

GRADE 9 English Language Arts: Blackout Poetry

Summary of Learning Opportunity

This mini-unit centred around an inquiry into injustice. We began the unit by building a shared understanding of injustices with respect to human rights through interpreting various texts. Students were then asked to interpret a found text, make connections to a social justice theme and synthesize, shift perspectives and express ideas as an empowering new poem.

English
Language Arts
9

Learning
Standards

- Synthesize ideas from a variety of sources to build understanding.
- Recognize and identify the role of personal, social and cultural contexts, values and perspectives in texts
- Exchange ideas and viewpoints to build shared understanding and extend thinking
- Transform ideas and information to create original texts

Literacy Connections

Instruction and Assessment

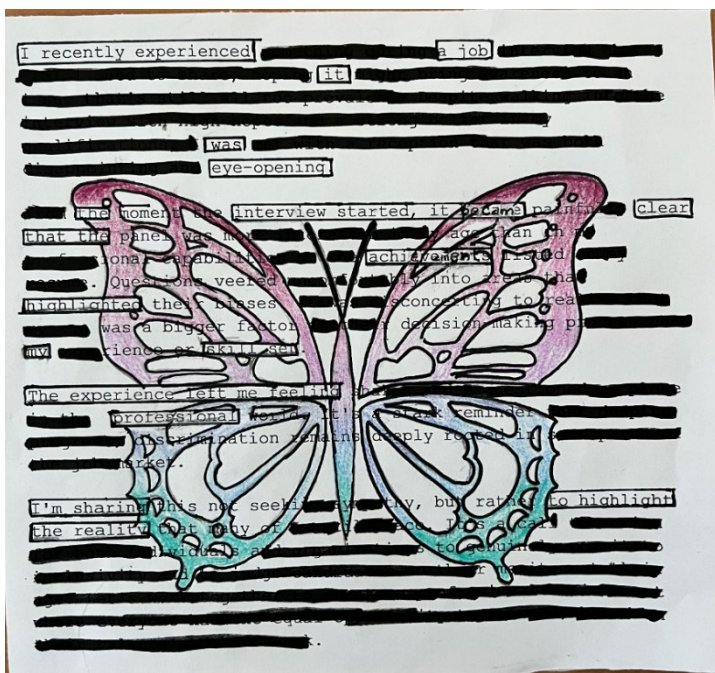
Competencies Developed, Practiced and/or Assessed

LITERACY: Comprehends
Texts—Interprets texts;
Applies Understanding--
Synthesizes ideas and
information

1. We first built a shared understanding of human rights through interpreting photographs and having small collaborative and large group discussions about the themes represented.
2. Students then analyzed a series of poems for tone and theme, i.e., racism, segregation, oppression.
3. In the third lesson, we focused on shifting perspectives. We viewed photos of famous landmarks from the typical perspective and contrasted with a less-often shown viewpoint. We read [reversible poems](#) and discussed the shifts in perspective and tone.
4. In the final activity, I set up “provocation tables” for groups of students with both out-dated and current texts which had serious, complex themes of racism, oppression, segregation, discrimination. Students were asked to transform one of the texts to a positive tone using a black out technique in which they synthesize and express a shifted, positive message. Students used various strategies to interpret, organize and transform the text. I supported the students through this process by guiding peer feedback and with my own formative feedback.

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- Exchange ideas and viewpoints to build shared understanding and extend thinking
- Recognize and identify the role of personal, social and cultural contexts, values and perspectives in texts
- Transform ideas and information to create original texts

LITERACY: Communicates—
Presents ideas and
information



Demonstration of Student Learning, Teacher Assessment and Reflection

The original text was about a person enduring a negative interview experience based on age discrimination. This student chose a butterfly to demonstrate their understanding of transformation within the message, but also to honor the beauty in the evolution of aging.

Injustice: Blackout Found Poem

Teacher's Assessment and Reflection

Proficient. This student was able to interpret texts by examining a variety of themes within the poems, photographs and discussions explored during the earlier lessons and the provocation station. The student identified tone through word choice, perspectives based on point of view, and theme by reviewing the conflict in the original poem and applying it to their final product. Within the reflection, they were able to communicate their choice of symbolism and relate it to shifting perspectives.

Using the Literacy skills of Interprets, Synthesizes and Presents ideas helped me be able to offer more effective feedback. The literacy descriptors bring the learning standards into focus by making clear the thinking that students need to do in order to develop and demonstrate the Curricular Competencies.

Final Evaluation

Areas for Improvement		Criteria	Areas of Strength	
				
Emerging	Developing	Aspects	Proficient	Extending
I can synthesize ideas from a variety of sources to build understanding.				
		Interprets Text ☐ I use text features as cues to identify themes, tone etc. as a means to consider context, purpose, and perspective of the text.	The tone of this document was negative and hopeless. By blacking out some words, I was able to transform this poem into a positive message. I used a butterfly to symbolize the theme: that age is just a number and that aging is beautiful and we should have respect for that.	
I can critically, creatively, and reflectively explore ideas within, between, and beyond texts.				
		Expresses Ideas and Information ☐ I effectively communicate my thinking and understanding using learned material.	Through words and symbolism, I was able to communicate my understanding of how perspectives can change.	

Criteria:

- ☒ -My poem conveys a positive tone and message.
- ☒ -My poem includes a relevant symbol.
- ☒ -It is coloured.
- ☒ -It is at least 10 words in length.

