

Blackout Poetry: Encouraging Poetic Creativity in the Classroom

by

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for the degree of Master of Arts in the Department of English.

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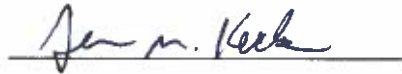


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ABSTRACT

In this thesis, I explore the history of blackout poetry and how it can be used in the classroom setting. I assess the place this genre of poetry has in academia by applying the theoretical lenses of deconstruction and post-structuralism. I also explore how scholars teach poetry and implement blackout poetry in their classrooms. To support this research, I showcase my own examples of blackout poetry as examples of how blackout poetry can be created.

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Nothing is completely original. All creative work builds on what came before. – Austin Kleon

What is Blackout Poetry? History, Literary Theory, and Theoretical Applications

When talking with his students about their feelings towards poetry, Michael Bugeja learned that almost half of his students enjoyed poetry “until a teacher made a value judgment about their intellect” (32). Between being criticized for their interpretations of poetry and their struggle to create effective poetry, students tend to dislike poetry compared to other forms of writing. I can recall my sister’s panic during her Honor’s English class in 12th grade. Her teacher assigned the class a poetry assignment with their Shakespeare unit, challenging them to use Shakespeare’s sonnets as inspiration for their own. My sister was not the best at creative writing in any form, poetry worst of all, and sought out my help. With that help, my sister was able to pass the assignment with flying colors. This was due to my aptitude for finding rhyme and rhythm patterns and being able to evoke an image in the words I wrote. But that did not always come easy. I can also recall my own experiences in my undergraduate poetry classes, struggling to churn out weekly poems and feeling jealous of my classmates with superior poetry skills that, I imagine, will get them published someday.

I have learned that I am not alone in that feeling of inferiority; in fact, I think it is a prerequisite for any writer. Many students struggle with writing creatively, while a lucky few find it easy. This ease with types of creative writing can come at different points in life, just like hobbies. That’s how I was about poetry. While I had a brief phase in middle school where I wrote my own amateur poems, I eventually lost my passion for it. I started to favor fiction writing, as I believed that there was a lot more freedom in what I could write and how I could write it. Years later, as a graduate student, my passion for creative writing had been lost due to the weight of schoolwork, lack of inspiration, and the inevitable feeling of not being good enough. What

brought back my creative spark was a simple extra credit project assigned to the freshman-level writing course I helped teach. The task was simple: take a page from our text, Markus Zusak's *The Book Thief*, and make it into something new. This could have been done through origami, art, poetry, etc. It was through my own experimentation with this activity that I rediscovered my love for poetry, but more specifically, I found a love for blackout poetry. I'd come to learn that while I struggled with more traditional poetry for many of the same reasons that most students have for their dislike of poetry, blackout poetry opened a door that took my previous struggles off my shoulders and challenged me in new and exciting ways. This form of poetry allows students the opportunity to create poetic works by using pre-existing texts as a word bank and these poems can be visualized in a variety of different ways, from the iconic "blackout" to drawings and photography. The purpose of this thesis is to inform educators and students about blackout poetry and how it can be used in the classroom.

What is Blackout Poetry?

Blackout poetry is a form of art where the poet takes a pre-existing text, such as newspapers, books, webpages, other poems, etc., and uses that text to create a new poem. The words for this poem must be found on the page of the original text, words cannot be added, though words may be pieced together by isolating specific letters on the page. The chosen words can also flow non-consecutively through the page depending on what kind of effect the poet wants to achieve both visually and poetically. These words and letters are then isolated as the rest of the original text is obscured in some way. Blackout poetry got its name from the practice of using a black marker to obscure the unwanted words of the original text. Poets have also created blackout poetry by using drawings, isolating their chosen words and transposing them elsewhere, or with digitally altered texts.

Blackout poetry, while recently popularized by Austin Kleon with his collection of newspaper blackout poems, has a long history that Kleon himself was unaware of when he first started. Kleon shared how blackout poetry came to him during a period of writer's block: "Here I am without any words. And right next to me are thousands of them..." ("Steal Like An Artist"). Rather than try and write in a forced attempt at creativity, Kleon used the words given to him every day in the newspaper and broke down a section of the text, carefully choosing certain words to create a poem before blacking out the unnecessary parts of the original text. He thought he was on to something new here. It was as his poetry became popular online that Kleon got messages through emails and various social media platforms that this form of poetry was "completely unoriginal," with many replies pointing out Tom Phillips' *A Humument* project ("Steal Like An Artist"). Phillips' *A Humument* project employed the same art that Kleon did with his newspaper blackout poems, with Phillips crossing out "...unwanted words with ink leaving some (often too many) to stand..." (Phillips). With this new knowledge, Kleon went on to trace the history of using newspapers and other printed media to create poetry back to the 1760s with Caleb Whitford, a neighbor of Benjamin Franklin, who would read the newspaper columns across the page to get unique combinations and eventually publish them ("Steal Like An Artist").

While some noted that Kleon's style was not as original as he believed, others asserted that this form of "poetry" was unoriginal no matter who invented it. Kleon acknowledges that the creation of blackout poetry is a practice of creative theft, due to how the poems are created by using words chosen from a base text that was written by someone else. It is with the thought of creative theft in mind that Kleon refers to T. S. Eliot: "Bad poets take what they steal and they deface it. And the good poets turn it into something better or at least something different" ("Steal

Like An Artist”). Blackout poetry does exactly what Eliot asserted. By taking an original text, defacing it, and creating it into a new work of literature, in this case, poetry, blackout poets are becoming “good poets.” That does not mean that blackout poets can create a poem from just any original text they have before them, whatever that text may be. I’ve been actively creating blackout poetry for the past year and I find it difficult to work with a variety of texts, whether that be due to length, genre, or the selection of words on that given page. Creating blackout poems is an art that must be practiced, just like any other form of writing. Kleon discusses how blackout poetry is not just a practice in creative theft, but also in transformation. “I know that it’s actually transformation that is flattery: taking the things you’ve stolen and turning it into your own thing” (“Steal Like An Artist”). To Kleon, the act of taking the newspaper, something he has a personal history and connection with, and transforming parts of it into something new is an act of flattery. That concept of flattery can also apply to blackout poems created through other texts. Imagine creating a blackout poem with the lyrics of your favorite song. You choose the words that stand out to you and create a new poem out of those lyrics. The act of taking that song and making it into a blackout poem is an act of flattery because of the meaning that the song originally had that inspired you to turn it into a blackout poem. Blackout poetry also allows poets to embrace texts in different ways and the benefits of doing so. Carroll asserts in the introduction of his workbook that the three “best things about blackout poetry” are that “it generates unexpected ideas, it’s therapeutic, and that it forces you to be present” (3). In Jerrod Schwarz’s foreward of *Make Blackout Poetry: Activist Edition*, he mentions how creating blackout poetry with political documents allows poets to embrace their civic and American identity (1). Poets can use blackout to show their appreciation and disdain for, or call attention to various texts, topics, or issues they come across; flattery and critique go hand in hand with this type of poetry.

As mentioned earlier, not everyone sees the value in this type of poetry. The subjective nature of art is well documented. When entering my graduate-level poetry course, taught by the same professor of my undergraduate poetry courses, I asked him if he would be all right with me sharing some of my blackout poetry. He was confused at first, having never heard of this kind of poetry before. I explained what blackout poetry was to him and sent him examples to look at. Despite my explanations, he still did not quite understand it, but tentatively permitted me to share my poems in class. This went off well at first, with some of my fellow students sharing their interest and awe despite my professor's hesitation. On the weeks I would share my blackout poetry, he would often remark on how my voice wasn't reflected in the blackout poems I shared. I reminded him that with blackout poetry: "...by *destroying* writing you can *create* new writing. You can take a stranger's random words and pick and choose from them to express your own personal vision" (Kleon, xv). I could see my voice in the poems I created because I read the chosen base text(s) and found the poetry within them to transform the page into something new. I see blackout poetry as a literary word search puzzle, where it is my job to find the words that will bring new life to the text in front of me.

While my professor often stated that he could not see my voice in the blackout poems I submitted, I believe his hesitancy also came from his own inexperience with this type of poetry. He often stated that he was unsure of the validity of blackout poetry and wasn't sure how to evaluate it. This insecurity about the validity and methods of evaluation of poetry is surely a cause of why some teachers or poets dislike the genre. If a teacher is unsure how to teach or evaluate an activity in class, they are unlikely to implement it in their classrooms. There are a variety of resources available to teachers who wish to learn more about blackout poetry or to find materials/lesson plans on how to incorporate it into their classrooms, from YouTube videos, like

Austin Kleon's TEDx Talk, to teacher share sites like TeachersPayTeachers.com. Teachers can also encourage students to explore blackout poetry on their own time. To help demonstrate the validity of blackout poetry, I chose to apply two lenses of critical theory.

Application of Literary Theory

As with all forms of literature, blackout poetry is subject to evaluation under the lens of critical theory. Given how blackout poetry is created and structured, it makes sense to look at this form of poetry using the lenses of deconstruction and post-structuralism. Deconstruction's focus on the relationship between text and meaning applies to blackout due to the isolation/erasure of parts of the text. The "deconstruction" of the base text allows poets to find new meanings that are highlighted through their poetry. The application of post-structuralism allows poets to see a base text as more than what it has been established as and be open to a variety of new meanings through the creation of blackout poetry.

Blackout poetry can be examined through the lens of deconstruction due to how the creation of blackout poetry centers around the act of breaking up pre-existing text down to individual signifiers and signs. By isolating specific signifiers from the original text to connect them with other signifiers either later in the text, or in a different order, the meanings of these signs and signifiers change. For example, if an original text has the line "*The early morning sun rose on the horizon,*" there are multiple signifiers here that can be chosen to reuse and adapt. For this example, I will isolate the word "rose" as that word, when isolated, makes me think of flowers. Moving further down the page, perhaps there is another line that reads "*The flower petals were laced with glistening dew.*" I could then isolate the word "petals" to reinforce the image of the "rose" I had in mind after isolating the first word. This act of isolating signifiers

throughout a text and pairing them to create a new image, a new sign, is the very essence of blackout poetry.

Terry Eagleton, in his study and discussion of post-structuralism, states that “man is able spontaneously to create and express his own meanings” (130). This statement applies greatly to blackout poetry. Eagleton also discusses how “out of this play of signifiers, certain meanings are elevated by social ideologies to a privileged position, or made the centres around which other meanings are forced to turn” (131). This comment about the use and manipulation of signifiers can be used to understand why some teachers or poets dislike blackout poetry because they do not value the way signifiers are re-used from a specific text as it clashes with their preferred levels of privilege and/or understandings. For example, if a teacher is knowledgeable about the works of Henry David Thoreau and is used to reading and interpreting his texts through a specific lens of understanding, they might find fault with the meaning of his text being changed through the style of blackout poetry. This adaptation of an original text, depending on the chosen signifiers, could completely change the meaning of the original text due to how each individual signifier is paired with each other outside of the original context. Teachers and poets might also find fault with how blackout poetry is made by adapting pre-existing signifiers in a text to create a new poem rather than the poet creating their own signs/signifiers to make an original work. This view can make it seem like blackout poetry is a less skillful or creative form of poetry compared to its more traditional counterparts.

What makes post-structuralism an ideal lens to examine blackout poetry is how post-structuralism is “a movement from ‘work’ to ‘text,’” so rather than looking at a poem or novel as a “closed entity” with solid, pre-determined meanings to be deciphered at the hands of its critic, these works are made “irreducibly plural” and are therefore not able to be narrowed down to any

singular meaning (Eagleton 138). Post-structuralism opens a work to a variety of interpretations, something that blackout poetry also does in its own way. This can be demonstrated by giving a class of students the same text as the basis for their blackout poem.

Theory In Action

The classroom is a great place to demonstrate how theory applies to blackout poetry. If a teacher gave a copy of the same base text to every student in their class and asked them to make a blackout poem from the provided page, the resulting poems are likely to vary. This is due to how students may identify and isolate signifiers from the text before them. To demonstrate this, I asked several graduate colleagues of mine, both students, professors, and a high school junior, to create blackout poems using Robert Frost's *The Road Not Taken* and Dylan Thomas' *Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night* as their base texts. While I had encouraged them to play with structure and visual styles, they opted to stick with the standard blackout method. As you'll see in the examples below, each person's poem is unique. When talking with Dan about his experience creating blackout poetry, he mentioned how he felt it necessary to choose at least one word from every line. Dan also circled his words, saying that doing so helped him isolate what he saw in the text. Nancy and Dan mentioned that using a work that they were incredibly familiar with made finding something new to isolate in the text a challenge, which demonstrates the "work to text" movement of post-structuralism. Carli expressed her insecurities about creating blackout poetry, claiming she wasn't any good at it. Keira, a high school junior, was happy to jump in and pull the provided texts apart with no concern about the "rules" of poetry.

Poems by Nancy, Carli, and Keira using Robert Frost's *The Road Not Taken*:

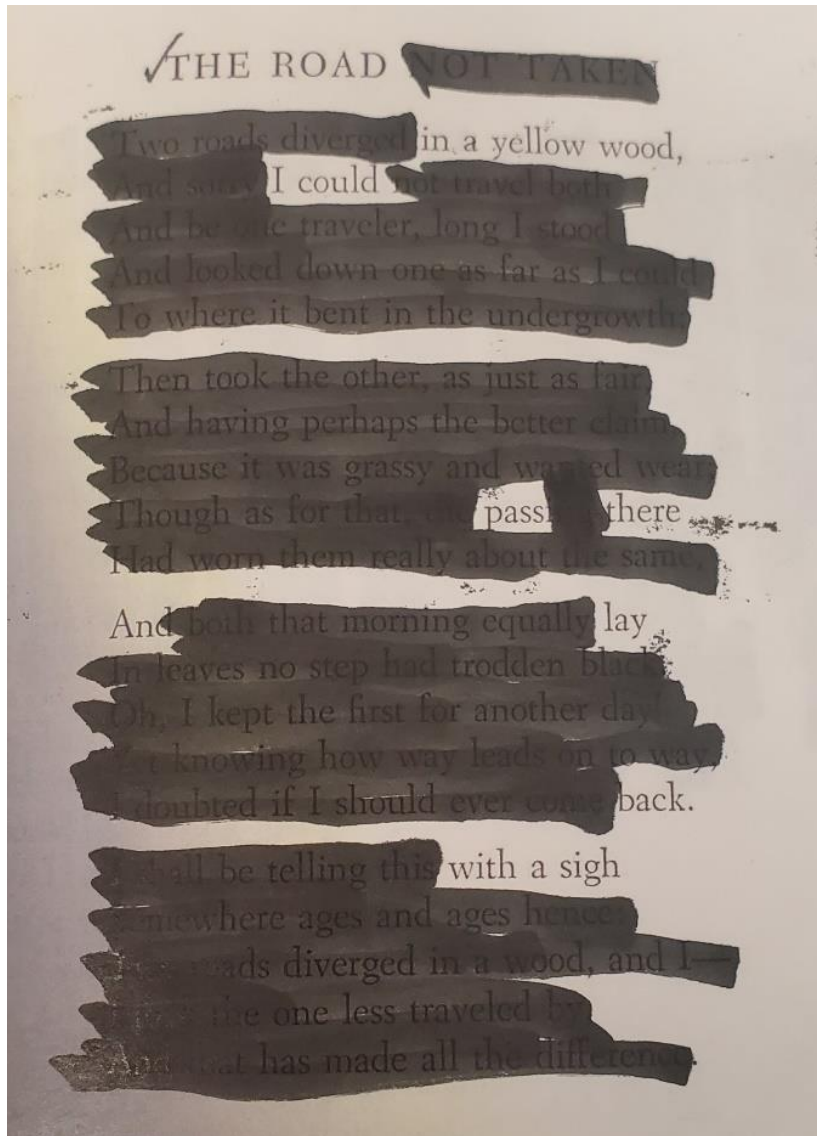


Fig. 1. Nancy's Poem.

