

RESILIENT HEARTS: STORIES OF STRENGTH AND JOY

A newsletter created by participants in Webs of Support,
a class by and for incarcerated survivors of violence and severe trauma, 4th ed.

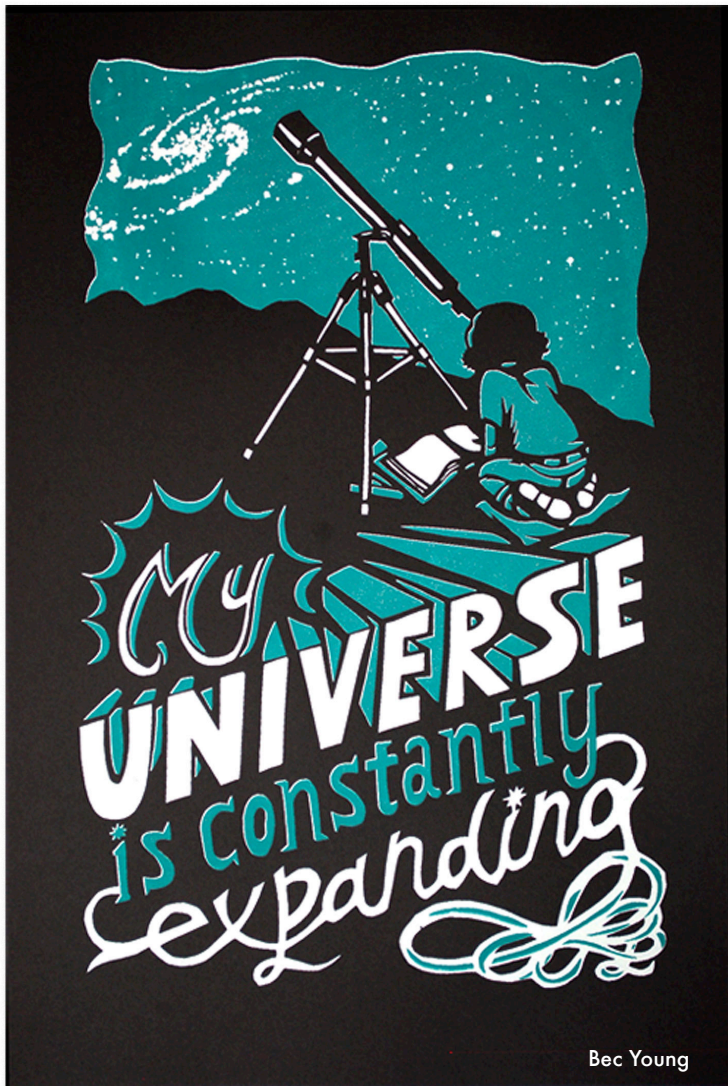


Webs of Support is a 12-week curriculum dealing with issues related to violence and trauma and also develops personal empowerment, a sense of community, growth, and healing.

In the winter of 2017, we developed this newsletter to be a resource guide and source of inspiration to any other person struggling with similar issues.

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LIFE IN SPACE

Make a list of characteristics of the space you live in. Think of your unit, your room, and the general place that you live. What words best describe it? Make the list as long or as short as you'd like.

Now, think about some distant space that you would like to live in. It could be a foreign land, or even outer space. What characteristics describe this ideal space? Create a list and try to describe it as best you can. Think about what it looks like, how it feels to be there, and perhaps who is there with you.

Now, create a poem based on the lists of words you've written. You can borrow from just one or both lists.

I fell asleep one day
 Dreaming of a place far, far away
 I look out, expecting to see walls
 Instead, I see opportunity.
 For some reason, I don't know how to act.
 No one around to remind me what I lack.
 I look out, expecting to see walls.
 Instead, I see opportunity.
 Days go by, everything is the same.
 I'm so exhausted, tired of this game.
 I look out, expecting to see walls.
 Instead, I see opportunity.
 Today, I see sunshine, a smile on my face
 I'm finally leaving this place
 I look out, expecting to see walls.
 Instead, I see opportunity.

- Meghan McKeon

It is so cramped in here. Too many people,
 the metal is cold, the vibe is evil.
 Someone always coming or going, something
 always happening.
 None of us knowing
 How do we feel so alone
 When we're surrounded by all the people
 The lights, the noise, the smell of this place.
 I close my eyes to escape
 The sun, the sand,
 The fresh tropical air,
 The friendly locals everywhere
 And then the light
 Warm, loving, welcoming, calm.
 If only I was there all along.

- Arian Campbell

We do not need a window to see the clouds
Adrift in an endless sea of sky

Nor wings to feel the wind beneath them
In freedom of flight

There is no place we cannot go with
the power of our minds.

For there is NOT a captor of thought

– Debb Fache

Long days, lonely, surrounded by hundreds. Still all
alone.

That's the point, isn't it?

Being surrounded in an existence but, still so cold.

Disgusting sadness behind the eyes of
condescending souls.

Lacking love, the compassion. Fuck a conscience.

Real; does it exist? Time changing in a repetitive
roller coaster of emotional garble.

Plastic souls lacking the enthusiasm to learn to cope
with the unchangeable past.

Chain link separating a terrifying existence of an
untamed soul, for the "norm" of a beautiful society.

Seeming so mystic as the breeze blows. Fresh
smelling, free, and colorful as ever changing

seasons pass. Smiles, giggles, and enthusiasm
missed in a pile of dread created by none other

than a lonesome soul, aching to feel the relaxation
of a peaceful undiscovered universe; such is a

glorious life comparable to the undiscovered
paradise longing to breath begging to live.

Such is life before the aftermath of these prison
walls.

– Tonie Rosales

Simple structure,
Complicated space,
Alone in a crowded place.

Majestic Hues,
Loving news,
Alone in a beautiful place.

Musical sounds, soft grounds.

– Justine Murphy

I'm lonely while surrounded
The noise screams and says nothing
I don't want to hear the words being spoken
I scream back and I am unheard.

I'm trapped.

In changing while I remain the same,
The growth I can't see, it's stretching me
I don't want to feel the growing pains
I shrink back from the guilt

I'm unworthy

I'm oppressed while becoming free
The lies can't hide the truth
My worth screams and says everything
I whisper and I am heard.

I'm becoming

Considered weak I'm a warrior
The fight comes from within
The scream is a warrior's cry
And it will not be silenced

I am powerful

I'm surrounded by an army
We march together we are not lonely
There's an unspoken strength that is heard
We are one and we have a voice

We are victorious.

– Susan Ayres



Mary Tremonte

Yoga Pose of the Season: Camel // Ustrasana pose



Submitted by Darci Bower

While on your knees, place your hands on your lower back for support and do a slight back bend, sending your head backwards. Keep breathing. If you are able, lean back a bit more and grab the heels of your feet or your ankles. Continue to breathe. Also send your hips forward for a deeper back bend. Hold for approximately 20 seconds. Remember to breathe!

This posture stretches the throat and stretches the thyroid and parathyroid glands. Camel also firms and slims the abdomen and waist line. Camel pose creates maximum compression in your spine, stimulating the nervous system while improving the flexibility of your neck and spine.

This posture is best to do in the morning, as it will awaken you and help bring focus. It is best to follow this posture up with child's pose to better support your spinal health and counterbalance the back bend.



Jokes.....

How do you organize a trip to outer space?

.....You planet!

Who did the ghost take to the party?

.....His boo!

More Jokes.....

I think every attorney has a daughter named Sue.

Submitted by Debb Fache

What do you get when a cow jumps over a barbed wire fence?

.....Utter destruction!

Submitted by Darci Bower

A 2-pack of M&Ms cost 50 cent - that's ludacris!

Submitted by Arian Campbell

A person spots a sign outside a house that reads "Talking Dog for Sale." Intrigued, they walk in. "So, what have you done with your life?" they ask the dog. "I've led a very full life, says the dog. "I lived in the Alps rescuing avalanche victims. Then I volunteered and helped tsunami victims in the Pacific. And now, I spend my days reading at a retirement home." The person is flabbergasted and asks the owner, "Why on earth would you want to get rid of a dog like that?" The owner says, "Because he's a liar! He never did any of that!"

Submitted by Colleen

What do you call a pile of kittens?

.....A meowtain!

