

# Question the Body



## GRADE LEVEL

6-8

## PROJECT OVERVIEW

Inspired by the art making process in Dorney's featured work and additional project *Home Poems*, create an abstract redaction poem using an assemblage technique.

## GOALS

Students will understand:

- How close observation is a tool for learning and discovery
- Transformation of body of writing to art form
- Development of a simple poem unique to the maker
- Combining assemblage technique to redaction poetry

## ARTIST

Erin Dorney | Lovell, ME  
Blending poetry and visual arts, Dorney's work takes shape on screen, encased, or installed into intimate spaces.  
Her featured work was developed during a residency at Hewnoaks Artist Colony in

## INTRODUCTION

*QUESTION THE BODY* is a collection of photographs and time-lapse videos where gathered natural objects obscure pages from "The Question and Answer Book About The Human Body" by Ann McGovern (Random House, 1965). Through recorded erasure/redaction, each poem is built by the disembodied hands of the artist. The unobscured text reveals inquiries into physical form, preference, expression, and function.

By emphasizing process over product, *QUESTION THE BODY* blurs the boundaries between writing, visual art, appropriation, performance, and assemblage. Works in this series were created during a residency at Hewnoaks Artist Colony in Lovell, Maine. All natural objects were collected from the grounds of the residency during the artist's weeklong stay in 2019.

## LESSON

Take a look at the On Screen artwork of Erin Dorney found on our website at <https://cmcanow.org/event/screen-dorney-question-the-body/>. Inspired by the art making process in Dorney's featured work and additional project *Home Poems*, create an abstract redaction poem using an assemblage technique. Additional poetry projects and resources can be viewed at [erindorney.com](http://erindorney.com).

## CRITICAL QUESTIONS

What is the context of this written work? What words stand out to describe the original context of the label? How can I visually frame the text in an appealing formation? What is assemblage?

\*Abstract poems do not have to make sense! They can be a collective of words or ideas that sound good together or look visually pleasing.

## CELEBRATE YOUR WORK

Build a collection of your own abstract poems and share them with family and friends, teach your siblings or parents the process and share what you've created with us @cmcanow.

## VOCABULARY

Abstract: a form of artistic response to a physical reality, simplified marks to complex physical information

Redaction Poem: repurposing a work of writing using the editing technique of blacking out text to transform original visual form and meaning

Negative Space: area in between objects, texts

Emphasis: focal point in a visual artwork

Assemblage: a relief style technique of collage where the objects used to abstract are three dimensional

## MATERIALS

- Recycled food containers
- Labels
- Magazines
- Found objects something you can grab a handful amount
- Tape - optional
- Marker - optional



## INSTRUCTIONS

### STEP 1

Collect a handful of labels and writings you find around the house. These may take the form of a pasta box, advertisement, or recycled handout.

### STEP 2

Read closely the labels contents thoroughly understanding the objective. Read for the second time editing out as many words possible creating a concise version of the label. Apply your found objects to cover up the unnecessary text emphasizing the remaining words.

### STEP 3

Arrange your found objects in a visually pleasing formation. It may be that only one word stands out to describe the contents that the label is trying to sell. *How will you emphasize this word(s) clearly?*

## TIPS & TRICKS:

- Similar to the work of Erin Dorney, create a natural dye or paint to obscure the original text
- Challenge yourself to obscure old notes or writing that you created, read and edit using this visual assemblage technique.



Erin Dorney



Top Left: *Question the Body*, 2019  
Recycled paper and berries  
On Screen 6:53

Middle Left: *Question the Body*, 2019  
Recycled paper and berries  
On Screen 6:53



Bottom Left: *Home Poems*, 2020  
Photograph, recycled cardboard