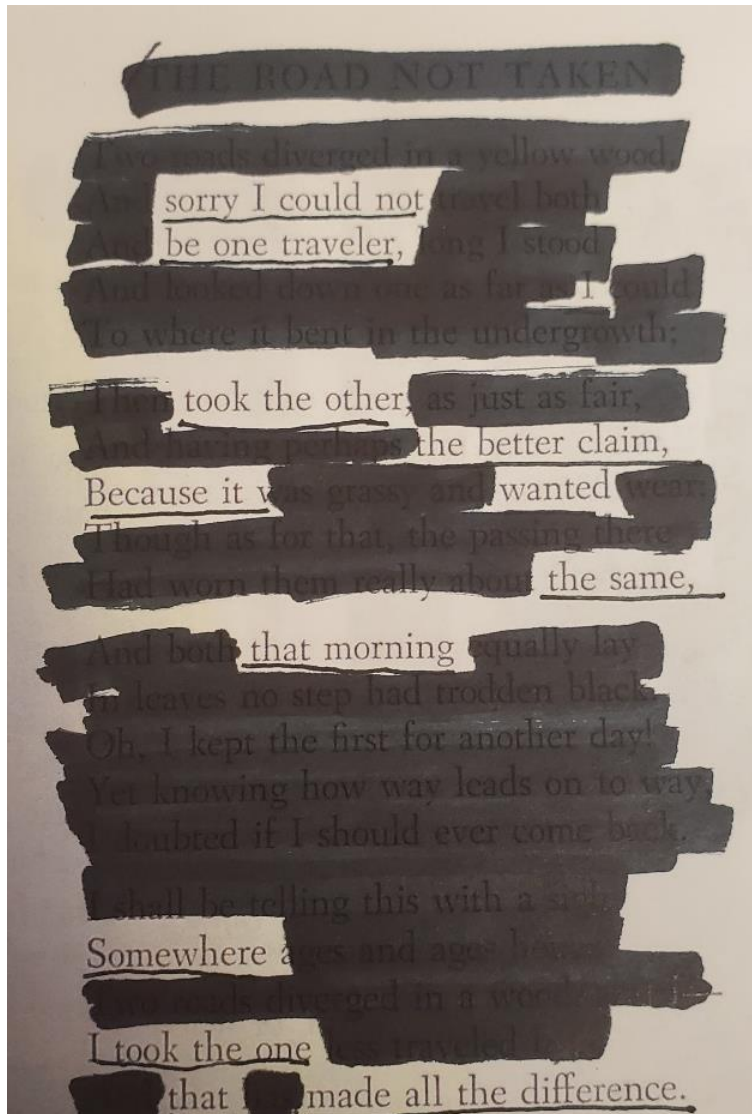


Fig. 2. Carli's Poem.

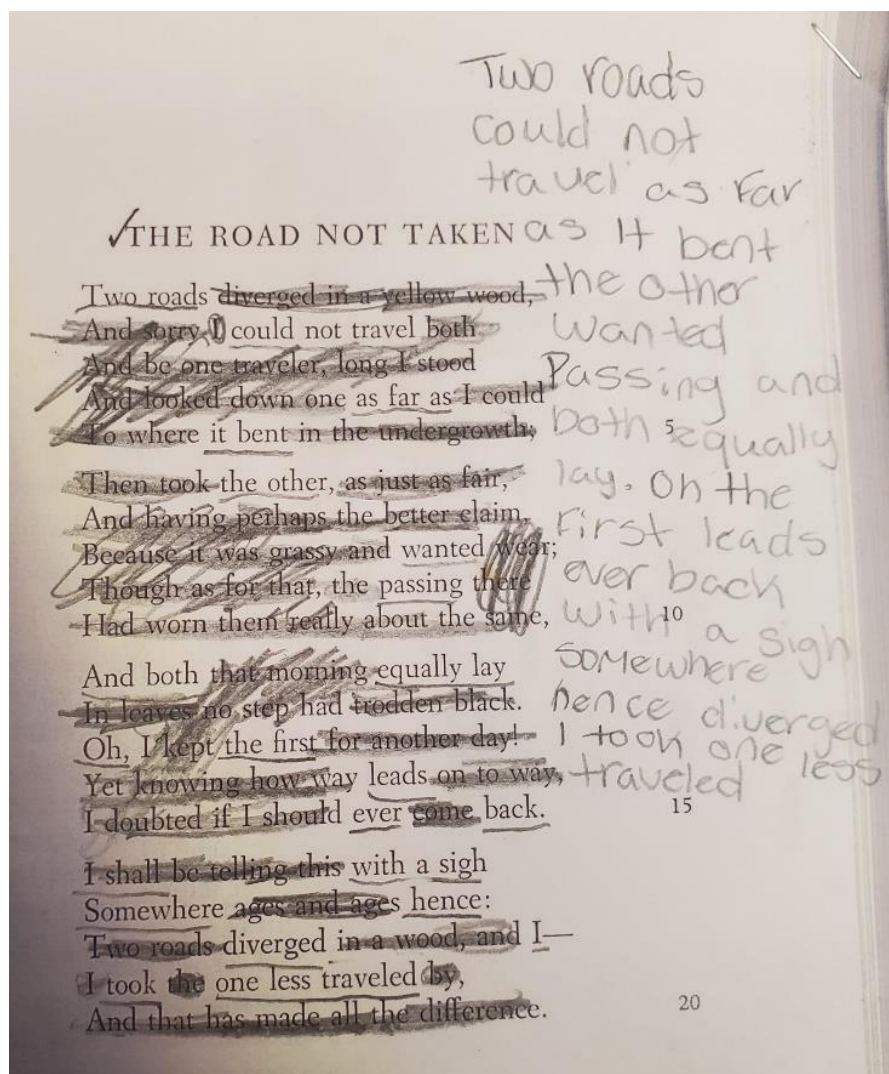


Fig. 3. Keira's Poem.

Poems by Michael, Dan, and Kam using Dylan Thomas' *Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night*:

Night:

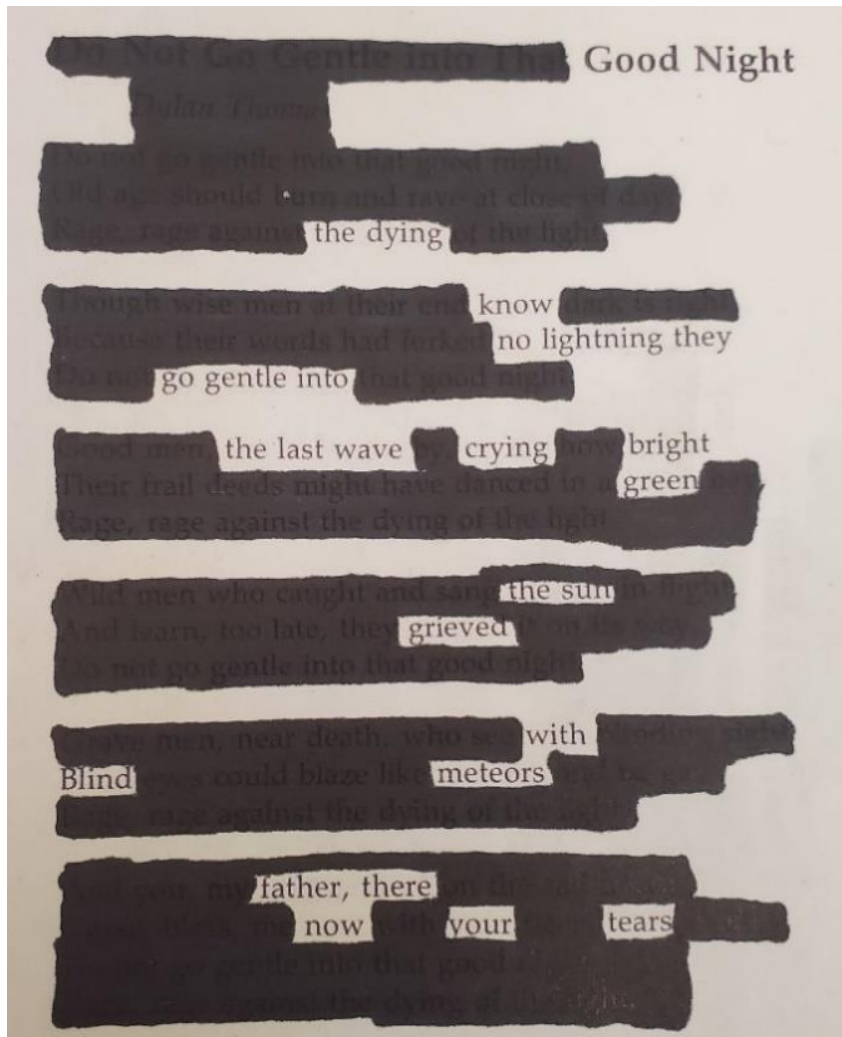


Fig. 4. Michael's Poem.

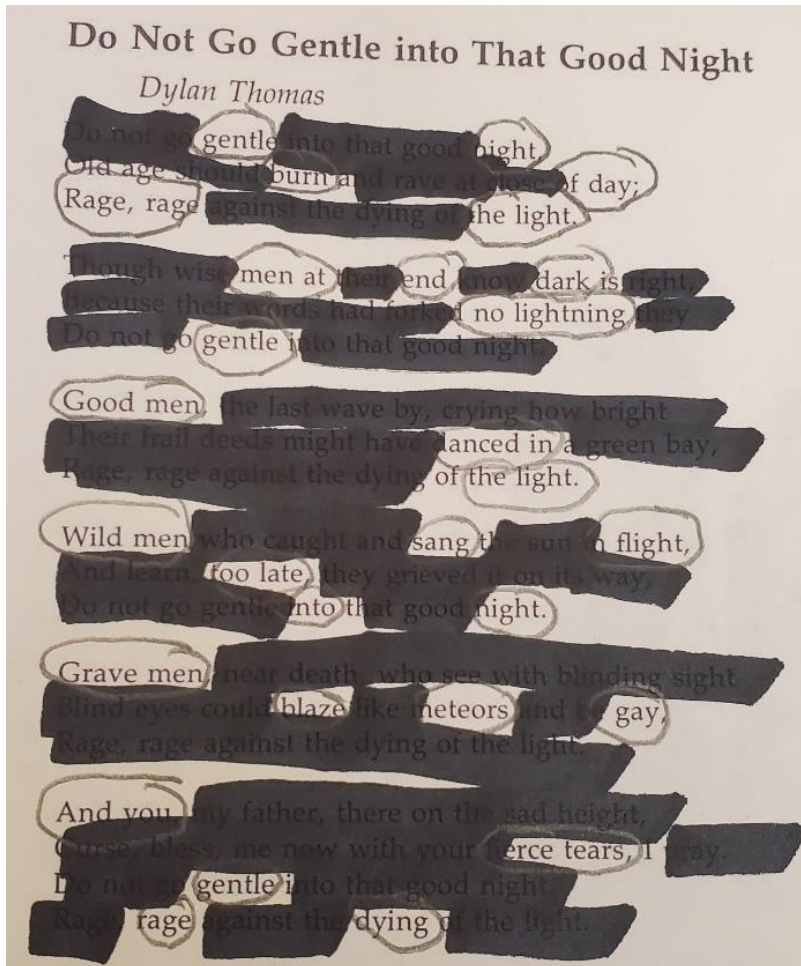


Fig. 5. Dan's Poem.

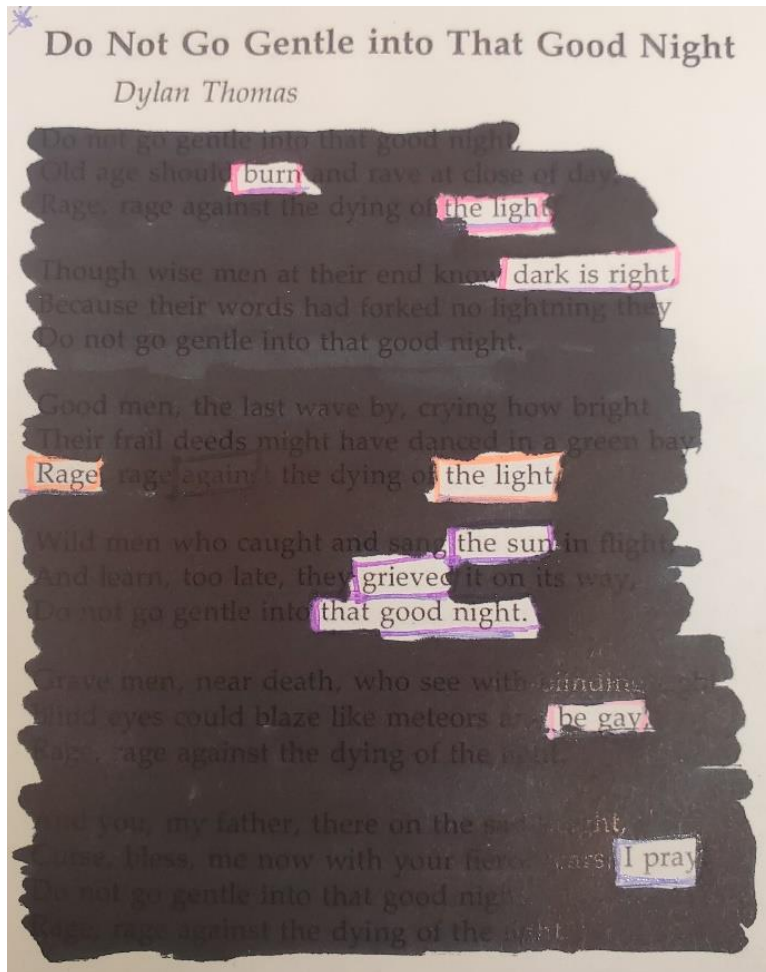


Fig. 6. Kam's Poem.

No two poems are the same, even among this small sample, and each poem also has its small imperfections, as they only received one copy of the text to work with. Imagine the possibilities when implementing this activity in a classroom setting with 20 or more students, especially if implemented in each section of the class the teacher has.

Blackout Poetry in the Classroom and Activity Ideas

Poetry in the Classroom

When I reflect on learning poetry in grade school, I can only recall three things: reading Shakespeare's sonnets, reading poems by Edgar Allan Poe so I could do a middle school-level research paper on him, learning about form and structure, and creating a small chapbook.

Whenever my classes were assigned to write poetry, it was focused on the technical aspects of poetry rather than the creative aspects. I earned good grades so long as my poems were quatrains with a proper rhyme scheme or a haiku with the right number of syllables. But poetry isn't everyone's strong suit and students may struggle creating poems and give up feeling defeated.

Often, students struggle with reading and learning poetry because their teachers don't know how to teach it. Nancie Atwell addresses this problem in her teaching, saying that her students "seldom found poetry, because as much as I loved it, I didn't know how to help kids look for it" (415). She goes on to say that teachers she knew avoided poetry due to being intimidated by it, and finding it difficult to read, understand, and talk about (416). To tackle this hurdle, Atwell not only began to read more poetry but also encouraged her students to open up with the kind of poetry they created. She emphasizes that "Poetry can be about anything—any subject, any theme, in any voice" (417) and that "Poets play with the rules and bend them to suit their subjects and themselves" (419). Blackout poetry is a great example for students of how the rules of poetry are flexible and can be about anything. Creating blackout poetry is also a great way to show students that "understanding poetry follows most naturally from fooling around with poetry" (Kirby et al. 151).

Benefits of Blackout Poetry in the Classroom/How it Has Already Been Applied

The incorporation of blackout poetry in the classroom can open a new creative channel for students to express themselves and find new meaning in the literature around them. While blackout poetry is known for its “blackout” process, the visuality of it is far more flexible, which allows students to have more control and freedom over their creations. Unlike other poems, such as quatrains and haikus that have a more established length and style requirements, blackout poetry does not have a definitive percentage for how much of the original text needs to be blacked out. Preferably, the more blacked out the original text is, the more unique and personal to the creator it becomes. While blackout poetry does not have a clear limit on how many words should be used/obscured from the original text, it does limit you to “only the words, letters, punctuation, and spaces” (Ladenheim 46) of the base text. “Letters” is included in this list as sometimes the base text does not have the word needed to create a poem, but individual letters can be isolated and read together to make the missing word. Piecing together letters can interfere with the desired structure of the poem and should be used sparingly. It is best used when it is needed since “any piece of writing has an ideal number of words. To go over or under even by one word is to diminish the success of the finished piece” (Dobyns 7). This is especially true with blackout poetry, as keeping one or too many words can make the new creation too similar to the original text while taking away too many words can make the poem seem choppy and unfinished.

Teachers have already begun to implement blackout poetry in their classrooms, both at the grade school and college levels. Melissa Landenheim incorporated newspaper blackout into her honors class intending to show students how “poetry can be their thing and also show them how much it can shape the way they think about the world and their place in it” (45). She also mentions that the implementation of this activity in class allowed for a “shared experience of

struggle since all students find the exercise more challenging than they imagined at the outset” (49). Experiencing this challenge is common among all newcomers to blackout poetry, as I have had my own struggles with creating blackout, from the base text I had to how I wanted the poem to look visually. The group of people I asked to participate in the sample above also expressed the challenges they faced.

In his article “Engaging with historically marginalized voices through blackout poetry,” Miguel Gómez highlights how he incorporated blackout poetry in his classroom. When discussing his lesson plans, Gómez states: “This lesson will help students begin to develop their understanding of the historical context that their selected marginalized voices experienced...” (222). As part of this unit on pairing blackout with marginalized voices, he has students present and then reflect on the influence their choice of text had in the creation of their poems (223). One of his goals with this project is to have students “...consider, the power, emotions, significance and gravitas that reading the actual words used by marginalized voices had in creating their poems” (Gómez 227). This lesson allows students to creatively approach and evaluate the voices of marginalized individuals, which can add another level of empowerment to what has already been said.

Blackout Poetry Activities for the Classroom

When introducing blackout poetry into the classroom, I first suggest that teachers make themselves familiar with it. “There’s only one requirement for the teacher who wants to teach poetry. Read it” (Atwell 422). On top of Atwell’s suggestion, I recommend that teachers also become familiar with creating blackout poetry themselves. It doesn’t have to be much and they don’t have to be perfect, but knowing how to create blackout poetry and being able to describe the process as someone who is learning *alongside* the students can make all the difference. With

the following activities listed, I encourage teachers to partake in this activity and share their poems with the students. Throughout these activities, I recommend following the guidance of Kirby et al.: “Encourage them to practice. Take a risk yourself. Respond with a poem of your own. Give them lots of opportunities to write and share their poetry” (151). Let them take the assignments home to work on and encourage them to create more poems in their spare time. As teachers, share your creations with your students, do the assignments with them in class, and reflect on your creations just as you have your students do. Challenge yourself just as you challenge your students.

