



Blackout Poetry: Re-envisioning Writing

Poetry



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Grade Level	10th – 11th Grade	Time Frame	2-3 class period(s)
Subject	English/Language Arts	Duration	90 minutes

Essential Question

What does it mean to be a writer or poet? How can we alter our perceptions of writing by turning ordinary, everyday writing into meaningful poetry?

Summary

This lesson allows students to reflect on and discuss their perceptions about writing. Shifting the focus from writing from scratch to using words already written as a starting place, students engage in reading and creating blackout poems from newspaper articles. Students also practice listening and speaking skills as they read and present their creations. Ultimately, students determine if and how their perceptions about what writing is changed as a result of this lesson.

Snapshot

Engage

Students watch a video about Austin Kleon, a blackout poet, and engage in a Magnetic Statements activity.

Explore

Using the I Think/We Think instructional strategy, students read and respond to poet Austin Kleon's blackout poems.

Explain

Students create an original blackout poem using a newspaper article as a mentor text.

Extend

Students read and present their blackout poem to their classmates.

Evaluate

Students complete a reflective free-write and both a self and peer evaluation.

Standards

Oklahoma Academic Standards: English Language Arts (Grade 10)

10.1.L.2: Actively listen in order to analyze and evaluate speakers' verbal and nonverbal messages by asking questions to clarify purpose and perspective.

10.1.S.3: Conduct formal and informal presentations in a variety of contexts supporting their message with evidence and using verbal and nonverbal cues.

10.7.R: Analyze and evaluate the techniques used in a variety of multimodal content and how they contribute to meaning.

10.8.W: Write independently using print, cursive, and/or typing for various lengths of time, intentionally selecting and combining modes and genres to suit their audiences and purposes.

Attachments

- [I Think We Think—Blackout Poetry Re-Envisioning Writing - Spanish.docx](#)
- [I Think We Think—Blackout Poetry Re-Envisioning Writing - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [I Think We Think—Blackout Poetry Re-Envisioning Writing.docx](#)
- [I Think We Think—Blackout Poetry Re-Envisioning Writing.pdf](#)
- [Magnetic Statements for Blackout Poetry Engage Activity—Blackout Poetry Re-Envisioning Writing - Spanish.docx](#)
- [Magnetic Statements for Blackout Poetry Engage Activity—Blackout Poetry Re-Envisioning Writing - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [Magnetic Statements for Blackout Poetry Engage Activity—Blackout Poetry Re-Envisioning Writing.docx](#)
- [Magnetic Statements for Blackout Poetry Engage Activity—Blackout Poetry Re-Envisioning Writing.pdf](#)

Materials

- Magnetic Statements (attached; for facilitator's use)
- I Think/We Think handout (attached; one per student)
- Example Blackout poems (online)
- Newspapers
- Sharpies or black markers
- Writing materials - pen, pencil, paper, etc.
- Computers/tablets
- Dry erase pockets and markers (optional)

20 minutes

Engage

To begin, show students the "[Blackout Poet](#)" YouTube video, an interview with Austin Kleon. Because many students might be unfamiliar with [Blackout Poetry](#), this video will provide some helpful background information.

Embedded video

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=XqB9kXzJ0UA>

As students watch, ask them to think about their own personal feelings and conceptions about writing; students should also consider a specific time they struggled with writing.

Kleon discusses writer's block, so after the video students will participate in the instructional strategy [Magnetic Statements](#); this will help uncover their ideas and attitudes about their own struggles with writing and/or a time they felt they had writer's block.

Teacher's Note: Magnetic Statements

Magnetic Statements are attached above. Feel free to edit these or add your own as you see fit. Consider using dry erase pockets and markers to reuse pages for each class and allow for simple revisions of blackout poetry.

Here's a rundown of how the Magnetic Statements instructional strategy would work in this particular lesson:

1. Print and post the statements around your classroom.
2. Give students a few minutes to visit and read each statement.
3. Students should go to the one statement that most attracts or repels them. Feel free to limit the amount of students allowed to select each statement.
4. Students should discuss with the other students gathered around their statement reasons why they were either attracted to or repelled by that statement.
5. Each group should report on why they were attracted to or repelled by the statement.

