

# Express yourself creatively

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Workshop 1  
June 2026





## Early bird activity

Poetry matching game in Quizlet:

<https://quizlet.com/join-activity?code=A2SQOM>

If you use the QR code, you do not have to enter the Access code. Put in a nickname + space and the Join activity button should light up.

# Links



<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1jJC5wqbj3QKGdqc7znZMCS91yeTQuVUdtrwINhwpII8/edit?usp=sharing>



# Welcome

We are so happy to have such a wonderful group gathered today.

To get us started, name a way you like to be creative. Or tell us one thing you like about poetry.

While you are doing that, I'll tell you a little about us.



# About us



Guylaine began her career as a librarian supporting literacy practitioners in the Deaf and Francophone communities. She specializes in information and cloud content management, curating learning resources, and technology problem-solving. Her areas of interest and professional development include information literacy and artificial intelligence, online privacy and safety, as well as digital equality.



Tracey has worked in adult education at community programs, school boards, colleges, unions and networks. Her work is informed by her experience as an instructor and program worker as well as her project experience developing e-learning strategies, blended or distance curricula and models for online instructional design.

# Workshop Elements

A scaffolded approach to writing poetry

- guides and supports, templates, form poems, etc.
- learning about rhythm, metre and rhyme

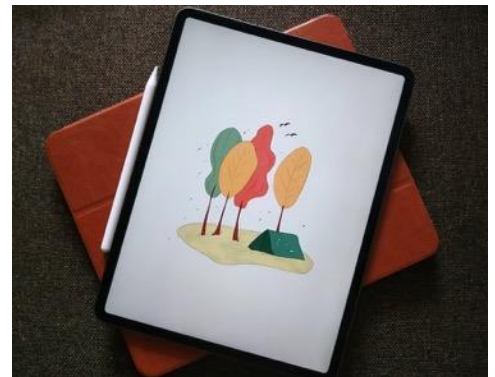
A scaffolded approach to experiencing poetry

- text, audio and video presentations of poems by published authors and learner-poets

OER, digital resources and digital tools

- that support a scaffolded approach to expressing oneself through the medium of creative writing - especially poetry

OER = Open Education Resources



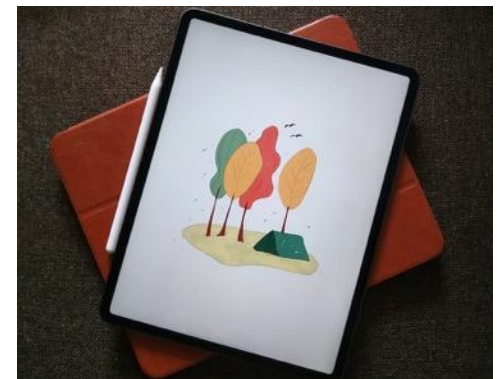
# Why poetry?

## Poetry and literacy

*Poetry has been associated with the teaching of literacy for a long time. Because poetry, in some ways, is the cherry on the top of literacy. In poetry we see something approaching our full humanity expressed in the technology of writing. Writing is a complex, subtle, highly expressive technology. Poetry is typically considered the highest form of writing because that's where we learn how to feel—and sing—with language. Language in poetry can carry feeling, song, emotion, attitude, the tone of the inner voice, as well as thought.*

<https://vispo.com/netartery/digital-poetry-in-digital-literacy.html>

<https://www.vispo.com/writings/essays/DigitalPoetryInDigitalLiteracy2.pdf>



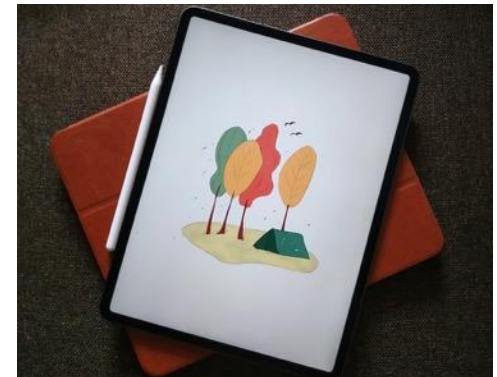
# Learn together

## Creating something from something

Today we are going to look at some ways we can create poetry even if we have never read or written a poem before.

We are going to look at

- two resources for learning about what poetry is;
- two forms of *found poetry* that are a place to start;
- how creating something from something fosters a growth mindset.





# Billy Collins on why poems exist

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## Billy Collins Teaches Reading and Writing Poetry



# Billy Collins keeping an eye on things

## Billy Collins keeping an eye on mice

The Country



A screenshot from a [video](#) animated by Brady Baltezor of Radium.

