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Come in...and be captivated...



### Writers' Craft Box

What this section is intended to do:  
Give writers suggested hints, resources, and advice.

How to use: Pick and choose what you feel is most helpful and derive inspiration from it- most importantly, **HAVE FUN!**

What a Writers' Craft Box is: Say you're doing an art project and you want to spice it up a bit. You reach into a seemingly bottomless box full of colorful art/craft supplies and choose only the things that speak to you. You take only what you need to feel that you've fully expressed yourself. Then, you go about doing your individual project adding just the right amount of everything you've chosen until you reach a product that suits you completely. So, this is on that concept. Reach in, find the things that inspire you, use the tools



"Arts and Crafts" N.M.B Copyright 2008

that get your writing going and see it as fulfilling your self-expression as opposed to following rules.

Writing is art and art is supposed to be fun, relaxing, healing and nurturing. It's all work and it's all play at the same time. A Writers' Craft Box is whatever your imagination needs it to be- a lifeboat, the spark of an idea, a strike of metaphorical lightning, a reminder, or simply the recommendation of a good book. Feel free to sit back and break out the crayons. Coloring outside the lines is heartily encouraged.

## *Writers' Challenge!*

In this edition of Writers' Challenge, as it was developed to be in keeping with the celebration of our eight year anniversary, we asked participants to find and tell their own stories spoken through the emblematic language of numbers. Participants were to consider universal as well as personal patterns and perceptions about the role numbers play in influencing our lives and conveying aspects of who we are and what holds value.

One of the inherent challenges to the Writers' Challenge feature is narrowing down finalists when we receive a variety of quality materials in different voices and mediums. Two entries, divergent in both their interpretations and their forms, struck us as meriting equal attention for their ability to make our theme count. Thus, we have a tie, doubling the win. Neal Whitman, for his poem "You Can Count on Me" and Stephen Carey, for his short story "15.41647" will each receive a \$20 Barnes & Noble

giftcard. We extend a hearty congratulations to both winners as well as enduring gratitude to all who entered.

Read the two winning entries featured on this page!

*(Excerpt from original prompt—see spring-summer 2016 issue archive for full prompt)*

Writing What Counts

by WPWT Staff

So much of everyday life is built around the significance of numbers (time, commerce, communication, precision in technology, medicine, architecture...) with often only slight differences between functionality and malfunction, survival and peril. There is also a symbolic substance to numbers that ranges from personal realms of meaning (anniversaries, birthdays...) to broader spiritual, religious and numerological meanings. Even our words have numerical value in the sum of the numbers corresponding to the individual letters. The numerical values of names are said to influence their bearer's traits and fates. What's in a name, indeed.

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For this edition of Writers' Challenge here at WPWT, we want you to embark upon your own journeys of discovery within the language of numbers. As we had done with a few past editions, we gave one of our contributors the opportunity to collaborate with us. Cheryl Somers Aubin shared a prompt she uses with students in her memoir writing classes and we share here an excerpt for you to derive further inspiration from: "Numbers are a unit of measure, a teller of truths." Whether in fiction, poetry, non-fiction, art or photography, we ask you to convey individual or universal "truths" centering around the numbers that measure and mark our existence.

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According to Wikipedia, a number is "used to count, measure, and label." Tell us what's in a number—according to you.

### **You Can Count on Me**

by Neal Whitman

*"Can you do addition?" the White Queen asked.*

*“What’s one and one and one and one and one and one and one and one and one and one and one?”*

*“I don’t know,” said Alice. “I lost count.”* –Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass*

Every new parent begins by counting.  
 Ten fingers. Ten Toes.  
 It may have started in a cave.  
 Fred and Wilma Flintstone counted Pebbles.  
 No, not their daughter,  
 but small stones dropped in a pot  
 to inventory ibex skins and bone awls  
 Pebbles (*calculi* in Latin) are easy to lose.  
 Have you ever been locked out of your house?  
 Thank goodness Sumerians invented the key ring.  
 In Central Asia, merchants strung beads on twine.  
 Decimal-based, the world’s first computer.  
 Version 2.0 in a frame.  
 9 beads across.  
 2 beads above a crossbar and 5 below.  
 Marketed in China as *Heaven above Earth*.  
 Touted as...  
**a**ccurate  
**b**eaded  
**a**ccessible  
**c**apable  
**u**niversal  
**s**peedy

Bio- Neal Whitman lives in Pacific Grove, California, with his wife, Elaine. His poetry and her photography are inspired by walking as often as possible on the coastal trail along Monterey Bay. On the garden path to their front door, guests are greeted by a granite slate with the words of Henry David Thoreau: "ex Oriente lux / ex Occidente frux." Indeed, from the East, Neal won 2nd prize in the *Common Ground Review* (Springfield, Massachusetts) 2016 poetry contest and from the West, 1st prize in the 2016 San Francisco’s Bay Area Poets Coalition contest.

15.41647

by Stephen Carey

“This is such a stupid assignment,” said the high school student. “A thousand words to talk about some stupid numbers! It’s just stupid. I mean make up your mind, words or numbers?”

“Your assignment,” said the teacher, “is to write about the significance of numbers using words as it pertains to the news article and the individual you were assigned. Numbers are to words as exclamation points are to question marks.”

“That’s stupid,” said the student. “What does that mean?”

“It means,” the teacher replied, “numbers help us understand our world; they provide definitive answers to our questions. They help us know who and what we are in ways that cannot be disputed. They help us see clearly what we value.”

