



Do the Math #2: The Writing on the Wall

By Wendy Lichtman

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Eighth grade, like algebra, has become pretty complicated for Tess. For one thing, there are the patterns she's noticing everywhere—like how charming-on-the-outside Richard keeps playing scary pranks on her, and how annoying copycat Lynn always has to follow what everyone else is doing. Then there's the pattern of graffiti that keeps appearing on the wall by her school—could those numbers be a code meant for Tess? Is it up to her to find out what they mean? And most importantly, if Damien keeps up with his pattern of waiting for her after school, does it mean he likes her? Or is that just a coincidental system?

Tess looks for formulas to help her figure it all out, but she's afraid there may be none. Sometimes you have to make up your own solutions.

Sometimes, you just have to risk it.

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Do the Math #2: The Writing on the Wall By Wendy Lichtman Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #1041212 in Books
- Brand: Greenwillow Books
- Published on: 2008-06-24
- Released on: 2008-06-24
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.25" h x .81" w x 5.50" l, .71 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 224 pages

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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Grade 5–9—This sequel to *Do the Math: Secrets, Lies, and Algebra* (HarperCollins, 2007) picks up the story of Tess, an eighth grader who copes with uncertain situations and unpredictable people by applying mathematical equations or symbols, an approach that gives her comfort and perspective. After seeing a series of numbers graffitied on a building near school, Tess recognizes that it is a math puzzle and solves it to reveal a secret code. When she decodes the word "arson," she realizes that someone is trying to communicate shocking information to her (there has recently been an unexplained fire at school). Though aware of the punishment for defacing property, she writes her own message on the wall in an attempt to get more information. She eventually solves the mystery, but ends up getting more than she bargained for when she is caught and must face the consequences. She also wrestles with peer relationships as she deals with a boy who is tormenting her and tries to figure out contradictions in a new friend. Lichtman cleverly incorporates mathematical concepts into Tess's narrative, keeping the ideas simple and explaining them in terms that readers can understand. Tess is likable and navigates through her problems in a realistic manner.—*Amelia Jenkins, Juneau Public Library, AK*

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From [Booklist](#)

In this sequel to *Secrets, Lies, and Algebra* (2007), eighth-grade mathematician Tess is intrigued by numeric graffiti that may connect with a recent classroom fire. Using her algebra skills to sort through clues, Tess investigates and encounters a bullying classmate along the way. Lichtman cleverly weaves math throughout the story, and Tess is an appealing, dimensional character whose descriptive narrative rings true. Mystery and math fans will enjoy the code breaking, while many readers will want to debate the significance of graffiti as art, communication tool, and vandalism. Another engaging blend of mystery, math, and teen life in the *Do the Math* series. Grades 6-9. --Shelle Rosenfeld

About the Author

Wendy Lichtman writes personal essays for the *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, and *Good Housekeeping*, among other national publications. She has also written four previous young adult novels, including *Do the Math: Secrets, Lies, and Algebra*. She holds a degree in mathematics and has tutored public-school students in algebra for several years. When she decided to write about a teenage girl who realizes that some questions have more than one right answer, algebra, with its unknowns and variables, seemed a perfect metaphor. Wendy Lichtman lives in Berkeley, California.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Susan Padgett:

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