

| Make your Own Poem |

For this assignment you will be choosing a source of your own to provide the creative material for your poem. This can be nearly anything: a page from your favorite book, the lyrics from a song which is important to you, a letter, a utility bill, or a transcript of a scene from your favorite movie. Be as creative as you like and take advantage of one of the many copying machines available to you in campus libraries so that no books are harmed in the process of making this poem. Once you've acquired your material, please follow the following steps:

- 1) Skim your page of words. Don't read carefully, as the point is just to grab an idea from the words, not take them in. Find a word, phrase, or general theme that you like.
- 2) Go through and lightly circle the words or phrases you might want to use, now that you have your idea. Grab a blank piece of paper and write them down in order, then read through them. Cross out the words you don't want. If you need a few connecting words (like "a," "the," "it," or the like), then dive back in and see if you can find them between the words you want to connect. You often can.
- 3) Go back through your poem and boldly box the words you are keeping with a pen, Sharpie, dark pencil, etc. Erase any circles around words you don't want.
- 4) Read through your final poem. Sketch in a few images or symbols on your page that relate to the theme of your poem if you like.
- 5) Now it's time to start blackening. Using a Sharpie, pen, or pencil, black out everything that is *not* a word in your poem or one of your own sketches.
- 6) Write out your final poem to display next to your blackout poetry. Your final poem should include strategic punctuation and enjambment.

Finally you will write a brief (300 word) reflection on your writing process. This should include the following:

- Why you chose the original text
- A short close reading of the poem you've created~what does it mean to you?
- Is there any connection to the original text in your piece, or does your poem stand completely on its own?
- What was the most difficult part of the poetry writing process?

Please turn in your poem (both the blackout version and the final version) and the reflection. You may upload a photo/scan of the blackout version or turn in a paper copy.

Student Example

Blackout:

"I don't know what I should talk about—about death or about love? Or are they the same?"

I would say to him, "I love you." But I didn't know then how much. I had no idea . . .

One night I heard a noise.

"There's a fire at the reactor. I'll be back soon."

Everything was radiant. The whole sky. A tall flame. And smoke.

And he's still not back.

(p10, Alexievich, 2015)

Final:

I don't know what I should talk about—
About death or about love?
Or are they the same?

I would say to him,
"I love you."
But I didn't know then how much.
I had no idea...

One night I heard a noise.
He said "There's a fire at the reactor,
I'll be back soon."

Everything was radiant.
The whole sky.
A tall flame.
And smoke.
And he's still not back.

Reflection:

The poem I created is a simplified poem version of an original paragraph from a book I'm currently reading called "Voices from Chernobyl" by Svetlana Alexievich. This book talked about the interviews for the eyewitnesses of the Nuclear Disaster. The paragraph I chose was the first interview of this book, and I was feeling deeply emotional when reading it. I explored the experiences of individuals who experienced the Chernobyl accident and how the disaster affected their lives.

In my interpretation, the poem brings up the physical and psychological struggle of the speaker living in a contaminated environment, losing her husband, with the fear of an uncertain future. The repetition of questioning emphasizes the uncertainty and confusion surrounding her suggesting a complex feeling between the love and death. I personally feel very different when reading documentaries and the interviews from eyewitnesses of a disaster. It was a powerful and emotionally charged experience that deepened my understanding of the event's impact. My blackout poem is closely mirror of the themes, imagery, and narrative of the original text, which

maintains a strong connection throughout. My goal is trying to make a reinterpretation version of the material, while still retaining elements of the original text.

The first challenging aspect of the poetry writing for me is generating meaningful poetry from a limited set of words. It is hard to rearrange and reinterpret the chosen words to express the desired message. I also felt restrictive working with the original text, such as its subject matter, its tone and its language, they make it challenging to find my own voice and perspective. In addition, since I have no former experience of writing poem, it is hard to edit the poem to ensure its flow, rhythm, clarity, and consistency without weakening the core of the original text.