

Blackout Poetry

Found Poetry



Go, lovely rose,
This is no country for old men. The young
Midwinter spring is its own season
And a few lilies blow. They that have power to
hurt, and will do none.
Looking as if she were alive, I call.
The vapours weep their burthen to the ground.

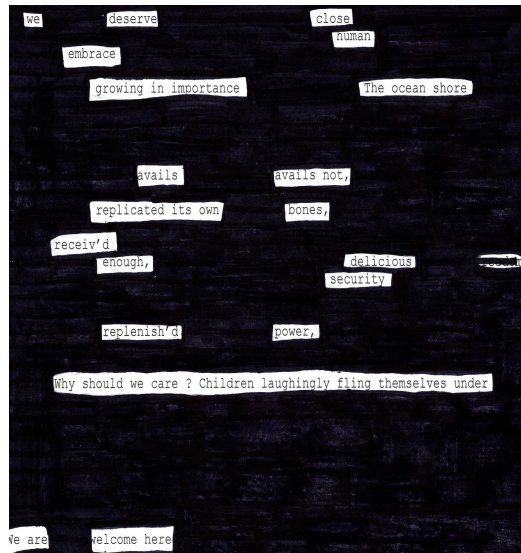
Found poems take existing texts and manipulate them to create original poems. They are often referred to as literary “collage”. Original sources can be newspaper clippings, speeches, existing poems, books, etc.

This type of poetry gained relevance in the 1900’s alongside the pop art of Andy Warhol and Roy Lichtenstein. The above excerpt is from 20th century poet John Ashbery’s “To a Waterfowl”. In just this section, Ashbery borrows from seven other poems, including T.S. Eliot’s *Four Quartets 4: Little Gidding* and Shakespeare’s *Sonnet 94*.

To craft poems, artists use techniques such as cutting and rearranging text or writing ‘two-voice’ poems, in which they take a line from a source and respond to it in their own voice.

Blackout Poetry

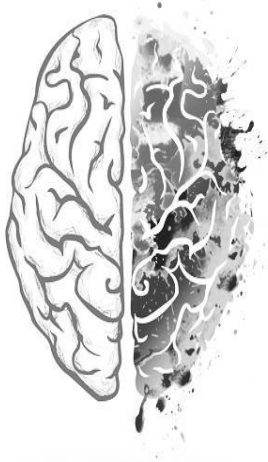
A poet starts with established text and redacts from it until a new, original poem is formed.



Our focus is on blackout poetry, a form of found poetry in which a poet chooses an original text and eliminates words until forming an original poem.

Poetry and Process

take what is 'yours' and make it 'ours'



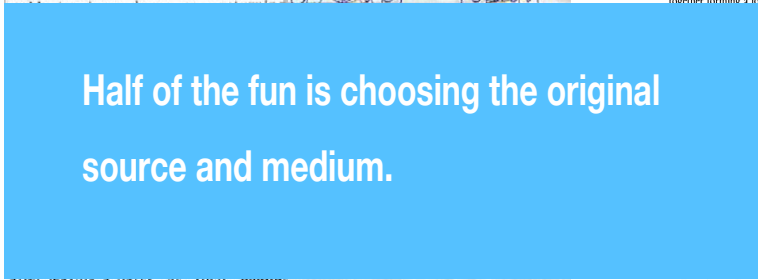
Process is the unique perspective we bring to the creation of translating our ideas to the poetic page. Process, the way we write a poem, captures the struggle of articulating experiences to our audience, and they myriad of ways a poet can try to engage those translations. We often grapple with large, abstract concepts (emotive and charged by our feelings towards a subject: joy, fear, injustice, memory). Ultimately, through the creative process, you are taking what is yours and making it ours.

MYSTERIOUS NIGHT LIGHT
 A mysterious ghostly light which has been appearing recently on the road across Inch Eank leading from the mainland at Tooban into Inch Island is terrifying people who reside near this part of the island. The mysterious light was first seen by a Tooban

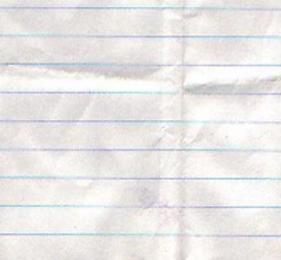
POETRY

BOOKS

From the heart of this dark, evacuated campus
 I can hear the library humming in the night,
 an immense choir of authors muttering inside their books
 along the unit, alphabetical shelves,
 Giovanni Pontano next to Pope, Dumas next to his son,
 each one stitched into his own private coat,
 together forming a low, gigantic chord of language.



The driver saw a sudden bright flash, from what is described as "a ball of fire," emerge into the roadway before the bus. The strange light was so powerful that it momentarily dimmed the headlights of the bus. As quickly as it had appeared, the light vanished. Since then, the light has been reported seen by several people who have been abroad in this district at night.



the act of reading,
 tilted into the wind of a book,
 holding the rope of his tie
 saturates a page,
 in the middle of a theorem.
 graph to paragraph
 of endless, panelled rooms.

mother reading to me
 bed, books about horses and dogs,
 other distant sounds,
 ablaze in the night,
 toward the brink of speech.

ng bookshelves in college,
 walls within walls, as rain soaks New England,
 or standing in a bookstore in a trench coat.

