

# AUTHORING YOUR FUTURE 1.0

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Authoring Your Future 1.0 is a preliminary work and sample of a larger forthcoming collection of teaching tools and techniques practiced by Anthem Salgado

## INTRODUCTION

Often times, youth's perspectives of themselves and of the world they live in are shaped passively - by media, peers, neighborhood conditions, parents, etc. In this kit, teachers can learn to give the beginnings of lifelong tools to their students that will help them take back the power to direct their personal narratives.

This kit will focus on writing prompts for educators who wish to offer literary instruction to students with limited creative writing experience - high school and up. Included are writing exercises, all keeping with the mission to empower young people towards self-determination via the word. These lessons each can be expanded in a typical class setting to ninety or so minutes.

The following lessons are by no means an exact science. Just as an actor breathes life into text, you are to "perform" these lessons, make specific adjustments for the climate and pace of your class, and engage your students with your own enthusiasm and energy.

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## 1. Finding Poetry, a found poetry intro

**Rationale:** Communication is an essential skill. Students may articulate thoughts and feelings at different levels. This lesson is intended to help demystify language in general and creative writing in particular. Through the use of found language, students will see that they should never be at a loss for words, at least for the written word as demonstrated in this plan. They will effortlessly find ways to describe themselves, their surroundings, and countless other aspects of their daily lives. The value of these teachings will be evident in the abilities of young people to actively identify themselves rather than be labeled by others and to have access to modes of expression that may aid in coping with personal stresses.

### Learning Outcomes/Goals:

Students will:

- learn the form of found poem.
- define basic poetic structure and vocabulary (Found Poem, line, fragment, verbatim).
- personally identify with texts.

- work in an ensemble fashion.

### Lesson Objectives/Performance Indicators:

Students will:

- organize language ideas according to given themes.

### Materials and Resources:

- Any appropriate collection of books, magazines, and/or newspapers, ranging from cookbooks and history books to the daily paper (sans any questionable content like the sex column) and Time magazine; The more atypical the better! For example, math books and science books too.
- Dry-erase or chalk board and matching writing utensils for you, the teacher.
- Any loose leaf or notebook paper and writing utensils for your students.
- Large format paper with tape or large format post-it sheets, and markers.

### Lesson Development/Demonstration/Explanation:

1. Students will be given a selection of texts to sift through.
2. You will ask the class what a fragment or fragmented sentence is. Guide and/or remind the class of the definition of a fragmented sentence. You should open a book, select a sentence at random to read out loud, focus on the part of the sentence that you might pick, and read that section out loud.
3. The criteria: Students are encouraged to follow the music of the words and pick phrases that simply sound good and/or catch their attention.
4. The students will select and make a list of fifteen fragments, typically more than one word but no more than five or so. Each fragment will count as one line of poetry each.
5. You will announce a time "limit" or more accurately, a time goal; for instance, 15 minutes. This is not an inflexible *time's up*. Rather it is meant to help your students bypass their cerebral self, the part of the mind that edits, questions, doubts, and criticizes. Give your students time checks: 10 minutes, 5 minutes, 3 minutes, for example. Check in with your class as the clock winds down. Ask who's finished and who may need more time. Depending on their pace, you should allow extensions of a few minutes but not much more than 5 minutes or so. This will ensure that everyone finishes, that everyone succeeds.
6. You may want to do this exercise too to demonstrate that you're game.
7. Students are encouraged to share their newly written Found Poems by reading out loud, and giving obvious short pauses after each line. [While I am no psychologist, and neither are you, it is interesting to note how these poems can sometimes be like Rorschach inkblots, giving a glimpse at your students' inner worlds at that particular time.]

8. As your students read out loud, you may read quietly alongside. And you should practice actively observing how the language connects: how themes emerge, how it may relate to another artist or art form, how the words may rhyme or be alliterative, how the senses are engaged - how some may be visual or more auditory.
9. You will share your observations briefly with the class. And you may ask others to share their observations. These should be more factual rather than *value* statements, e.g. "I like it" or "I don't like it" or "That's great". If you do "like it", you should like that your students are doing well in the exercise - finding poetry, completing the assignment, sharing their poems. If you "don't like it", keep it to yourself and consider that you may be in the wrong line of work.
10. As a variation, now that the students are getting a better idea of the form, you will give the next part of this exercise. Have your students create a six-line poem from their new collection of fifteen lines. No words should be altered or combined in new ways. Each line should be re-written as it was copied originally, that is, verbatim. They will begin by selecting one line that will serve as a title. Another that will be the first line of the poem and so on. Set a time goal.
11. Again, share.
12. The lesson will close with ensemble poetry. Break the class up into teams of four or so. Existing groups of friends may work together. Or you may want to randomize the class by having them count off (all 1's become a group, 2's, 3's, and so on). What works for your class?
13. Now, each group will be given large sheets of paper, one each, and markers. Do the Finding Poetry exercise again. This time, with an assigned theme or topic. Perhaps a single word or a question. Maybe something related to personal empowerment or something related to an already existing class topic, e.g. Who am I? What is home? The possible subjects are numerous.
14. As a collective, students will offer to their team a fragment from their original fifteen item list to act as a title to the class poem. This will be followed with other student suggestions for the first, second, and remaining lines of the poem. This collection will be written neatly by the group or by one person from the group with marker(s) on the large format paper. Set a time goal. Your students will post these on the wall upon completion and will also read them nice and loud.

#### Assessment of the Lesson:

- Did your students understand your instructions?
- Did they learn the necessary vocabulary words and others: found poem or found poetry, line, fragment, verbatim?
- Were your students excited to observe threads in the seemingly disconnected pieces of text?
- Did the students feel comfortable sharing their found poems?
- Did they work well in their respective teams?