Newspaper Blackout: Channeling Our Inner Kleon

As an introductory activity, I suggest starting by having students channel their inner Austin Kleon. Before having them create their own poems, I recommend having them watch Kleon’s “Steal Like An Artist” TEDx Talk and his “How To Make A Newspaper Blackout Poem” videos, both of which can be found on YouTube. These videos will introduce students both to Kleon and blackout poetry. Teachers could then pass out stacks of newspapers and markers and give students time to find an article that they can use. After students find the section they plan to use for their poem, teachers can then guide students through the blackout process, or float around the room and help those who need it. Once students are done with their blackout poems, have them cut their poems out of the rest of the newspaper, and encourage them to share their creations with the class. Students could discuss a bit about their process, such as which section of the newspaper they chose to work from, what words originally caught their attention, and what they envisioned through their poems. Ask students what might resonate with them about their poems, such as the poem’s language, the creation experience, the feelings that were generated, the imagery, repetition, the message, etc. (Atwell 425-426).

A great way to encourage students to share their creation process is to share your own. I have had to explain to numerous friends and colleagues how I created my blackout poems. My explanation for the creation process went like so:

- 1) Find a base text, this can be anything from a newspaper, a book, or a digital source.

Below is a page out of the *Make Blackout Poetry* workbook I bought online.

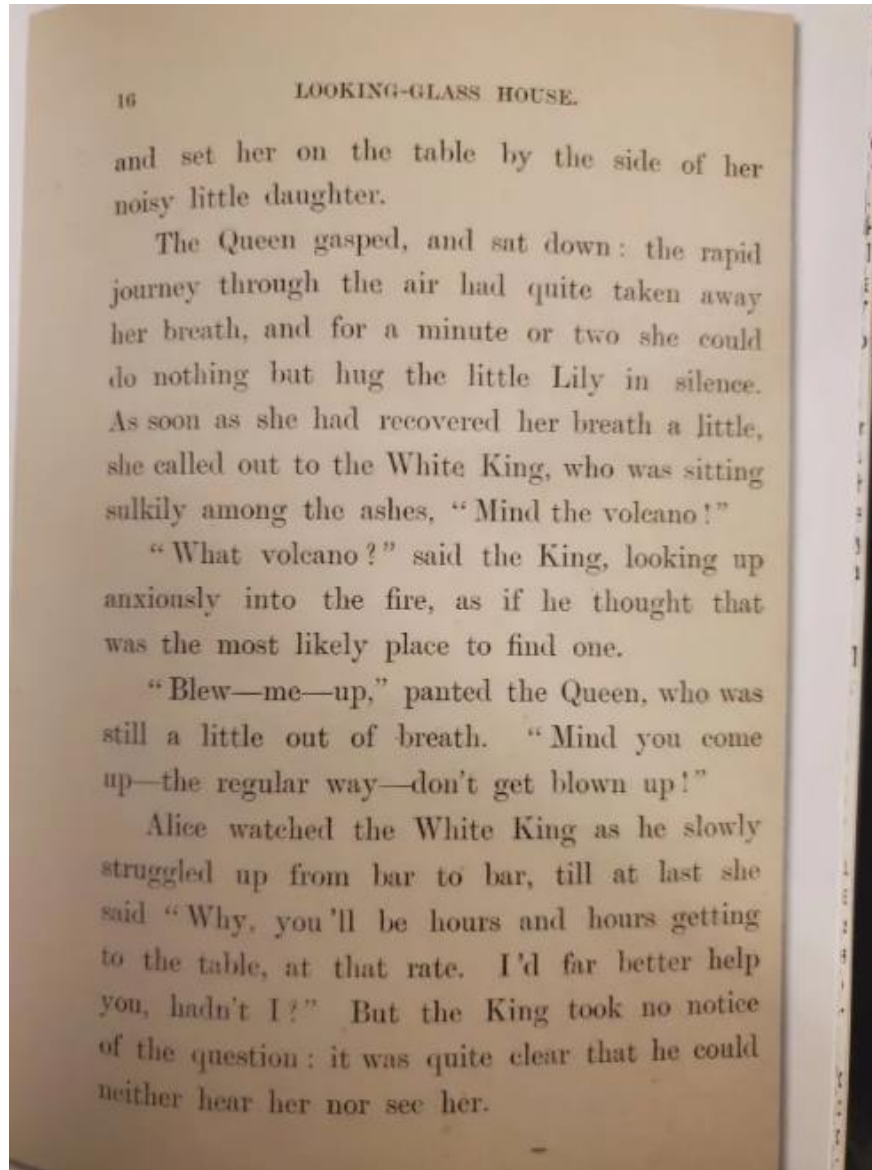


Fig. 7.

- 2) Isolate words that stand out to you. Here, I opted to underline my words.

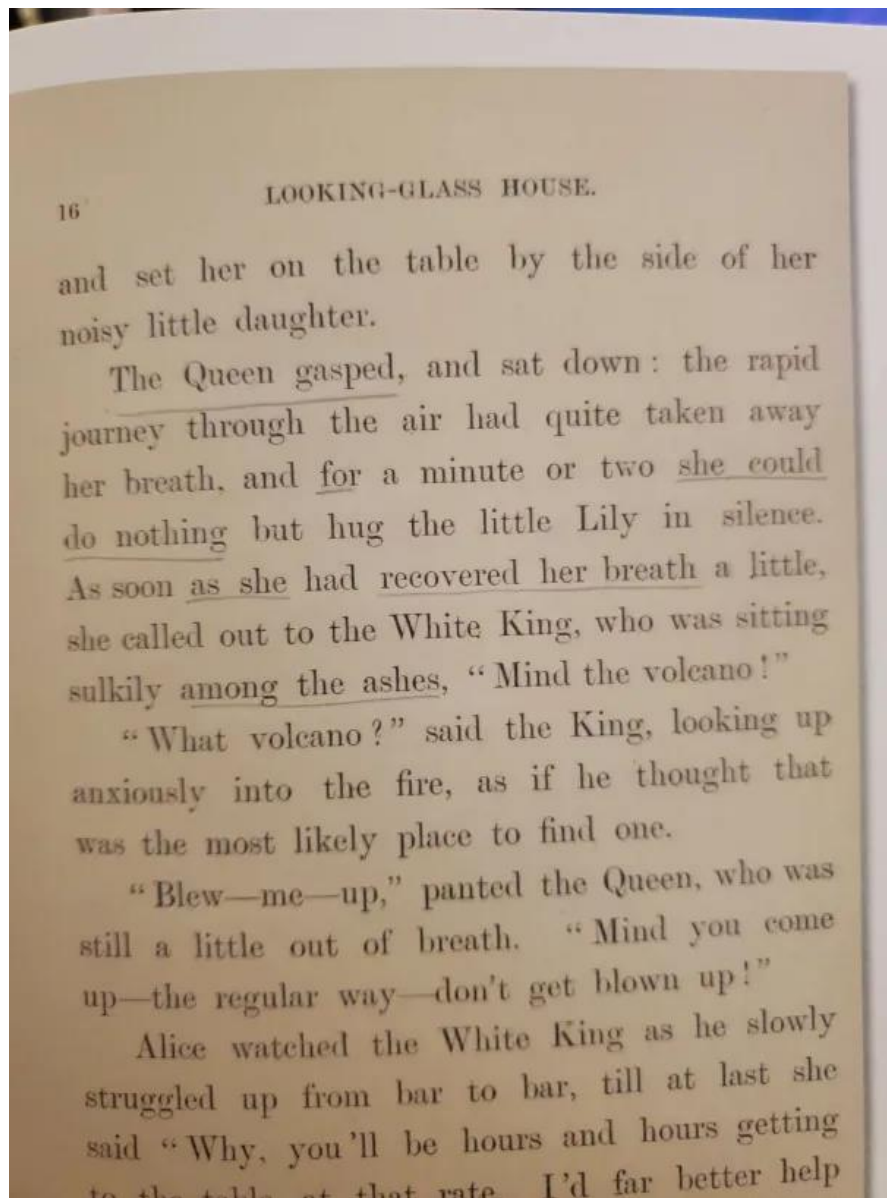


Fig. 8.

- 3) Block your chosen words. This step is optional, but it can be helpful to ensure that you don't accidentally mark over words you intend to keep.

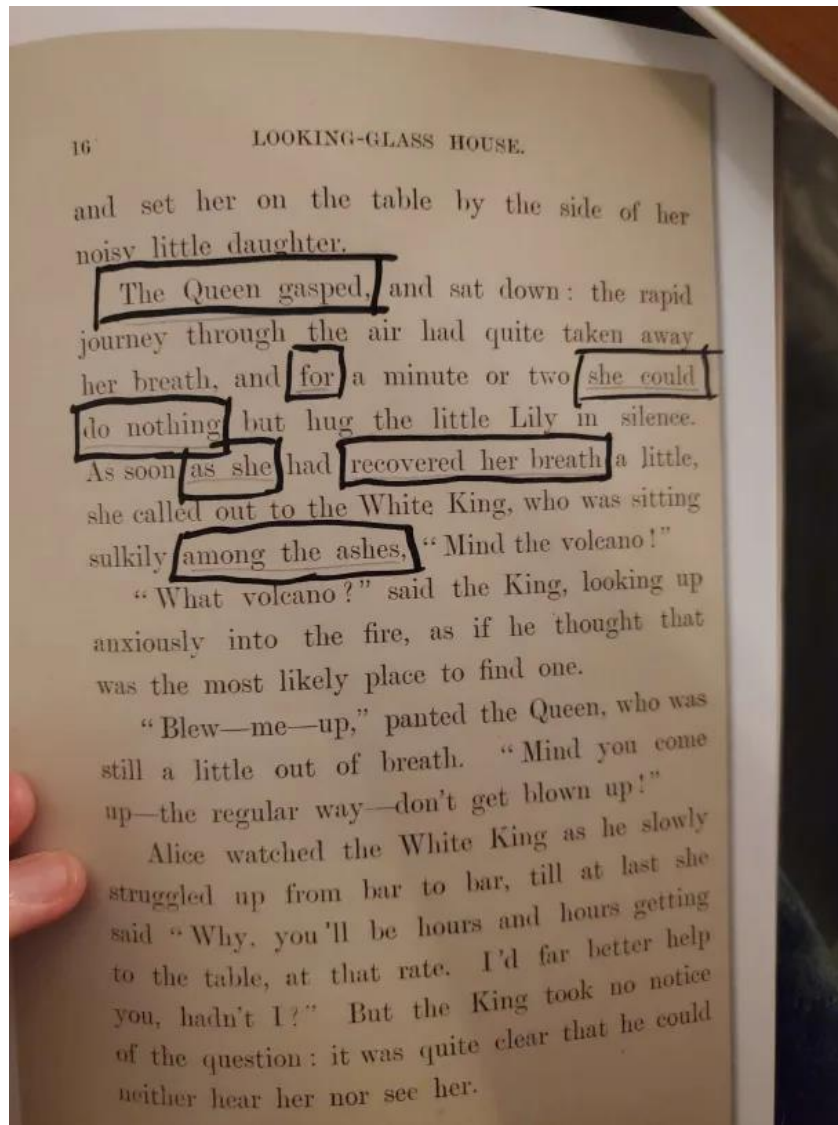


Fig. 9.

- 4) Lastly, blackout your poem. Here, I opted to add a little creative flair to the piece by drawing fire and flakes of ash, emphasizing the image I wanted the poem to invoke.

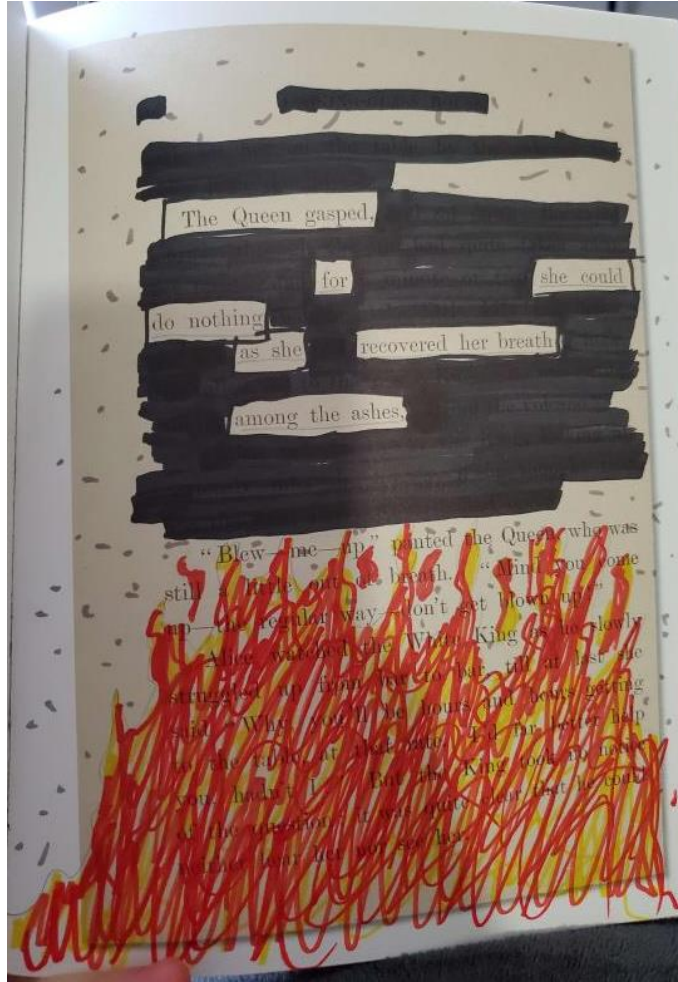


Fig. 10.

As teachers, by sharing your experiences of the creation process with your students, they will feel more comfortable and confident with sharing their creations.

Make It Viral: Cheese of Truth Blackout

In today's technology-centric society, many students have access to social media apps such as Instagram, X (Twitter), and TikTok. Social media trends tend to infiltrate schools, such as dance challenges and pranks. One way teachers can incorporate social media into their classroom lessons on blackout poetry is to have students reenact Nathan Kessel's "Cheese of Truth" series from TikTok (2023). While Kessel's paper is simply a page with only a small range of words in a random order and not quite a proper text, the text used for students in class could be newspapers

or a random assortment of scanned pages from books. Using slices of cheese in the classroom can be a bit messy or cause classroom chaos, so this activity calls for something different. When doing this activity, I recommend having students take index cards or blank pieces of paper and use a hole punch to create their own slices of “cheese.” (Note, depending on the font size of the base text, standard hole punches may be too small.) Students would then use one or multiple pieces of their “cheese” to isolate words for their poems. Below, I demonstrate how a poem made in this manner might look. After securing the hole-punched index cards in place, I underlined the words that stood out to me, highlighting the ones I opted to keep for the poem.

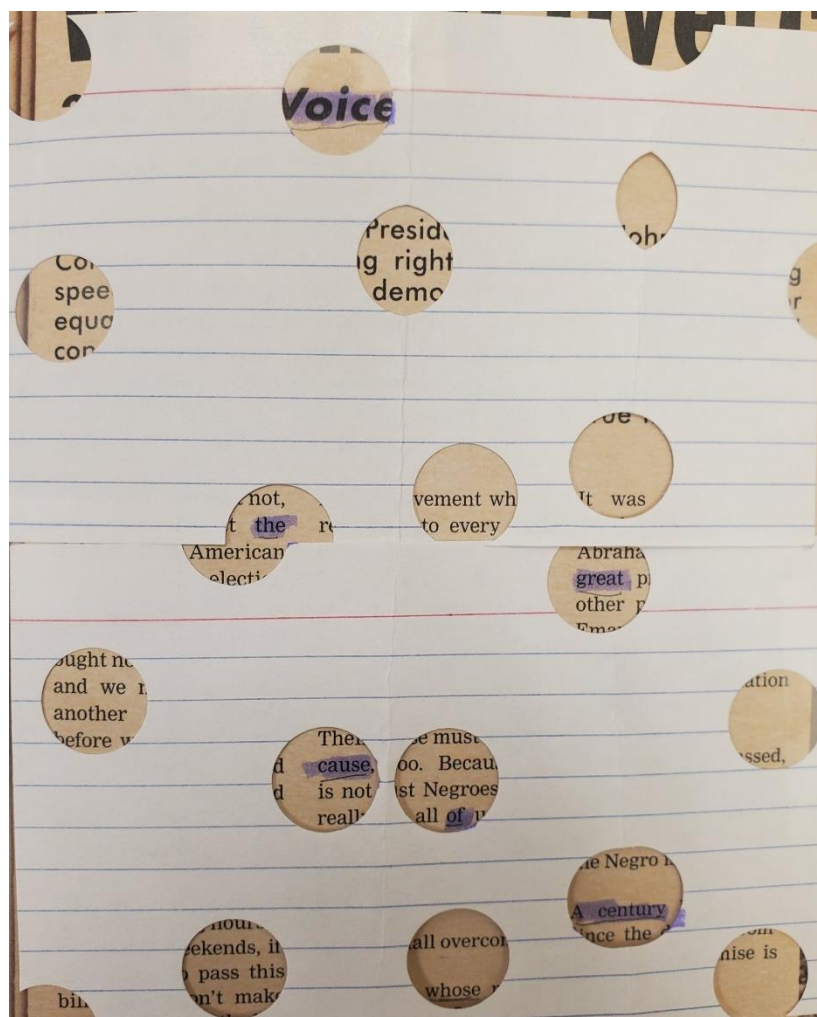


Fig. 11.