Submitted by Ashleigh Wallace

Recipes

Chicken and Rice

---Ingredients---

- onion flakes
- white rice
- pack of chicken
- peanuts
- sunflower seeds
- soy sauce

Step one:

Cook rice with Mrs. Dash & onion flakes till done

Step two:

Add chicken (heated)

Step three:

Add nuts, sauce and stir

Step four:

eat!

-- Submitted by Justine Murphy

Tuna Pasta

---Ingredients---

- noodles
- tuna
- peanuts
- sunflower seeds
- hot corn chips
- olives
- cheese
- jalapenos
- ranch

Step one: Cook noodles then rinse with cold water.
Add a little of each item above. Serves 1-2, or more if multiplied.

-- Submitted by Darci Bower



Recipes

Hawaiian Cream Pie

---Ingredients---

- one bag chocolate chip cookies
- seven to ten packets of cream cheese
- one bag powder creamer
- two dole tropical fruit cups

Chop fruit from both cups and set aside – save juice.

Crunch cookies and add 3-5 tablespoons of juice from fruit until they're moistened. Press into bottom and sides of bowl. Microwave for 45 seconds and set aside to cool.

Empty cream cheeses into bowl and mix until very creamy. Begin to add creamer about ¼ bag at a time – mixing well between additions. Once all the creamer is added, mix until your arm hurts. Then give it to a friend to mix until their arm hurts. Now it is ready. Add about 4 tablespoons of juice from fruit to cream cheese mix. Blend well then spoon into cooled crust.

Top with chopped fruit, let sit for two hours covered. Ready to serve.

-- Submitted by Debb Fache

Triple Layer Cake

---Ingredients---

- four packs of duplex cookies
- one box of zebra cakes
- four packets of cream cheese
- two milkways or reese's or kitkats
- one soda pop – dark in color

Take 2 packs of cookies. Separate the middle from cookies – place aside. Crush cookies to crumbs in one bowl.

Saturate with soda just enough to make moist.

Cook 6 minutes in microwave.

Repeat for other 2 cookies.

Set cakes to cool completely.

Take middles of the cookies and mix with cream cheese until you have a nice whipped frosting.

After the cake is cool, place one cake on lid.

Place thin layer of icing.

To make Zebra cake stick, make a layer of zebra cake.

Place 2nd cake on top.

Ice the whole cake.

Melt milky way, pour over top or cut/chop up kitkat/reese's and sprinkle on top.

-- Submitted by Arian Campbell

+ Quotes +

“One isn't necessarily born with courage, but one is born with potential. Without courage, we cannot practice any other virtue with consistency. We can't be kind, true, merciful, generous, or honest.”

- Maya Angelou

“I'd rather be hated for who I am, than loved for who I'm not.”

- Kurt Cobain

“A woman who writes has power, and a woman with power is feared.”

- Gloria E. Anzaldúa

Community Words of Support

This collaborative poetry writing was done at a workshop at Titwrench music festival in Denver, in August 2017.

They did not come from the rib of a man.
They listened closely as he feigned deaf.
Not content to listen, they spoke, they sang, they
railed, they warned of the bones of man.
His sin, their burden.
We bare the bars of a society built on our throats.

-Vincent.

Stay Strong!

Every woman is mother,
Gluing together the cracks around her
As he swings the hammer blindly enraged.
Each of us shards of mother-once-child
Hairline fractures scars that shine and glisten in the
sun.

-Marianne.

To my sisters on the inside:

*Every poem and prose I heard from you today
humbled me because your words were so full of love
and hope. You confronted your fears and your pain
but you never forsake your love for the world. Keep
fighting and loving, we need women of your strength,
your caliber, your heart in this world. The outside is
waiting for you with outstretched arms. <3*

I'm reminded of those dreams we sometimes have
Running as hard as you can, never getting anywhere.
Like a mirage, close to reality,
Slips through your fingers endlessly.
But I still hold tight,
Knowing it brings me closer to you.

-Ross.

*Hope can be dangerous. But sometimes hope is all we
have. Stay strong. Solidarity.*

We come from sparks, blaze heat.
Ashes on air, tongues and death wail warnings.
We come from the fires someone else set

But the burning is our own.
As in the forest, our growth
Is new and our colors vibrant.

-Jewels.

Even though they value profits over people
They cannot erase the spirits of those behind bars
A fire has been lit
To destroy and to sustain
Through crumbling walls and echos of song
The howling whistle of wild burning is in the key of
G.

-Elizabeth.

In solidarity, love and rage.

We hear you, we feel you
But now you know the game.
There's no pressure, take your time
To reinforce your body and mind.
Sometimes surviving is most noble,
A selfless act, a gift to the world.
Try not to forget. There are people
Who care and want to hear your words.
Your fire is still inside of you.
It's stronger than you know.

Does the worth of bodies by society increase so
slowly and separate from ourselves
You can rise above this and forget the past
learning these lessons are sure to last
It may not change in our lifetime
But we are teaching our children
I value yours and hope you love mine.
The walls will crumble, this pain will not last.

-Group poem – unsigned // response to unknown poem

I am looking at your open hands
And I am struck by their beauty
By how absolutely flawless it can be to smash in the
teeth
Of someone holding your key...
May you use your beauty and your rage
To bring down those who would see you destroyed.

-Sarah Typhoon.

*Hugs and love. Thank you for your beautiful poems.
We read it and talked about its message and the
beauty of its form – and we were changed.*

I know it's hard to feel forgotten, alone,
But I feel that glow from within your soul
through walls, space and time
a fellow human, woman, a sister of mine
We can stick together
Know that the world is bigger
With our strength combined, united,
We can fight and win
we can bear the weight together

<3 Brandee
<3 Christian

Dollars burn and walls fall
unparalleled strength and resistance is
always born and born and born and born

And through birth they arise, together
Hand in hand, radiant and bright

The new world, here, already
within us.

- Oak

*Because wedges, doorstops and institutions
once created, they can be destroyed*

I hear your words
I feel your pain
You are not alone
We are one and the same
Our struggles are different, this much is true
but we have so much to teach

and much to learn me and you

-Group poem – unsigned // response to unknown
poem

Dear Sister,
Digging at these roots is how we grow.
our children will see the change as far as we know.
Your resilience will not be in vain
We're here to help you along the way
You will not be silenced
We will read your words aloud
We will feel your heart beat
Stay strong and proud
How ever long it take
We will stand with you

*You have friends on the outside
that love and fight for you*
<3 Raquel

I can feel the shame you speak on
The oppression experienced
they try to stunt our growth at every turn
It's up to us to build ourselves back up.
Your worth might feel low but trust that
it's high. You are not alone in this time.
You are loved. You are valued.
You are worth the fight.
No one can take that away

<3 Christian
Angi

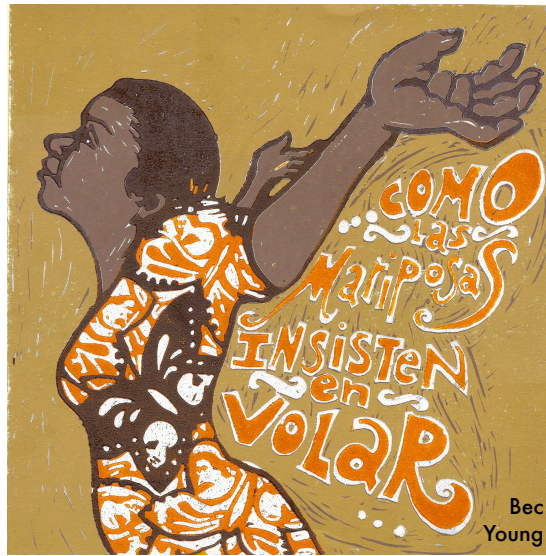
A small candle at the bottom of a well.
Shout so loud, scared to blow it out
But breathing steady
oxygen grows flame into fire
It becomes a pillar of fire rushing up
the shout echoed back

-ZR

There are people thinking of you, always. Stay strong.

“No one can make you feel inferior without your consent.”

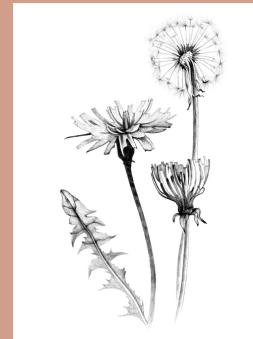
- e.roosevelt



“I will not have my life narrowed down. I will not bow down to somebody else's whim or to someone else's ignorance.”

