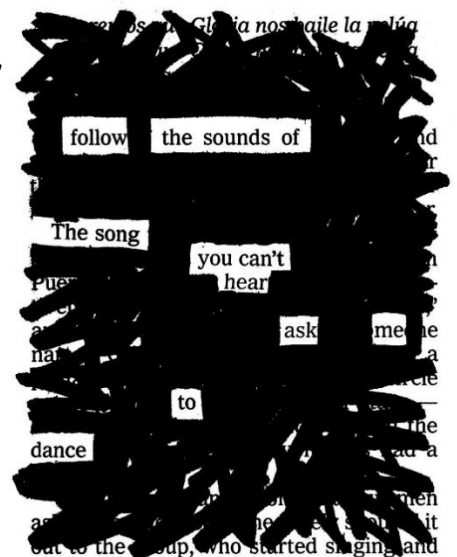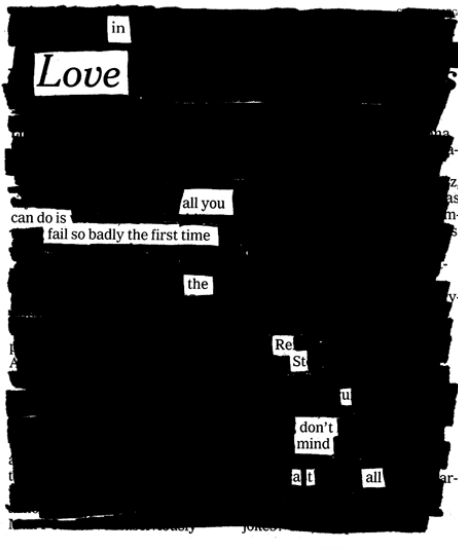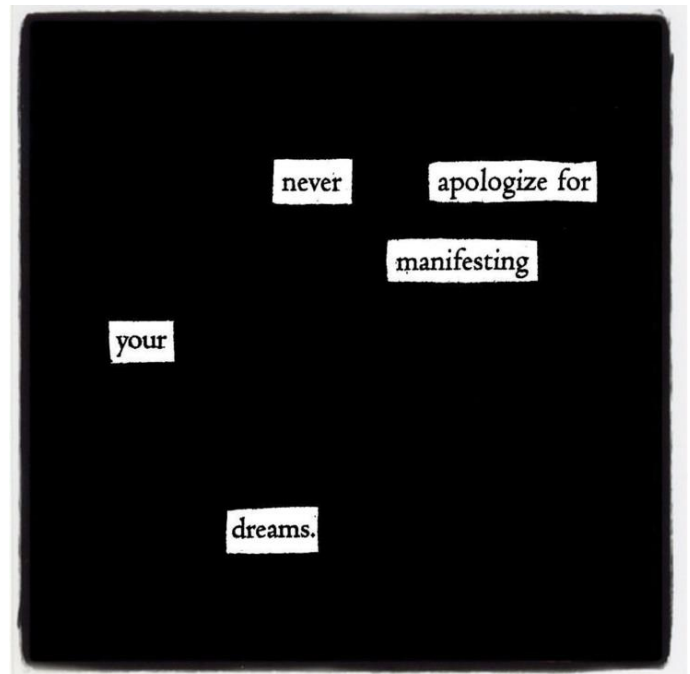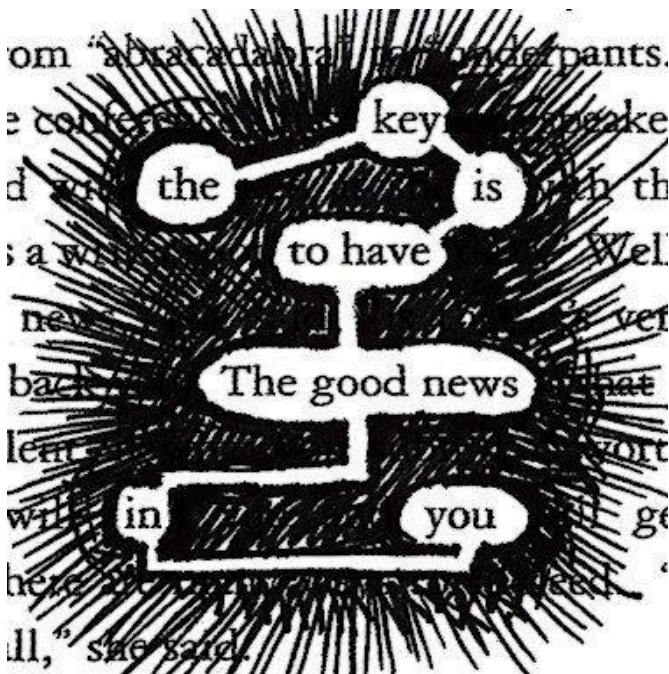# Blackout Poetry Part One

L.O. Make careful word choices to create a poem

Blackout poetry is a type of 'found' poetry, first created by a poet called Austin Kleon in 2005. He noticed that he was able to create poems by linking words that he saw on printed pages (newspapers, magazines, books – in fact any text).

Blackout poets pick out single words or phrases from the existing text, then piece them together to make something new. This kind of poetry embraces randomness, and also gives people a chance to mix poetry and visual art Anyone can do this; to create one, you scan a text for words and phrases that create a poem. Then, black out (with a Sharpie or other marker) all the other words. You poem jumps out of the text from there. Simple as that.

Activitiy 1: Meet Austin Kleon here and find out how he writes his poetry.

Activity 2: Let's have a look at some examples first. Read each poem a couple of times – do you understand what the poet is trying to say? Do you feel any emotions? Can you imagine what the original text was? Was it a page from a story, a magazine or maybe a newspaper?

Activity 3: Find a page of text – newspaper works well, but it can be fun to look at a photocopy of one of your favourite book pages, or even find a book that is falling apart and the pages are coming out.

- Scan the page looking for a 'theme word' to inspire possible topics for your poem. With a pencil, choose any word for your theme word – it's about choosing something that stands out to you. Words may stand out because they have meaning or significance, for example, because they link to a personal value, a favourite feeling, or a special event. The meaningful theme word decides the topic of the whole poem. Don't even worry about 'having to create a poem' – just creating a sentence from words taken from you page of text is fun, and in the end, that's all the examples on the previous page have done; they become poetry because each word has been chosen carefully and every word counts.
- Now re-read your page more carefully. Lightly circle with your pencil any other words that connect to your theme word or resonate with you – it's also OK to circle words just because they sound nice! This is all about self-expression! Try not to circle more than three words in a row. If possible, pick words that work on their own.
- Piece together the circled words in the same order that the appear on the page (so, in English, top to bottom and left to right). Aim for about eight lines of poem – it's up to you where a line stops and a new one starts. If you need to join words that don't quite follow each other on the page, then you can just link them in the right order, like the first example above does.
- Before you start using your marker pen, go back through your poem – do you want to remove any words? Are there any spaces where you need to add something? Experiment with a few different possibilities. If things aren't working out, it's OK to go back and repeat the previous step to find some more words.
- Once you've settled on a final poem, rub out any circles around words you're not using.
- Now circle the words that you are using more obviously – you could use a pen or highlighter – and black out the rest of the page, leaving the words you have chosen.
- Share your poem with your family (maybe by reading it out, or photographing and sharing). You could chat about what it means and how you pulled words together. Please share your finished poem on Seesaw