

City Scattered & Source Text

Age Group: undergraduate, graduate, community audience

Materials: “City Scattered”, Tyler Mills, Writing Materials, Source text (\*\*see prework)

Time: 45 - 60 minutes

Medium: in person or virtual

**Lesson Objectives:** Through reading, writing, and discussion students will have the opportunity to learn how source texts, and history can be used as a source of inspiration and propel the world of poems into realms.

Prework: This lesson will work best if students come in having read the chapbook, and bringing in a source text: a *Salaryed Masses* used in “Scattered City”, nonfiction works best. It may be helpful to tell students to bring in something they are reading from another one of their classes.

Note for instructors: the opening section of the lesson features a lecture component with links to more information and examples.

**The Lesson**

Lecture

Defining the terms

*Source Text:* a text (sometimes oral) from which information or ideas are derived.

*Found Poetry/Borrowed Language:* “Take existing texts and refashion them, reorder them, and present them as poems...Many poets have also chosen to incorporate snippets of found texts into larger poems” - From Poets.org

History: Found poetry is typically traced back to the 1920s, when the Dada movement was first emerging, followed quickly by Surrealism. (For more on these artistic movements, check out the "Connection to Visual Art" tab in this LibGuide.) Artists and poets from these movements emphasized the unconscious, chance, and juxtaposition in their work, ideas that would later play into such found poetry techniques as cut-up. - Simmons Library

Examples: Solmaz Sharif “[Look](#)” courtesy of The PEN America the source text being The Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms, and Chessy Normile’s “[Ever](#)”

which brings a new way into look at a source text through the mentioning of a TS Eliot Essay, courtesy of Poets.org.

Discussion: Historical context

Do a quick internet set on the book *Salaried Masses* and discuss the following questions

- The book was published in 1930 Germany. What was the social landscape of the time?
  - How might this book be especially important given the context?
- What social interests may be of importance in this text?
  - What possible insights could a poet write about from said text.

Reading and Discussion

Read the following selections from “Study” and “Coda”: 4 pg. 6.pg 11. pg

- What are the moments of borrowed language from the source text?
- How is the borrowed language being used?
  - From a grammatical sense? What is its function within the poem
  - How is it intertwining with the world of the speaker?
    - What is the effect of bringing language into the direct world of the speaker such as on page 4.

Activity

Comb through your own source text and mine the work for interesting language and phrases, and to have at least 5-8 different phrases.

Once the phrases are found, brainstorm a list of ways/situations in which they might be used within your own daily life (within a poem).

Reading and Discussion

Read the following selections from “Interlocutor” and “Chorus Played on a Victrola”

12 pg. 21 pg 26-27 pg.

- How is the source text being used differently in these poems?
- How is the speaker within the world of the poems interacting with the text?
- What complications/considerations are being presented in these poems?

Writing

With the remaining class time present the following prompts

*Prompt 1:* With your list of phrases create a poem based on your own daily experience that uses at least 3 of the phrases.

*Prompt 2:* Read a small excerpt from your source text (1-2 paragraphs) and write a poem that presents your immediate response to the work. Search for wonders, questions, connections, concerns, etc.