



Short Activity
Ages 9–12
20–30 minutes

Blackout Poetry

Description

Participants will choose a page from a book to use as the basis of a blackout or elimination poetry activity. Participants can share their poetry if they wish.

Number of participants

For any number of participants.

Space considerations

An indoor space with tables and chairs is recommended.

Competencies

- Reading comprehension
- Critical thinking
- Language building
- Story building
- Public speaking (optional)

Materials

- Photocopies of pages from selected books
- Thick black or blue markers (e.g., Sharpies)
- Blank or lined paper (optional)
- Template for Blackout Poetry notes
- Laptop/projector (optional)
- Whiteboard or large flip chart (optional)

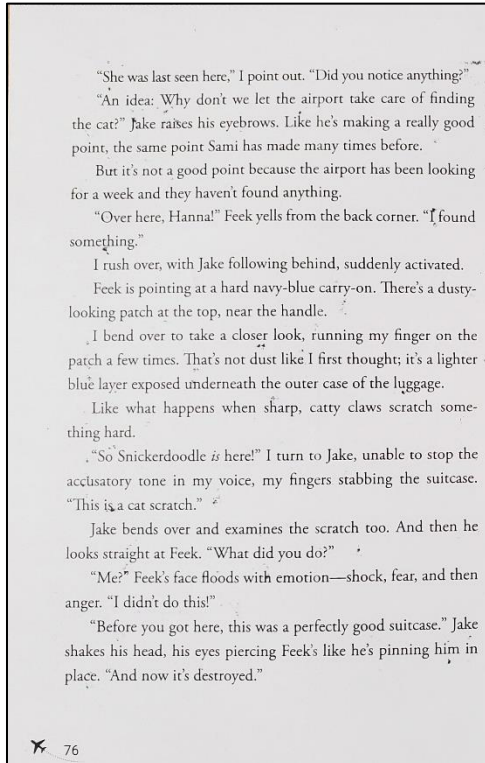
Preparation

- Print necessary number of copies of the suggested text template for participants
- Have thick black/blue markers available

- Optional: include blank or lined paper in case participants wish to copy their poems into a cleaner format

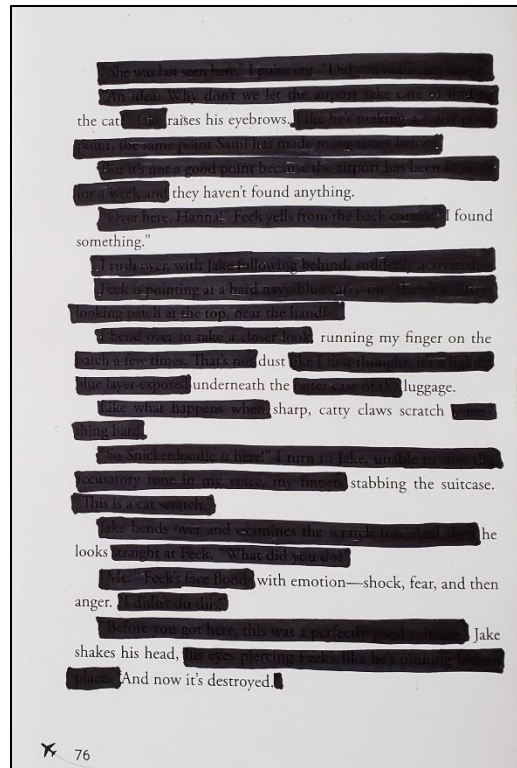
Implementation

1. Choose one of the text options. *Grounded* and *The Bellwoods Game* have been provided as examples, but any book with somewhat sophisticated language will work well.



2. Use the **Blackout Poetry Participant Template** to identify key ideas and concepts. Start a discussion about what kind of feelings or emotions certain words or phrases might evoke:
 - Does this remind you of a certain time or place?
 - Do certain words have more positive or negative connotations?

3. Carefully cross out unwanted words in the text. Feel free to mark off entire sentences, lines, etc.



4. Offer an additional page for participants to copy the words or phrases that remain.

Lost, Then Found

the cat raises his eyebrows
they haven't found anything

found something
running my finger on the dust

underneath the luggage
sharp, catty claws scratch
stabbing the suitcase

he looks with emotion--
shock, fear, and then anger

Jake shakes his head
and now it's destroyed

5. To add an additional challenge, encourage participants to share their final poems with each other in a poetry show. Note that not all participants will be comfortable with this—please gauge your audience’s interest!

Accessibility considerations

- Consider increasing text size by photocopying at a larger size
- Make it a group poem: Use a projector to display the selected text and read it aloud together. Have participants share words they want to keep or cross out
- Provide blank or scrap paper for participants to write out a “clean” version of their blackout poem
- Let participants work individually or in small groups/pairs
- To extend this activity or to include other age groups, consider using simpler text options (e.g., a shorter fiction title or even a lengthier picture book)

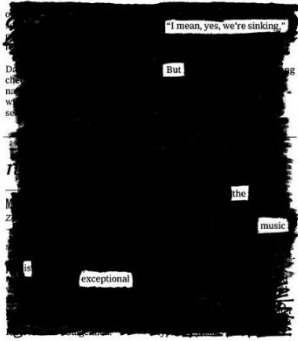
Book suggestions

Grounded by Aisha Saeed, S.K. Ali, Jamilah Thompkins-Bigelow and Huda Al-Marashi

The Bellwoods Game by Celia Krampien

Download links

- [Blackout Poetry—Activity](#)
- [Blackout Poetry—Participant Template](#)



BLACKOUT POETRY

Blackout poetry is all about eliminating or “blacking out” existing words or phrases to create new phrases and concepts.

- What words or phrases stick out to you?
- What kind of ideas can you start to build from these words?
- What emotions do you feel?
- What stories can you start to imagine?

Remember: you can get rid of or keep as much of the existing text as you want!

MY IDEAS: