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Creative Plagiarism

To steal the language, ideas or thoughts from another, representing them as one's own original work. (Random House Dictionary, 1980)

Text discovered in some non-poetic setting, removed from its context, and presented as a poem. (The Poetry Dictionary, 1995)

Everyone has plagiarized in one form or another at some time in their past. They have picked up and used a word or phrase from a song or story or movie and stored that word or phrase in the back of their mind and invariably slipped it into a poem or song or piece of prose.

Most of what we have read has been written or thought of long before we were born. Writers have borrowed ideas from one another for as long as ink has passed over paper (or velum). While true plagiarism is wrong (claiming entire pieces of another's work as your own), borrowing an idea or phrase that you find interesting or important can be as good as a compliment to a writer (whether they in turn, borrowed it or not). This can be categorized to some as Writer's License or as it is called here . . . Creative Plagiarism.

The first form of Creative Plagiarism that will be discussed is one that has been growing in popularity over the past few years. This writing form is known as the Found Poem. Found poetry can be created from any existing written material or conversation. While the original material should still be credited to the original author, the changed form and not the actual words becomes your credit or authorship. Original material can be obtained from graffiti, speeches, lists, conversations, stories, books, etc.

This author's first attempt at Found poetry first occurred in 1974. While working as the Assistant Foreman for Metro Toronto Parks Department at James Gardens in Etobicoke during the spring cleanup of the Monument Garden a large piece of paper was discovered with parts of a letter and other scribbling on it. It was wedged in the slats of a park bench and contained the rambling and thoughts written to a girl named Judy from a young man named . . . The letter was filed away for ten years when this author was the Grounds Foreman at the University of Toronto in 1984. As synchronicity would have it, a crumpled letter written on yellow paper was accidentally discovered and was written by a young woman named Judy to a young man named Mike. Upon returning home and comparing this discovery with the one from ten years earlier, they were found to be compatible in content and even though they were not written by the same people (even though the names were the same) they could have been. A Found Poem was created:

Rochdale 1

Art Shoes, Yellow paper:

Mike and Judy a psychotic love affair

Hello Judy
down the hall from me
is a lady piano teacher
and if you like I'll ask her if you
could play her piano for a while.
I love you more than a sister for a sister I
never had.
I love you more than a daughter
because even though I had her mother, she
has told them not to love me.
Oh Judy I miss you
and there was so much I didn't say
(did I listen when you were telling me an
importance?)
I love your concern
for even a hardened cicada
protests inside a paper bag.
(forgive my packrat mind, my
stupidity for fumbling
and you laughed at how warm I felt)
womanly beauty, the ability to express it,
a warm thought that covers
the feelings of each moments nearness,
space time a word that is gracious,
complementing,
(as needed as the nuts on a nut loaf)
forgive me for you
find beauty in the junkyards of my mind.
I need a simple room, a quiet room,
completely black with a candle,
a room for contemplating only,
I seemed to really upset you
last night when you . . .
Please express specifically what
your thoughts were at the moment
you began to cry and then sob?
Dear please, I am concerned for you,
what hurts you, I also feel.
May I say there is no logic as
to how you felt at the time.

You are a woman and
I couldn't get over it so please specify:

SEX

how often where you want
how you want when you want
(how honest should I be with her?)
Your friends, my friends, what do they
want?
What do you want?
True affection bull shit games.
Oh Judy, the tears well up in my eyes.

Rochdale 2:

Mike and Judy a psychotic love affair
Art basics, props not
so much alive on basics
but I can't speed.
I've got to get in touch with coops,
find out about ... etc.
Is it more or less accessible to students
an inevitability - geo aesthetics
constant thoughts of suicide
and I have to consider the light at Rochdale.
Yellow futures,
applying for starship birds,
flexibility shoes, and
the board committee is involved
in the feasibility of the
expensive and the old.
I've only been a grub in the co-op,
whose people can little afford new ideas
and borders.
I've only been a parasite.
I've taken from Lori
and given nothing back,
and from Mike I've taken much
and given in return
what money can't afford,
others are indifferent.
Mike I care about.
Much less bed feeling . . .

Usually bed nothing
(he s having ego attention)
I have not given
what a human being can be paid for
when words they will be spoken
all these thoughts of all these days.
I don t give much care
about philosophical dilemma,
a divider of suspicion reigns Michael,
unlock the ravages of this room.
Show me the whole little girl,
she must touch, act, sense, feel,
(she felt she had composed all these things)
The other night I dreamt that we were
ordering food which in the end
we did not eat and the waitress
got angry and the others with us had left
and there we were paying nothing,
later I was bringing up some food
on a downtown street and I remembered
that I saw several people,
people I had to eat to know
although in reality I already did,
(we make so much of the little nothings in
our brains)
can you paint the prom?
I think the world needs another citizen
who firmly believes that they are right.
Perhaps your paintings are too intense.
Too much open mindedness
and some sense of connection, is it fear?
The kind of undermining techniques
of the adversary which is built
into people, oh well . . .
Well. . . what promise is there
in casting free shadows on the beach?

