



Creative Voices from WriteGirl

EMOTIONAL MAP OF LOS ANGELES

WRITING EXPERIMENTS

INSIDE -->

Hello world, hello LA

INTRODUCTION

For this year's anthology, we asked our girls and mentors to give us their Los Angeles stories – where they feel at home, the tiny details of one particular moment, their unique view of the city, stories of joy and loss and journeys out of town.

Our girls and women writers live, work and write all over LA, from Santa Monica to Watts and beyond. Brandy ponders life and love under a sky full of stars; Seenah feels like an outsider as she walks amongst the sights and sounds of Venice Beach. With every page is a new voice, and a new story. Together, the creative work of these 193 writers forms a fresh take on our sprawling metropolis – it is an Emotional Map of Los Angeles.

At our monthly WriteGirl workshops, we bring everyone together to write in our city's most inspiring places. We explored fiction at the Huntington Gardens, wrote songs at the LA Opera, crafted poetry amongst the artifacts at the Japan America National Museum and created laugh-your-pants-off comedy at The Actors' Gang theater. These are more than just places on a map – they are worlds unto themselves.

I love exploring different neighborhoods and hidden creative spots in LA, and I always have my camera to capture textures and slices of the city. The chapter title pages are all photos I've taken over the past year – with a little design twist from our book designer, Sara Apelkvist.

Chapter 1: View from 6th Street Bridge, Boyle Heights

Chapter 2: Fabric District, Downtown LA

Chapter 3: Pacific Ocean, Santa Monica

Chapter 4: Near Malibu Beach

Chapter 5: Coastline, off Venice Boardwalk and Marina Del Rey

Chapter 6: Valley Blvd. and Mission Rd., Lincoln Heights

Chapter 7: Santa Monica Pier Carousel

Chapter 8: Wall detail, Industrial Arts District, Downtown LA

Chapter 9: Quesadilla, East LA

- Chapter 10: South Park, Downtown LA
- Chapter 11: Metal grate, foot of Los Angeles City Hall
- Chapter 12: Rusty farm equipment, Lake Arrowhead
- Chapter 13: Ferris wheel, Santa Monica Pier
- Chapter 14: Pavement lines, San Gabriel
- Chapter 15: Parking structure, Arts District, Downtown LA
- Chapter 16: Street lamp cluster, LAX
- Chapter 17: Power lines and palm trees, El Sereno
- Chapter 18: Window, historic Downtown LA Terminal Annex Post Office
- Chapter 19: Paint samples, Highland Park
- Chapter 20: WriteGirl writing, Culver City
- Chapter 21: Chandelier, Hollywood

Let this book give you a fresh view of LA and a window into the lives and minds of the next generation of women writers. Ditch the GPS, power down your devices, forget what you think you know about this city, and dive into the Emotional Map of Los Angeles.

– Keren Taylor, Executive Director, WriteGirl

*Writing, good writing,
requires a quiet space
and some dedicated
time, and an open heart.*

CHAPTER 1



COYOTE ON THE STREET CORNER

CELEBRATE L.A.



Aasha Talibah, age 17

I wanted to show the portion of LA that I live in everyday.

City Life

Lawn mowers howl
The Billboard's Top 100 blast
Horns honk in frustration
Red lights ignored

School bells ring
Chip bags open
Taco trucks roll into formation
McDonald's employee #1 takes an incorrect order

Shoes slap against the worn pavement
Lips smack in annoyance
Automated voices call out from the Metro
Headphones turn to the highest volume

The city is alive

Asha Berkes, age 15

I wrote this after I had spent the day doing touristy things in LA with friends from out of town, and I fell in love with my beautiful hometown even more than I already had been.

I Saw My City

I saw you in the LA glamour
I saw strawberry-stained teeth poolside in a white bathing suit
I saw tortured artists running through the midnight streets
screaming like the world was ending

I saw you happy
I saw me happy

I saw art,
life,
hot summer days, red with passion and sunburns,
the ocean at two in the morning

I saw poetry lips and pink hair
I saw who I wanted to be
I saw sore throats and haunted streets
I saw holding hands on Sunset Boulevard
I saw the sunset every night

I saw the City of Angels
I saw you

Don't be afraid to
put things on paper,
even if they don't fit.