“Fine, whatever,” said the student. “I just don’t get the math; I mean really, what’s the point?”

“The point is those who forget history condemn themselves to repeat it!” said the teacher. “One of the reasons we learn is to avoid mistakes.”

“So is this math or history?” said the student.

“Yes, absolutely,” said the teacher.

“Fine, whatever,” spat the student. “What’s her stupid name again?”

“No name is stupid; all names are sacred just as yours is to you,” shared the teacher. “Hers was Helen, Helen Katz.”

“And how is she important?” said the student.

“She is one of the 170,000,” answered the teacher.

“Right, so they killed her?” asked the student.

“Yes, they killed her,” said the teacher. “She was your age when they took her, you know.”

“Took her from where?” asked the student.

“From her home and family, her friends, from everything and everyone she knew,” replied the teacher.

“My age?” said the student.

“Yes, a teenager,” replied the teacher.

“Why does any of this matter?” replied the student. “I mean really, it’s ancient history.”

“It is more than history. She was real, actual and true,” responded the teacher. “What happened to her, to them, is a part of us, who we were, who we are, and who we will become. You could be Helen, Helen could be you.”

“Whatever,” said the student, a bit of hesitation in her tone. “Can we just get it done? So it’s 5 right, 5 years? So 5 times... How many weeks in a year?”

“52,” replied the teacher.

“Right, so...um...wait let me get my smartphone,” the student said. “Ok, 'k, 'k, the calculator is up and...52 right? So 5 times 52 is...260 weeks with 7 days in each week is um...1,820 days.”

“And the hours, the minutes?” said the teacher.

“1,820 days with 24 hours each is 43,680 hours, times 60 minutes in each hour is 2,620,800,” the student answered. “So this guy gets over two and a half million?”

“This guy?” said the teacher.

“Right, that Hanning dude,” said the student.

“That Hanning dude?” answered the teacher.

“Right, the Reinhold Hanning dude gets over two and a half million minutes in the slammer,” shared the student, “but what does that have to do with Helen what's-her-name?”

“Helen Katz,” the teacher answered. “Helen is represented by the number ‘one’ because she is one of the 170,000,” said the teacher, “so we divide to find her.”

“Right, divide the number of those he helped to murder into the time he was sentenced to serve for that crime,” proclaimed the student. “Ok so almost done here...the 2,620,800 minutes is divided by the 170,000 people....um...it’s 15, the answer is 15, I got it!!!”

“No,” responded the teacher, “the answer is 15.41647.”

“So I rounded a little, so what?” said the student.

“Remember this is a real person we are talking about with hopes and dreams just like you,” said the teacher. “This is Helen’s life, her time on the planet. Your missing .41647 could have been her family, her future, her husband, her grandchildren.”

“Did she have a boyfriend?” said the student.

“Do you?” answered the teacher.

“Right, of course she did, but I thought you said she died in the camp when she was young?” replied the student.

“Yes she did, but all her possibilities are within those numbers,” said the teacher. “Think about what the 15.41647 represents. What does that number mean?”

“Well I guess it’s...um, minutes, right?” answered the student.

“Yes, but minutes of what?” demanded the teacher.

“Minutes of...um...time, jail time for...each murder he helped to commit. Oh gross, gross, gross!!! He helped murder all those people and for each of them he will spend only 15.4 whatever minutes in the jail? Oh God this is soooo wrong,” cried the student. “He helped murder Helen and for that he will spend less than 16 minutes in jail?!!”

“Exactly,” responded the teacher.

“This is outrageous! Who knows about this?” cried the student.

“Well, you do,” replied the teacher.

“No,” snapped the student, deep indignation in her voice, “I mean like the police or someone who can do something about it, someone who can speak for Helen, someone with authority.”

“If you have done the math the numbers give you the authority to speak,” replied the teacher. “I think Helen would have been proud to have known you.”

“You think so?” quietly replied the student.

“It seems you have found some words to help express how you feel about these numbers,” said the teacher.

“If I speak for Helen,” said the student thoughtfully “can I send what I write to Detmold?”

“I would be glad to pay the postage,” replied the teacher.

“I think I may need more than 1000 words,” replied the student.

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Links for further information on the sentencing of Reinhold Hanning, and the story of Helen Katz:

Associated Press. "Guilty verdict for 94-year-old former Auschwitz Nazi guard." CBS News. June 17, 2016.

<http://www.cbsnews.com/news/ex-nazi-ss-auschwitz-guard-reinhold-hanning-guilty-accessory-murder-jews-germany/>

"Helen Katz was killed upon arrival at Auschwitz on May 31, 1944. She was 13 years old." —from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. "Helen Katz." Holocaust Encyclopedia.

<https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/idcard.php?ModuleId=10006547>

Bio- Stephen Carey is the father of three great boys and husband of over 30 years to Carol. They live in southern New Hampshire with a springer spaniel named Oreo. Stephen has authored a series of woodworking books entitled *Laminated Wood Art Made Easy*, which can be found on his woodworking website [WWW.WoodArt.Biz](http://WWW.WoodArt.Biz). Stephen is also the author



of *Ornan's Threshing Floor*, a selection of journal entries, sermon parts and pieces and writings regarding faith, ethics, and Christianity. Stephen is the Pastor of Main Street Mission, a non-denominational inner-city, Christian outreach ministry in downtown Manchester, NH. Please feel free to contact Steve at [StephenPJCarey \(at\) gmail.com](mailto:StephenPJCarey@gmail.com).



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