

Found Poetry: Can Prose become Poetry?

Poetry is made up of words, as are prose. If you rearrange the words from prose so that they gain a stronger sense of rhythm, they become poetry.

What Is Found Poetry?

“In its purest form, found poetry is poetry we find all around us”- Susan Musgrave, WiER poet

A found poem is one in which the poet uses or “finds” words from another source. The poet then rearranges the words into a poem. He or she can repeat words and cut out words and phrases. Some people say that the poet can add his or her own words to the poem, but others believe that in doing so it is no longer strictly a “found poem” because those new words were not “found.”

The most important part of a found poem is a little line at the top of the page, which explains that this piece is a found poem and cites the original source.

Citing Your Source:

Citing your source at the beginning of your poem is what keeps a found poem from becoming plagiarism.

When you admit to using other peoples' words for a found poem, you are not saying that you are not creative. You are saying that you are inspired.

Where Can You “Find” a Poem?

Originally found poems were made only from non-literary sources, but now you can find a poem anywhere. Some examples include:

- Newspapers
- Articles
- Advertisements
- Street Signs
- Novels
- Essays
- Speeches
- Political material
- Encyclopedias

Suggestion: Listen to Susan Musgrave read a found poem on the WiER podcast (approximately 18 minutes into the podcast).

Exercise A (group activity): Finding Poetry in the News

With a small group of other students, flip through the newspaper your teacher has provided. Pick one article to work on together, and create a found poem. Remember to cite your source (author, article, and newspaper) at the top of your poem.

Exercise B (group activity): Found Poetry Scavenger Hunt

With your small group, “find” (create from other sources) three poems from the following categories. Remember to cite each of your sources. You may need to leave your classroom to find some of these sources.

- School Signs/ Notices
- Classroom posters
- Novel or short story
- Advertisement
- School newspaper
- Textbook
- Handouts from another class

Exercise C (individual activity): Find a Poem from Your Reading

Create a found poem from any one of the prose-texts (short stories, novels, or essays) you have studied so far in this class. Remember to cite your source.