Blackout Remix: Exploring Other Forms of Blackout Poetry

Blackout poetry can take a variety of visual forms, as evident through the works of Tom Phillips, Austin Kleon, and Stacia Leigh, each of which can have different effects on the readers and the poem itself. In this activity, students are encouraged to play with visual and multi-modal presentations of blackout poetry. This includes but is not limited to:

- Using art to isolate words rather than a traditional blackout, such as this example by Stacia Leigh:



Fig. 12.

Leigh, Stacia. "Here it Lies." *Distance Between: Blackout Poetry & Art*, 2018.

- Using photography/crafting to isolate the poem



Fig. 13.

- And using digital sources (websites, song lyrics, social media posts, etc.) as the base text and using digital software (Microsoft Word, Photoshop, etc.) like Maria Lahman’s “Blacking Out” article (2019).

Blackout Project: Make a Mini-Chapbook (8-10 Poems) With Reflection

When doing a unit on blackout poetry, the activities and lessons above can culminate into a chapbook for each student, allowing them to collect their poems in one place. Teachers would then be able to put the chapbooks on display or return them to the students so they can have copies of their hard work. Teachers can also set their requirements as to how their students should format the chapbook. For a physical chapbook, students would put their chapbooks in a folder or small binder and decorate the exteriors of their chapbooks as they please. Digitally created poems, such as those made in Word, Paint, Photoshop, etc., would need to be printed out

and added to the collection. Digital chapbooks would be made through programs such as PowerPoint, Canva, Pinterest, or as a blog. To make their physical poems digital, students would need to photograph or scan their poems and include the files in their digital chapbooks. Teachers also have the freedom to open the chapbook creation process to student choice, which would allow students to have more freedom in the creation of their chapbooks.

Blackout Mini-Unit Lesson Plan

Goals/Objectives: Have students learn, practice, compile, and present blackout poetry to build creative and multimodal learning skills.

Day 1: Introducing blackout poetry

- Introduce students to blackout poetry using videos and examples.
- Have students explore blackout poetry examples online and discuss/reflect upon their findings.

Day 2: Newspaper Blackout: Embracing your inner Austin Kleon

- Introduce students to newspaper-based blackout poetry using videos and examples by Austin Kleon.
- Have students create their own newspaper blackout poems.

Day 3: Make It Viral: Cheese of Truth blackout poetry

- Introduce students to Nathan Kressel's "Cheese of Truth" TikTok series.
- Have students use paper/other crafting supplies to create their own slices of "cheese" to guide them in creating their blackout poems.

Day 4: Blackout Remix: Embracing other kinds of blackout poetry

- Introduce students to other visual forms of blackout poetry, such as Stacia Leigh's artistic blackout, Kate Baer's digital social media blackout poetry, and examples of photographic blackout (get better wording for this)
- Have students practice with broader visualizations for blackout poetry, such as art, photography, and digitally edited poems.

Day 5: Blackout Poetry Chapbook

- Introduce students to the chapbook assignment. Have them select 8-10 of their poems.
- Have students compile their blackout poetry creations into a chapbook. These can be compiled physically in binders or digitally through document programs, slideshows, blogs, etc.

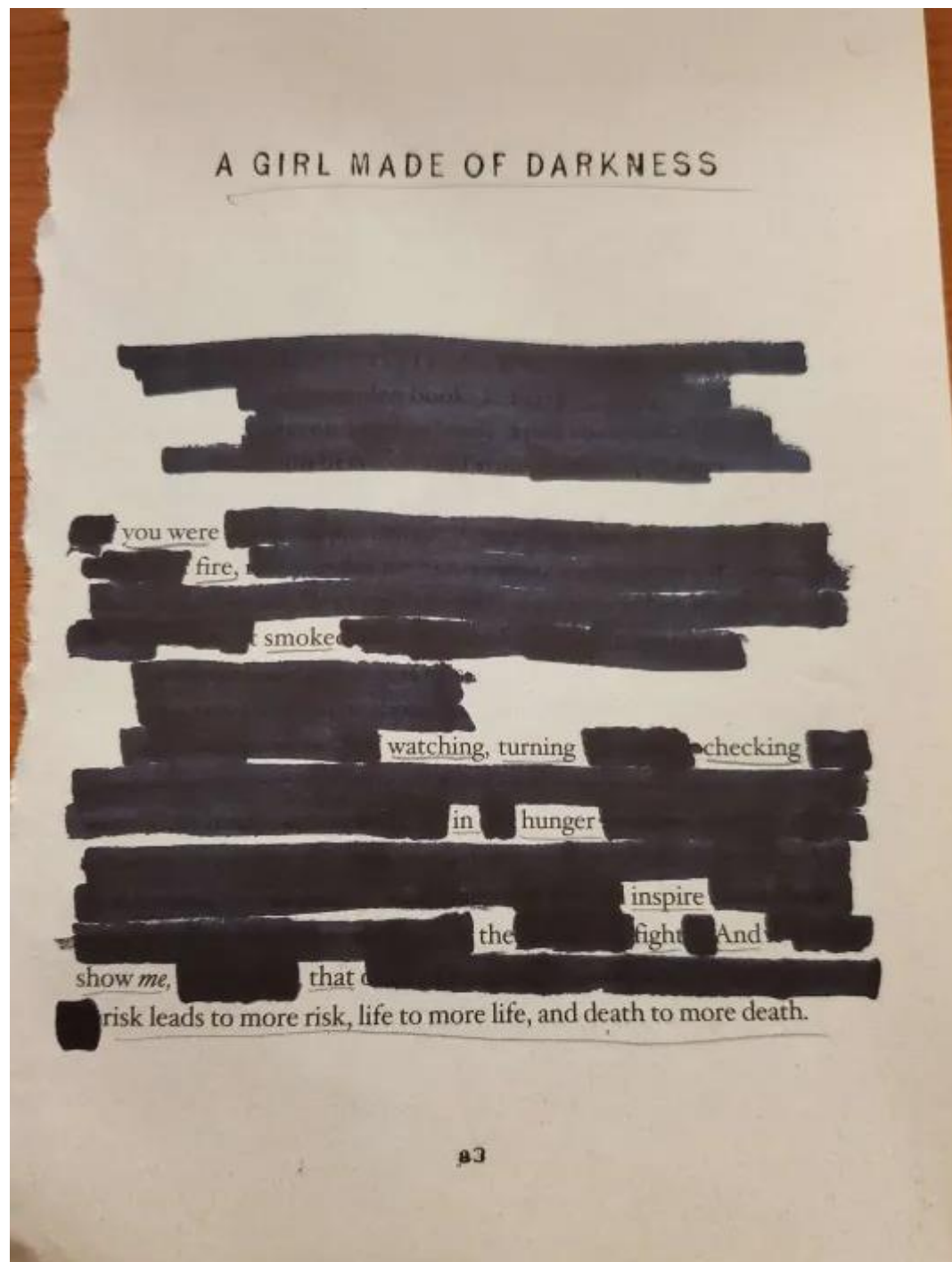
Blackout Poetry Chapbook

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Queen of Ashes
Two Weeks
Daisy Bell
Readers and Travelers
Giraffe
Dracula
Courage, Brains, and Heart
War of My Mind
Forest Blaze
Sleeping Sound
Celebration
My Love
Survive
Remember Me
Melody
Kitten
Doubtless, Subtle, Compelling
Madness
Gentle Night
Somewhere Less Traveled
Frozen
We Order
Sorry Angel
Encourage and Connect

A GIRL MADE OF DARKNESS

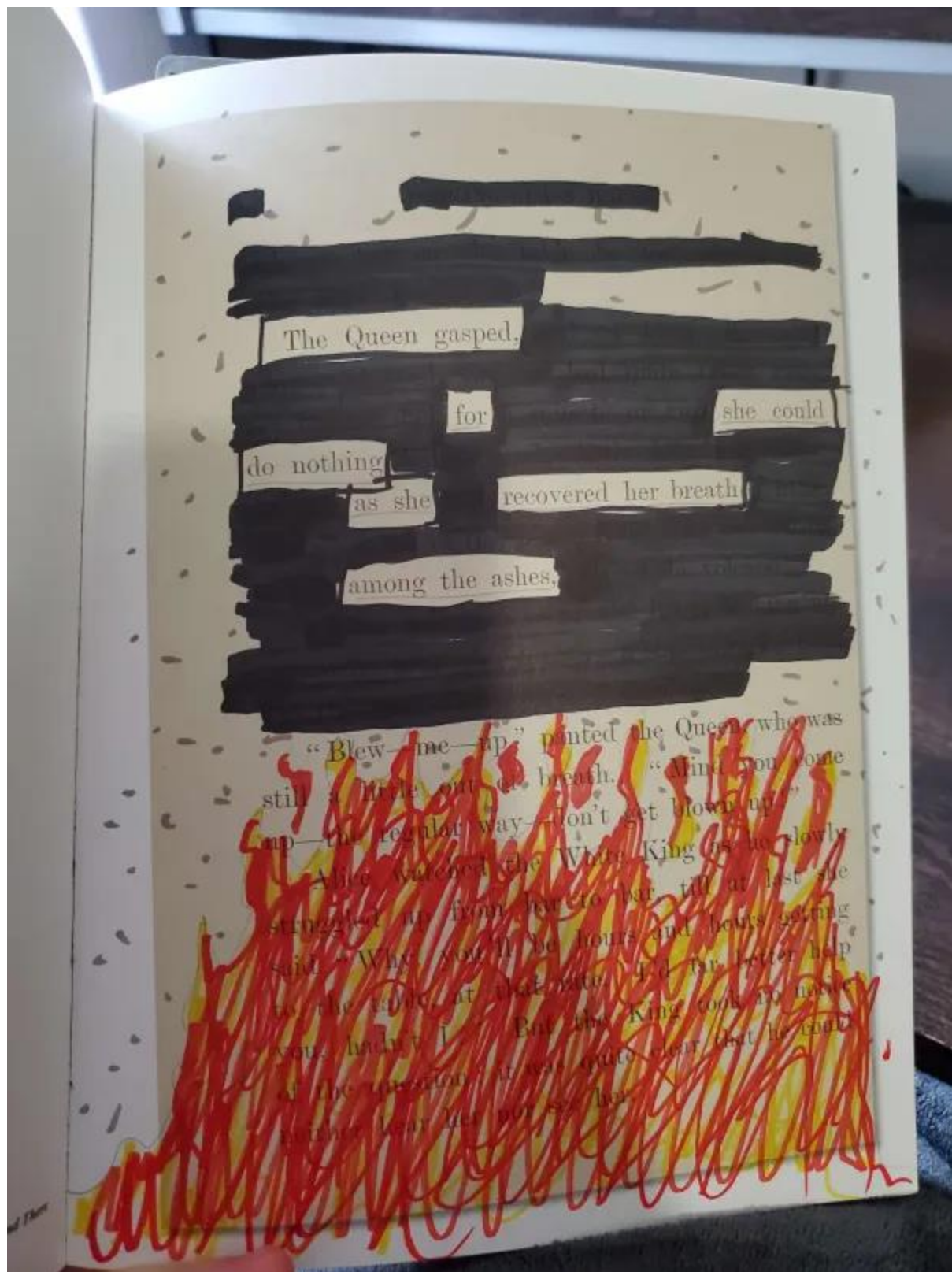
You were fire, smoke
Watching, turning, checking in hunger
Inspire the fight
And show me that
Risk leads to more risk
Life to more life
And death to more death



Seitz, Dixie. *A Girl Made of Darkness* blackout poem. 2023. Author's personal collection.

ASHES

The Queen gasped
For she could do nothing
As she recovered her breath
Among the ashes



Seitz, Dixie. *Ashes* blackout poem. 2023. Author's personal collection.

TWO WEEKS

It's been two weeks

And no one

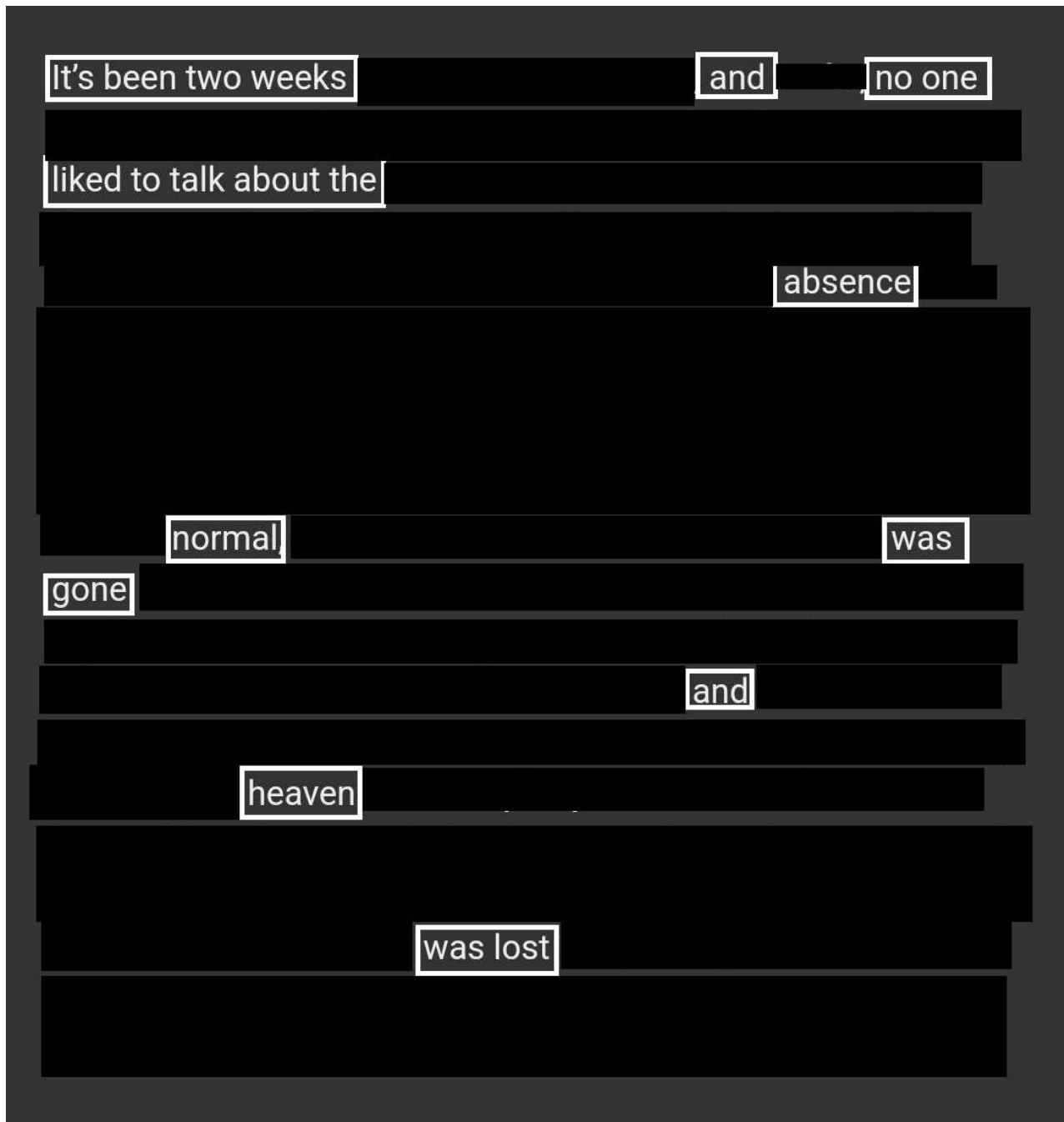
Liked to talk about

The absence

Normal was gone

And

Heaven was lost.