Teacher's Note

Be sure to address student beliefs/attitudes during this activity. Ask probing questions such as "*What specific reasons caused you to be attracted to/repelled by this statement?*"

Kleon's solution to his writing dilemma was to create blackout poetry out of newspaper articles. Students will be doing just that for this lesson.

Teacher's Note

Transition into the Explore stage of the lesson by encouraging students to keep their beliefs and attitudes in mind as they work through the following activities. Let students know they will be revisiting these statements at the end of the lesson.

20 minutes

Explore

Using computers, allow students to work in pairs or in groups of three to research Austin Kleon's blackout poems located on his [website](#). (Alternatively, students can use [this website](#).)

Instruct students to read and respond to at least three poems using the [I Think/We Think](#) instructional strategy. Have individual students respond to a poem and then collaborate with the group. Ask them to fill out both columns of their handout throughout this group activity.

Teacher's Note

Be sure to check out the I Think/We Think instructional strategy card (linked above) beforehand. Students will need writing materials for this activity.

Here's how I Think/We Think would work in this lesson:

1. Give each student one **I Think We Think** handout (attached).
2. For each poem, ask students to read and respond to the poem, focusing on poetry elements such as structure, sound devices (alliteration, assonance, consonance, onomatopoeia, etc.), meaning, figurative language, etc. Check out [Elements of Poetry](#) on [lexiconic.net](#) for more detailed information on the elements of poetry if you or your students need a reference.
3. Give students time to record their thoughts in the "I Think" column. Tell them to leave the "We Think" column alone for now.
4. Once students have sufficient time to record their thoughts, have them get with a partner or group to share what they recorded.
5. After sharing out, have the partners/groups record their common understanding of poetry elements from the poem in the "We Think" column.

Once students have read, responded to, and discussed three blackout poems, ask for each group to share out with the whole class.

Teacher's Note

For sharing out for a whole-class, ask each group to choose one poem they found particularly interesting, had very similar (or different) ideas about, liked, etc. It's not necessary that each group discuss each poem aloud with the whole class, especially if time is a factor.

25 minutes

Explain

Moving from reading example blackout poems to creating their own poetry, give students time to peruse newspaper articles and choose one to use as a mentor text for their own blackout poems.

Encourage students to model Kleon's procedure of finding an anchor word that resonates with them and grabs their attention. Instruct them to make a box around that word and then move around, trying to find words that connect to the initial word. Some of Kleon's poems were abstract and some were more literal, so it is up to students to choose the meaning and message of their poem.

20 minutes

Extend

As an extension, give students sufficient time to read and present their newly created blackout poem to the class. Have them first read their poem aloud and then show their classmates how it looks visually on the paper.

Evaluate

Evaluate students' I Think/We Think charts and blackout poems. Also have students complete both a self and peer evaluation for their group members.

Teacher's Note

Any kind of cooperative evaluation forms can be used for the self and peer evaluation. For this lesson, a peer evaluation half sheet would be an effective self and peer assessment tool.

In addition, have students write a short, reflective [Quick Write](#), discussing if and how their opinions about writing changed from the Magnetic Statements activity to now. Encourage students to revisit those statements to see if their opinions about writers/writing have been altered as a result of participating in this lesson. Be sure students offer justification in their writing as to why or why not. The reflective Quick Write should attempt to answer the essential questions presented at the beginning of the lesson. This can be accomplished by asking students to write about the process of taking a piece of written material and turning it into a poem. Ask *“Did your creative process change the meaning of what it is to be a poet or writer?”*

Resources

- K20 Center. (n.d.). Blackout poetry. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/84>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). I think/We think. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/141>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Magnetic statements. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/166>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Quick write. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/1127>
- Kleon, A. (2016). Austin Kleon. <https://austinkleon.com/category/newspaper-blackout-poems/>
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- Texascountryreporter. (2010, February 22). Blackout Poet [Video file]. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XqB9kXzJ0UA>
- Welch, C. (2015). Elements of Poetry. Lexiconic Resources. <http://learn.lexiconic.net/elementsofpoetry.htm><http://learn.lexiconic.net/elementsofpoetry.htm>