## Billy Collins keeping an eye on dogs

Dharma



A screenshot from a [video](#) animated by [@sophiatwli](#)

# Other things Billy Collins is keeping an eye on

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Budapest

Now and Then

The Best Cigarette

Hunger

Walking Across the Atlantic

Forgetfulness

The Dead

Some Days



# What do you want to keep an eye on?

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Chipmunks?

Clouds?

Dogs?

Mice?

If you are thinking about writing your first poem, what would it be about?

If you've written poems before, what will your next one be about?





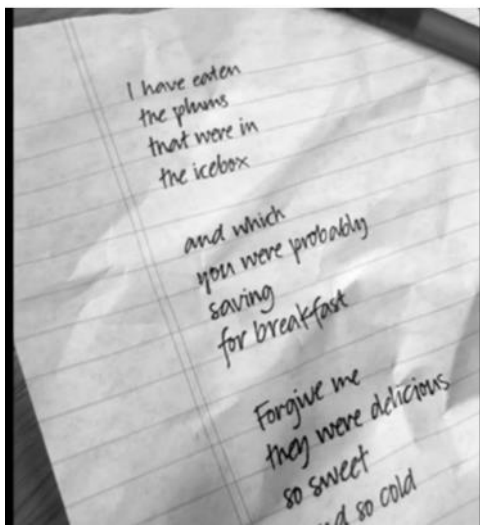
# What makes a poem a poem

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Sorry – I ate all the  
plums that were in the  
fridge.

Bill 😞



## This is just to say

14

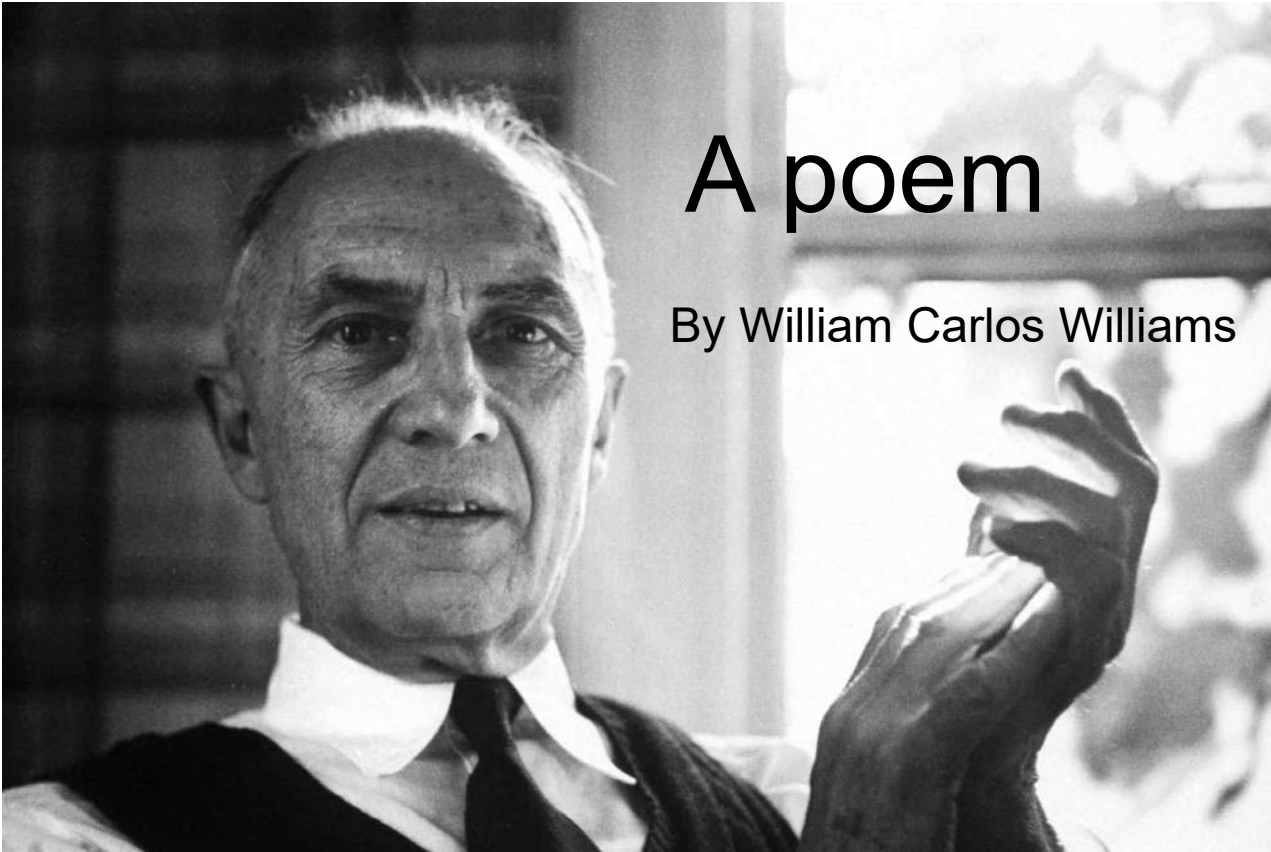
I have eaten  
the plums  
that were in  
the icebox