- bell hooks

+ Poetic Odes +



Juan Morales, poet and instructor at the Colorado State University, Pueblo came to our class - this was his 4th return visit! - and led a workshop on writing odes and how they relate to building community. Odes are often thought of as tributes to something or someone, so Juan brought several tributary poems from various authors to inspire us to create writings that honor our community and ourselves. Below, we've listed some poems that Juan brought, along with certain prompts and exercises that will help you write your own tribute. After that, we include some of our own poems that we wrote during Juan's workshop.

How to Triumph Like a Girl

by Ada Limón

I like the lady horses best,
how they make it all look easy,
like running 40 miles per hour
is as fun as taking a nap, or
grass.
I like their lady horse swagger,
after winning. Ears up, girls,
ears up!

But mainly, let's be honest, I like
that they're ladies. As if this big
dangerous animal is also a part
of me,
that somewhere inside the
delicate
skin of my body, there pumps
an 8-pound female horse heart,
giant with power, heavy with
blood.

Don't you want to believe it?
Don't you want to lift my shirt
and see
the huge beating genius machine
that thinks, no, it knows,
it's going to come in first.

What do you notice about the poem "How to Triumph Like a Girl?" Write down some observations. How did it make you feel? What thoughts did you have as you read it? How does Limón speak to female empowerment? Meditate on its meaning and how this poem gives tribute to the strength of femmes and to the author herself.

Exercise:

1. Choose a number (between 5-10).
2. Think of an animal, the first one that pops into your head is fine. One that you like or don't like.
3. Describe what you admire in this animal. Limit your poem to the number of lines that you thought of in step one.

Example Poems:

The animal that best describes me is a cat. Cool and calm and just lingers around. But when threatened the claws come out and the deep growl below, to give the warning that I'm about to blow. But when the cat is not a threat or in beast mode, it can just chill and play and go and be curious and run around all crazy.

- Darci Bower

Horse

Strong body,
Free mind,
Easy loving,
Hard to define.
Beautiful energy,
Great company at any time,
Strong sound - filling my senses.
Great feeling, great experience,
great to be around.

- Claudia Jimenezcedillo

Giraffe

Tall, lengthy, reaching.
Standing above the trees,
Touching the edge of the sky

Inquisitive, looking out over all.
Touching the top,
being untouchable.

- Susan Ayre

Dog

I like that you are my best friend and so loyal. You always protect me. You listen well, we exercise together. You and I take naps together. You are always there when I cry.

- Ashleigh Wallace

the mama is never too far from keeping them from harm.

- Tonie Rosales

Owl

Mysterious and sleek
Wise, yet silent
Night warrior
Powerful predator
Graceful, yet cunning
Beautiful creature.

- Meghan McKeon



Oda al día feliz // Ode to the Happy Day
by Pablo Neruda (translated by Ilan Stavans)

Esta vez dejadme
ser feliz,
nada ha pasado a nadie,
no estoy en parte alguna,
sucede solamente
que soy feliz
por los cuatro costados
del corazón, andando,
durmiendo o escribiendo.
Qué voy a hacele, soy feliz.
Soy más innumerable
que el pasto
en las praderas,
siento la piel como un árbol rugoso
y el agua abajo,
los pájaros arriba,
el mar como un anillo
en mi cintura,
hecha de pan y piedra la tierra
el aire canta como una guitarra.

Tú a mi lado en la arena
eres arena,
tú cantas y eres canto,
el mundo
es hoy mi alma
canto y arena,
el mundo
es hoy tu boca,
dejadme
en tu boca y en la arena
ser feliz,
ser feliz porque sí, porque respiro
y porque tú respiras,
ser feliz porque toco
tu rodilla
y es como si tocara
la piel azul del cielo
y su frescura.

Hoy dejadme
a mí solo
ser feliz,
con todos o sin todos,
ser feliz
con el pasto
y la arena,

This time allow me
to be happy,
nothing has happened to anyone,
I am nowhere,
it just happens
I am happy
in the four chambers
of the heart, wandering around,
sleeping or writing.
What can I do, I'm happy.
I'm more innumerable
than the grass
in the prairies,
I feel my skin like a wrinkled tree
and water underneath,
birds above,
the sea like a notch
on my belt,
made of bread and stone of earth
the air sings like a guitar.

At my side on the sand
you're sand,
you sing and are song,
the world
is my soul today,
song and sand,
the world
is your mouth,
let me
be happy
with your mouth and with the sand,
be happy just because, because I breathe
and because you breathe,
be happy because I touch
your knee
and it's like touching
the blue skin of the sky
and its freshness.

Today let me
alone
be happy,
with or without everyone,
be happy
with the grass
and the sand,

ser feliz
con el aire y la tierra,
ser feliz,
contigo, con tu boca,
ser feliz.

be happy
with the air and the earth,
be happy,
with you, with your mouth,
be happy.

What stands out to you in the poem "Ode to the Happy day?" Make a list of the things you like about this poem. What lines in particular stand out to you? Write them down. And think about why they stand out.

In this poem, Pablo uses a lot of similes. Similes involve the comparison of one thing with another thing of a different kind, used to add emphasis or drama to the description (ex: "As brave as a lion," "Crazy like a fox," "I feel my skin like a wrinkled tree"). Find the similes in this poem.

Exercise:

1. Choose a number (between 4-10).
2. Write a poem about your version of a happy day, limiting your lines to the number you thought of in step one.
3. Try to use at least one simile.

Example Poems:

Mind is clear
Wind in my face
The beauty of earth is all I taste
The only moment is now
That's all I can see
That's all I need,
I am happy.
- Justine Murphy

More than such a happy day to
see your smiling face, with your
ocean blue eyes grinning ear to
ear. This day is like the day you
were born. I'm so proud of you
son, Isaiah, you're #1.
- Ashleigh Wallace

The sun shines on my face
and my hound dog is as
eager as a kid on Christmas
morning
to get to the rotting elk carcass
that is her bone paradise.
I'm rustling in the piñons,

harvesting resin,
my own personal black friday
shopping spree.
- colleen

My happy day is like a field of
flowers
smiling, blooming, and full of
life
There's color and fragrance and
personality everywhere
I dance with them and through
them and spin and laugh with
them
My happy day is a wild field of
flowers.
- Susan Ayres

Lleno de hermosina, de musico
y sonidos. Sonrisas que llenan
mis sentidos. Pensamientos
positivos que alegran mis
suspiros. Dias alargados en
emociones y cariño. Mi día feliz
es lo que siempre he pedido.

// Full of love, music, and
sounds. Smiles that fill my
senses. Positive thoughts that
cheer my sighs. Days
lengthened in emotions and
affection. My happy day is what
I have always asked for.

- Claudia Jimenezcedillo

My happy day is smiling and
laughing without being quitted.
A joyful day where I'm as free
as a bird and happy as an
infant playing with colorful
blocks.

My happy day is being home
with my family knowing that
there's nowhere else I'd rather
be. My happy day is just being
me, happy and carefree, easy
going with no concerns about
offending. My happy day is me
just being alive.

- Darci Bower

As the sun shines bright above
my smile shines bright because
I have no reason, just because
Like a child, just because
I am happy.

- Meghan McKeon

Warm sunshine to bathe my soul
Waves crashing on the shore
that are louder than the happy
children nearby
Ice cold gin and tonic with
lemon - not lime,

My happy day is like summer
subdued into soft shadows.

- Debb Fache

My happy day

Peaceful, sitting free, birds
chirping as the world speaks.
Blissful, my soul like the giggles
of children playing. Make-
believe sitting free, amazingly
odd how different the world
seems just outside these gates.

- Tonie Rosales

My happy day
starts with warm brewed coffee
and flavored creamer
with the sun rising warm and
bright
with the birds chirping as if they
are all singing just for me.
My happy day finds perfect in
imperfectness as kids see the
world through their eyes, as if
everything were just how it was
meant to be.

