girl.



CONCRETE POETRY

GET YOUR POEMS
INTO SHAPE!

Concrete Poetry, sometimes called “shape poetry” is poetry whose visual appearance matches the topic of the poem. The words form shapes which illustrate the poem's subject as a picture, as well as through their literal meaning.

The Shape of a Thing

Choose an object that you have strong emotions about, either positive or negative emotions. List at least three items. Feel free to write a poem in a shape automatically or try writing a poem first and then creating the shape afterwards! This concrete poem is from a WriteGirl mentee:

I Take a Step

Divine, age 14

Everyday is like
A set of stairs
I go up and I go

D

O

W

N

Sometimes I

Give up and

Take a step

D

O

W

N

But I know

I have to go

Back up and

Stay up so I take that

S

T

E

P

I make it

WRITING TIP!

TRY NOT TO USE CLICHÉ SHAPES SUCH AS A HEART, HOUSE, CIRCLE OR OTHER REGULAR, COMMON SHAPES. THIS IS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR YOU TO DEEPEN YOUR CREATIVITY AND MAKE YOUR POEM INTO A UNIQUE SHAPE!

THE WORLD AT YOUR FINGERTIPS!

USE THESE DIGITAL
RESOURCES TO
EXPLORE THE WORLD
FROM YOUR ROOM.

Curate Your Own Mobile Library

With the Poetry Foundation's free [POETRY app](#), you can explore hundreds of poems by classic and contemporary poets from the comfort of your home! From William Shakespeare to Heather McHugh, the Poetry Foundation's app turns your phone into a mobile poetry library. Search for old favorites with memorable lines, give your phone a shake to discover new poems to fit any mood, and save your favorite poems to share through Facebook and Twitter!

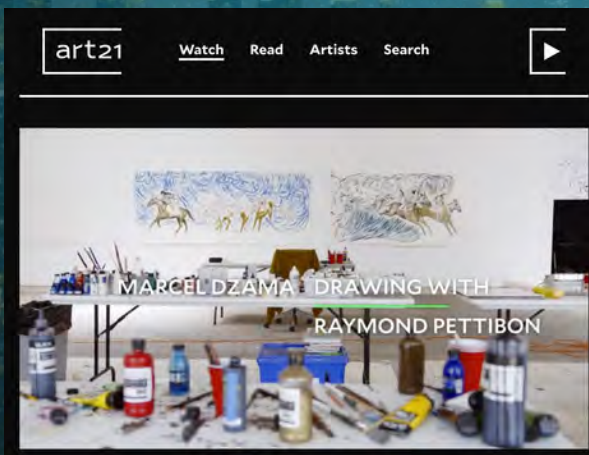


Collaborate with Teens All Over the World!

While we are staying physically distant from each other, it's more important than ever to stay connected socially. That's why Young Poets Network is launching a collaborative renga poetry challenge! The word 'renga' literally means 'linked poem' and consists of alternating haikus and couplets, with each stanza written by a different person. Join the link by clicking [here!](#)