Reflection: 2-3 sentences. Why did we create black-out poetry? Referencing "Friendship Nails," explain the purpose of the activity.

I think we created black out poetry to show how we can eliminate negative messages within our work. "Friendship Nails" reminds us that even though we try to remove the negative, it still exists. We need to learn to be more understanding of what other people have been through.

Teacher Final Evaluation				
Interprets Text	☐ Emerging	☐ Developing	☒ Proficient	☐ Extending
Expresses Ideas and Information	☐ Emerging	☐ Developing	☒ Proficient	☐ Extending

Teacher comments: Well done! This is an incredible representation of transformation. You demonstrated your ability to detect tone, perspective, and theme in a creative final product. Way to gather your thoughts and communicate your understanding through your reflection.

Demonstration of Student Learning, Teacher Assessment, and Reflection

The original text was an open letter about the failing health care system. This student chose to box the positive messages, but leave the rest of the document exposed to reveal the initial message. They were considering language and the audience when they intended on keeping the original version intact; this demonstrated their understanding of theme from "Friendship Nails": words matter and think before you act. The student thought it was imperative that their audience understand that blacking out the words does not make the problem disappear and that resolution occurs when matters are brought to the surface.

Injustice: Blackout Found Poem

Final Evaluation

Areas for Improvement		Criteria 	Areas of Strength	
Emerging	Developing	Aspects	Proficient	Extending
I can synthesize ideas from a variety of sources to build understanding.				
		Interprets Text ☐ I use text features as cues to identify themes, tone etc. as a means to consider context, purpose, and perspective of the text.	I kept some of the original meaning to expose the original message. I read over the text and understood what it meant, enough to find a new meaning within it that I then made a poem from. I show how I believe tone can be easily changed, but leave the rest of the text visible so the reader can understand the way I know something negative can become positive.	
I can critically, creatively, and reflectively explore ideas within, between, and beyond texts.				
		Expresses Ideas and Information ☐ I effectively communicate my thinking and understanding using learned material.	I could have had more symbols with deeper meanings in them, but the roses seemed like they would brighten up the overall appearance. I created a completely new poem from the negativity, and the colors were very bright and uplifting.	

Criteria:

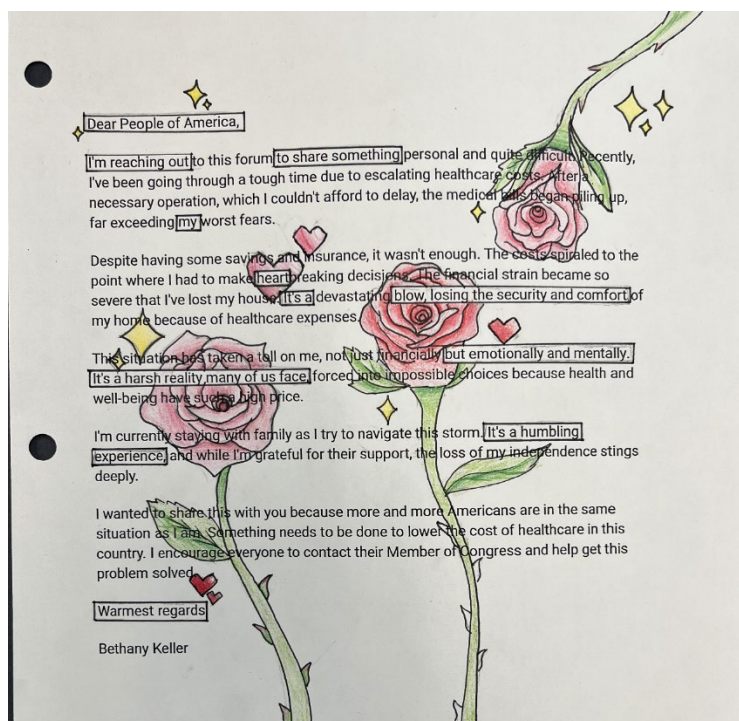
- ☒ -My poem conveys a positive tone and message.
- ☒ -My poem includes a relevant symbol.
- ☒ -It is coloured.
- ☒ -It is at least 10 words in length.

Reflection: 2-3 sentences. Why did we create black-out poetry? Referencing "Friendship Nails," explain the purpose of the activity.

Black out poems are a great way to highlight word choice and change a negative to a positive. Friendship Nails was a great story about healing and how this can take a long time to process. I learned that words really matter.

Teacher Final Evaluation				
Interprets Text	☐ Emerging	☐ Developing	☒ Proficient	☐ Extending
Expresses Ideas and Information	☐ Emerging	☒ Developing	☐ Proficient	☐ Extending

Teacher comments: You created a beautiful piece of artwork here! Good job on interpreting the learned material like tone, perspective, and theme and applying it to your final product. I would like to have seen more of an intention and explanation with the symbol you chose.



Teacher's Assessment

Proficient: This student demonstrated a proficient interpretation of texts and a proficient synthesis of the lesson material. They showed depth in word choice by piecing together a meaningful message in their own poem. In addition, they understood the theme of progression (we cannot move forward as a society unless we resolve the past). They articulated their decision to present their poem in this way, keeping the original words as a reminder, as opposed to blacking them out.

Developing: This student is developing in the literacy sub-aspect of Presenting ideas and information as they reflected that the rose symbol did not represent the message in any depth, but rather was chosen for its aesthetics.