- Arian Campbell

Mermaid Song

by Kim Addonizio
for Aya at fifteen



Damp-haired from the bath, you drape yourself
upside down across the sofa, reading,
one hand idly sunk into a bowl
of crackers, goldfish with smiles stamped on.
I think they are growing gills, swimming
up the sweet air to reach you. Small girl,
my slim miracle, they multiply.
In the black hours when I lie sleepless,
near drowning, dread-heavy, your face
is the bright lure I look for, love's hook
piercing me, hauling me cleanly up.



What is this poem describing? What lines describe the love this author has for her daughter?

Juan asserts that often, verbs bring out the most important parts of a poem. Do a checklist on the verbs used in the poem (a verb is word describing an action, state, or occurrence - ex: hear, become, happen, run). What are some of the verbs used by the author Kim? Do they add substance to the poem? How might you use verbs in this way?

Exercise:

1. Pick two numbers between 3 and 10.
2. Think of someone important to you.
3. Write a two-line poem thanking that person, or saying hello to them. The first line will have the first # you thought of in step one and the second line will have the second # you thought of in step one.

Example Poems:

I am grateful for
your care. It showed me how to.
- colleen

I fell in love
The second I saw your beautiful
face.
- Meghan McKeon

Mama, thanks for teaching
me to walk, to love, to learn.
- Ashleigh Wallace

You are my heart.
You are the beat to my heart.
- Tonie Rosales

Karissa, I want to thank you for:
Always believing in me
Choosing to make your own life
path.
- Susan Ayres

You accept me completely.
Thank you for the love we have.
- Justine Murphy



Ode to Sleeping in my Clothes
by Ross Gay

And though I don't mention it
to my mother
or the doctors
with their white coats
it is, in fact,
a great source of happiness,
for me, as I don't
even remove my socks,
and will sometimes
even pull up my hood
and slide my hands deep
in my pockets
and probably moreso
than usual look as if something
bad has happened
my heart blasting a last somersault
or some artery parting
like curtains in a theater
while the cavalry of blood
comes charging through
except unlike
so many of the dead
I must be smiling

there in my denim
and cotton sarcophagus
slightly rank from the day
it is said that Shostakovich slept
with a packed suitcase beneath
his bed and it is said
that black people were snatched
from dark streets and made experiments
of and you and I
both have family whose life
savings are tucked 12 feet beneath
the Norway maple whose roots
splay like the bones in the foot of a man
who has walked to Youngstown, Ohio
from Arkansas without sleeping
or keeping his name
and it's a miracle
maybe I almost never think of
to rise like this
and simply by sliding my feet into my boots
while the water for coffee
gathers its song
be in the garden
or on the stoop
running, almost,
from nothing.

This poem is a bit more complex. Do you think you know that this is about? It is ok if not. Underline the parts that are confusing or difficult. Why won't the author let us grab onto anything?

If someone is sleeping in their clothes, what assumptions might be made about that person? What other parts of the poem give you an indication about the author's state of mind? Also, notice that this poem is actually just one long sentence. Why is it written this way?

We came up with several interpretations of this poem. We don't know if any of them are correct or not, but what we all agreed upon is that this poem seems to be depicting some kind of dream or dream-like state (or a haunting, for that matter). Because of that, the next exercise will be a dream haiku.

Exercise:

1. A haiku is a short poem that is just 3 lines. The 1st line is 5 syllables, the 2nd line is 7 syllables, and the 3rd line is 5 syllables. 5-7-5.
2. Write a haiku inspired by a dream. Maybe a dream that you regularly have, or a day dream.

Example Poems:

Who is that I see?
Someone I know, I should think
Wait, I think it's me.
- Justine Murphy

It's so real to me,
I'm really flying up there.
A dream in a dream.
- Ashleigh Wallace

Come my Love
Slip away with me
We can go away from here
Come into my dreams.
- Susan Ayre

My head is a blur
I can't seem to be still
Wake me up later.
- Meghan McKeon

I stare grey mystic blue
Chasing my breathe holding
onto nothing else
dream the day changing.
- Tonie Rosales

When her Eyes Fill with Tears

by Susan Ayres

When her blue eyes begin to fill
With the pain you put there
Her innocence flowing out from her
Your purpose becomes so clear.
Save her from that single welling tear
All you want is to reach for her
Before the tear slips over the edge
Before her feet slip over the ledge.
The questions run so deep for her.
And in the deepest depths of her beautiful eyes
Her stolen innocence screams out "Why"
And the answers are just too weak for her
And she's desperate to know that she matters
Because if that fear hits the floor she may shatter
So you cry out to God "collect this fear for her"
And you scream "this girl fucking matters"
Because she's so damned fragile.

And you want to be her strength for her.
But behind those tears and behind the pain
There's strength with the power of a freight train.
And you stand back and you're in awe of her
Because she's fragile, but she's so strong
And her eyes turn life into song
And you end up falling in love with her
Because her life song sings to you
And her pain bleeds into you
And your heart begins to beat with hers
And she wipes the tears from your eyes
And she answers all your innocent "whys?"
And God says "I brought her to catch your tears for you"

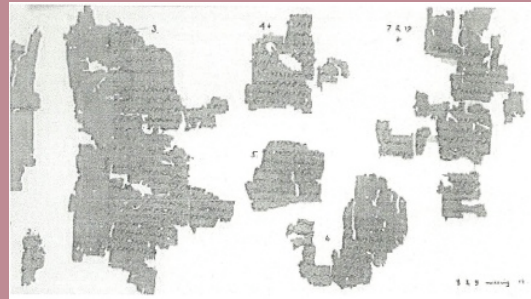
*You keep track of all my sorrows
You have collected all my tears
In your bottle
Psalm 56:8*

+ Erasure Poetry +

Sappho 620 B.C., Greece

Again love, the limb-loosener, rattles me
bittersweet,
irresistible,
a crawling beast.
(Fragment 15)

As a wind in the mountains
assaults an oak,
love shook my breast.
(Fragment 16)



"There is as much meaning in what you erase, as there is in what you leave." - Debb Fache

Danielle Holmes, writer and instructor at Colorado State University, Pueblo, attended our class and introduced us to erasure poetry, also known as blackout poetry. This is a way to "remix" existing texts and to breathe new life into written materials. Erasure poetry is created by erasing words in an existing text and using the remaining words/letters as a new poem. You can take a marker - usually a black marker - to a newspaper article, for example, and start noticing what words stand out to you. Can they make a poem? Start blacking out and redacting the text around it and try to make something new. The goal is to black out at least 50% of the original text so that you are truly creating something new. We've included some examples of erasure poetry with some questions for you to consider as you explore your own hand at this popular form of poetry!

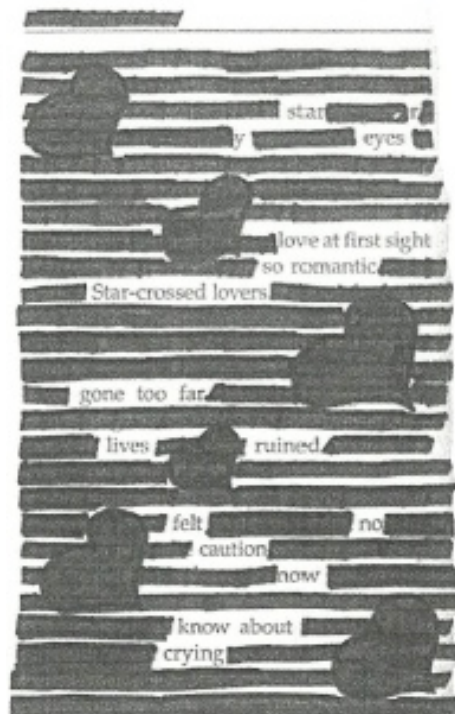
- What negative associations do you have with blood? What positive associations?
- What do you think of the phrase "raising its prices"?
- How do you interpret this poem?

- What do you think of the images?
- How does this poem begin? How does it end?
- What does it make you feel?



*"This Time
This blood
Is raising its prices"*

CNN Instagram erasure poem



*"Starry eyes
Love at first sight
So romantic
Star-crossed lovers
Gone too far
Lives ruined
Felt no caution
Now know about crying."*

Make your own rules.

Think of the text as a box full of Lego-words that you get to build something with. Circle interesting words. Decide upon things to “look for.” Let your idea run over a few pages at a time. Give it space to develop.