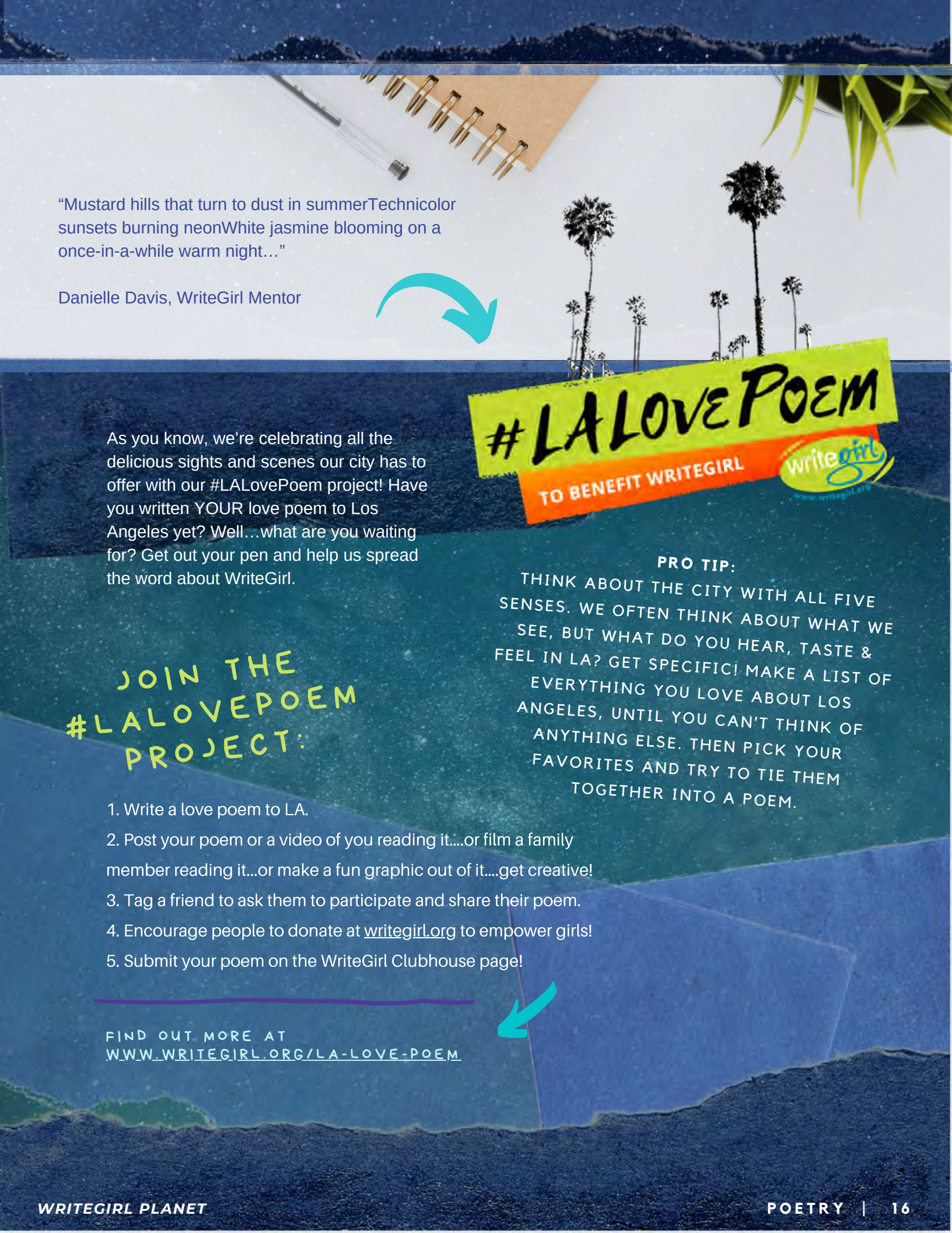
Learning from the Best

The PBS series [Art School](#) offers short (about five minutes), easy-to-follow videos in which artists talk about their careers and demonstrate a special skill. We loved learning about the niche lettering work of Californian artist and author [Jessica Hische](#).



All-Access Pass

Interested in more expansive access to contemporary artists' studios? [Art 21](#) gets up close and personal with visual artists, welcoming viewers into their worlds and studios. If you are not sure where to start, check out the film about Bay-based artist Stephanie Syjuoco. Her work is an inspiring example of what is broadly called "social practice art," which is primarily concerned with human interaction.



“Mustard hills that turn to dust in summer
Technicolor sunsets burning neon
White jasmine blooming on a
once-in-a-while warm night...”

Danielle Davis, WriteGirl Mentor

As you know, we’re celebrating all the delicious sights and scenes our city has to offer with our #LALovePoem project! Have you written YOUR love poem to Los Angeles yet? Well...what are you waiting for? Get out your pen and help us spread the word about WriteGirl.

JOIN THE #LALOVEPOEM PROJECT:

1. Write a love poem to LA.
2. Post your poem or a video of you reading it...or film a family member reading it...or make a fun graphic out of it...get creative!
3. Tag a friend to ask them to participate and share their poem.
4. Encourage people to donate at writegirl.org to empower girls!
5. Submit your poem on the WriteGirl Clubhouse page!

FIND OUT MORE AT
WWW.WRITEGIRL.ORG/LA-LOVE-POEM



PRO TIP:
THINK ABOUT THE CITY WITH ALL FIVE SENSES. WE OFTEN THINK ABOUT WHAT WE SEE, BUT WHAT DO YOU HEAR, TASTE & FEEL IN LA? GET SPECIFIC! MAKE A LIST OF EVERYTHING YOU LOVE ABOUT LOS ANGELES, UNTIL YOU CAN'T THINK OF ANYTHING ELSE. THEN PICK YOUR FAVORITES AND TRY TO TIE THEM TOGETHER INTO A POEM.

FREE YOUR PEN

SELF-CARE TOOLKIT

It's totally normal to feel anxious or worried right now. But you can help fight your fret by staying in the present moment and tapping into your senses. Try closing your eyes for three minutes and clearing your mind. Focus on observing what you hear, how you feel and what you smell. If any thoughts pop into your head, acknowledge them and then let them go and get back to what's happening now! Don't forget to breathe.

Congratulations, you just meditated! How'd it go?

Reflect on your experience by creating a meditation poem! Write down all of the things you noticed while your eyes were closed. BE SPECIFIC! You can even write down those pesky thoughts that wandered in. Combine these descriptive lines in a way that speaks to you and read back your new mindful poem.

We want to read it too! Share it with us on the [WriteGirl Clubhouse page!](#) Just click [SUBMIT YOUR WRITING](#).

The music of this moment

By Alex McCale, WriteGirl Staff member

Breathe in...
a gentle buzz of energy
begins to float on my skin
somewhere outside, the harsh growl from an air blower
bursts in & out of my consciousness
while the yip of a tiny dog plays like a triangle in the distance,
keeping rhythm with the bang of my neighbor's closing cabinets
Breathe in...
the soft air leaps to my nose to dance to the music of this moment

My apartment is a symphony.

WHAT'S NEXT?

WRITEGIRL ONLINE WORKSHOP: MYSTERY GENRE

We'll surprise you with the genre of our next online workshop!

Saturday

May 9, 2020

11 AM - 12:30 PM

Via Zoom -

watch your email for the link.



SPECIAL THANKS TO:



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for you!



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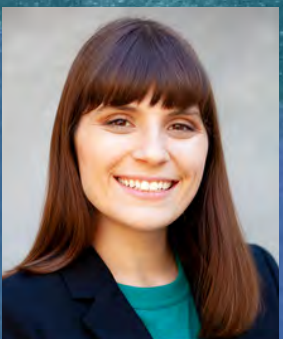
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