



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2014 Volume II: Playing with Poems: Rules, Tools, and Games

Tearing Poetry Apart: A Short History of How Collage, Concrete, and Conceptual Poems Are Made

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Here is a short history of Conceptual poetry and 7 activities for learning how to make visual Dadaist cut-up poems, typography poems, visual collages with words, redaction poems, concrete constructivist poems and found poems, culminating in the production of a multi-media altered work of literature. Deeper than any activities, however is the goal of understanding the conceptual framework for poetry of this type, and cultivating critical thinking skills: *How could this text be altered to find new meaning(s)? How and why have artists and poets employed a variety of physical techniques to express their sense of language and its possibilities?* For teachers, I will discuss the theory behind using these multiple modalities to assist students in learning the joy of class work. Ultimately, students will see how the "Conceptual" work being done over a wide span of history synthesizes art, poetry, and even philosophical theory. Participants in this unit, whether located in a Poetry workshop, English class, Philosophy, or Art and Design seminar, will find themselves entering the contemporary moment where these separate fields pursue a common thread of inquiry. Ultimately, this is a unit about how to *think*, as much as one about how to *do*.

(Developed for Poetry elective, grades 10-12; recommended for English and Art, grades K-12)

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