and which  
you were probably  
saving  
for breakfast

Forgive me  
they were delicious  
so sweet  
and so cold

## A poem

By William Carlos Williams



# This poem started as a note

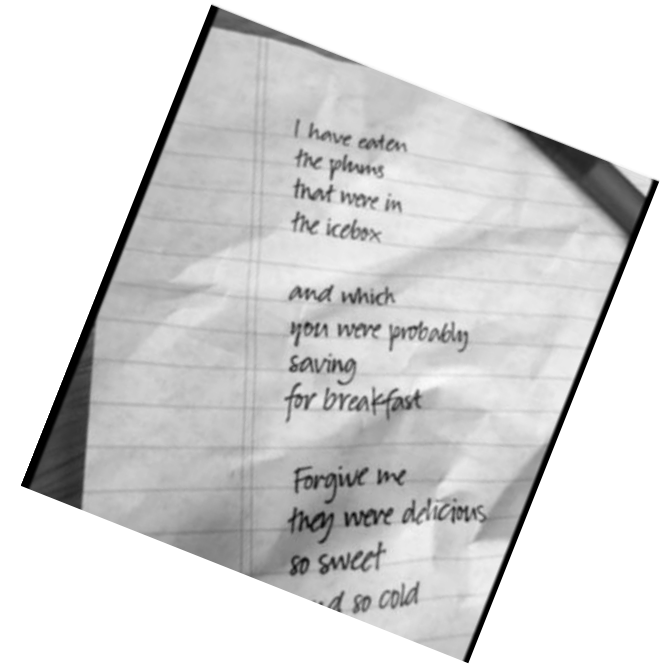
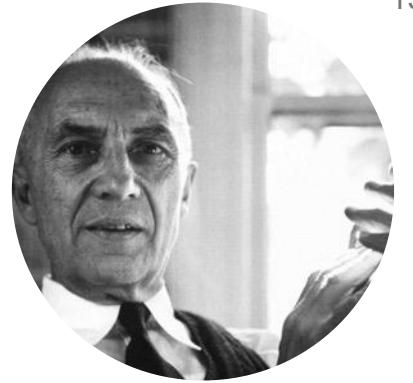
If you were leaving a note to apologize for eating something, what would your note say?

What makes *This is just to say* a poem?

[The elements of a poem | Reading | Khan Academy](#)

*Poetry is a special kind of writing—if ordinary writing is like talking, then poetry is like singing. This video describes the parts of poems, and how to think about them.*

After watching the video, what are your thoughts and ideas about the way William Carlos Williams breaks the lines in this poem?



# What is this poem?

What makes a poem ... a poem?