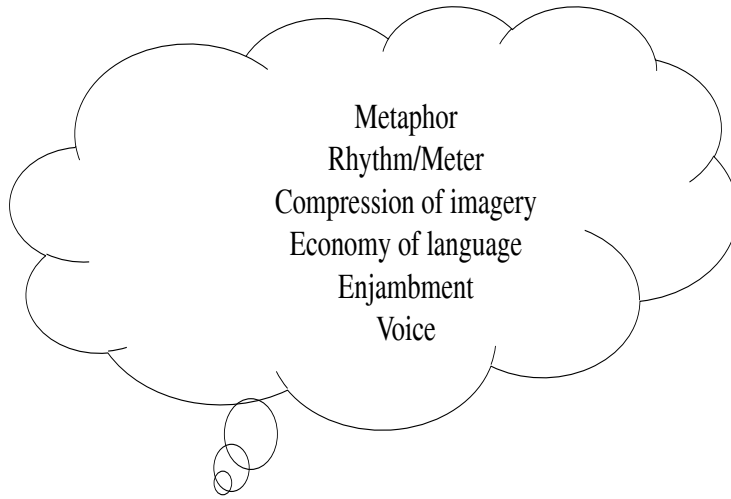
I see all of us reading ourselves away from ourselves,
 straining in circles of light to find more light
 until the line of words becomes a trail of crumbs
 that we follow across a page of fresh snow;

when evening is shadowing the forest,
 small brown birds flutter down to consume them
 and we have to listen hard to hear the voices
 of the boy and his sister receding into the perilous woods.

Found poetry provides us with an opportunity to better express our process. In blackout poetry, half of the fun is choosing a source and deciding how you'd like to 'perform' the poem. Poets can choose anything from a full-length book to an old grocery list in conjunction with markers, paint, the highlighter tool of a word processor, etc.

It challenges us to find new ways to communicate our large, abstract concepts.

Poetic Craft



Craft provides the tools essential for poetry: compression of imagery, the carrying capacity of a metaphor, beautiful economy of language. Understanding craft helps writers create successful metaphors and conceit; how to break a line and why/effects (enjambment vs end stops); rhythm and meter; development of voice, and how to revise, etc.

Applying Craft



How does craft help you
find the Found poem?

How is craft applied to blackout poetry? Think about what you know about craft as you begin to look at the text, circling words, blacking out text... what about your knowledge of craft helps you conjure subject-images—metaphor – theme towards the surface of a new text?

THE O MISSION REPO

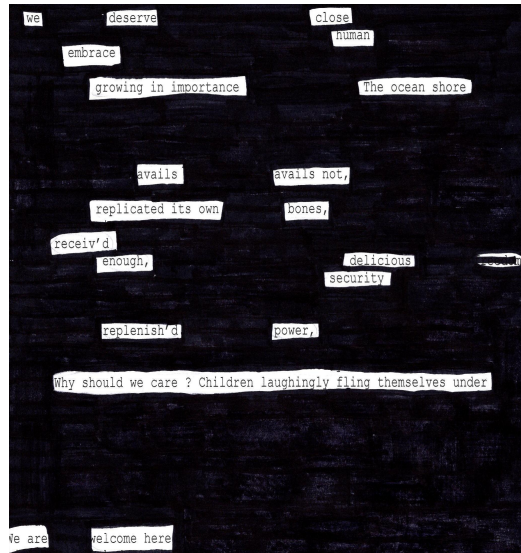
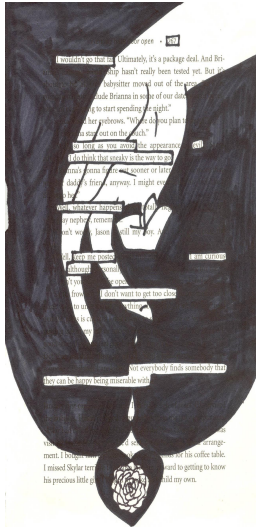
Travis Macdonald's *The O Mission Repo* is a book of blackout poetry written atop the 9-11 Commission Report.



The O Mission Repo is a full-length book of blackout poetry and a perfect example of the power of writing poetry in this way. Because it's written atop the 9-11 Commission Report, the already daring themes are even more eye-catching and evocative.

It also utilizes a variety of techniques such as using a translucent highlighter to black out pages so that the original text is still visible to the reader. The title itself is crafted by blacking out the phrase "The Commission Report".

More Examples



A quick Google search yields thousands of examples of blackout poetry. Many are crafted so that they also form a piece of visual art.

Why Blackout Poetry?

- Escaping writer's block
- Introduction to poetry
- Creating evocative poetry
- Communicating through process
- Practicing poetic craft

Blackout poetry is a good exercise for any writer, as it can help provide fresh inspiration and get the brain moving in new ways. It can introduce a poet to themes they wouldn't normally think to write about and help with brainstorming.

It is also a great introductory exercise for new writer, as it may feel less daunting than starting with a blank page.

As is evident from *The O Mission Repo*, using an original source can help to pack even more of a punch.