

## Found Poetry Exercises

Simone Muench offers some great found poetry writing exercises in a reader's guide that you can find a link to in the blurb on her author page at Sarabande Books:

<http://www.sarabandebooks.org/all-titles/wolf-centos-simone-muench>

### The Angel of the Library Exercise

This is a great exercise that will be useful once libraries are open once more post-COVID-19. I first had the idea when I heard the writer Peter Blegvad talking about the “angel of the library” which guides your hand to the book that you didn't know you wanted. That's the joy of in person libraries.

#### *Writing Preparation*

Ask your students to visit your local library and study the books on the shelves. They can explore any section of the library except for literature or poetry. They could investigate sections like travel and geography, history, religion, sociology, self-help, cookery etc.

During their exploration, they have to let the library angel guide their hand to a book in one of these sections. Then they must take it to one side and do the following:

Ask them to add the three numbers in their birth date i.e. the day, the month and the last two digits in the year, and whatever number it adds up to, turn to that page in the book. They must write out the page in their notebook and take it home.

#### *Writing Exercise*

Once at home, they should circle six interesting words that come up on the page they copied out. These will be the basis of a sestina. The sestina uses a complex pattern of word repetition at the end of lines. This pattern employs six-line stanzas with six repeated end words and a tercet for the envoi. The title should derive from the found text, and they should try to work as much of the found text into the poem as possible.

Sestet 1. ABCDEF

Sestet 2. FAEBDC

Sestet 3. CFDABE

Sestet 4. ECBFAD

Sestet 5. DEACFB

Sestet 6. BDFECA

Sestet 7. (envoi) ECA or ACE

The subject matter of the poem will be defined by the words that they have chosen, but the trick is to make those words work for them and what they want to say, For further inspiration, see W.H. Auden's 'Paysage Moralisé': <http://homes.chass.utoronto.ca/~ian/paysage.html>

#### Diagram SESTINA FORM

\_\_\_\_\_ (WORD A)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (WORD B)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (WORD C)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (WORD D)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (WORD E)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (WORD F)

\_\_\_\_\_ (WORD F)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (WORD A)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (WORD E)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (WORD B)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (WORD D)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (WORD C)

\_\_\_\_\_ (WORD C)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (WORD F)

\_\_\_\_\_ (WORD D)

\_\_\_\_\_ (WORD A)

\_\_\_\_\_ (WORD B)

\_\_\_\_\_ (WORD E)

\_\_\_\_\_ (WORD E)

\_\_\_\_\_ (WORD C)

\_\_\_\_\_ (WORD B)

\_\_\_\_\_ (WORD F)

\_\_\_\_\_ (WORD A)

\_\_\_\_\_ (WORD D)

\_\_\_\_\_ (WORD D)

\_\_\_\_\_ (WORD E)

\_\_\_\_\_ (WORD A)

\_\_\_\_\_ (WORD C)

\_\_\_\_\_ (WORD F)

\_\_\_\_\_ (WORD B)

\_\_\_\_\_ (WORD B)

\_\_\_\_\_ (WORD D)

\_\_\_\_\_ (WORD F)

\_\_\_\_\_ (WORD E)

\_\_\_\_\_ (WORD C)

\_\_\_\_\_ (WORD A)

\_\_\_\_\_ (WORD B) \_\_\_\_\_ (WORD E)

\_\_\_\_\_ (WORD D) \_\_\_\_\_ (WORD C)

\_\_\_\_\_ (WORD F) \_\_\_\_\_ (WORD A)

## FOUND POEMS by Zoë Brigley

**The Secret**

A peculiar symptom in those poisoned by Belladonna is the complete loss of voice.  
— Medical Dictionary

Dyma'r Wyddfa a'i chriw; dyma lymder, a moelni'r tir.  
They said: *Why do you want to go to that place? There is nothing to see.* And I said: *But I like its name. It means "snow" and "death". It has something to do with the colours of red and green.* So,

they were talking about the war, the table still uncleared  
in front of them. Centuries of hate divide the Severn channel  
from the Welsh. Far away, dark before the shining exit gates,  
some place was waiting, its features unrecognizable.

I was born in the place on a slope few see that falls westwardly  
like the feel of a pulse in the dark when I stay up all night.  
Its name – how impossible! A piece of grass on the tongue  
kidneys slipped from silk or striding the night for speckled eggs.

But me your work is not the best for—nor your love the best,  
nor able to commend the kind of work for love's sake.  
I am a settler East of the River, but back I have come  
wintering in a dark without window at the heart of the house.

Brigley, Zoe. 2011. 'Unravelling the Title Poem of *The Secret*.' *The Midnight Heart*, January 11.  
<[https://blogs.warwick.ac.uk/zoebripley/entry/unravelling\\_the\\_title](https://blogs.warwick.ac.uk/zoebripley/entry/unravelling_the_title)>.

**Poem for Emily Doe**

The next thing  
she remembers, she is on a gurney  
in a hallway. She has dried blood  
and bandages on the backs  
of her hands and elbow. She thinks,  
maybe I have fallen. She is very  
calm. She signs  
the papers. Three nurses  
prise flora and fauna  
from her hair. Pine needles scratch  
the back of her neck. She  
shuffles from room to room  
with a blanket wrapped  
around, needles trailing  
behind: she leaves a little pile  
in every room she sits in—

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