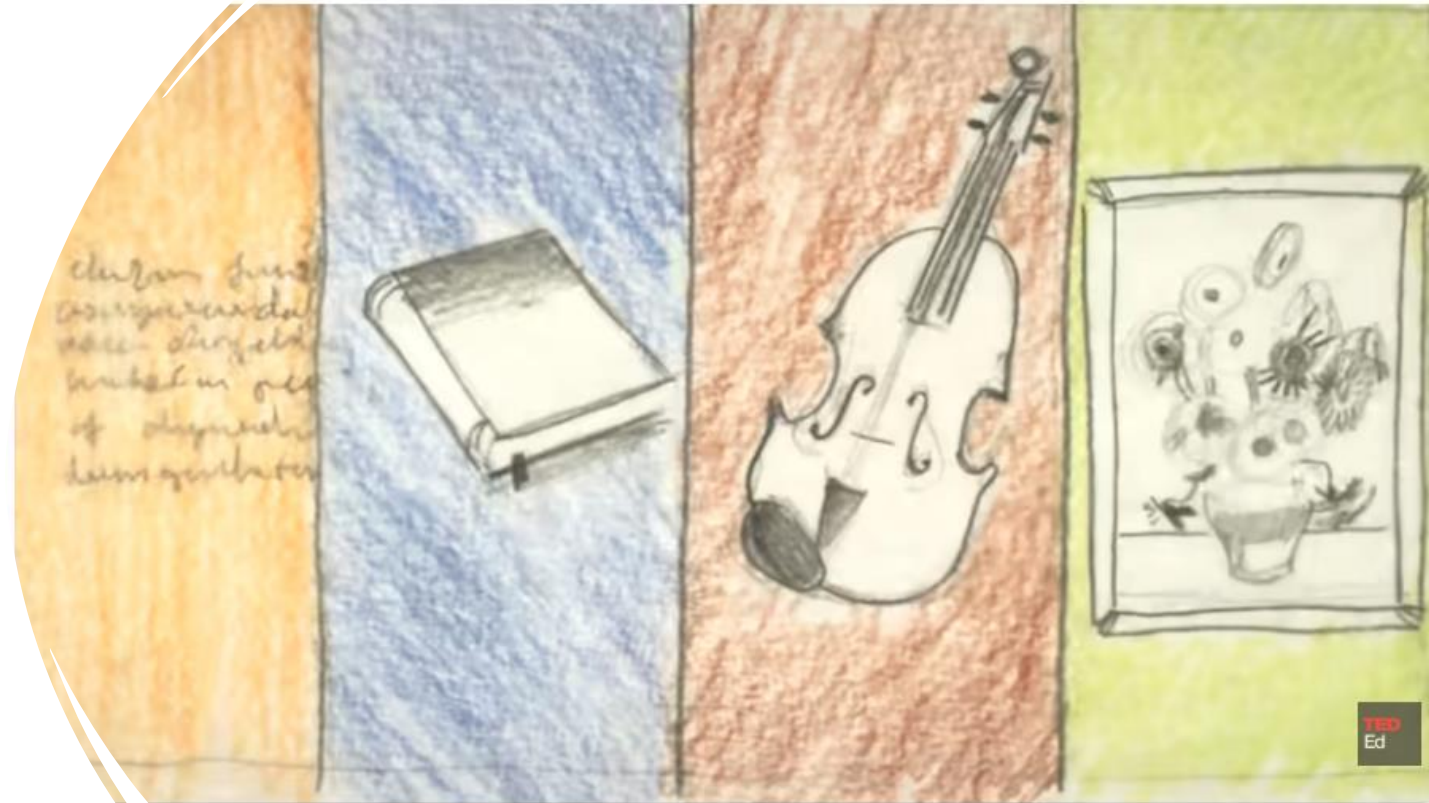
(A Ted ED Lesson)

Is this poem a little machine?

A firework?

An echo?

A dream?



A screenshot from a TedEd [video](#) by Melissa Kovacs and Richard O'Connor  
Illustrated and animated by Taisiya Zaretskaya and Phil Powers.



# Characteristics of poetry

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Poetry generally has certain recognizable characteristics.

1. Poems emphasize language's musical qualities. This can be achieved through rhyme, rhythm, and meter.
2. Poems use condensed language, like literature with all the water wrung out of it.
3. Poems often feature intense feelings.



# This is just to say

Read the poem here:

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/56159/this-is-just-to-say>

Watch these videos of different people reading the poem:

[William Carlos Williams](#)

[Matthew Macfadyen](#)

[Adam Driver](#)

[Helena Bonham Carter](#)

# Questions: This is just to say

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Listen to the 4 versions.

Do you think or feel differently about the poem depending on who is reading it? If so, why?

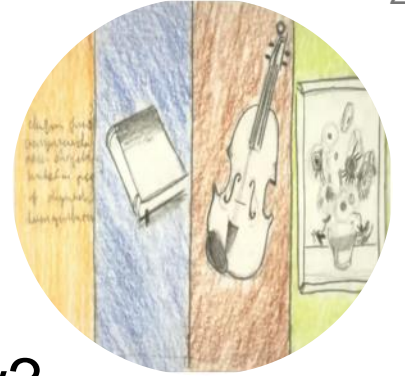
What does this poem make you feel?

What does it make you think about?



# Characteristics of *This is just to say*

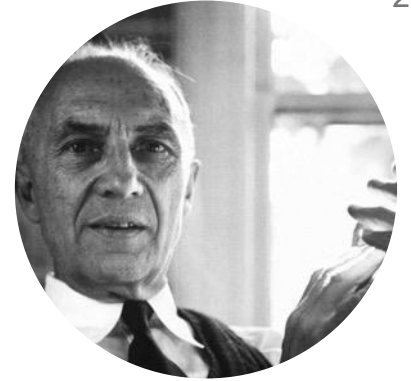
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1. Does this poem reflect language's musical qualities? If so, how?
2. Does this poem use condensed language? If so, how?
3. Does this poem evoke an intense feeling? If so, how?
4. Does this poem comment on what it is to be human? If so, how?
5. Does this poem help us see what it is to be human in a new way? If so, how?