For some, the process is like a puzzle. There is something to be solved, a picture to be assembled out of tiny pieces. For others, the process is a meditation - a chance to cut loose, to flow, to let spontaneity be your guide.

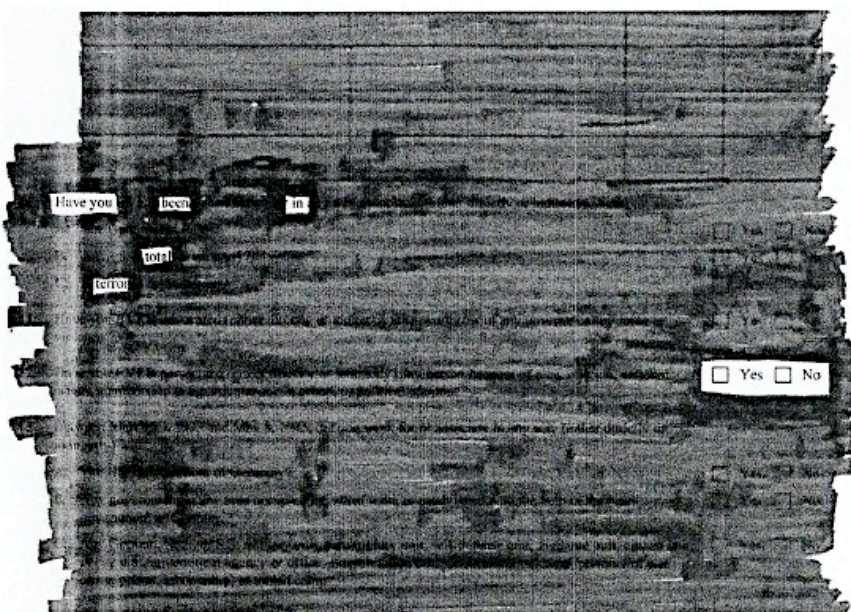
It’s a text. It’s an art piece. It’s both.

Linking the poems together can be a useful strategy. Think of a central theme, or main character. This can help you get started and give you direction as you move forward with more and more erasure poems.

Form N-400 Erasures

By Niina Pollari - Feb 23, 2017

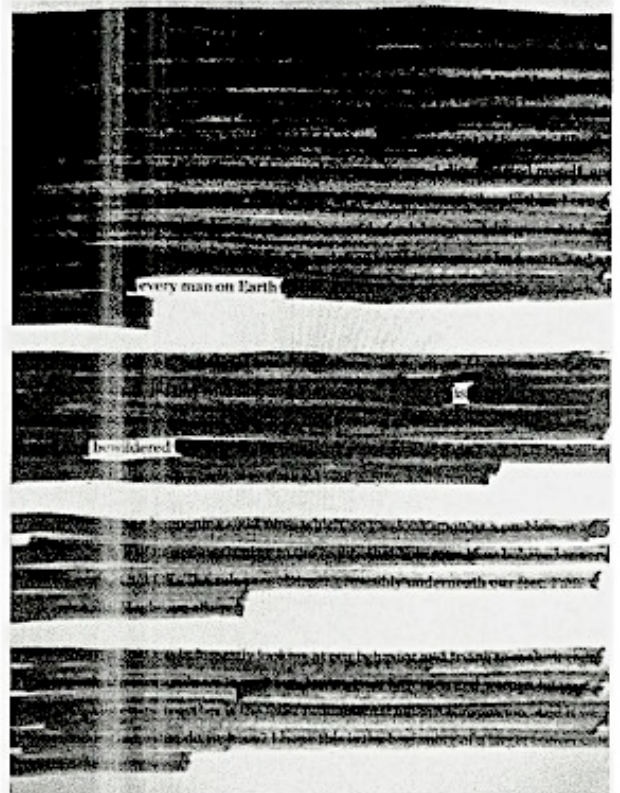
*Forms for becoming naturalized U.S. citizen



“Have you been in total terror? Yes No”

- Here the author uses a government form for those wanting to become U.S. citizens. What statement is she trying to make?
- This text uses a lot of black. How might this make the reader feel?

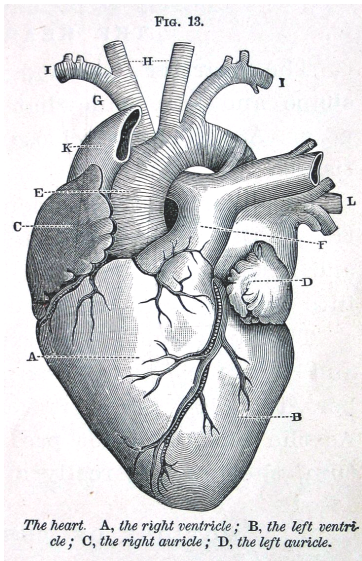
Isabel O’Hare, using Richard Dryfuss’ statement about allegations of sexual assault



“Every man on Earth is bewildered.”

- Given the current context of the #metoo movement, this poem is a strong statement of reclamation. Isabel O’Hare reuses a statement from an actor accused of sexual assault and retools it to be empowering and uplifting.
- How can erasure poetry be a political act?

We've included examples of erasure poetry that we did in class, under Danielle's guidance. After these examples, we've included the original texts that Danielle brought to our class so you can try your hand at this exercise!



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 The heart is a muscular organ in most animals, which pumps blood through the blood vessels of the circulatory system. Blood provides the body with oxygen and nutrients, as well as assists in the removal of metabolic waste. In humans, the heart is located between the lungs in the middle of the chest.
 In humans, other mammals, and birds, the heart is divided into four chambers: upper left and right atria and lower left and right ventricles. Commonly, the right atrium and ventricle are referred to together as the right heart and their left counterparts as the left heart.^[a] Fish, in contrast, have two chambers, an atrium and a ventricle, while reptiles have three chambers. In a healthy heart, blood flows one way through the heart due to heart valves, which prevent backflow. The heart is enclosed in a protective sac, the pericardium, which also contains a small amount of fluid. The wall of the heart is made up of three layers: epicardium, myocardium, and endocardium.
 The heart pumps blood with a rhythm determined by a group of pacemaker cells in the sinoatrial node and along the conduction system of the heart. Traveling through the atrioventricular node and along the conduction system of the heart. The heart receives blood low in oxygen from the systemic circulation, which enters the right atrium from the superior and inferior vena cava and passes to the right ventricle. From here it is pumped into the pulmonary circulation, through the lungs, where it receives oxygen and gives off carbon dioxide. Oxygenated blood then returns to the left atrium, passes through the left ventricle and is pumped out through the aorta to the systemic circulation, where the oxygen is used and metabolized to carbon dioxide. The heart beats at a resting rate close to 72 beats per minute. Exercise temporarily increases the rate, but lowers resting heart rate in the long term, and is good for heart health.^[b]

Arian Campbell

Where the Wild Things Are by Maurice Sendak

The night wore his wolf suit and made mischief of one kind and another his mother called him "WILD THING!" and Max said "I'LL EAT YOU UP!" so he was sent to bed without eating anything. That very night in Max's room a forest grew and grew and grew until his ceiling hung with vines and the walls became the world all around and an ocean tumbled by with a private boat for Max and he sailed off through night and day and in and out of weeks and almost over a year to where the wild things are. And when he came to the place where the wild things are they roared their terrible roars and gnashed their terrible teeth and rolled their terrible eyes and showed their terrible claws till Max said "BE STILL!" and tamed them with the magic trick of staring into all their yellow eyes without blinking once and they were frightened and called him the most wild thing of all and made him king of all wild things. "And now," cried Max, "let the wild rumpus start!" "Now stop!" Max said and sent the wild things off to bed without their supper. And Max the king of all wild things was lonely and wanted to be where someone loved him best of all. Then all around from far away across the world he smelled good things to eat so he gave up being king of where the wild things are. But the wild things cried, "Oh please don't go we'll eat you up-we love you so!" And Max said, "No!" The wild things roared their terrible roars and gnashed their terrible teeth and rolled their terrible eyes and showed their terrible claws but Max stepped into his private boat and waved good-bye and sailed back over a year and in and out of weeks and through a day and into the night of his very own room where he found his supper waiting for him and it was still hot.



