

Math-Poems by Students

**Arcadia University
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Introduction

These poems were written by students in response to the writing exercise I gave when I was a guest speaker in Marion Cohen's "Mathematics in Literature" class at Arcadia University in Glenside, PA.

Here is the writing exercise—borrowed from Carol Dorf's workshop that I attended this summer:

Step 1: Brainstorm three recent school or other situations in your present life – you can just write a few words to reference them.

Step 2: List 10-20 mathematical words you've used in class in the past month.

Step 3: Write about one of the previous situations using as many of these words as possible. Try to avoid referencing the situation directly. Write no more than seven words per line.

Sarah Glaz
University of Connecticut
Storrs, CT

The Poems

1)

Infinite people shouting to be heard equals
greater music that adds and subtracts
from the integral event of exposing yourself
to simplify.

Look to introduce yourself, make the most.
Divide the room up and people multiply.
Young actors gather within parentheses
hoping to gain more or less dreams.

Olivia Lantz
Situation: Rehearsals for "Midsummer Night's Dream"

2)

Her pride she can't subtract
The pain multiplies
As injury adds variables
The probability of failure increases
The solution would be to stop
But then she adds determination
The count starts 5, 6, 7, 8
1, 2, dip and catch
add the flyer subtract the
weight as two variables work
together
the solution is success, infinite
height, infinite teamwork
the solution is in the proof.

Meg Mack

3) ASPARAGUS

An infinity of hunger within me
Dividing a bunch of green
Snap and sizzle,
Green parentheses in a pan
The aromatic property
Simplifying my want
Producing a need
Each fraction of a second
Dragging its feet impatiently as I wait
And when it is distributed on my plate
It is only a moment before zero
Units of nourishment remain.

Sarah Goldfarb

4)

The count starts
five, six, seven, eight
we swirl around
an infinity of different movements.
Adding and dividing in numbers
Until we finally end
Just to start back up again.

Emily Evans
Situation: Interiors

5)

Happy numbers 16 together fun
Annoyed divided 14 to 2 wait
Alone 1 against 2, no wait 3 against 1
Happy numbers now divided
Which number is right
What is the true answer

Andrew Weiss

6)

We started as two
As close as a pencil
to the numbers it writes.
But the numbers take
what the pencil gives.

Multiplying on paper
divides from the pencil.
Its acute point proportionally reduced.
Multiply. Divide.
Take. Give.

Erase.

Rebecca Smith

7)

Calculations running through my head
The probability of making it.
Reaching for the wall.
Extending towards the infinity
The variables I can't control
Swarming exponentially
Trying to divide them
Faster than they multiply
Equally exhausting
But the solution is there
Waiting to be proven.

Whitney Boeckel
Situation: Swimming

8)

You told me about a golden rule
where life was divided into infinite possibilities
but somewhere along that divided line
I fell from grace
and became only a remainder
in time

Quietly I count my mistakes
hoping to shape a solution,
to multiply the odds
and finish my suffering.

Raven Eckman

9) $\frac{1}{2/3}$

You stayed
Even though we went to the bottom
I was cozy in the middle
And you claimed content.

But...
You multiplied!!
You claim it was to simplify
But I know better
It was betrayal.

Now we're still a fraction
If I divide us we'll be
Whole.
Infinitely together but...
Am I worth it?
Are you?

Erika Elizando

10) THE COUNTDOWN

The crowds are multiplying by the day
As the countdown lessens, the excitement increases
Customers are calculating their next purchase
Discounts subtract dollars from prices and bring smiles to people's faces
Integrating into the sums of people as they leave each store
Music plays in the distance

The timeline reaches the 25th
Stacks of presents add up
As if reaching infinity
Perfectly proportioned and wrapped nicely
Only to be ripped open in a matter of seconds
The tree is lit with numerous lights wrapped in a circular motion
The holiday is here
The happiness on everyone's faces is clearly defined.

Lauren Metzinger

11) AN EMPTY BEACH

It is quiet and peaceful
A far cry from the uncountable sums of people a few short months ago
The summer has ended
The sun sits lower in the sky
And it darkens early in the day
But still the breathtaking landscape remains the same
The ocean meets the blue sky at a horizontal line in the distance
Each ripple of a wave slowly integrates with the already wet sand
Shells lay on the sand as if they were thrown there
Once perfectly proportioned, but now broken into pieces
The edges create sharp acute angles making it difficult to differentiate its original form
The sand is cold and the infinite grains are compacted to make a hard surface
The days of sitting in my chair by the water are over
Sadly replaced by the multiplying days of cold weather
Still there are slight defined footprints in the sand
Proof that there are people like me longing for the return of summer.

Lauren Metzinger

12)

Rehearsal equals exhaustion
Homework gone undone, bed not slept in.
Multiply that by Tech!
A crazy unsolvable number and you get
less sleep, less time, more things undone
But a final beautiful product.
A play with many variables
Fairy's plus Puck equals
one tired Puck!

Jess Jacob

13)

When you subtract from your life
all the variables
that don't add up
negatives cancels out
the hurt cancels out
and it's not so bad to be empty
sometimes

Breaking down the finite walls around you
in the quiet night
when you're still and silent
I can feel the vibrations
I fall through the equations
and sink into the
infinite
stars
in the sky.

Fallon Rourke

14) LOVE IN LINES

Three little lines,
one blue, one pink, one green;
first and last are parallel, the other not.

Never touching, never moving,
no shape; none needed.
Intoxication. Desolation. Transformation.

Innocuous alone; if never moved.
Allow the pink to reach the blue: the thrill of free falling.
Allow the pink to reach the green: collision inevitable.

So tempting, riveting, scandalous.
The safe danger of a rollercoaster or
titillation of a run-away train running out of track?

Only the pink can change its slope,
choose with whom to mix.
Green? Blue? Become parallel too?

Weak, though, is the pink.
Green she knows, even the extirpation.
Blue is unknown, uncertain but exciting.

To perpendicularity is the goal,
perfect interception, nothing less.
Which though, should have the honor?

Though they're parallel,
the blue and the green,
the pink can perpendicular with only one.

The pink line; a fixed length,
a line segment, truly.
Long enough, though,, unwilling to lengthen and cross them both.

Shifting from the side,
it's the blue the pink chooses,
Just beyond the touch of the green.

Envy will reach the green,
Pride the blue, And alas,
in a world of unhappiness:

Exuberance, joy, contentment and
Assuredly in the affirmative,
Happiness for the pink.

Kyna Beckner