

A photograph of a desk with a vase of pink flowers, a pen, and glasses. The text is centered in a white box.

WORKBOOK
WRITING ANNUAL REVIEW

WELCOME, WRITER

Seasonal shifts always provide an opportunity to reflect and reframe, and perhaps the most potent transition is when the calendar moves from December to January. There's nothing like waking up to a fresh new year.

We all have different ways of taking stock, but one of my rituals involves exploring my creative life—past, present, and future. The prompts in these pages are the same ones I've used for years to honor where I've been, settle into where I am, and dream about where I'm headed.

This exercise grew from my years in corporate positions where I was required to fill out annual reviews and self-evaluations. I didn't always consider this time well spent, but one day I decided to translate this experience to my writing life and become my own director of HR.

After all, no one was going to voluntarily research workshops for me, book flights to a retreat, or chat with me about the areas where I'd like my writing life to grow. This responsibility is something we need to cultivate ourselves, which is why it's helpful to consider where our work is headed, loosely pencil some things into a calendar, and consider the past twelve months of our writing life.

This workbook starts with the past, reviewing the previous year before turning to the future and what you might want to invite into the year ahead.

It should be noted, this is a judgment-free space. If you had loftier intentions than you were able to achieve this year, can you meet yourself with kindness? If a new idea sprang up that wasn't in your original plan, can you embrace the wonder of it?

I hope these pages encourage you to nurture your inner writer, and provide some space feel inspired as well.

—*Nicole*

REFLECTIONS

Begin by sorting out the main projects or focus areas from the past year. Examples might include starting a newsletter, drafting a book outline, improving writing dialogue, pitching yourself to podcasts, agents, or what have you. And yes, even “thinking about starting my novel” counts. In the second column, make note of how the project made you feel, any emotions associated with it, and whether it’s ongoing or how long it took you to complete.

PROJECT or FOCUS AREA

THOUGHTS/FEELINGS/REFLECTIONS

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REFLECTIONS

Thinking back to this time last year, **what hopes and dreams did you have for your writing life?** How were these intentions met? Or, did they change?

What lit you up? Noticing what you listed on the previous page, which projects felt the most aligned this year? Which opportunities gave you the most energy?

What was draining? Did you start something and not finish it? Are you less in love with an idea now? Did you regret saying 'yes' to something? Did social media deplete your energy?

How did you spend your time? Were your writing sessions consistent or sporadic? What was your schedule like? How did the pandemic impact your creative life this year?

REFLECTIONS

What worked? When you *did* spend time writing, what kind of routines worked for you this year? Were they consistent, or did you adapt to changing seasons and circumstances?

List some **favorite creative moments from the past year**. (e.g. winning a prize, receiving your first newsletter reply, publishing an essay, building friendships with fellow writers, a big a-ha for your manuscript, etc.)

List any **challenges from the past year**. (e.g. a rejection, leaving a story unfinished, forgetting to save your work and losing it, disappointing feedback, etc.)

Did you attend a workshop or conference, or join a virtual writing group? **How did that support your creativity?** How did it impact your work in progress?

REFLECTIONS

Describe your reading life this year. Did you read for comfort, for pleasure, or for research? Did you read more or less than you hoped? Do any of your choices feel like books you “should” be reading, and if so, why?

What did you gravitate towards? Did you discover a new author or genre you’re excited to read more of? What topics did you learn about? And which sources of book recommendations (friend recs, newsletters, social media, etc.) were the most reliable for you?

In a media-driven world, it’s easy to feel behind and start comparing our progress to others. What beliefs about writing are you holding on to? Do they come from within, or have you been influenced by outside sources, like social media?

LOOKING AHEAD

Use this space to brainstorm what you're hoping to work on next, or areas where you'd like to focus your energy. (Examples: a project might be a book or a newsletter, and a focus area might be reading or building relationships with other authors.) In the second column, reflect on what's pulling you toward this idea, as well as your intentions. Will it help you reach a larger goal? Is it a continuation of something from last year? Will it help you connect with others? Or will the idea simply not leave you alone?

PROJECT or FOCUS AREA

WHY NOW? / INTENTIONS

PROJECT or FOCUS AREA

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WHY NOW? / INTENTIONS

PROJECT or FOCUS AREA

WHY NOW? / INTENTIONS

LOOKING AHEAD

List some words to describe **how you'd like your writing practice to feel in the upcoming year.**

Is there anything in particular you'd like to learn more about? (Like research for a book, for example.) Books you already know you want to read? An author you want to get to know more?

What are you craving? Looking for community? More newsletter subscribers? Hoping to find an agent? List what you need both practically and emotionally.

How can you support yourself to receive it? List some of the ways you can reach out to your family or community to get what you need. What resources do you already have? What resources are you missing?

Do you use social media? Think about how it felt to show up this year and use the platforms. Is there anything you'd like to change? Are there new boundaries you'd like to implement?

LOOKING AHEAD

Where are your margins? You don't need a lot of time to commit to writing. Try 10 minutes a day. Where can you find this pocket of time in your day? How are you willing to experiment?

Write an encouraging note to your future self. **On December 31, what do you want her to know?** How have you adapted to changing circumstances? How has it felt to make meaningful progress? How has your work expanded and deepened?

