Instructions
This writing assignment is a little different. It will not be peer graded. Only the course staff will see what you write. We ask you to engage with this prompt honestly and in good faith. That is the main criteria we will use for grading.

Introduction
You are exceptional. Literally. Globally, only 7% of the adult population will earn a college degree. In the U.S., about a third of the adult population has a college degree. A quarter of those degrees are in STEM fields. Only 5% of U.S. college degrees are in an engineering discipline and 2.4% are in computer science. We’re going to explore how you came to be a member of this exclusive club while so many others have not. We’ll also explore why, despite all the hard work it takes to earn a CS degree, many women with your qualifications leave the tech industry.

Personal Inventory
Start by thinking about the following questions. You don’t have to answer all of them, but write a paragraph or two about anything interesting you feel comfortable sharing that comes to mind while contemplating them. This is purely an educational exercise. We’re not going to judge you as a person based on your answers, and we won’t single you out to follow up on any of your responses.

Think back to your childhood. Did you ever feel like you weren’t supposed to play with certain toys? What were they? Why? How many school friends of your gender did you have that had the same interests as you? Did you play with Legos? Did you play video games? When did you get your first computer? Was it yours? Did you have a science kit? Were you good at math and science in elementary school? In books, movies, TV, or video games, what characters did you identify with most strongly? When did you first go online? Did you ever feel like you had to hide your gender on the Internet or while playing a videogame online?

Next, think back on your college experience. Why did you decide to major in computer science? Do you remember your perception of the typical CS major back then? Were your family and friends supportive of your decision to major in CS? Did you program before coming to college? Who taught you to program? How confident were you in your abilities relative to your peers entering the CS program? How confident are you now? Who has encouraged or discouraged you along the way? Do you think your confidence has been affected by stereotypes? Have you ever felt like you don’t belong in this field? Have you ever felt “impostor syndrome” (i.e. being convinced that you do not actually deserve to claim your accomplishments; that you have somehow just been lucky or otherwise deceived others that you are good at what you do?) Have you ever felt like your technical skills or contributions weren’t taken seriously because of your gender? When being assertive, have you ever worried your peers think you were being “bossy”? Did you ever worry about how you represent your gender in class? How much time do you spend getting ready for class? Have you ever worried about how your appearance or outfit would be judged
in class? Have you ever worried you might not finish your degree if you got pregnant? Do you feel comfortable walking home alone late at night? Have you ever worried someone might put something in your drink at a party or bar? Did any of these questions make you feel singled out or anxious? Why might that be?

Now, consider your future. Have you ever worried about being the only person of your gender at your first job? Do you worry about being able to relate to your coworkers? Do you worry about being perceived as only getting your job because of affirmative action? Have you ever worried about balancing parenting with your career? Do you worry about being paid less than your peers because of your gender?

Research
With your own experiences in mind, read the following articles and respond to them with your own thoughts. Do you find anything particularly surprising or interesting? Are there opinions you strongly agree or disagree with? Find at least 4 interesting quotes from the articles to mention in your response.

http://www.npr.org/blogs/money/2014/10/21/357629765/when-women-stopped-coding
http://www.wired.com/2014/12/mit-scientists-on-women-in-stem/
http://www.cnn.com/2012/05/07/tech/web/programmers/

Reflection
In light of the articles you’ve read and your personal inventory, how are your experiences different than women of your age who won’t graduate with a CS degree? Do you think someone of a different gender might answer some of the inventory questions differently? How do your college experiences and career concerns compare to the research and commentary in the articles? Are you representative or an outlier? How do you think your educational experiences compare to those of your peers of the opposite gender? What about your professional concerns? Do you think they are comparable to those of your peers of the opposite gender? Why are you currently looking at a bright career in field were women are significantly underrepresented? When did your paths part ways with women who won’t enter this field? Why did your paths part ways?

Works Cited
https://www.census.gov/hhes/socdemo/education/data/cps/2013/tables.html
http://dashboard.ed.gov/moreinfo.aspx?i=m&id=5&wt=0