

Segue

Writing  Writing

WHY EXPERIMENTAL WRITING NOT: A CLASS COLLAGE

JANIS BUTLER HOLM

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Preface

"Why Experimental Writing Not" is a performance piece from an experimental writing class. It is composed of student responses to the following assignment:

Please choose one.

1. Experimental writing is often left out of literature anthologies used in high school and college classrooms. Given what you've learned of experimental literature in this class, what are the likely reasons for this exclusion? How do you feel about it? In 300-500 words, explain. (Don't be afraid to approve of the exclusion.)
2. Construct a poem or prose piece of 16 lines or more using techniques employed by one of the following writers: Laura E. Richards, E. E. Cummings, James Joyce, John Lennon, or Gertrude Stein. The audience for your work can be any age group (and you can be serious or funny).

My thanks go to my writing class members—Joshua Boles, Colleen Brown, B. J. Cottrill, Lesley Cunningham, Lee Delaveris, Adam DeSantis, Amanda Freeman, Lauren Gilker, Abbie Graham, Rachel Green, Jessica Hartman, Dustin Humes, Jennifer Hutchinson, Amanda Maddock, Katie Matheny, Doug Merritt, Casey Nice, Liz O'Hara, Anastasia Parc, Tom Rankin, Chris Rife, Mary Schaad, Lynn Schaffer, Kara Schappa, Kyle Stock, and Johanna Voutyras--for permission to make a collage from their work.

Why Experimental Writing Not

hefty hippo handeliers
hang downside up from candeliers

While children are exposed to experimental literature in the form of fairy tale or adventure poems and stories, and are exposed to nonsense words from the moment they are born, by the time people are in high school it is expected that they will read traditional works.

child like. like child. lick child.

Later we attended high school and continued to read the books popular in our parents' generation.

it smunked of old shoes and hair

In high school, experimental writing was completely excluded from the curriculum in all of my classes.

is it not great to have such frydom?
hot apple cry and some delicious frydom frees

Experimental writing is not often featured in literature anthologies in high school or college classrooms because most teachers are afraid to take on this type of writing.

paranoid blue endless eye looks on

High school teachers are most likely prohibited to stray from the line of conformity because of the possible disapproval of the students' parents. I can just hear a father saying, "I'm paying for you to read this nonsense! This Jabberwocky!"

asmighty motful scorning

I think that many teachers are afraid to explore certain pieces of literature because there has been little structure or planning that has been built about them in the past.

far & few between rock and unsolved places
few places between far faces
far between rocks, few unsolved traces

More and more teachers are forced to teach to a test.

slandle the morning stale

First of all, I believe that there is a wide misconception about what experimental writing is.

black holes
portals
swallowing up
my head

I think that many people feel that this type of literature offers little educational value.

mickity and dickity were two boyzickities
always laughickity always drinkickity

John Lennon's poems read differently than a novel by Charles Dickens.

yelpering like a sinner songwriter

Anthologies that include only the dominant literary works and figures, therefore, only help us to understand the dominant literary trend, and not the complete picture.

but what is It to be without That making It whole

Furthermore, after making my own attempt at annotating Cummings's "anyone lived in a pretty how town," I can imagine how stressful it would be for the editors of these anthologies to gloss work after work of this type of material.

it is painful so painful that it is always painful but even more painful now

I think part of the reason experimental literature is avoided in the classroom is because it is hard to read.

briggy slaggy craddiness

Feeling your way around in a dark and unfamiliar territory scares many of us.

along along along a troubled trip he tropped
without the compass his direction was cost

Abstract material is hard to comprehend and analyze.

air thin with jats

I can imagine being a high school student and being faced with James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*.

that will be the ouch and breaking of it

For students who have a beginner level of literature interpretation, seeing something like "a rose is a rose is a rose is a rose" would not only be confusing, but intimidating as well.

To stick the same scheme, a scheme I saw askew, was a sticking scheme. In its rightful place was there it was. And it was there for it stuck there. A long time it had fallen off, but stuck there nonetheless. I heard rhyme and reason sound out of sync, and out of sink, and out of sync. It didn't make sense either, because it did. Which didn't make sense. Nonetheless, it faltered sense.

Student apathy may be a reason why many professors omit experimental literature from their curriculum.

no need to conversate with this growd
ever shrinking by fines and nines

The material we read is difficult to understand without collaborative discussions about what the selection means.

we see
he sees, maybe not what isn't
but for sure it isn't

And many professors, to say nothing of their students, would rather ignore this type of material.

in form a shun. sesh un.

College is supposed to be a time of enlightenment.

other than what is to be and over how to start

Reading experimental literature has taken me out of my usual comfort zone and forced me to think differently about a text than I usually do.

a stunned pair of feety hair

Part of the excitement of this kind of writing is finding out what different people gain from reading the same piece of text.

you see. i see. she sees. she saw. see saw.

I think that all types of literature should be taught in schools.

compassion for all not none

Experimental writing shows the reader so many different ways the English language can be used in writing and how fun and creative writing can be.

lovable sound upon the cave of wonder

I feel that experimental writing should be included in these anthologies not only because of the reasons I've mentioned above, but also because it is engaging and it opens up minds and imaginations, which is exactly what I believe good literature always does.

infinite's
infinity

Janis Butler Holm teaches experimental writing at Ohio University, where she has served as Associate Editor for *Wide Angle*, the film journal. Her essays, poems, and stories have appeared in both small-press and national magazines.