From an anonymous postcard writer, found in the mail stream at Canada Post 2008:

Midwinter

The physical consciousness of a plant in
midwinter is not directed towards the past
summer but toward the coming spring.
If plants are certain of a coming spring,
through which they will come out of themselves,
why cannot a human plant, be certain
of a spring to come, in which I will be able
to fulfill myself?
Perhaps our spring is not in this life -
this life may be nothing but a winter!

Graffiti can make the easiest and best Found Poems. These recorded graffiti are from around the University of Toronto campus by that famous Greek author Anonymous, in the mid 1980's.

Reality is a cop out
for people who can't
handle Drugs.

Drugs are a cop out
for people who can't
handle suicide.

Suicide is a cop out
for people who can't
handle life.

Life is a cop out
for people who can't
handle reality.

Finally, another form of Creative Plagiarism or Found Poetry that is easily worked on is called Index Poems for want of a better phrase. If one were to pick up an anthology of poems that lists title and/or first lines, check and see if they flow coherently. Find which sections work together and which do not. It is best not to change or delete words as it should be kept as original as possible, but sometimes Writer's License makes it necessary for the flow to be maintained. In the haste to create an Index Poem, the title of this anthology was overlooked and the original author/editor cannot be properly credited. Make sure you are diligent and give credit where credit is due. Also see: *Creative Writing & 21 Pelicans*. Below are two Found Poems created from all or most of the first lines of poems listed in the index of the first 1985 anthology. and *Poetry After 9/11* ISBN 0-9718659-1-4 (2002)

A Blue Grained Line

a blue grained line circles
a fragment of the mind,
a dead mosquito,
flattened against a door, after dark
ailanthus,
what makes you flower as
a knight rides into the moon,
a man in terror of
impotence, and now
outside the walls, this is how you live:
a woman, children,
an old pot, an old shoe and
an old skin,
a piece of thread ripped-out
from a fierce design as solid
seeming as antiquity
autumn equinox
autumn sequence the old times,
autumn torture and
a woman in the shape of a woman,
walking behind grimed blinds
slatted across a courtyard back there,
birds and periodic blood
blacked out on a wagon, part
of my life cut out forever
burning oneself in
burning oneself out,
can I easily say
there is a celebration
in the plaza,
a child with a chip of mirror
in his eye, coming
by evening through the windy city
completely protected on all sides
where cruelty is rarely conscious
the days of spring dead, dead, dead,
demon lovers,
did you think I was talking about my life
about evenings which seem endless now
and even when I thought I prayed
I was talking to myself

everywhere, snow is falling,
from here on all of us will be living frost,
burning the cities ill
however legendary
hopes sparkle like water
in the clear carafe and I
am trying to imagine
I am up at sunrise, I am walking
rapidly through striations of light
and dark, I don't know
in my dream, children
in my imagination, insomnia
in the field the air writhes,
a heat pocket in the heart
of the queen Anne's lace,
a knot of blood in the woods
it is asleep in my body
I trust only my existence
last night you wrote on the wall:
revolution is poetry,
letters from the land of sinners
means there is something to hold,
meditations for the savage child
mirror in which
two are seen as one,
night pieces for a child
now, again, the life and death talk,
now, not a tear begun,
now that your hopes are shamed,
you stand nursing your nerves
when our mother went away
and father was the king
out in this desert,
rain of blood
rape reforming the crystal
riding the black express
from heaven to hell
so many minds in search of bodies
something broken something
the clouds are electric
in this freedom of the wholly mad,

their faces, safe as an interior,
their life, collapsed,
the music of words,
the mystic finishes of time,
the long sunlight lying on the sea
the pact we made was an ordinary act,
there were no angels,
the trees inside are moving
out into the forest and they say
this is a woman's confession,
this is how it feels to do
something you are afraid of,
to live, to lay awake
trying to tell you
we had to take the world
as it was given,

we smile, bound by the wheel
of an endless conversation,
whatever it was
what is happening when the ice
begins to shiver,
when the grains of a glacier
are caked in the boot cleats
you are beside me like a waif,
I touch you with my fingers and,
you are falling asleep
I sit looking at you
hiding there in your words,
you see a man in your dreams,
you show me the poems of some woman,
you are sleeping now,
I cover you with my heart.

Poetry After 9/11

TOC Found Poem [2019]

Grudges in a silent room.
Flight over the old neighborhood
on Ash Wednesday (before 9/11).
Friends, civilization, Whitman
without skyscrapers or [London's] asylum.
Circling, circling, circling,
slowing down for death.
Cookies for peace, gallantly streaming
when the skyline crumbles.
Now, the weather seems different
in the burning air, the burning air.
Nodding cranes I said on that
September morning to the
skeptic [al] New York [ers].
Good Morning [Vietn] America!
No immortal nocturne's at 9am
in the Land of SHI. Mercy.
Going to work on 9/11, this
message will [self] destruct
in sixty seconds, early, late.
Flowers before I was born
over mortal remains but not
on All Saints Day, although all
the Saints were there in September.
Bad days, nights, after 9/11.
The statue, a window on the moment
of flame, weeping tangerine orchids
on the following Sunday afternoon,
writing Liberty Island poems after
September 11th.

The bed in the wilderness is, softer than
Ground Zero.