What Is LA?

LA is Hollywood

A place where people want to be

A place where everyone has to be a certain thing

LA is Beverly Hills

Where everyone wants to live

A place where everyone wants to belong

LA is where there is diversity

LA is where dreams come true

LA is a place where you decide your definition of it

And make it your own.

Arden Rosenthal, age 16

At the WriteGirl Memoir Workshop I got the prompt "I always loved the smell of..."

The Smell of the Ocean


From fuchsia sunsets to lilac houses
The waves provide a calm, never a storm
The sand is paint for my feet
The water is the beat of my heart

When the sea hits my face and freezes it
When my body is immersed in salt and water
When all I can see is blue
When all I can feel is absolute serenity

When falling does not mean getting hurt
There is this smell of the ocean.

Take risks.

If you are afraid to write it,
you need to **write it.**

A thin white diagonal line starts from the left edge of the image and extends upwards and to the right, ending in the middle of the page.

Addissyn House, age 15

This poem was written for my California State Summer School for the Arts application.

Highway Signs

green signs wave us away:
"thanks for visiting Indiana, come back soon"
leave behind paint peeling barns,
Hoosier crimson street signs,
lonely roads,
home

the same green signs beckon:
"Welcome to California" and "Los Angeles City Limits"
say hello to cold, foggy mornings,
barbeques on 80 degree February afternoons,
tank tops and outdoor hallways all year 'round,
welcome to apartment 302

when they visit me
I'll paint my own green signs:
"Welcome to California As I Know It"

A close-up, monochromatic blue-toned photograph of a hand holding a pen over an open notebook. The notebook's pages are filled with dense, cursive handwriting. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the texture of the paper and the grip of the pen.

PICK UP THE PEN

WRITING

EVERYDAY OBJECTS

Objects that we see and use everyday can be transformed into powerful muses with just a tiny shift in perspective. In her poem "Cloud," Sandra Cisneros recounts the epic journey and many lives of a simple cloud. Pick an object from the choices below, and list all the different ways and situations where it could be used. Example: A pair of scissors can cut a child's hair and then cut the tags off of a new winter coat in another.

Suitcase
Candle
Balloon
Scissors
Clock
Dollar
Camera
Key
Ruler
Bicycle
Calendar
Fork

Think about the sound, shape and texture of the object. What emotions does it represent? Where would you normally find it? Who would use it?

Once you have three or more different impressions, describe each one and then create a poem like "Five Ways to Look at a Candle."

A SENSE OF SETTING

Our senses (sight, smell, taste, touch and sound) have the power to transform us. They also have the power to enhance our surroundings, adding magic to the atmosphere. Suddenly, we're experiencing a special place as if we've never been there before. We literally breathe in that place and it becomes a part of us.

Pick a place that you love and make a list of the sensory details you'll find there. Maybe it's the feel and taste of gauzy, pink cotton candy at a carnival, the crackle of leaves beneath your shoes in a forest, or the salty scent of the ocean. Use your list to create a piece like "The Smell of the Ocean."

NOW TRY THIS:

Transform your poem into fiction. Place a character into the setting you've created and give them something to do. What are they doing in this setting? Why? Will they stay here? Where will they go next? Describe the answers in detail to find out where your story might go.

WRITEGIRL WORKS!



WriteGirl is a creative writing and mentoring organization that helps teen girls discover and express their creative voices. Founded in 2001, with just 30 girls and 30 volunteers, WriteGirl now serves more than 300 teen girls annually with a variety of programs and the professional skills of 150 women writers who volunteer their time and enthusiasm.

WriteGirl teens come from more than 80 schools throughout Los Angeles County and volunteers are recruited from such prestigious companies as the *Los Angeles Times*, Disney, Paramount, Time Warner, Fox, HBO and Roll International. WriteGirl Volunteers complete a rigorous training program and dedicate a total of 1,500 hours each month to support our programs.

Each season, WriteGirl teen girls are paired with professional women writers for yearlong program of one-on-one mentoring, creative writing workshops, public readings, publications and college entrance guidance. Girls develop vital writing, public speaking, leadership and critical thinking skills, and the confidence to make an impact on the world around them.



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Never underestimate the power of a girl and her pen.

There is
no end
to inspiration.

