Markov Chain Text Generators and Blackout Poetry - Poetry Students

Markovify Tutorial

To get a basic idea of how to harness Markov Chains in Python to create simple text generators, visit the tutorial below.

https://colab.research.google.com/drive/1kJhbsUvV4xIg--YYUu2lGmVe1Df0TXYF?usp=sharing

Harness the Generated Text

Alter the text sources and parameterizations that you are using to train your model until you are generating text you feel you could use to create your own blackout poetry. Generate as many sentences as you'd like and copy/paste them into a word document. Then, use the techniques below, your own techniques, or a combination to create a cohesive set of 5 poems. As you write your poems, feel free to continue to alter the text generation model. The poems can be created using the highlight feature of a word processor, marker, paint, or whatever you so choose!

1. *Start with a theme* - Brainstorm a specific theme or emotion. Then, quickly look over your text document and circle all words or phrases that align with your theme. After you've read through the document, find ways to link the phrases until a poem emerges.
2. *Translator* - Clear your mind and read through the text. Is there something that it's trying to communicate that you can filter out for it? Write a poem acting as a translator for your text generator.
3. *Two Voices* - Write a couple of lines of poetry. Then, cut out a few lines from the generated text. Continue to write responses and cut lines from the text to create a 'two-voice' poem.
4. *Natural* - Use a marker to trace over each line. Lift the marker when you see a word or line you like. Likely, the outcome will be messy. However, this a good exercise when stuck and looking for inspiration.

Reflection Questions

1. While writing your poems, how did you feel about the text generator? Did it feel like a teammate? Did it help inspire you or limit your creativity? Why?

2. AI involvement in art is a hot ethics topic in recent years. After reflecting on the exercise, do you think there is a place for artificially intelligent programs to assist artists? If so, to what degree is it acceptable for an artist to use these programs?
3. Philosophically and ethically speaking, can AI create its own work that can be considered art?
4. Travis Macdonald's *The O Mission Repo* is a book of blackout poetry written atop the 9-11 Commission Report. Evocative and daring, it displays the power of writing blackout poetry and importance of choosing a source. If you were to create your own blackout poetry collection, is there a particular source or theme you would want to use?