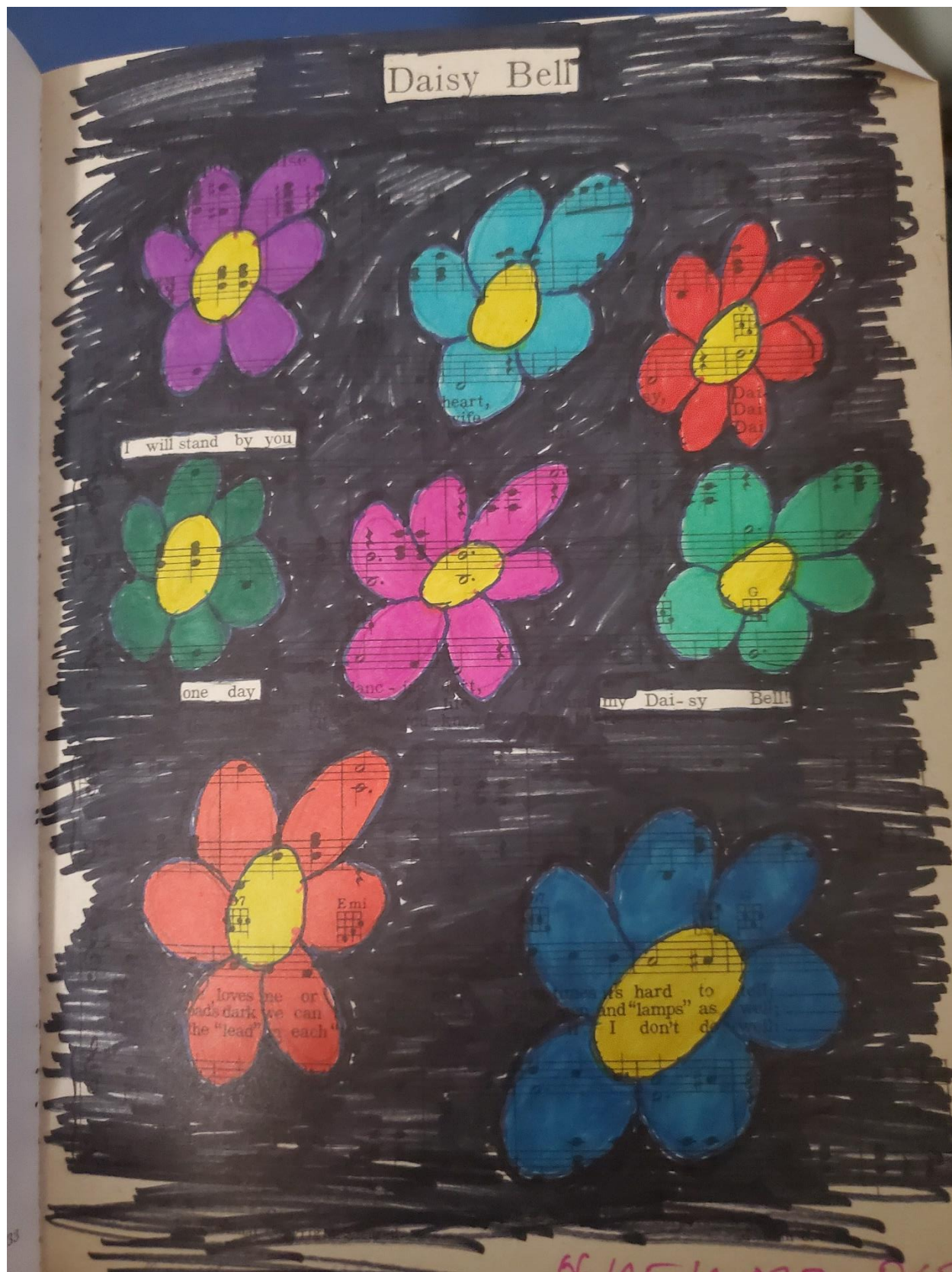
Seitz, Dixie. *Two Weeks* blackout poem. 2024. Author's personal collection.

DAISY BELL

I will stand by you

One day

My Daisy Bell



Seitz, Dixie. *Daisy Bell* blackout poem. 2023. Author's personal collection.

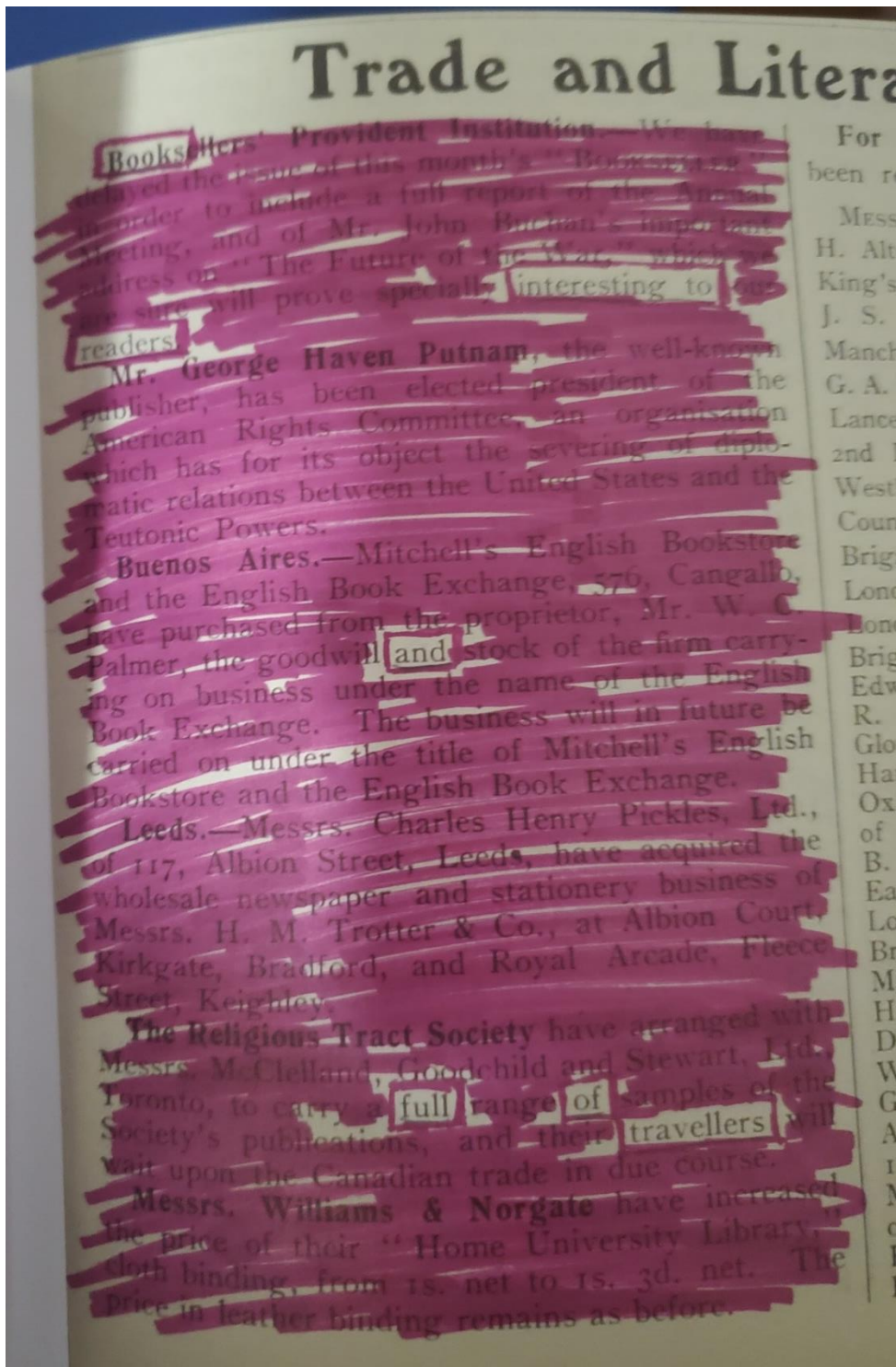
READERS AND TRAVELERS

Books

Interesting to readers

And

Full of travelers



Seitz, Dixie. *Readers and Travelers* blackout poem. 2023. Author's personal collection.

GIRAFFE

Adapt

And

Grow

age-like mine-car especially
[< Ar. Sp zarāf, giraffe.]

ir'an-dōl, n. 1. A branching
2. A rotating firework; any

ection
endent
. gyro,

, Ste-
merican
College,

2 gir'a-
bluish-
h red-
†. [F.,
< girare
v.), +
a-sole†.
IRD'ED^d
To bind
h a belt.
cle. [<

ack with
2†. To

[< AS. gyrd, rod.] gerd†.
ust; taunt; gibe; sneer. 2†. A cut-
t. 3†. A spurt.
hoop. girr†.
d'er, n. 1. A principal horizontal
structure acting as a beam, re-
bearing vertically upon its sup-



Giraffe. 1/100

Seitz, Dixie. Giraffe blackout poem. 2024. Author's personal collection.

DRACULA

Loose skin

Red blood

A scar

Lock the door

And expect trouble

of loose skin and have transfixed it, for there are two little red points like pin-pricks, and on the band of her nightdress was a drop of blood. When I apologised and was concerned about it, she laughed and petted me, and said she did not even feel it. Fortunately it cannot leave a scar, as it is so tiny.

Some day, night.—We passed a happy day. The air was clear, and the sun bright, and there was a cool breeze. We took our lunch to Mulgrave Woods, Mrs. Westenra driving by the road and Lucy and I walking by the cliff-path and joining her at the gate. I felt a little sad myself, for I could not but feel how *absolutely* happy it would have been had Jonathan been with me. But there! I must only be patient. In the evening we strolled in the Casino Terrace, and heard some good music by Spohr and Mackenzie, and went to bed early. Lucy seems more restful than she has been for some time, and fell asleep at once. I shall lock the door and secure the key the same as before, though I do not expect any trouble to-night.

12 August.—My expectations were wrong, for twice during the night I was wakened by Lucy trying to get out. She seemed, even in her sleep, to be a little impatient at finding the door shut, and went back to bed under a sort of protest. I woke with the dawn, and heard the birds chirping outside of the window. Lucy woke, too, and, I was glad to see, even better than on the previous morning. All her old gaiety of manner seemed to have come back, and she came and snuggled in beside me and told me all about Arthur. I told her how anxious I was about Jonathan, and then she tried to comfort me. Well, she succeeded somewhat, for, though sympathy can't alter facts, it can help to make them more bearable.

COURAGE, BRAINS, AND HEART

You give me courage

Brains

A heart

I'll go with you

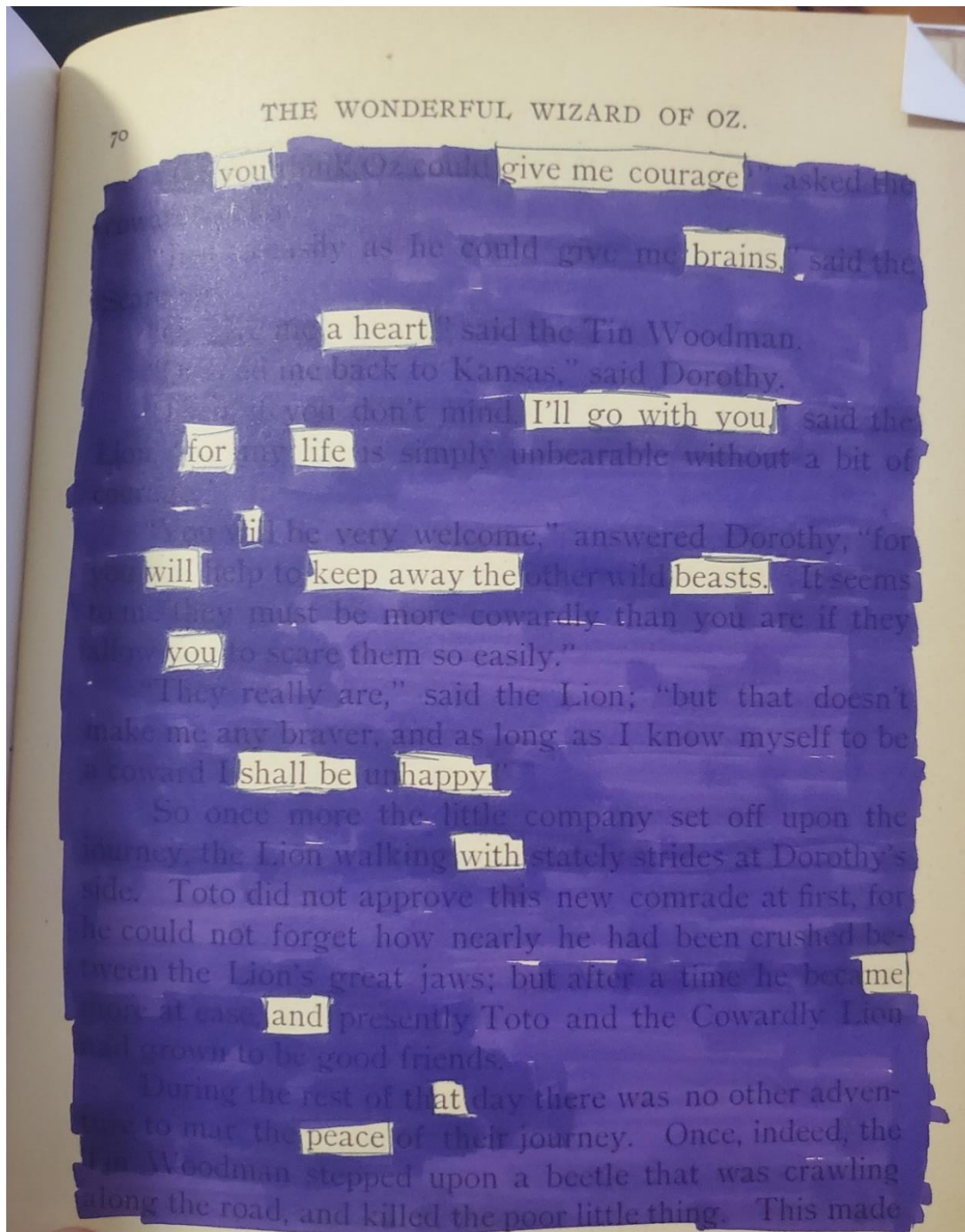
For life

I will keep away the beasts

You shall be happy

With me

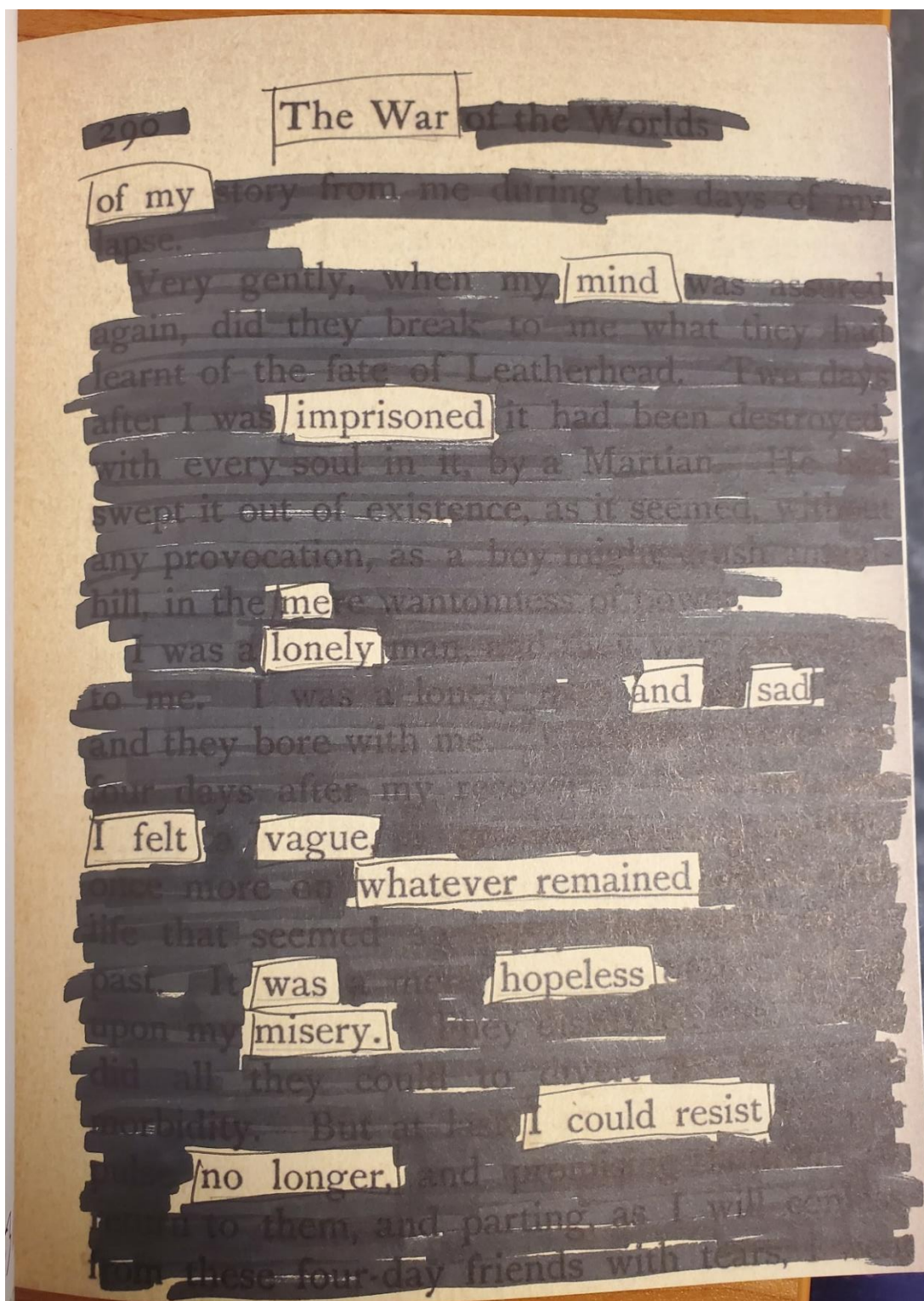
And at peace



Seitz, Dixie. *Courage, Brains, and Heart* blackout poem. 2023. Author's personal collection.

