

Handout #3 – Setting Found Poems

Directions: Individually or as a group, write a found poem based on the descriptions of setting from your assigned chapter. Your group will present one poem in a way that enhances the class's interpretation of Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*. For example, you may read the poem to music or use the projector to display images as you read.

Helpful Hints:

- ◆ A found poem is simply a poem that one creates from borrowed phrases and words. You will create a poem from Steinbeck's setting descriptions recorded on Handout #2. As you create your poem, remember the following:
 1. shorter lines have more emphasis than longer lines.
 2. shorter lines slow the reader down and longer lines speed up the reader
 3. the first and last words of a line carry the most weight.
- ◆ You may add some of your own words (for example, you may want to include some narration of events such as the death of Curley's wife), but a majority of the words should be Steinbeck's setting descriptions.
- ◆ Do not feel pressured to include all the setting descriptions you found in the chapter. You want to make meaning with your poem, and focusing on a specific part of the chapter (such as the shooting of Candy's dog) may be more effective.
- ◆ As you create your found poem, consider the following questions:

What mood does the setting create in this chapter?

What insights does the setting give me into a conflict or character?

What details may others in the class have missed on the first reading of this chapter that I want them to pay attention to?

See the example on the reverse side of this sheet.

Handout #3 – Found Poem – page 2

Prose from chapter 3 of *Black Boy*

“We were large enough for the white boys to fear us and both of us, the white boys and the black boys, began to play our traditional roles as though we had been born to them, as though it was in our blood, as though we were being guided by instinct. All the frightful descriptions we had heard about each other, all the violent expressions of hate and hostility that had seeped into us from our surroundings, came now to the surface to guide our actions. The roundhouse was the racial boundary of the neighborhood, and it had been tacitly agreed between the white boys and the black boys that the whites were to keep to the far side of the roundhouse and we blacks were to keep to our side. Whenever we caught a white boy on our side we stoned him; if we strayed to their side, they stoned us.

Our battles were real and bloody; we threw rocks, cinders, coal, sticks, pieces of iron, and broken bottles, and while we threw them we longed for even deadlier weapons. If we were hurt, we took it quietly; there was no crying or whimpering. If our wounds were not truly serious, we hid them from our parents. We did not want to be beaten for fighting. Once, in a battle with a gang of white boys, I was struck behind the eye with a piece of broken bottle; the cut was deep and bled profusely. I tried to stem the flow of blood by dabbing at the cut with a rag and when my mother came from work I was forced to tell her that I was hurt, for I needed medical attention. She rushed me to a doctor who stitched my scalp; but when she took me home she beat me, telling me that I must never fight white boys again, that I might be killed by them, that she had to work and had no time to worry about my fights. Her words did not sink in, for they conflicted with the code of the streets. I promised my mother that I would not fight, but I knew that if I kept my word I would lose my standing in the gang, and the gang’s life was my life.”

Text Rewritten as a Found Poem

Code of the Streets

white boys, black boys
 guided by instinct
hate and hostility seeping
 into us, guiding our actions
racial boundaries marking our side and their side

Our battles were real
 and bloody
rocks, cinders, coal, sticks, pieces of iron, broken bottles—
we longed
 for even deadlier weapons

To stop fighting was to lose
standing in the gang

and the gang's life was
my life.