# Rhythm and metre: This is just to say



What do you think of when you hear the poem read out loud?

How does the rhythm and metre of this poem help us understand the feelings in this poem?

[A description of rhythm and metre in poetry](#)

(Creative Writing Now)

# Next steps: Letter poem A

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Prompt A:

Imagine you are the person to whom William Carlos Williams wrote this note.

Leave William a reply. Write your note. What can you do to make your note a poem?

How will you change the order of the words? How will you change the rhythm?

Will you add or subtract any words?



Try the [Line Break Explorer](#)

from [Read Write Think Interactives](#)

[Tracey wrote back](#)

# Next steps: Letter poem B

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Prompt B:

What kind of notes do you write? What kind of notes do people write to you?

Find a note you have written or that someone has written to you. Can you turn it into a poem? How will you change the order of the words? How will you change the rhythm?

Will you add any words?



Try the [Line Break Explorer](#)

from [Read Write Think Interactives](#)

[Tracey wrote a poem](#)

# Letter poem lesson plans and activities

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## A lesson plan

- [Letter Poems Deliver: Experimenting with Line Breaks in Poetry Writing](#) (Poetry In Voice)

## A writing prompt

- [Write a “letter” poem](#) (Poetry In Voice)

## Activities

- [Read Write Think Interactives Letter Poem Creator](#)  
(the sample poem may be more suited to younger people)
- [Read Write Think Interactives Line Break Explorer](#)
- [Read Write Think Letter Generator \(start by writing a letter\)](#)



# Letter poems are a type of found poem

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## Found poems

- are made by taking language from a non-poetic sources and turning it into poems
- have been made using phrases from textbooks, street signs, news reports, and comic books
- are a collage made out of words

## A lesson plan

- [How to Write Found Poetry](#) ([Creative Writing Now](#))

## A video workshop

- [How to Write Found Poetry](#) (36-minute workshop from [I Am Loud Productions](#))

Complex grammar and vocabulary but great background for teachers.

# Another type of found poetry is blackout poetry



To create a blackout poem, you take a selected text from a newspaper, magazine or a book and redact most of the words, leaving only a small fraction of readable text. This creates a visual poem.

## What is Blackout Poetry?

## Examples and Inspiration

“Because I could not stop for debt,  
he kindly stopped for me.”



# Blackout poetry: igniting the joy of creating

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Some people find that blackout (or erasure poetry) is a good way to break writer's block. Instead of trying to create something out of nothing, you are creating something out of something and making it your own. It is a good way to ignite the joy of creating. As this blackout poet says, sometimes limitations mean freedom.



## How to Make Blackout Poetry



# Blackout poetry and a growth mindset



This workshop will foster participants to engage flexibly with digital skills by considering the Learning Zone Model (Senninger) or Growth Mindset (Dweck) and working through a hands-on digital challenge.

## Blackout poetry – digital literacy in creative ways

A lesson plan with instructions and a slide deck.

See the core messages on the next slide.

**Create Challenge:**  
**mindsets & mistakes,**  
**comfort zones & creativity**

A digital dexterity learning activity

Kat Cain - Manager, Digital Literacy Programs (Deakin)  
Elizabeth Smith - Information Services Project Officer (UTS)

**DIGITAL DEXTERITY**



# Senninger Learning Zones

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## Comfort zone:

- familiar, safe, no risks
- established skills and abilities
- no growth or new learning

## Learning zone:

- curiosity, stretch, new discoveries
- developing new skills and abilities
- growth and new learning

## Panic zone:

- stressful, highly uncomfortable
- barriers to learning
- no growth or new learning





# Core messages

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If you want to feel secure  
Do what you already know how to do.  
But if you want to grow...  
Go to the cutting edge of your competence,  
Which means a temporary loss of security.  
So, whenever you don't quite know  
What you are doing  
Know that you are growing...

-- David Viscott, 2003

## Core message:

It is impossible to make a mistake.  
Whatever you create will be a  
fantastic experimental poem.

## Focus for learners:

Tracking their self-talk and which  
learning zone they felt like they  
were in.