WAR OF MY MIND

The war of my mind
Imprisoned me
Lonely and sad
I felt vague
Whatever remained
Was hopeless misery
I could resist no longer



Seitz, Dixie. *War of My Mind* blackout poem. 2023. Author's personal collection.

FOREST BLAZE

Black smoke
Curling and rising
In the forest
The ground
Is a furnace blaze
Kissed by nightfall

The mockingbird sings
And the young men
Return to the grave

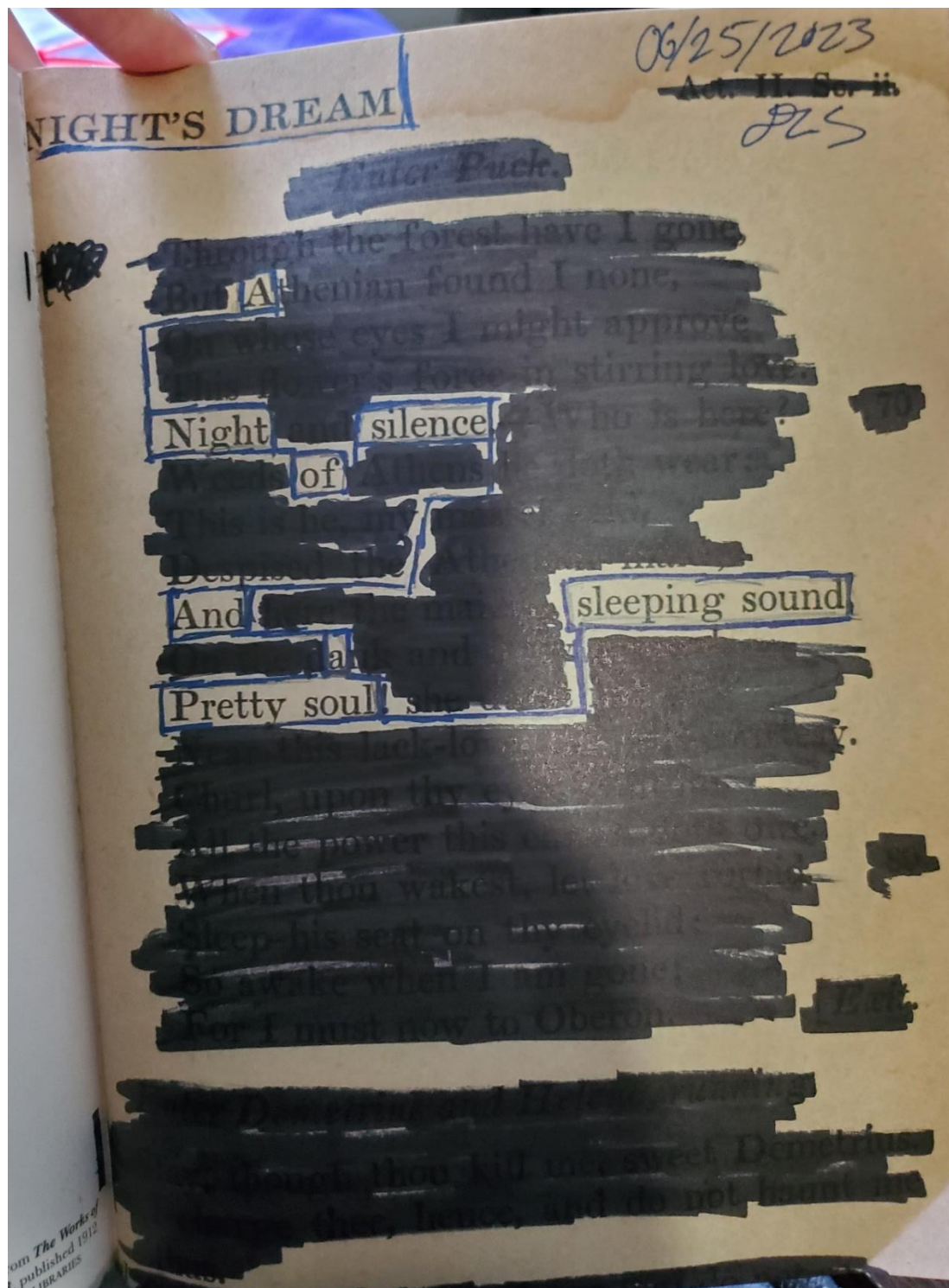
sycamore-trees — the flames — also the black
 smoke from the pitch-pine, curling and rising
 Southern fishermen fishing — the sounds and inlets
 of North Carolina's coast — the shad-fishery and
 the herring-fishery — the large sweep-seines —
 the windlasses on shore worked by horses — the
 clearing, curing, and packing houses;
 Deep in the forest, in the piney woods, turpentine
 and tar dropping from the incisions in the trees
 — There is the turpentine distillery.
 There are the negroes at work in good health — the
 ground in all directions is covered with pine
 straw;
 In Tennessee and Kentucky, slaves busy in the coal
 mines, at the forge, by the furnace-blaze, or at the
 corn-shucking;
 In Virginia, the planter's son returning after a
 absence, joyfully welcomed and kissed by his
 aged mulatto nurse;
 On rivers, boatmen safely moored at night-fall
 their boats, under the shelter of
 Some of the younger men drive to the
 banjo or fiddle — others smoke and
 smoking and talking;
 Late in the afternoon the mocking-bird
 mimic singing in the trees —
 there are the green mosses and the
 the plentiful moss, and the
 juniper tree;
 Northward, young men of the
 company from an expedition return
 evening — the musket and
 of flowers presented by women;
 Children at play — or on his cot, a
 boy fallen asleep, (how his face
 smiles in his sleep!)
 The scout riding on horseback over the plains
 of the Mississippi — he ascends a knoll and
 sweeps his eye around;
 California life — the miner, bearded, dressed in his
 rude costume — the staunch California friendship
 — the sweet air — the graves, one, in passing,
 meets, solitary, just aside the horse-path.

SLEEPING SOUND

A night of silence

And a pretty soul

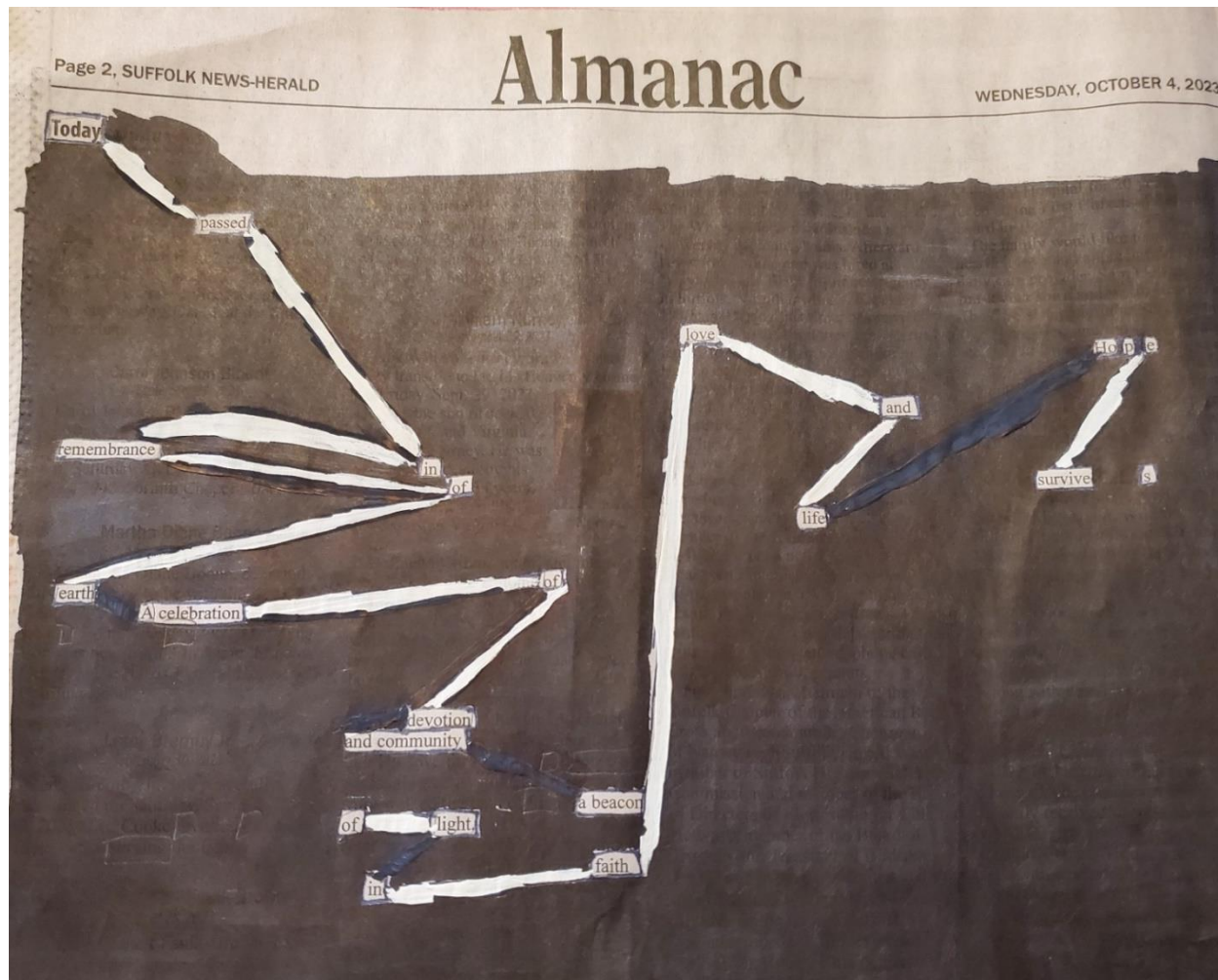
Sleeping sound



Seitz, Dixie. *Sleeping Sound* blackout poem. 2023. Author's personal collection.

CELEBRATION

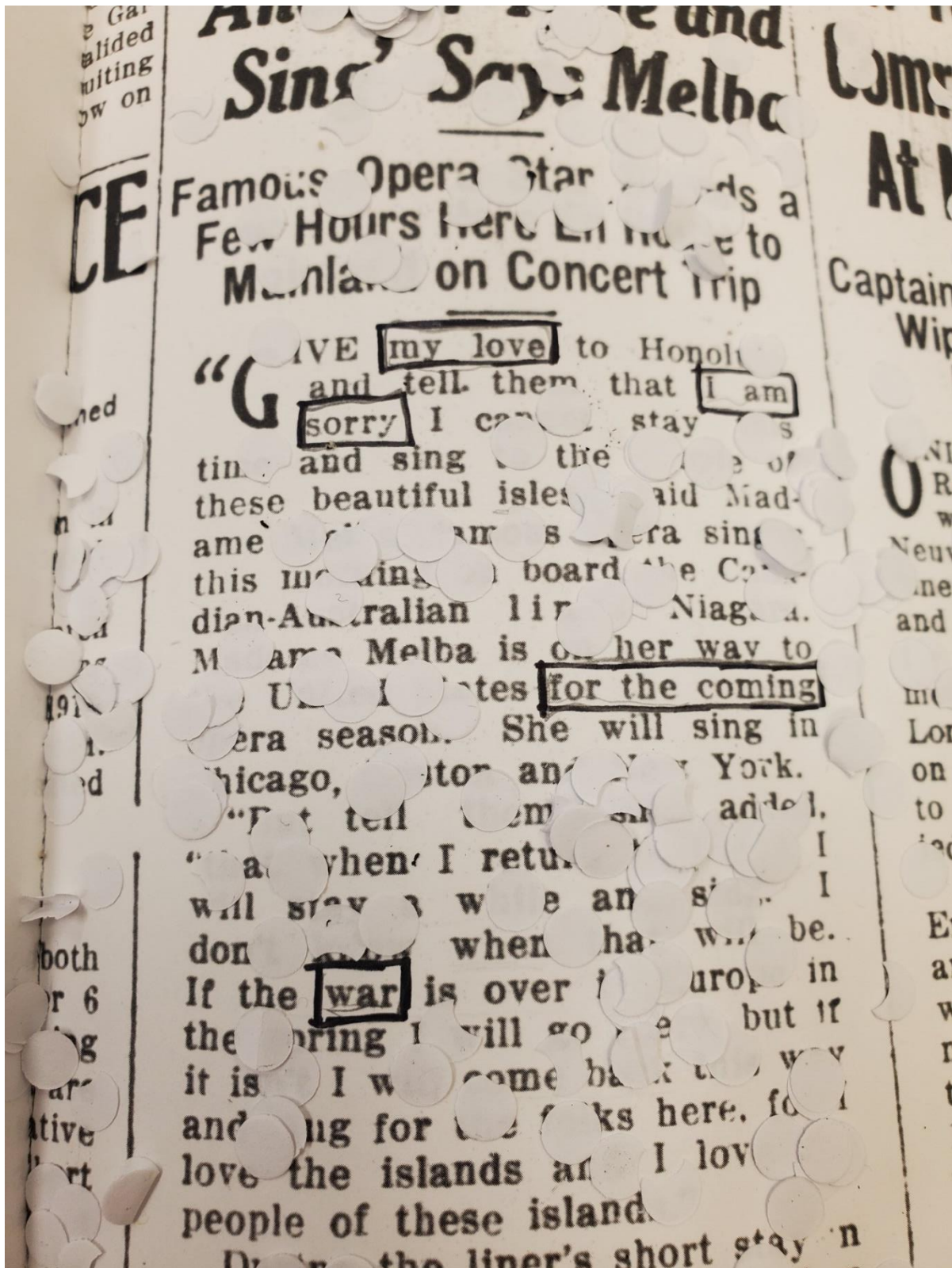
Today passed
In remembrance of Earth
A celebration of devotion
And community
A beacon of light
In faith, love, and life
Hope survives



Seitz, Dixie. *Celebration* blackout poem. 2023. Author's personal collection.

MY LOVE

My love
I am sorry
For the coming war



Seitz, Dixie. My Love blackout poem. 2024. Author's personal collection.

SURVIVE

Weigh your soul

Your strength

Survive the fray

Whatever it takes

Zestial: What weighs on your soul, old friend?
 I implore you to share the load
 If it was thou who slew the angel
 Why not let your strength be known?

Carmilla Carmine: I always thought that I would keep blood off my face
 But when that thing attacked, I had to act
 To cross that line and keep them safe
 But if anyone knew, then all of Hell would rise to war
 And who's to say who'd survive the fray?
 I might lose the ones that I was killing for
 So I, I'll be your keeper
 Do whatever it takes, I'll make the mistakes
 I'll keep you safe and keep this secret

Vaggie: When I saw your face
 You made me feel like a stranger in a brand new place
 And it felt so good to be understood
 But there's so much I wished that I could say
 So I, I'll be your armor
 Do whatever it takes, I'll make the mistakes
 I'll spend my life being your partner

Carmilla: And I don't know what we might face
 But I know I can't replace you
 So I'll do anything to save you

Vaggie: And I will try to make your dreams come true

Both: Whatever we go through
 I know I (Carmilla: I'll be your keeper)
 (Vaggie: I'll be your armor)
 Whatever it takes (Carmilla: I'll make the mistakes)
 (Vaggie: I'll make the mistakes)
 Whatever it takes

Lyrics from: <https://genius.com/Andrew-underberg-sam-haft-daphne-rubin-vega-stephanie-beatriz-and-james-monroe-iglehart-whatever-it-takes-lyrics>

