

210 Words of Advice

By Esmé Raji Codell

Stop counting words. (3)

I know it's hard, especially when...

When... (10)

 when (11)

 when...(12)

 ummmmmm...(13)

You don't know what to write next. (20)

Suddenly, numbers seems friendlier than words. (26 ☺)

Hey, is ummmmmm a word? Do page numbers count? (35ish?)

Do contractions count as two, or don't they? (42 or 43)

It would be so much easier to compare thee to a summer's day

 (or a winter's night, for that matter),

To hear the squeak of a fairy nearly underfoot,

 or feel the spray of the Pacific on the pirate's stubbled cheek.

Much better than counting is to recount

The back-and-forth of two best friends:

 ("what do you want to do?

 "Whatever *you* want to do.")

Or write between the lines/of /silence

When the friendship breaks off

Under a slate grey sky, framed by the braided metal

Of a playground fence.

See? (133)

The count flows (136) with the play of senses,

Feelings, word balloons, and twists of plot. (148)

If you're alive, the words breathe fast and run on paper,

Living, too.

But when you count, they pace like clumsy dance steps,

Pinched inside a shoe.

Word counts are a good idea for keeping derriere in chair,

But that is all of why they're there.

In writing, heartbeats are the sole amounts

 to be counted.

 That is all that counts.