## Focus for instructors:

Support for learners to self-solve  
problems, working through  
barriers, by providing problem-  
solving strategies

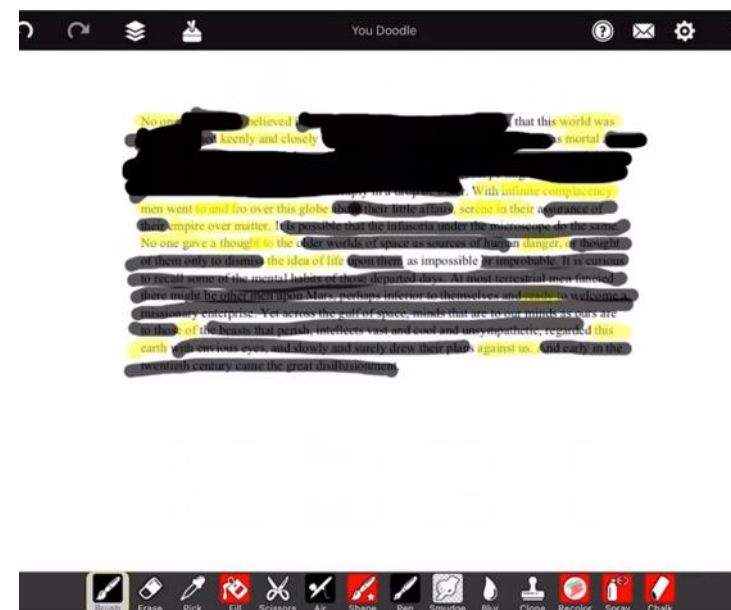
# Blackout poetry workshop

This is a 28-minute workshop that includes descriptions and activities where participants can create poems using analog or digital tools. Resources are included in the notes.

The facilitator demonstrates how to make a blackout poem using the You Doodle app:

- [Apple](#)
- [Google Play](#)

[Erasure Poetry Workshop](#)  
(Cut-out, Blackout Poetry)  
from [I Am Loud Productions](#)



# Blackout poetry and art

This blackout poet says uses a slightly different approach to presenting her poems. Instead of blacking out all the unused words, she connects the words and and draws pictures to illustrate the poem.