REMEMBER ME

It is a trembling sensation

Pleasurable and fearful

An unexplored secret

I do not understand

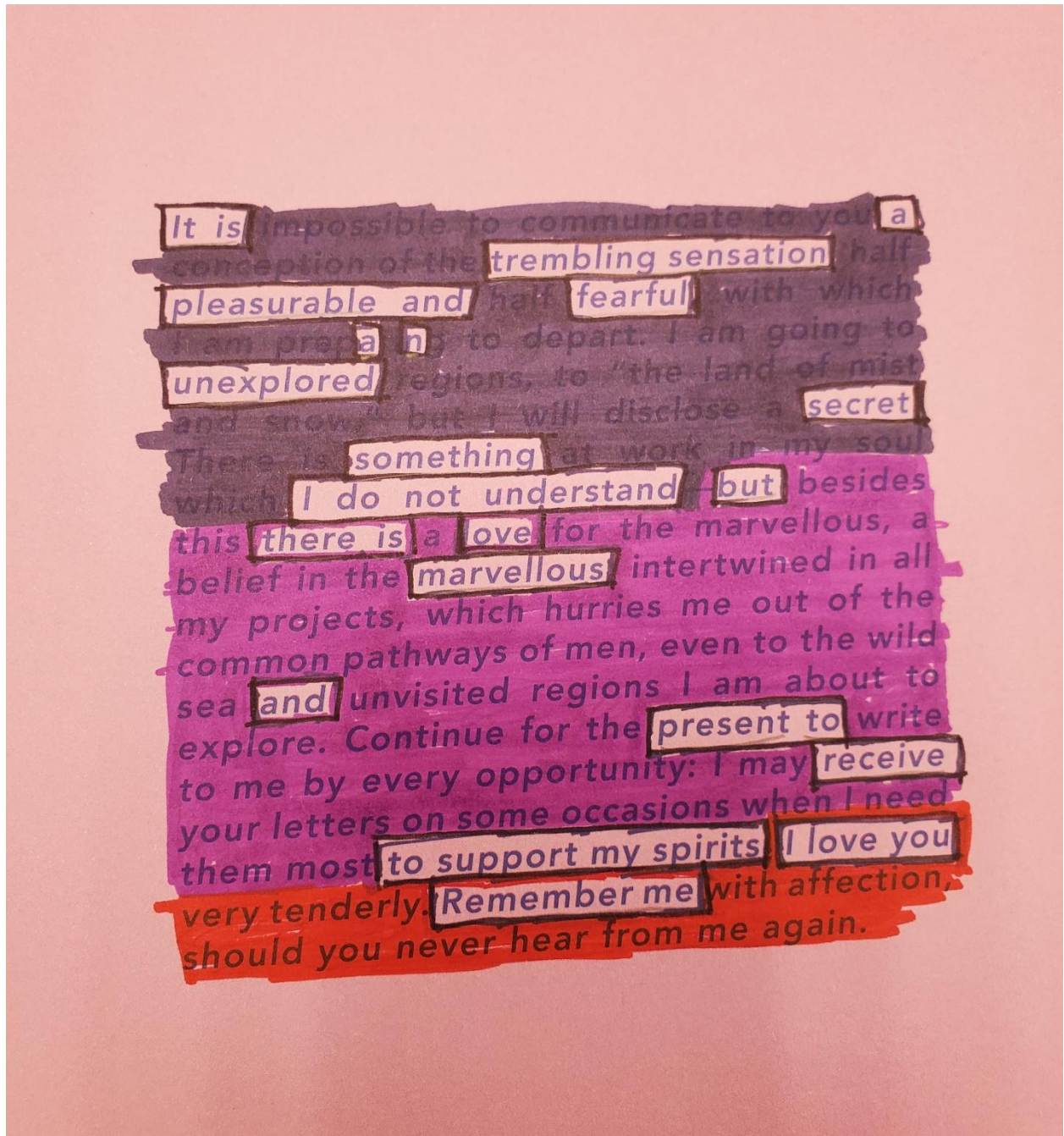
But there is love

Marvellous and present to receive

To support my spirits

I love you

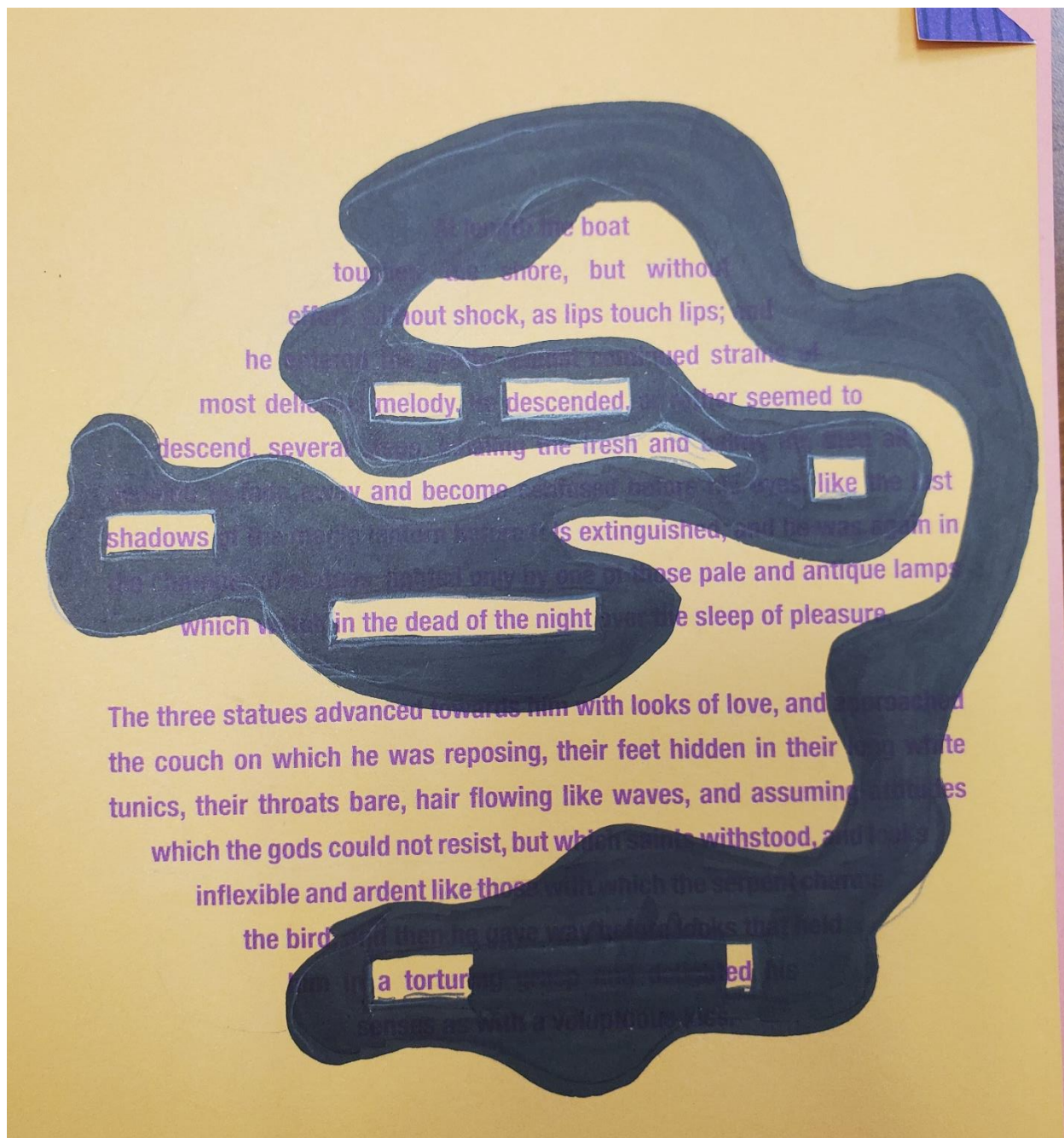
Remember me



Seitz, Dixie. *Remember Me* blackout poem. 2023. Author's personal collection.

MELODY

A tortured melody
Descended like shadows
In the dead of night



Seitz, Dixie. *Melody* blackout poem. 2024. Author's personal collection.

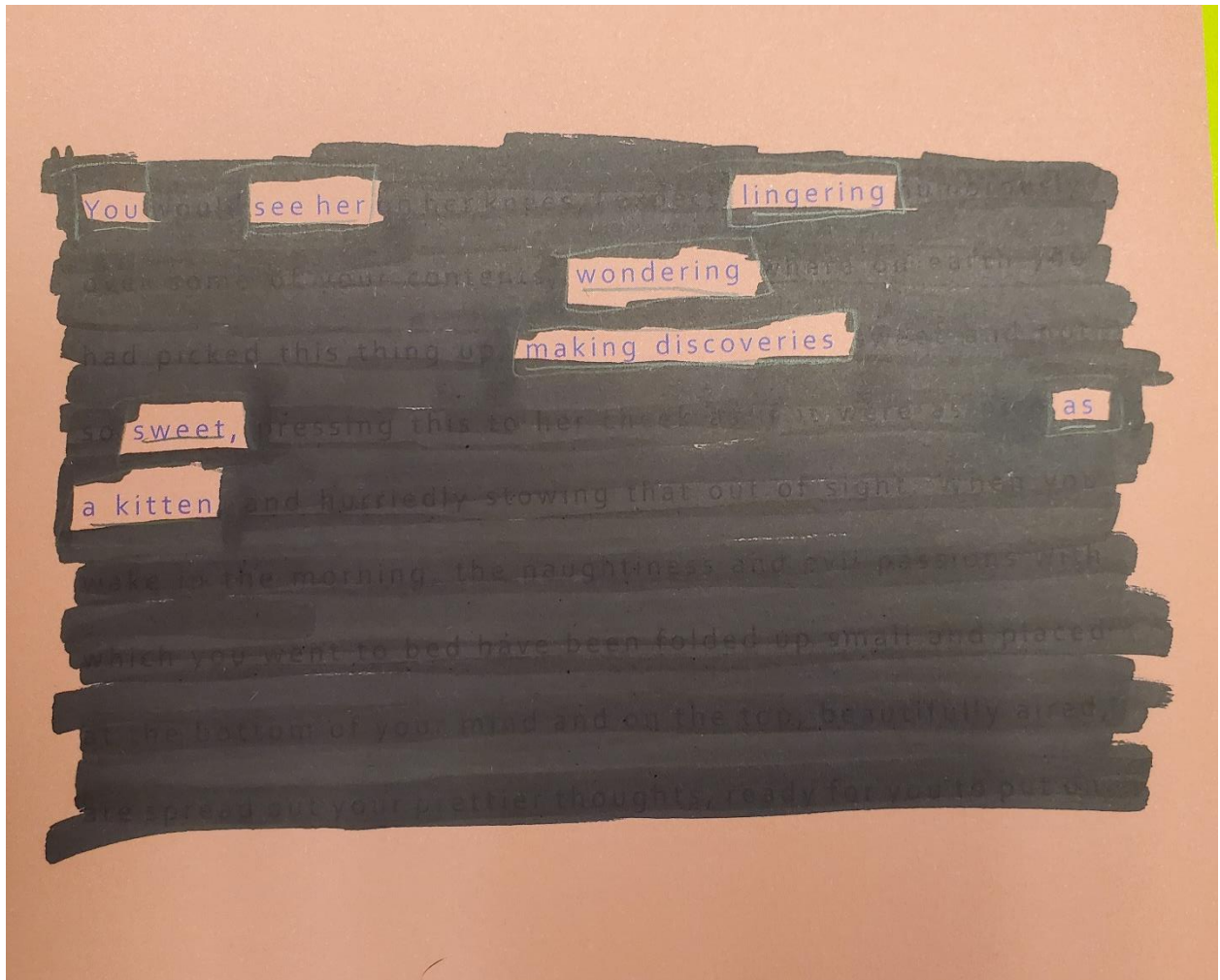
KITTEN

You see her lingering

Wondering

Making discoveries

Sweet as a kitten



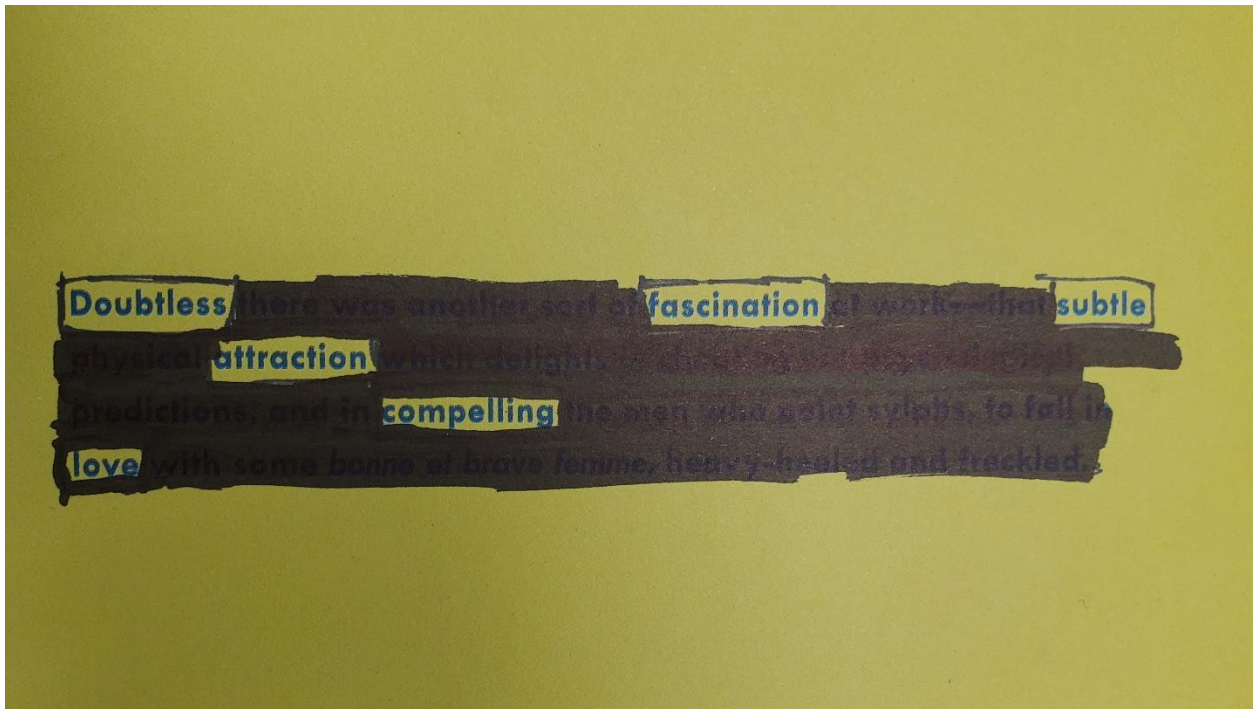
Seitz, Dixie. *Kitten* blackout poem. 2023. Author's personal collection.

DOUBTLESS, SUBTLE, COMPELLING

Doubtless fascination

Subtle attraction

Compelling love



Seitz, Dixie. *Doubtless, Subtle, Compelling* blackout poem. 2023. Author's personal collection.

MADNESS

Madness personified

The unbounded king of beasts

A very riotous character

Cries filled the air

Divinity was worshipped

However, that glory vanishes

Attached to indignation

Faithless rage

A panic afflicted with madness

Destroyed with sorrow and regret

Mourning ecstatic delight

Violent gesticulations, dancing, shouting, wounding and gashing

Frightful

Create a poem about Madness

Rhea, the wife of Cronus, and mother of Zeus and the other great gods of Olympus, personified the earth, and was regarded as the Great Mother and unceasing producer of all plant-life. She was also believed to exercise unbounded sway over the animal creation, more especially over the lion, the noble king of beasts. Rhea is generally represented wearing a crown of turrets or towers and seated on a throne, with lions crouching at her feet. She is sometimes depicted sitting in a chariot, drawn by lions. The principal seat of her worship, which was always of a very riotous character, was at Crete. At her festivals, which took place at night, the wildest music of flutes, cymbals, and drums resounded, whilst joyful shouts and cries, accompanied by dancing and loud stamping of feet, filled the air. Her divinity was introduced into Crete by its first colonists from Phrygia, in Asia Minor, in which country she was worshipped under the name of Cybele. The people of Crete adored her as the Great Mother, more especially in her signification as the Mother of the World. Sober however, that year by year, as winter appears, all her glory vanishes, her flowers fade, and her trees become leafless, they poetically expressed this process of nature under the figure of a lost love. She [19] was said to have been tenderly attached to a youth of remarkable beauty, named Atys, who, to her grief and indignation, proved faithless to her. He was about to unite himself to a nymph called Sagaris, when, in the midst of the wedding feast, the rage of the incensed goddess suddenly burst forth upon all present. A panic seized the assembled guests, and Atys, becoming afflicted with temporary madness, fled to the mountains and destroyed himself. Cybele, moved with sorrow and regret, instituted a yearly mourning for his loss, when her priests, the

into the mountains to seek the lost youth. Having discovered him [6] they gave full vent to their ecstatic delight by indulging in the most violent gesticulations, dancing, shouting, and, at the same time, wounding and gashing themselves in a frightful manner. In Rome the Greek Rhea was identified with Ops, the goddess of plenty, the wife of Saturn, who had a variety of appellations. She was called Magna-Mater, Mater Deorum, Berecynthia-Idea, and ~~Demeter~~. This latter title she acquired from three high mountains in Phrygia, whence she was brought to Rome as Cybele during the second Punic war, B.C. 205, in obedience to an injunction contained in the Sybilline books.

