

English Ten Found Poem Assignment for The Things They Carried

Name: _____

What is a Found Poem?

“A found poem uses language from non-poetic contexts and turns it into poetry. Think of a collage -- visual artists take scraps of newspaper, cloth, feathers, bottle caps, and create magic. You can do the same with language and poems.

Writing this type of poetry is a kind of treasure hunt. Search for interesting scraps of language, then put them together in different ways and see what comes out. Putting seemingly unrelated things together can create a kind of chemical spark, leading to surprising results.

You might end up rewriting the poem in the end and taking all the found language out, or you might keep the found scraps of language almost in their original form. Either way, found language is a great way to jolt your imagination.”¹

Process

- Begin by choosing any words and phrases from the novel, The Things They Carried.
- Then arrange them so they make some sort of sense.
- Delete and add words as you go; move things around.
- Edit the poem into stanzas.
- Revise and read aloud for clarity.
- Do not forget punctuation and a title.

Example

Here is my process and final product for a found poem from “A Sunrise on the Veld.”

- choosing any words and phrases

precious hours, too hot to bear, hollowing gleam of light, chilled earth, I can control every part of myself, the air smelled of morning, the urgency and the truth and the courage of what his voice was saying exulted him, sing again, raw flesh beneath, can't stop it, grimly satisfied, walked heavily, It lay at the back of his mind uncomfortably., think, feeling the chill, why should I interfere?, shining in the sun – yes, this is how life goes on, each blade of grass grew for it alone, I am not for you, the eyes, the bones, he saw the blackness thin, be trapped, in the tension of death, the danger, a figure from a dream, the grass was whispering, could hear nothing, anguish, this is what happens

¹ From Creative Writing Now at <http://www.creative-writing-now.com/found-poetry.html>

- Arrange them so they make some sort of sense.

Think. Of the courage and tired hours.

Raw flesh sings again in the air that smelled of morning

The hollowing gleam of light—too hot to bear in the precious hours. shining in the sun – yes, this is how life goes on, a hollowing gleam of light, the urgency and the truth and the courage, each blade of grass grew for it alone,

I can control every part of myself

the grass was whispering, could hear nothing sing again, raw flesh beneath

- Delete and add words as you go; move things around.

Think

of the courage and tired hours.

of raw flesh in the air that smelled of morning,
sings again.

The hollowing gleam of light—too hot to bear in the precious hours.

Shining in the sun – yes, this is how life goes on, a hollowing gleam of light
the urgency and the truth and the courage, each blade of grass grew for it alone,

I can control every part of myself

the grass was whispering, could hear nothing sing again, chilled earth

I am not for you, the eyes, the bones could hear nothing anguish, this is what
happens

walked heavily, yes, this is how life goes on

- Edit the poem into stanzas.

Think

of the courage and tired hours.

of raw flesh in the air that smelled of morning,
sing again.

The hollowing gleam of light—too hot to bear in the precious hours.

Shining in the sun – yes, this is how life goes on, a hollowing gleam of light.

There is urgency and the truth and the courage in each ...

I can control every part of myself

The grass was whispering, could hear nothing sing again, blade of grass grew for it alone,
chilled earth

I am not for you, the eyes, the bones could hear nothing anguish, this is what happens
walked heavily, yes, this is how life goes on in a hollowing gleam of light.

- Revise and read aloud for clarity.
- Do not forget punctuation and a title.

“Intractable”

by Lisa St. John 6.3.12 inspired by “A Sunrise on the Veld” by Doris Lessing.

Think
of the courage and tired hours.
Of raw flesh in the air that smelled of morning,
sing again.

The hollowing gleam of light—too hot to bear in the precious hours,
Shining in the sun – yes, this is how life goes on, a hollowing gleam of light.

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I can control every part of myself.

There is urgency and the truth and the courage in each
The eyes, the bones could hear nothing. The grass was whispering, could hear nothing.

Sing again for it alone, chilled earth.
I am not for you, anguish. This is what happens.
I have walked heavily, yes.

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This is how life goes on in a hollowing gleam of light.

Your found poem is due on Tuesday, March 27. I suggest you read it aloud several times. Show it to as many people as you can and get their feedback. You will be graded on creativity and originality as well as clarity of structure and content. There is no other criteria. On the following page is an outstanding example from one of Ms. Diana's past students.

“The Things They Carried” Found Poem

“The endless march, village to village, without purpose, nothing won or lost.	[15]	They carried the shared weight of memory. They took up what others could no longer bear.	[14-15]
A kind of emptiness, a dullness of desire and intellect and conscience and hope.	[15]	Often, they carried each other, the wounded or weak.	[15]
They carried all they could bear, including a silent awe	[9]	A hard, hating kind of love	[23]
Jimmy Cross [carried] a good-luck charm from Martha... a simple pebble...on the march... he carried the pebble in his mouth	[9]	All the emotional baggage of men who might die Shameful memories... the heaviest burden of all	[20] [20]
Imagination was a killer	[11]	Afraid of dying	
the two of them buried alive	[12]	but...even more afraid	
<i>She did not love him and never would.</i>	[17]	to show it	[19]
Henry Dobbins carried his girlfriend’s pantyhose wrapped around his neck as a comforter	[10]	He would accept the blame The terrible power of the things they carried	[24] [9]
Ted Lavender ... shot in the head... went down under an exceptional burden... He was dead weight	[13] [7]	Very sad, he thought. The things men carried inside “	[24]
<i>Afterward they burned Than Khe</i>	[8]		
Norman Bowker... carried a thumb... a gift by Mitchell Sanders... cut from a VC corpse	[13]		