## 10 Blackout Poetry Ideas: How-To Tutorial with Examples



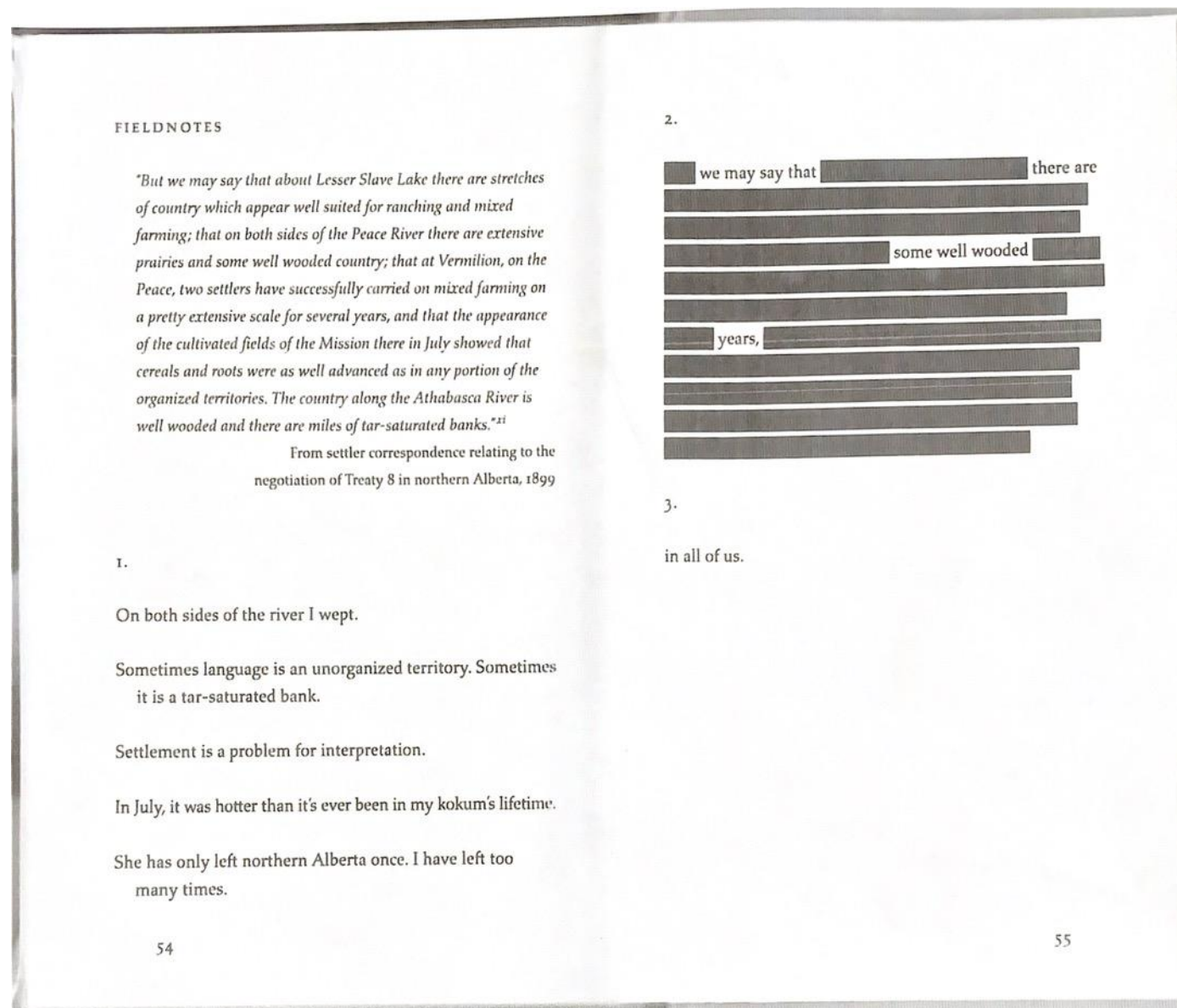
# Blackout poetry and history

This poem by [Billy Ray Belcourt](#) uses a historical text to create part of a poem.

Different types of texts can be used in blackout poetry.

In this example, the choice of text brings in another layer of meaning.

Belcourt, B. (2025). *The idea of an entire life*. McClelland and Stewart.



# *The idea of an entire life text*

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*But we may say that about Lesser Slave Lake there are stretches of country which appear well suited for ranching and mixed farming; that on both sides of the Peace River there are extensive prairies and some well wooded country; that at Vermilion, on the Peace, two settlers have successfully carried on mixed farming on a pretty extensive scale for several years, and that the appearance of the cultivated fields of the Mission there in July showed that cereals and roots were as well advanced as in any portion of the organized territories. The country along the Athabasca River is well wooded and there are miles of tar-saturated banks."*

From settler correspondence relating to the negotiation of Treaty 8 in northern Alberta, 1899

Belcourt, B. (2025). *The idea of an entire life*. McClelland and Stewart.



# *The idea of an entire life* for easy reading



1.

On both sides of the river I wept.

Sometimes language is an unorganized territory. Sometimes  
it is a tar-saturated bank.

Settlement is a problem for interpretation.

In July, it was hotter than it's ever been in my kokum's lifetime.

She has only left northern Alberta once. I have left too  
many times.

2.

we may say  
that there are  
some well wooded years,

3.

in all of us.

# Blackout poetry and emergent readers

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Redacting words from newspaper articles and books could be challenging for some literacy learners.

You could:

Choose simpler texts.

Read the texts aloud a few times and ask learners to listen for words and phrases they like.

Write the words and phrases they choose on a board or flip chart.

Ask learners to find those words in the text and circle them. They could draw lines to connect the words into a poem, blackout all the other words, or copy the words and phrases onto strips of paper and create poems from them.



# Try this

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## Blackout poetry in Google Slides

1. Choose a slide and add your name.
2. Read through the passage.
3. Choose the words you love best using whatever criteria you want.
4. Drag a box from the right over your words. Resize it if necessary.  
(You do not have to use all the boxes or you can make more. If you want to make more, right click in the box and choose Copy and then Paste.)
5. Drag the black boxes from the left over all the other words so that only your chosen words show up.

# Another Slides poetry activity

Here is an activity we used to do with strips of paper.



I made a Jamboard version and when Jamboard was discontinued, I converted it to Slides.

[View Pictures and Words activity](#)

[Copy Pictures and Words activity](#)

[See instructions](#)

## Breakout 1



Choose a picture that speaks to you. Delete the rest. When you are finished, delete this text box to see what to do next.

