

Blackout Poetry

Tommy Jolly, Kennesaw Mountain Writing Project

Grade level: 6-12 and teachers

Overview: Students will create original found poetry using existing texts from magazines or books.

Materials: Paper, pens, markers (especially black), existing texts (magazines, newspapers, book, etc.)

Time: One class period.

Instructional Sequence:

1. This writing activity can begin with different kinds of existing texts. Many teachers and poets (such as Austin Kleon, who popularized this activity) begin with magazines, newspapers, or books (the more obscure, the better!). It is possible, however, to use a short story or other text the students have just completed.
2. Share a few examples of blackout poetry by projecting them onto a screen for the class to see.
3. Explain the directions to the students:
 - a. Scan the text handed to you. Which words stand out? Circle them.
 - b. Look around the words you have already circled. Circle any words that may connect to the words you have already circled.
 - c. Attempt to connect words in such a way that they create a poetic statement. Connect them by drawing lines between them, directing the order in which they should be read.
 - d. Modify the existing text by either blacking out unused words entirely. If you do not wish to black out words, artfully decorate the unused text to emphasize the words you have circled.
4. Share your work with the class!