Ashleigh Wallace

From The Onion (fake newspaper)

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Debb Fache

Heart

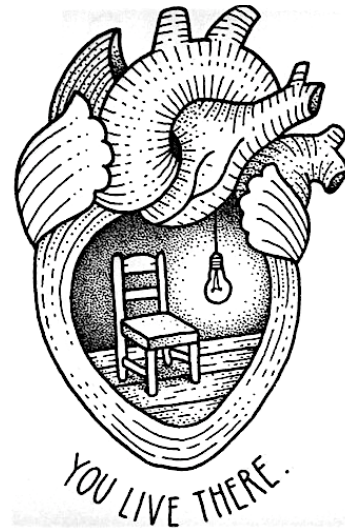
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Justine Murphy

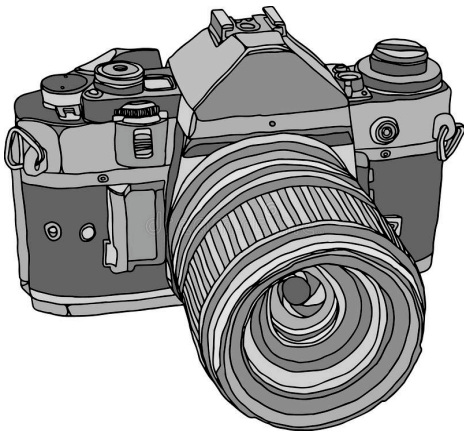
"How to Take a Flattering Photo" from *Elle Magazine*

Smile like you mean it.

"This is a hard one, and everyone will have a different kind of smile that works best for them, but here are a few tips: The best smile is always an authentic one, so think of something or someone who makes you smile when posing for a photo. One time I was shooting an actor and I shared a photo of my newborn son with him, and the smile I captured as he was looking at a picture of my son on the computer screen was just perfect. True smiles come from within—so, happy thoughts! If you need to fake a smile, try pushing your tongue against the top front of your mouth. This will help lift your cheeks and make your smile feel real. Finally, when all else fails, look at the pictures of yourself where you like your smile and learn to replicate that."

Go towards the light.

"The more light, the better. Smart phones and point and shoot cameras are getting better, but low light is still their weakness. Wherever you can find some light—whether it's a window, a doorway, a candle, or a bathroom mirror—go towards it and take the picture there. This is one case where you definitely want to follow the light. Also, keep that light in front of you and not to the side, which will result in unfortunate shadows on your face."



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Top ESPN Football Analyst Quits, Disturbed By Brain Injuries In The Sport

"I just don't think the game is safe for the brain."

A top football color analyst, who captained a college football championship team and spent five seasons in the NFL, quit his job because he couldn't stand helping sell a sport in which numerous players, from youngsters to grown men, suffer brain injuries.

After 20 years on the job, Ed Cunningham, 48, quit his job as the college football color analyst for ABC and ESPN back in April. He said:

I take full ownership of my alignment with the sport. I can just no longer be in that cheerleader's spot. In its current state, there are some real dangers: broken limbs, wear and tear. But the real crux of this is that I just don't think the game is safe for the brain. To me, it's unacceptable.

Cunningham started playing football as a high school freshman, then captained the University of Washington's 1991 national championship team before playing in the NFL for the Phoenix (now Arizona) Cardinals and Seattle Seahawks. Then it was on to broadcasting; for most of the last ten years he has joined play-by-play announcer Mike Patrick for Saturday afternoon games.

Cunningham's stance against reckless hits and irresponsible coaching decisions that endangered athletes elicited condemnation from fans, coaches and administrators, but he remained adamant. Ten years ago, he was quoted in *The New York Times* in an article about college players returning to games after sustaining concussions.

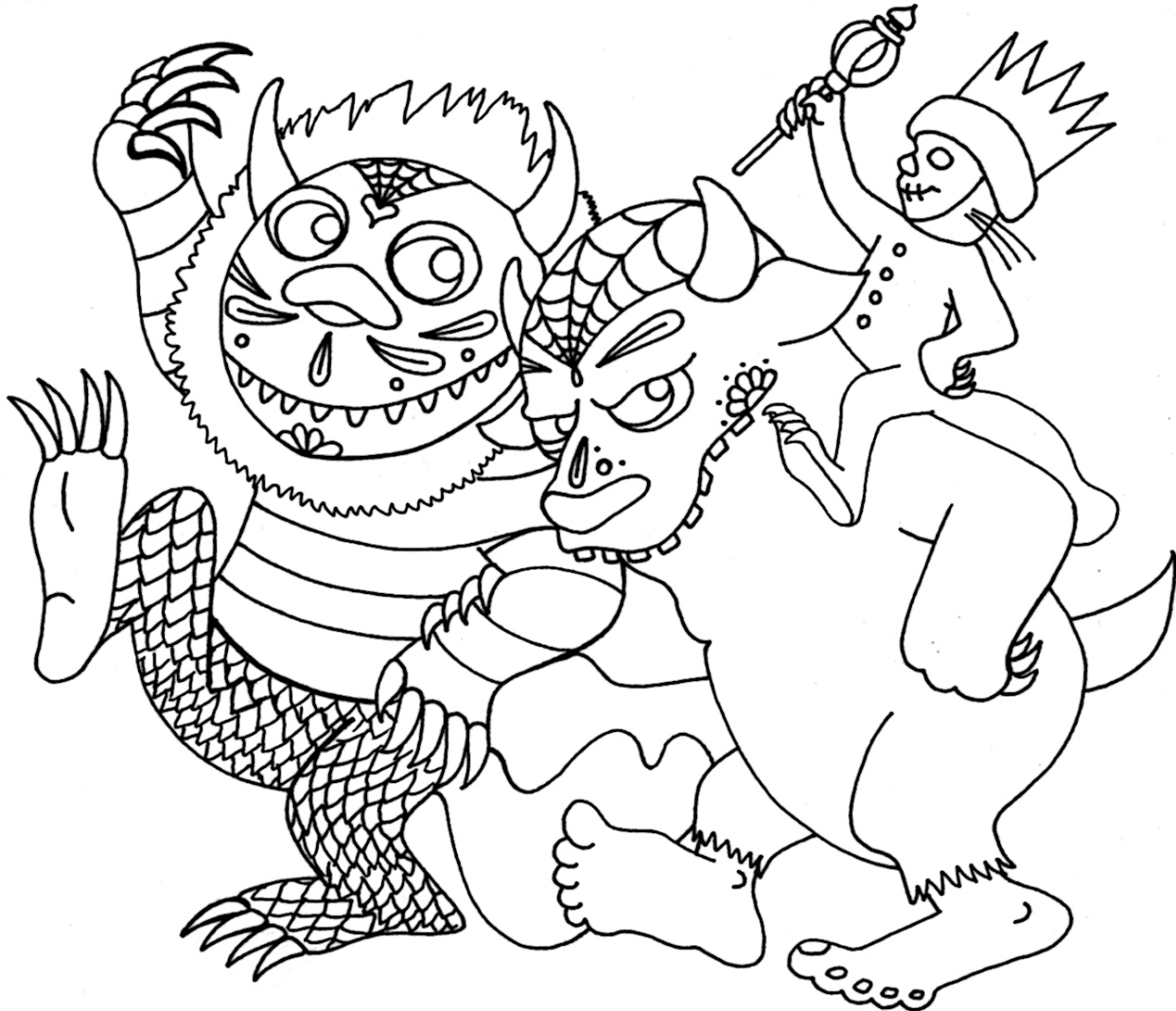
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Where the Wild Things Are coloring page:



+ Collaborative Poetry Writing +



Danielle Holmes also facilitated a collaborative poetry writing exercise, using a line from our erasure poetry activity.

To do this, gather 2-5 friends. Each of you should do at least one erasure poem. Then, every person should have their own sheet of paper and select just one line from their erased poem. Write down the line at the top of the paper. Then, pass to the right.

Once you've received a piece of paper with one line written on it, now just add one line to it. Note, you won't be needing to borrow any more lines from the erased poems. This is the part where you each should start trying to flow the poem and tapping into your creative powers to see where it goes!

After you've added one line to it, keep passing to the right. In the case of having just 2 people, you can pass back and forth until you've decided that the poem is complete. Otherwise, this exercise should go around the entire circle until done. Voila! Congratulations on your new collaborative poems!

