

Found Poem—for *The Devil's Arithmetic*

By Jane Yolen

Purpose of the strategy: Gives students a chance to look closely at the richness of ordinary prose all around them. Poetry is hidden in the things that are said and written. This can lead be used in a poetry unit, or in a unit on this novel to enrich the writing experience.

Supplies Needed: Copies of handout, scissors, glue sticks

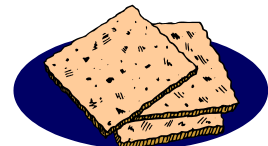
Directions:

1. Take the prose passage found below and make copies of it for the class. Use large lettering and double-space the passage.
2. Have students cut out 40-60 of the words that they like, tossing the rest. They may add two words of their own to their word pile if they desire.
3. Students should arrange these words into a poem of their own creation, making only punctuation and small grammar changes. Have them paste the words down on a new page to create the poem. Students may type the final poem if they desire. Give them an entire class period to work on the assignment and allow them to finish at home.
4. The next day in class, have students share their poetry.

Passage: (from page 121)

Hannah slipped uneasily into sleep, with the sounds of seventy women around her. Some of them were noisy sleepers, punctuating their dreams with snores. One or two cried out sharply in their sleep. And one woman wept throughout the night, low horrible sobs that rose in pitch until someone got up and comforted her. Then she would begin her sobbing again, slowly gathering volume and strength. Hannah's dreams were filled with the sobs, but in the dreams they were cries of joy. She dreamed she was in a schoolyard where girls in blue dresses and blue pants with brightly colored sweaters hooked arms and laughed, shutting her out from their group. When she woke, she was crying. Her upper arms, which had served as her pillow, were wet. The sweater she had used for a blanket had slipped to the floor. She could not remember the dream.

Assessment: Check to see if each student has completed the poem, with the appropriate amount of words from the text.





Found Poem—an example

The sounds of sleep rose uneasily into the night
One woman began to remember dreams and snores,
a pitch gathering volume, noisy
Some blue-colored blankets with pillows around the floor--
her cries could not be of joy.
She wept the sleeper's sobs.