SEASONAL INTENTIONS

WINTER

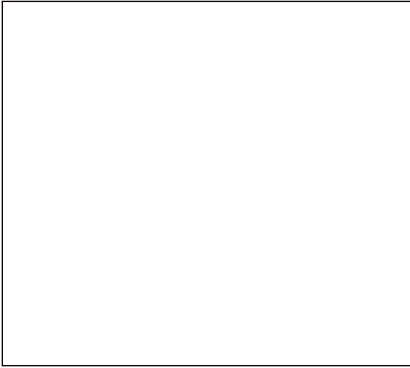
SPRING

SUMMER

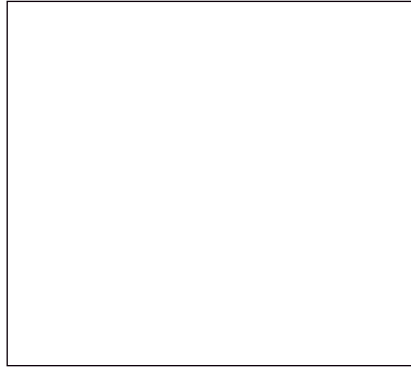
FALL

MONTHLY INTENTIONS

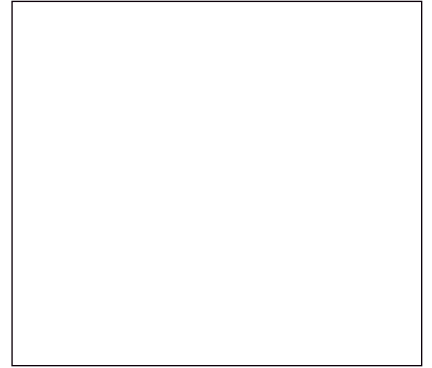
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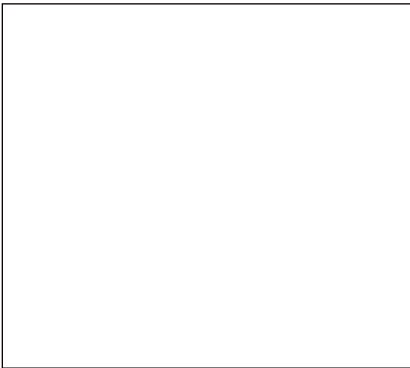
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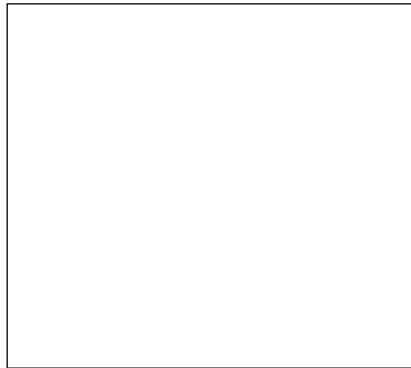
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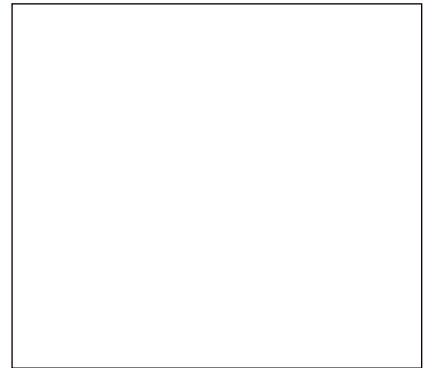
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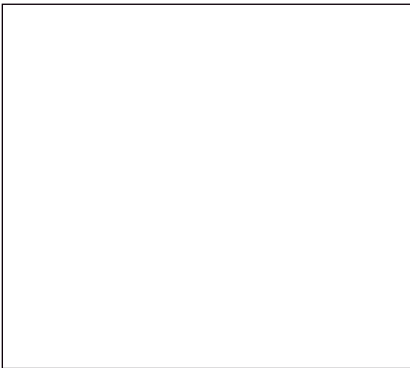
MAY



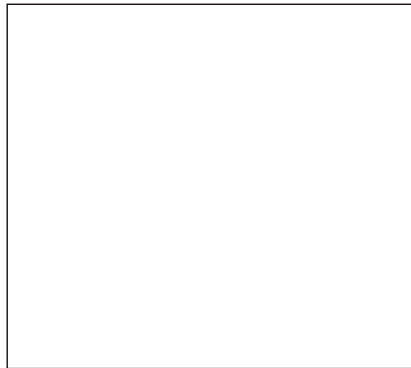
JUNE



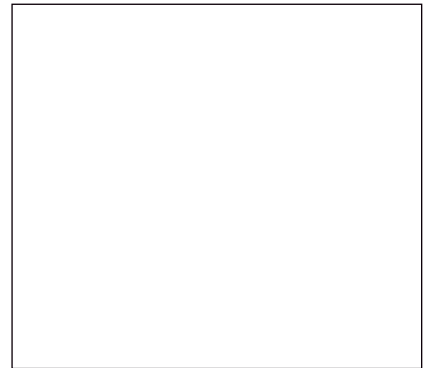
JULY



AUGUST




SEPTEMBER



OCTOBER



NOVEMBER



DECEMBER

