

# WRITER'S REGIMEN

## DAY 1: SECRETS

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### DAILY QUOTE(S)

“Everyone has three lives: a public life, a private life, and a secret life.”  
— Gabriel García Márquez

“‘Write a poem about a birth,’ says the culture to the poet; and what the poet writes (speaking in the person of a newborn baby) may shock the reader...”  
—Helen Vendler on “The Private Life”

“As a child, I liked to pretend that I lived a double life: one in the cosmopolitan city of Lahore where my parents migrated, and the second one in my grandparents’ village. Both places were different not only in terms of resources and geography, but also in regards to their stories.”  
—Kanza Javed, Interview with Pakistan-US Alumni Network

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### DAILY PROMPT

On a piece of paper, write down a secret that is sacred to you, something that you have never told anyone. Allow this secret to guide your poem or short story. Think of the speaker of your poem/narrator of your short story to be another human being who shares this exact secret with you. Keep in mind that this speaker/narrator is NOT you. This will ease any tension you may have. A great piece has an element of reveal—of surprise.

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### RIFF WORD

**Sacred**

**2 a : worthy of religious veneration : holy**  
**b : entitled to reverence and respect**

<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sacred>

## READING/WRITING RESPONSE

“The words *secret* and *sacred* are siblings.

The simplest possible definition of *sacred* is something so especially esteemed it is *set apart*, and consecrated as such. And by setting something apart one ensures against encroachment. Yet, despite this assurance, one sometimes lives in fear: the sacred word is a secret and cannot be spoken without consequence, be it a blessing or curse. There is simply too much power in certain words, and the unnerving force of naming casts a great spell over language and, in one very important sense, created poetry, since the invoke sacred powers, bypass words were employed, incantations without any meaning at all, such as *abracadabra*, words that of course became imbued with as much power as what they are trying to invoke.”

—from Mary Ruefle’s *Madness, Rack, and Honey*,  
“On Secrets”

Ruefle’s *Madness, Rack, and Honey* is a great book and a reading recommendation. In this excerpt from “On Secrets,” Ruefle prompts us to think about the sacredness of certain words, which is fitting because in every piece of writing, the writer must be deliberate with word choice. And as Ruefle states, “There is simply too much power in certain words, and the unnerving force of naming casts a great spell over language.” Great words cast a “great spell,” and great words give both the reader and writer a sense of release, even a sense of surprise—similar to the reveal of a great secret. Ruefle’s own use of words, especially in the first sentence of this excerpt is spellbinding. “Secret” and “sacred” already have a connection, but with the added alliteration of “secret,” “sacred,” and “siblings,” Ruefle’s sentence is simply magical. We can use Ruefle’s lecture on deliberate word choice as both impetus and extension to deliberate structural choices. As part of today’s reading/writing response, go back to your results from the daily prompt. Play around with this piece more and do the following “test run”/revision: re-organize your poem or short story into three stanzas or paragraphs: the first stanza/paragraph will be about the speaker’s/narrator’s public life, the second will be about the speaker’s/narrator’s private life, and the third will be about the speaker’s/narrator’s private life.

NOTE: When doing a revision, it’s a great idea to keep the original copy of the piece. In the end, you can see which you like better.