We've included ours to help inspire you:

In humans, the heart is divided
into pieces,
One piece from each time it has
been broken
From past loves, past hurt
But they scar, heal, the tissue
raised as a reminder
For every love lost, love that
lingered too long,
that always will be love
and always will be pain
And always will be mingled
together
For a taste of the bittersweet
But still can't let go of that love
thing.

I can't remember the last time
I sat down
Time no longer stands still
We race for a moment of
clarity
We race to stand still
When all is quiet the dust
motes linger in the sun
But I can't see them in motion
Because I'm so sad.
Yet I can't stop the beating of
my heart or the shuffle of my
feet
Through the dust that lingers
still
My heart won't skip a beat.

Smile hard, authentic, true, real,
light.
Beauty and hope, love shining
through,
Sun on your skin, the warmth of
childhood's lakeside.
Boats sail by, reminding you of
life's slow journey
Full of possibilities.
Deep with meaning and
adventure
Memories ripple in the tide
As you keep your eyes above
Know that life is as beautiful as
the beauty you have within.

Rolled eyes and private goodbyes,
into the night.
To remember that time
Where the fire burned bright and hot
Inside the sigh, you walked away.
Please stay.
Don't you know the love within me
You must know.
You need to know.
Yet you turn and walk away.
I watch your back shrink out of view.
I remember.

King of all things, not afraid of anything.
Powerful words to say
Fear is limitless, fear is powerful
Yet power too, is frightening -
the things of which we're capable.
Thrones built on sinkholes, loyalty is fleeting
and friendship is lovely. And enemies are the only
thing you can count on
To be always in your face.

Forget
nothing or no one, always remember
Time is important, recall.
Beautiful days with family
The joys of waking up in the morning
This is the moment to live.
This is the moment to remember
The perfect cup of coffee, quietly
looking out the kitchen window
Grateful for these times, in anticipation of mornings
to come.

Wall of the heart is made up of rhythm
Pounding out beats,
Playing its own drum
Rushing on its way
Bringing life to its beholder
Life full of uncertainty
Beats full of music

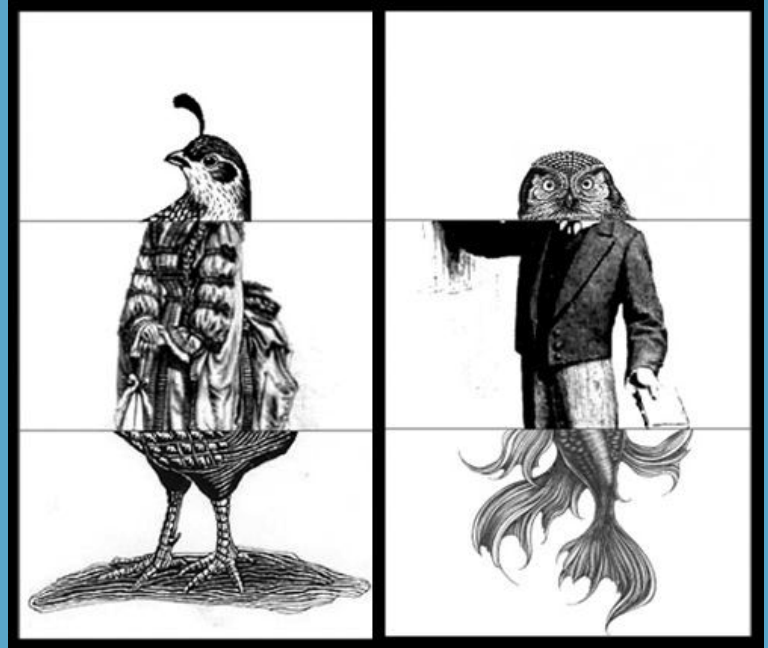
They sound like living.
We dance like no one is watching, we dance for
ourselves.
We live for the equality.

Try pushing against the top, it will make you feel
real.
The others will follow, in the search for authenticity.
They will look for simplicity.
But they will know the truth
It wasn't easy or simple at all,
It was within themselves all along
Why couldn't this have been known
That all this time I've actually known
What's really there
Was really there all along. Known.

Follow not unfortunate shadows,
yet be the light for others.
Don't be afraid to take the long road.
It may be narrow,
but your light will guide you
Into broad horizons so very brightly full of fortune.
And in the end, the light is
only possible with the darkness.
We embrace both parts, moving with grace.
Dancing and loving freely,
Sharing light.

Jumbled pieces packed away for future.
Unthinking.
These small fragments come in handy sometimes
Tumbling in my pocket, leaving them behind on
empty seats.
With happy smiles
and deep warm thoughts
Oh, what will they think?
I lost my marbles, somewhere
and still seem as happy as can be
I was lost, now I'm found.
I once was lost, now I'm found.

+ Exquisite Corpse +



Exquisite corpse, aka **exquisite cadaver** (from the French term *cadavre exquis*),

is a method of assembling a collection of words or images from two or more contributors. The old parlor game is commonly attributed to the surrealists, a cultural movement that began in the 1920s that inspired artwork and writings depicting illogical and abstract works. Exquisite corpse is meant to inspire group play, whereby each person takes turns adding onto each other's drawings, resulting in fantastic composite figures. The game involves elements of unpredictability, chance, unseen elements, and collaboration - all in service of disruption and fun.

To play, you'll need a group of 3, three pieces of paper, and writing instruments. Fold each piece of paper into thirds and make sure all 3 participants get the folded piece of paper. Each participant will take the top 1/3 of the page and draw a head (animal or human). Feel free to make this as fun or bizarre as you wish! Make sure that you draw the neck down to the middle 1/3 of the page so that the 2nd player will know how to connect the body to the head. Fold the top 1/3 of the page behind and make sure everyone passes the paper clockwise with just the middle 1/3 of the page showing.

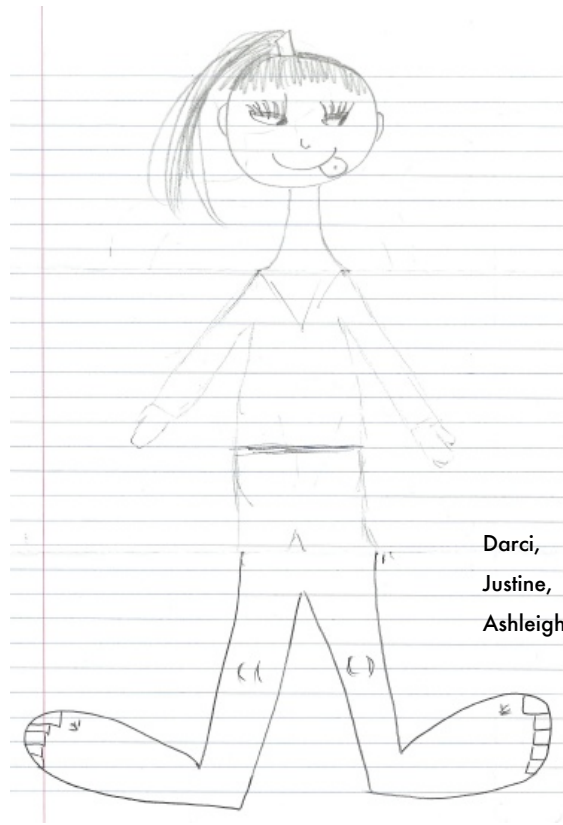
Each player should not look at the head that was drawn and just freely draw a torso. Again, make this as bizarre as you wish! Make sure you draw lines to the bottom 1/3 of the page so that the player to your right will know how to connect the legs. Fold the middle 1/3 behind and make sure you pass the paper clockwise with just the bottom 1/3 of the page showing.

Each player should not look at the head or the torso and just freely draw legs (or whatever, really!). Once everyone has drawn a head, torso, and legs, open the page to reveal the new creature you've all just created!

