**Found Poem Instructions**

Instructions adapted from “Found and Headline Poems” from *Getting the Knack: 20 Poetry Writing Exercises* by Stephen Dunning and William Stafford.

1. Carefully re-read the prose text and look for words that stand out. Highlight or underline details, words and phrases that you find particularly powerful, moving, or interesting (imagery). Also, consider words and phrases that particularly express themes, symbolism, characterization, Romantic characteristics, etc. Take note of figurative language (metaphor, simile, personification, allusions, etc.)

2. On a separate sheet of paper or in a separate file, make a list of the details, words and phrases you selected, keeping them in the order that you found them. Double space between lines so that the lines are easy to work with. Feel free to add others that you notice as you go through the prose piece again.

3. Look back over your new list and cut out everything that is dull, or unnecessary, or that just doesn’t seem right for your poem. Try to cut your original list in half.

4. As you look over the shortened list, think about the tone that the details and diction convey. The words should all reflect the tone of the prose passage.

5. Make any minor changes necessary to create your poem. You can change punctuation and make little changes to the words to make them fit together (such as changing verb tenses, making words possessive, plural/singular, editing capitalization, etc).

6. When you’re close to an edited down version, if you absolutely need to add a word or two to make the poem flow more smoothly, to make sense, to make a point, you may add up to two words of your own. That’s two (2) and only two!

7. Read back over your edited draft one more time and make any deletions or minor changes.

8. Give your poem an appropriate title.

9. Prepare the presentation copy of your poem: Copy your poem to a new sheet of paper or type the poem. Space or arrange the words so that they’re poem-like. Pay attention to line breaks, layout, and other elements that will emphasize important words or significant ideas in the poem. Read aloud as you arrange the words! Test the possible line breaks by pausing slightly. If it sounds good, it’s probably right.

• Arrange the words so that they make a rhythm you like. You can space words out so that they are all alone or allruntogether.

• You can also put

key

words

on lines by themselves.

• You can shape the entire poem so that it’s wide or tall or shaped like an object.

• Emphasize words by playing with boldface and italics, different sizes of letters, and so forth.

10. At the bottom of the poem, tell where the words in the poem came from. For example, From *The Scarlet Letter*, by Nathaniel Hawthorne, ch. 5 – “Hester and Her Needle.”