GENTLE NIGHT

Gentle Night

Rage against the light

Do not cry

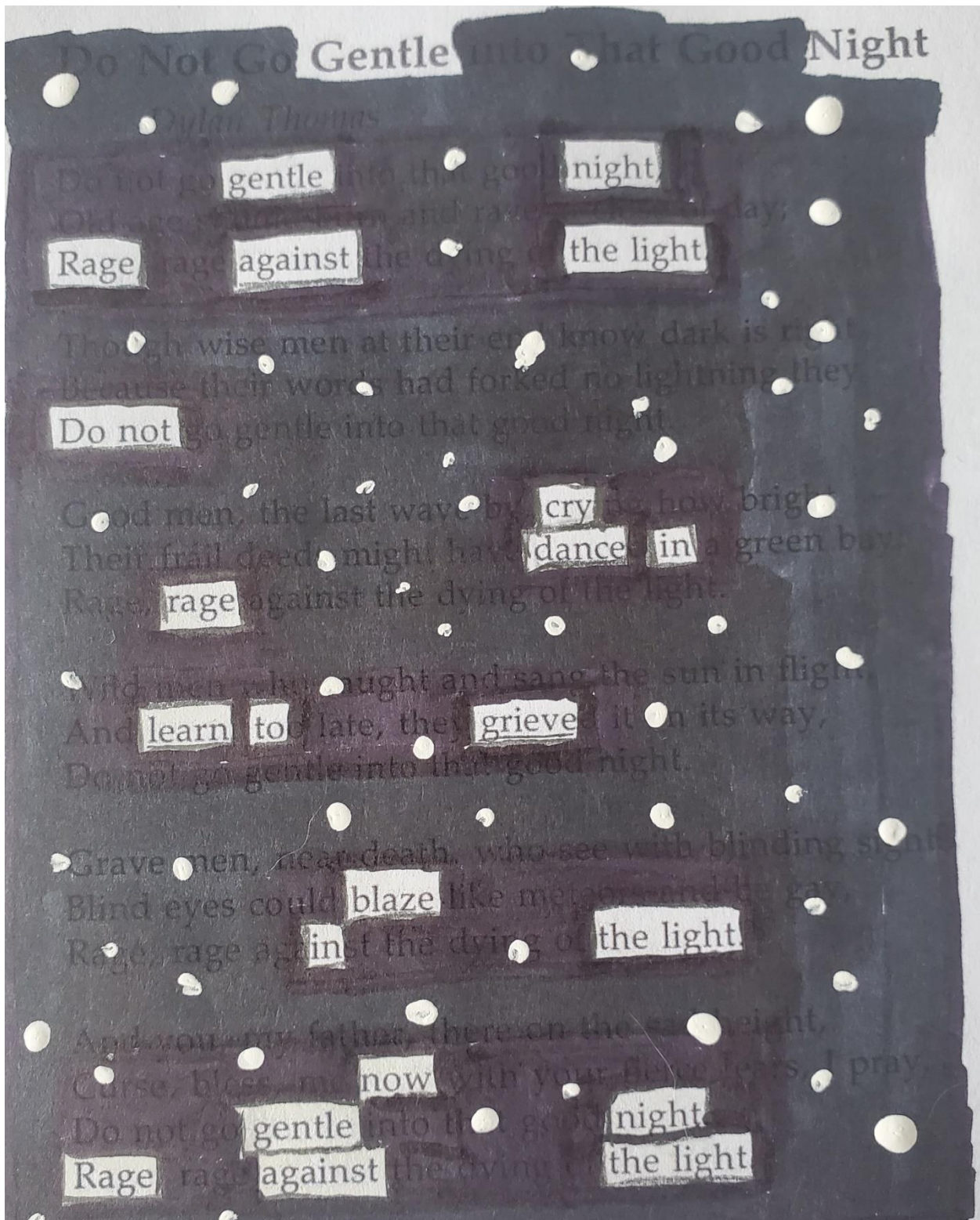
Dance in rage

Learn to grieve

Blaze in the light

Now gentle night

Rage against the light



Seitz, Dixie. *Gentle Night* blackout poem. 2024. Author's personal collection.

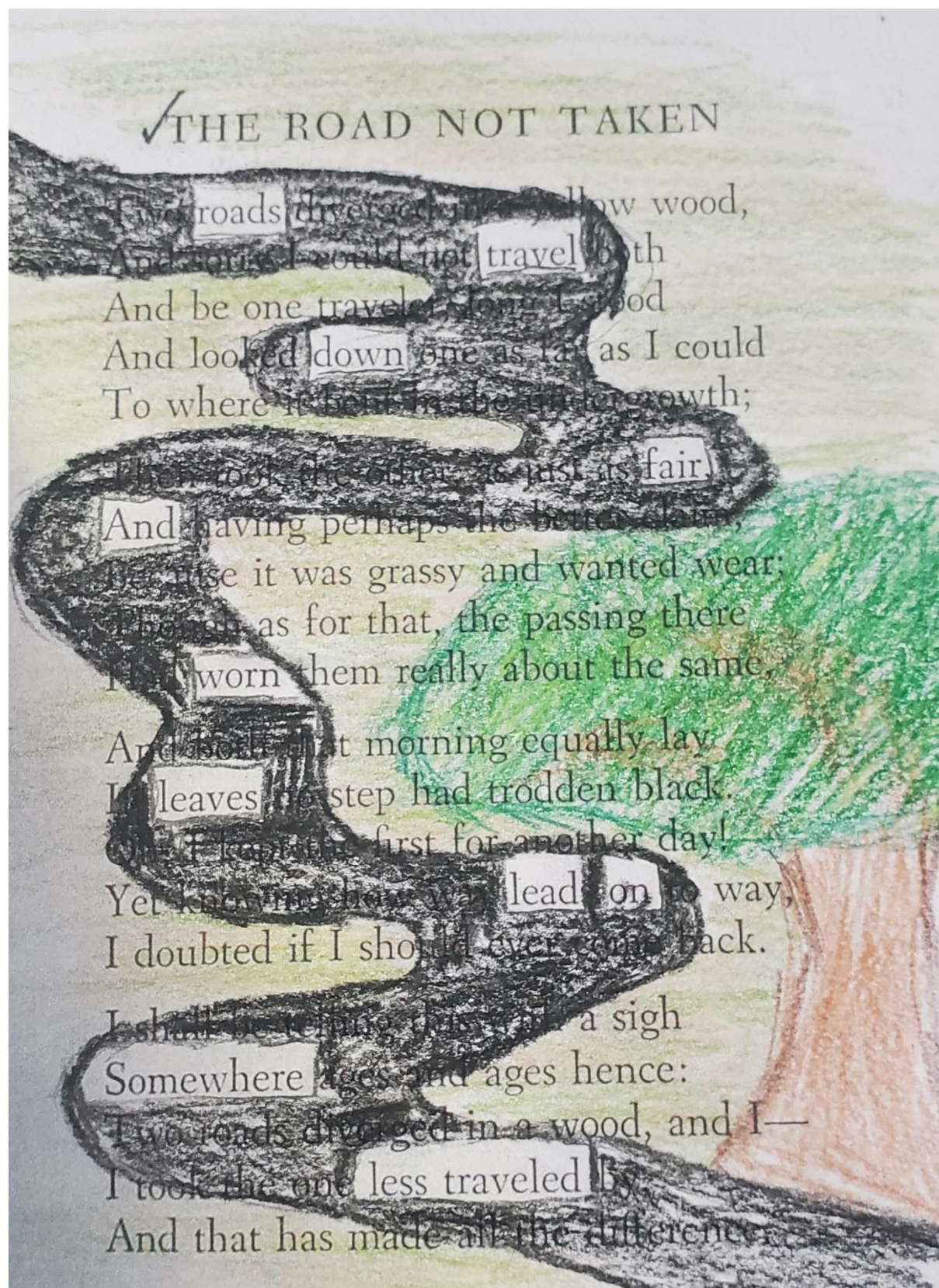
SOMEWHERE LESS TRAVELED

Roads travel down

Fair and worn

Leaves lead on

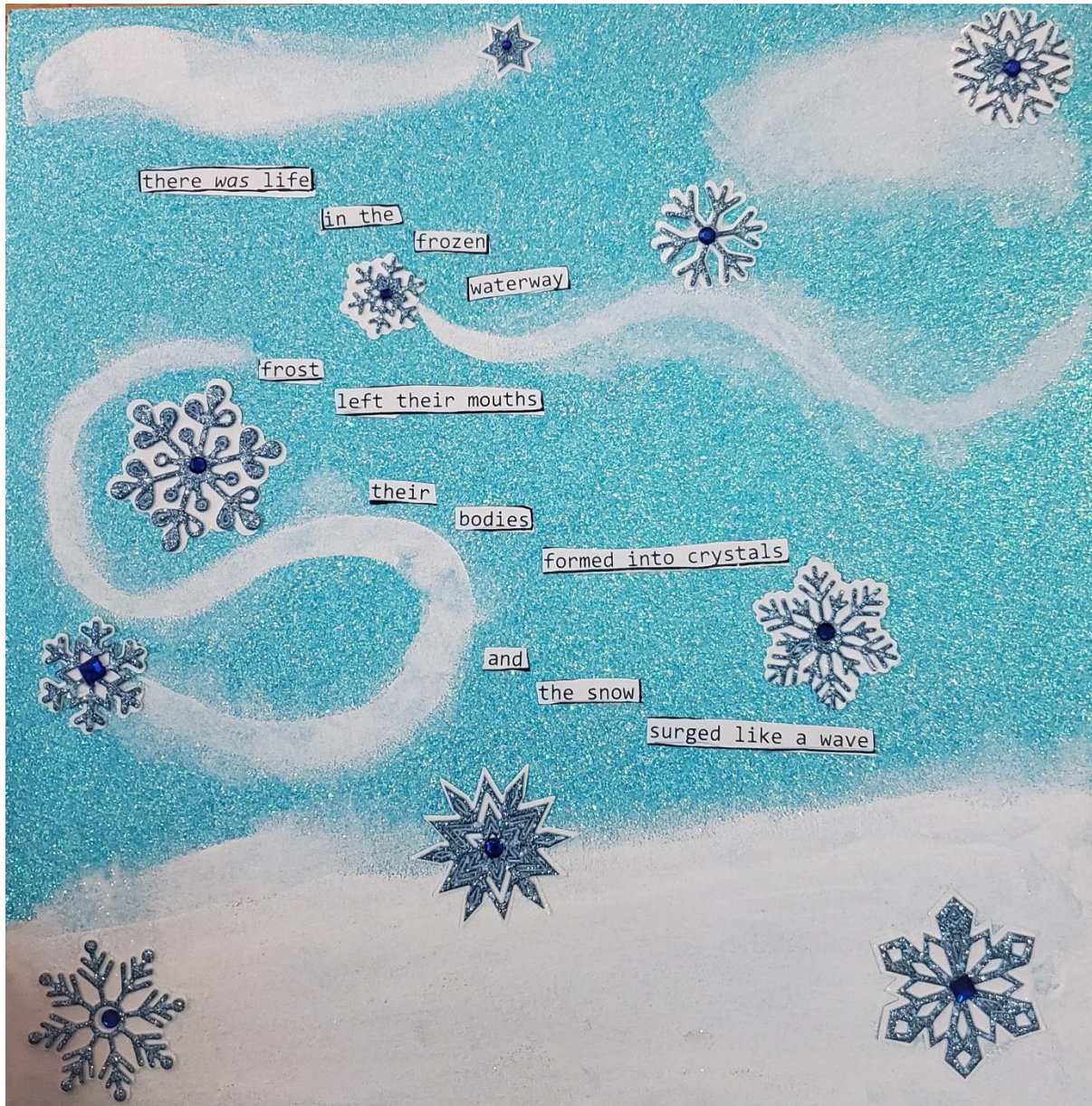
Somewhere less traveled



Seitz, Dixie. *Somewhere Less Traveled* blackout poem. 2024. Author's personal collection.

FROZEN

There was life
In the frozen waterway
Frost left their mouths
Their bodies formed into crystals
And the snow surged like a wave



Seitz, Dixie. *Frozen* blackout poem. 2024. Author's personal collection.

WE ORDER

We the People

Order more

Justice

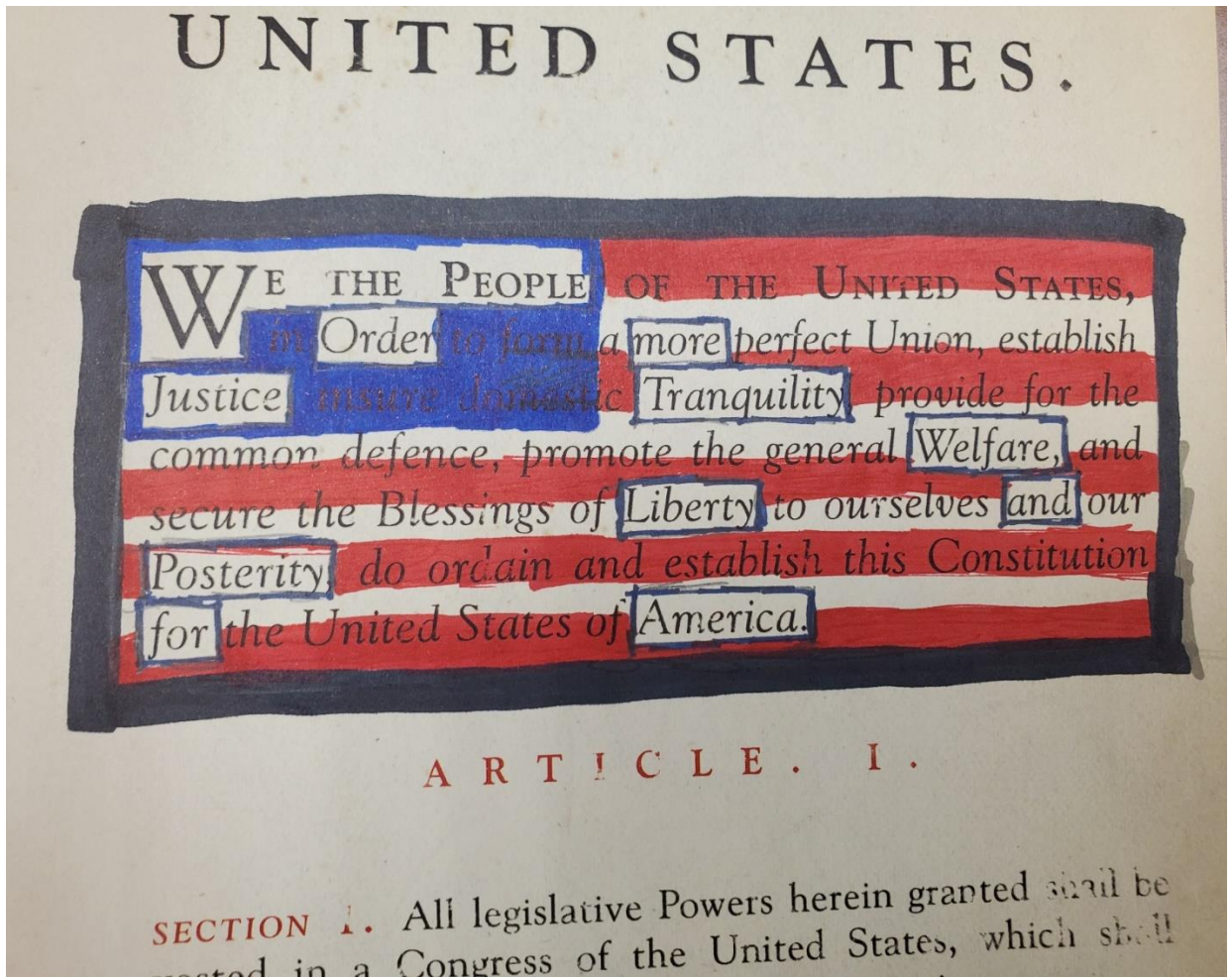
Tranquility

Welfare

Liberty

And Prosperity

For America



Seitz, Dixie. *We Order* blackout poem. 2023. Author's personal collection.

SORRY ANGEL

Sorry Angel
You shoulda known
This dream
Never had
A happy ending

Sorry Angel
This ain't a fairytale
It's too late
For a white horse

sorry

angel

you

shoulda known

this ain't a fairytale

this

dream

it's too late for

a

white horse

never

had

a

Happy ending

Lyrics from: <https://genius.com/Taylor-swift-white-horse-taylors-version-lyrics>

ENCOURAGE AND CONNECT

Read to encourage
And understand your character
Your experiences

Connect with the universe
Trust how you feel

[redacted]
[redacted]
[redacted] read [redacted]
[redacted] to encourage [redacted]
and [redacted]

[redacted] understand [redacted]
[redacted] your [redacted]

[redacted]
[redacted] character [redacted]
[redacted]
[redacted] your [redacted] experiences [redacted]
[redacted]
[redacted] connect with [redacted] [redacted]
[redacted]
[redacted]
[redacted] the [redacted]
[redacted] univers [redacted] e [redacted]
[redacted] trust [redacted]
How [redacted] you feel [redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]
[redacted]
[redacted]
[redacted]
[redacted]
[redacted]
[redacted]

Reflection

As I worked on this thesis, I remembered that my love for blackout poetry existed for years before having the creative assignment given to the class of students I taught. I found an old Pinterest board filled with examples of blackout poetry and I have a vague memory of taking an old book solely to create my own blackout poems, only to get frustrated and give up after my first failed attempt. I realize now that while I knew what blackout poetry looked like visually, I didn't know how to create it. I knew the end results, but not the steps to get there. Creating this thesis gave me the opportunity not only to teach myself the process behind creating blackout poetry but also the opportunity to teach others about blackout poetry.

The research I conducted for this thesis gave me a broader understanding of what it means to teach and learn poetry. By applying the theories of deconstruction and post-structuralism, I got a better understanding of how blackout poetry has a place in academia. The role blackout poetry has in academia was also supported in my research on teachers and scholars using blackout in their classrooms. By creating this thesis, I hope for students and teachers alike to embrace blackout poetry in their creative and professional lives.

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Appendix

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[DXARIsAPo7QA9wSAeTFv6K6ZKsFJGqwCsH5ZDH5pBc_mlfYGI5DpWMmkW2yF](https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/browse?gad_source=1&gclid=Cj0KCQjw8J6wBh)

[1AZr4aAoPqEALw_wcB&search=blackout%20poetry](https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/browse?gad_source=1&gclid=Cj0KCQjw8J6wBh). Accessed 30 March 2023.