

Blackout Poetry

Write your own High Holy Day poem using the text of Psalm 27 or, if you prefer, using any piece of paper, such as a page torn from an old book or newspaper. The words for your blackout poem are already written on the page of text; it's up to you to bring new meaning and life to these words. Creating a blackout poem involves 7 steps that are all about deconstruction and reconstruction. When you're finished with your poem, you can use it in your private prayers, read it as an intention, or share it with friends.

Step 1: Scan the page of Psalm 27 first before reading it completely. Keep an eye out for an anchor word as you scan. An anchor word is one word on the page that stands out to you because it is packed and loaded with meaning and significance. Starting with an anchor word is important because it helps you to imagine possible themes and topics for your poem.

Step 2: Write the anchor word at the top of the page.

Step 3: Now read the page of text in its entirety. Use a pencil to lightly circle any words that connect to the anchor word and resonate with you. Resonant words might be expressive or evocative, but for whatever reason, these are the words on the page that stick with you. Avoid circling more than three words in a row. This is the step of deconstruction.

Step 4: List all of the circled words on a separate piece of paper. List the words in the order that they appear on the page of text from top to bottom, left to right. The words you use for the final poem will remain in this order.

Step 5: Select words, without changing their order on the list, and piece them together to create the lines of a poem. You can eliminate parts of words, especially any endings, if it helps to keep the meaning of the poem clear. Try different possibilities before selecting the lines for your final poem. If you are stuck during this step, return to the original page of Psalm 27 to look for a word or words to add to your poem. Take your time on this step of reconstruction.

Step 6: Return to the page of Psalm 27 and circle only the words you selected for the final poem. Remember to erase the circles around any words you will not be using.

Step 7: Outline the circled words clearly, and add illustrations or a design to the page that connects to your poem. "Black out" the rest of the text with markers or paint pens to complete your design. Be careful not to draw over the circled words you selected for your final poem!

For David: Adonai is my light and my help. Whom should I fear? Adonai is the stronghold of my life. Whom should I dread? When evildoers draw near me to devour my flesh—it is they, my foes and my enemies—who stumble and fall. Though an army is encamped against me, my heart shall not fear. Though war is roused against me, still I am confident. One thing I ask of Adonai—it is this that I seek—to live in the house of the Adonai all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Adonai, to live in God's palace. God hides me in shelter on the day of evil. God protects me in the divine tent, raises me up high on a rock. Now my head is high over my enemies around me. Let me offer sacrifices in God's tent with shouts of joy, singing and chanting a hymn to Adonai. Hear, O God, my voice when I call. Grant me grace and answer me. Of You my heart says: "Seek My face!" Your face, Adonai, I do seek. Do not hide Your face from me, do not turn aside your servant in anger. You are my help. Do not abandon me, do not forsake me, O God of my rescue. Though my father and mother abandoned me, Adonai will take me in. Teach me Your way, O God, and lead me on a level path because of my enemies. Do not subject me to the will of my foes, for false witnesses and unjust accusers have appeared against me. If I trust to see God's goodness in the land of living. Hope in God! Let your heart be strong and of good courage, and hope in God!