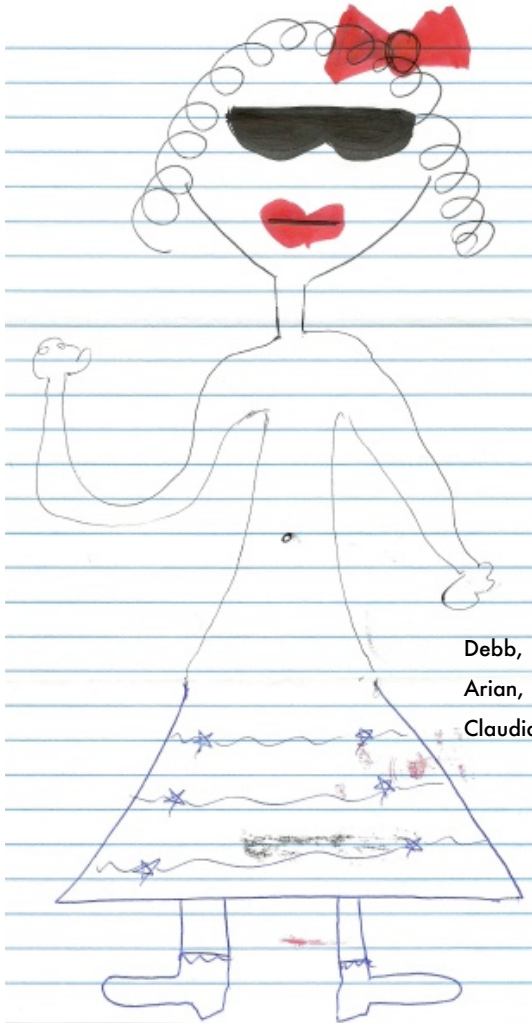
We've included a few of our own for you to give you an idea of what a finished cadaver might look like!



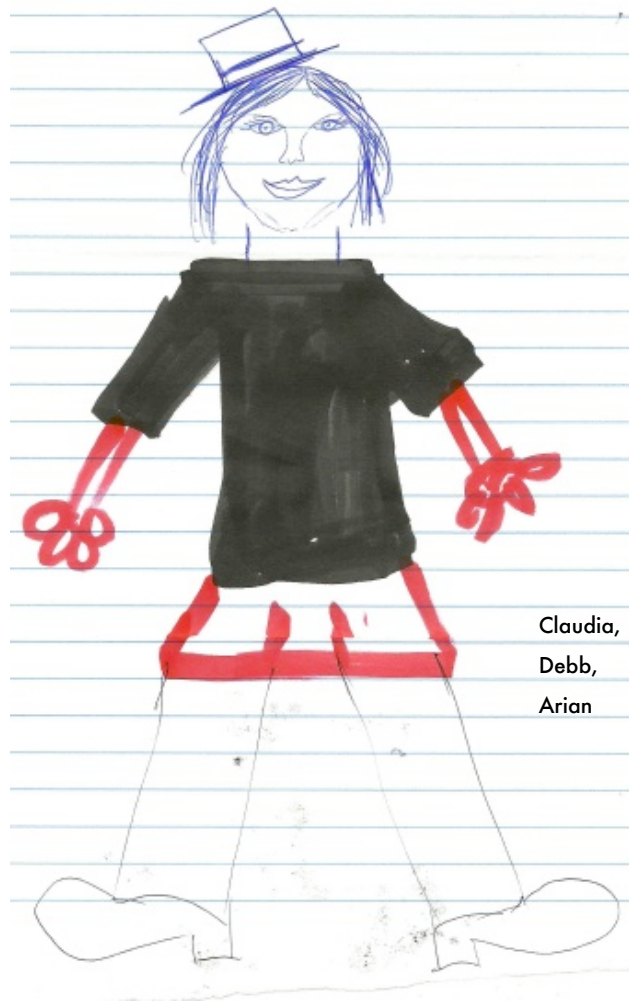
Ashleigh,
Darci,
Justine



Darci,
Justine,
Ashleigh



Debb,
Arian,
Claudia



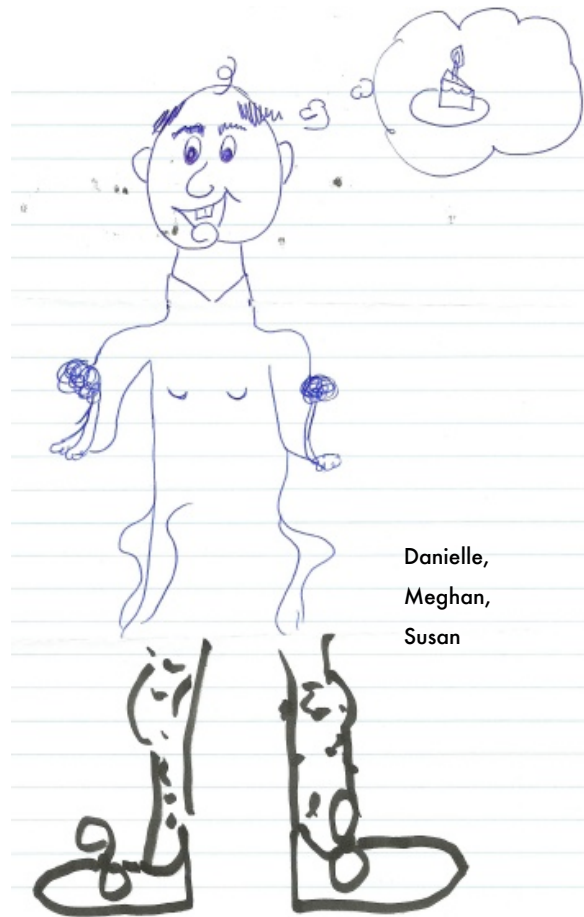
Claudia,
Debb,
Arian



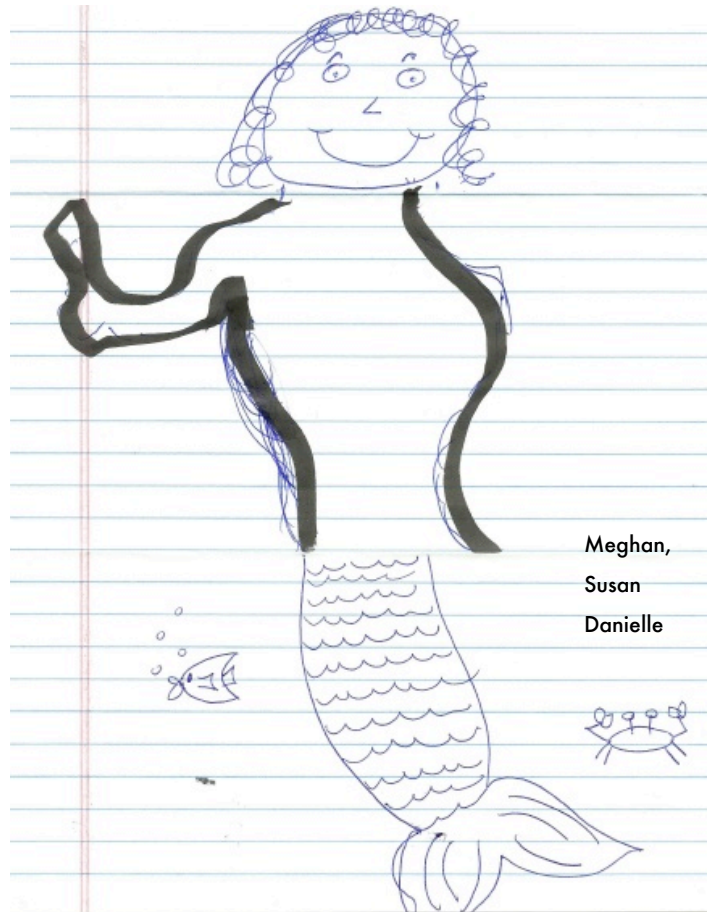
Arian,
Claudia,
Debb



Susan,
Meghan,
Danielle



Danielle,
Meghan,
Susan



Meghan,
Susan
Danielle

A black and white ink drawing of a cathedral interior. The architecture is characterized by sweeping, curved lines and dense hatching, creating a sense of depth and shadow. In the foreground, a person is kneeling on a patterned floor, their head bowed in prayer. The person's hair and clothing are rendered with fine, detailed lines. The overall style is expressive and somewhat abstract, focusing on light and shadow through the use of hatching and cross-hatching.

LOVE, LET ME TELL YOU
TOUCH IS A PRAYER.

AND WHEN THE
CATHEDRAL

OF MY BODY
ECHOES IT

BACK, YOU
WILL

LISTEN
TO
IT