**Blackout Poetry Lesson**

***Step 1: Introduction***

There are several YouTube videos of Austin Kleon talking about his creative process and Blackout poetry. He has written several books and published a creative journal as well. He and others have website with examples of Blackout poetry. What you use and how you introduce the topic to your students is, as always, best decided by you (see file titled **Blackout Poetry Links** for more ideas).

There are many examples of Blackout poems on the Internet. The file **Blackout Poem Images** is included as a Word File so that, as needed, it can be … made into a presentation; printed off; projected on a classroom screen; or downloaded to each student’s device. Discussions of the poetry created and/or the message of the blacked-out art portion can be rich for that particular piece as well as generating ideas for students. If the original can be found the students can see what was omitted as well. At this point the activity could stop and students have time to locate a text they want to use for the next step.

***Step 2: Selecting the text and creating the poem***

Provide ample time for your students to look through the text set assembled for the task. Students look at a page of text and select as many words and/or individual letters they want to use to make their own creative writing piece. I suggest you consider copying the text before they beginning for two reasons. First, students can make many revisions before their final selections are complete and some paper can’t withstand the wear and tear. A copy or copies of the text can be used for the final draft to be blacked out. Second, having the original next to the finished poem makes a nice display. The final task can include a number of items to allow for differentiated learning. For example, the finished project can be:

the blackout poem;

the original text and the blackout poem;

the poem and a written description outlining the thinking behind selecting & omitting;

the poem with a computer and Makey Makey with Scratch coding (poem can be recorded and played back with or without music or sound effects) (poem can be copied as a Scratch Backdrop and seen as the project plays out).

***Step 3: Creating the Blackout of the poem***

Once the words and/or letters have been selected the rest of the page is blacked-out with pencil, marker or paint. The use of black can even be an option as different colours add to the overall effect of the poem. As seen with several examples, patterns and images can be used on the poem rather than totally covering the text. Using a soft lead pencil conducts electricity for the Makey Makey connections but other conductors can be used as well.

***Step 4: Extensions***

Extending the idea with creative writing: students could write about the reasoning they used to select and blackout the various words on the page; they could use the resulting poem as a starting point and write a piece using the poem as a beginning or ending; or they could write a summary of the steps taken to create a blackout poem.

Extending the idea with technology students use a Makey Makey or MicroBit and Scratch programming to connect with the poem by adding sounds, illustrations, movement, audio recording, etc. Here is a starter sample project in Scratch <https://scratch.mit.edu/projects/415398242/> and several screen shots below.

Extending the idea with multi-media students could create a video like the YouTube video Austin Kleon created explaining his idea of Steal Like an Artist and they could explain the steps and thinking and creative process behind their poem.

***Supplies***

I went to the local Goodwill book store and bought a variety of books. With some pre-planning the school or class could start a collection of no longer needed/used books for projects such as this. The collection is texts students can cut/rip out the page/part if they want; photocopy the page/part; or copy by hand or type a page/part. For example:

Non-fiction:

books,

movie review book,

science book,

biography,

newspaper,

magazine,

advertisements,

poster,

text downloaded from Internet - students were interested in was information from the

 United Nations website Children’s Bill of Rights

 <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx> and

 Sustainable Goals <https://www.unicef.org/sdgs> )

Fiction:

 books,

 comics,

song lyrics

 graphic novels

Art supplies: pencils, pencil crayons, markers, paint, brushes

Technology: computers, Makey Makey kits (connecting wires)

Other: quiet space to record