Text 1

Text 4

Text 7

Text 10

Text 13

Text 2

Text 5

Text 8

Text 11

Text 14

Text 3

Text 6

Text 9

Text 12

Text 15





# Resources

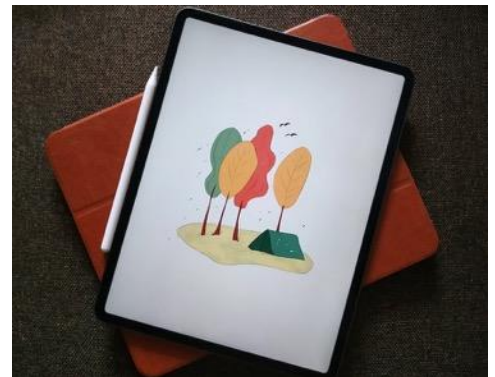
# OER in this workshop – Teaching Writing

## [Creative Writing Now](#)

Creative Writing Now was founded by writing teachers in 2009. You can find resources and activities for writing poetry and fiction.

### [\\*Poetry in Voice Lesson Plans](#)

Poetry in Voice/Les voix de la poésie is a “registered charity that wants all Canadians to speak poetry.” They “provide educators with engaging content and experiences, in English and French, to inspire their students to read, recite, and write poetry.” To see the [lesson plans](#) you need to make a teacher account. (I made one and it is fine – no spam so far.)



# OER in this workshop – Teaching Writing

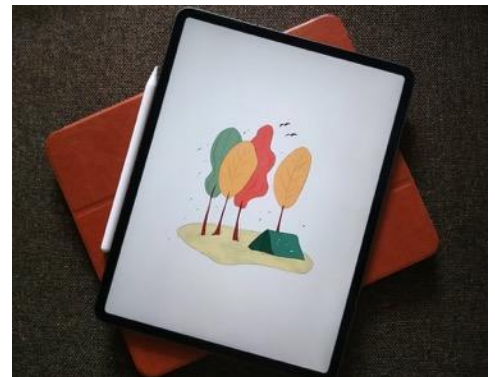
## 5 Creative Digital Poetry Activities

*I know poetry can be a sensitive subject. Maybe you love it and it's tough to see how many students arrive in your classroom already anti-poetry. Maybe you're pretty lukewarm, and you look forward to teaching it each year like you look forward to February slush. Maybe you had a perfect way to teach it, and now you're trying to figure out how on earth to move all your awesome activities online due to, you know, global pandemic.*

## I Am Loud Workshops

Founded in 2014, the core aim of I Am Loud is to support, develop, and make more sustainable the Scottish spoken word scene.

See the free workshops on their YouTube channel: [I Am Loud Productions Workshops Play List](#)



# OER in this workshop – Prompts, Templates and Examples

## \* [Poetry templates](#)

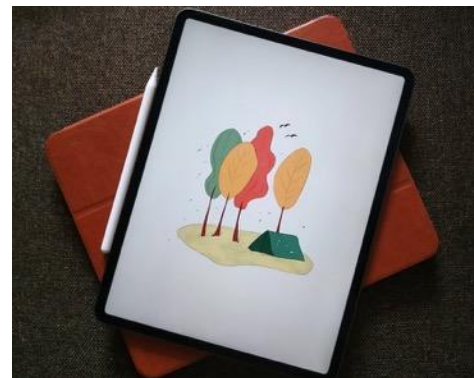
An open source collection of templates for different types of poems. All files can be saved, modified and shared. A [Poetry Analysis](#) activity is also available.

## [Read Write Think Interactives](#)

Interactive tools for learning about language from [Read Write Think](#).

## [The Westcoast Reader](#)

A collection of writing for and sometimes by adult literacy learners. Some entries come with audio support and some have activities.







# Next

## Homework ☺

Choose one and bring your poem next week

- [Write a response](#) to William Carlos Williams
- [Write a letter poem](#)
- [Make a backout poem](#)
- [Try this activity](#) with learners and ask to bring a poem next week
- Bring one of your favourite poems to share

## Week 2:

More ways to write poems

## Week 3:

Places to experience poems



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<https://www.masterclass.com/articles/tips-for-reading-poetry-from-billy-collins>



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# Tracey wrote back

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**This is just to say back**

by Mrs. Williams

You have eaten

the plums

that were in

the icebox

which I WAS

saving

for breakfast

I forgive you

I ate the banana instead.





# Tracey wrote a letter poem

## **Travels of My Mum**

Bank Street Mum

Market Mum

Downtown Mum

Art Centre Mum

So many Mums?

But a Mum who always comes home to become

Kitchen Mum

Garden Mum

Front Porch Mum

Laundry Room Mum

and Bedroom Mum tucking us in before sleep.

Here is an explanation of my note poem:  
Sometimes when we came home from school, my mum would be out. She would leave us a note to tell us where she was. My mother always wrote very short notes. Usually they were just 2 lines.

Something like: .  
Bank St.  
Mum.



# Thank you

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