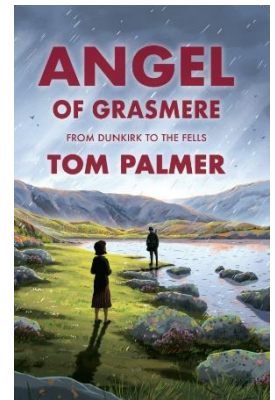


# Angel of Grasmere by Tom Palmer

## Black Out Poem Challenge

### 1 Introduction:

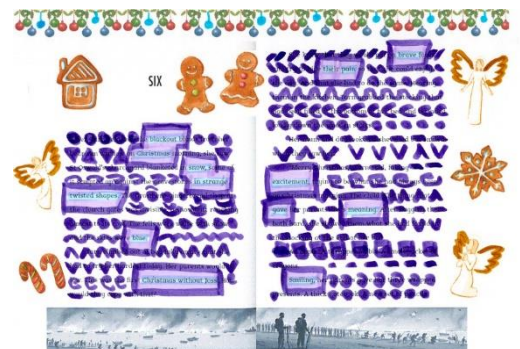
Poets have developed ideas about rearranging words since the 1920's in the Dadaist and Surrealist movements. The poet Tristan Tzara set off a riot at a surrealist rally when he proposed to create new poems by pulling words randomly out of a hat. The Beat writers and poets of the 1950's (e.g. William S. Burroughs and Brion Gysin) pushed this idea further by using scissors to cut up existing texts, like newspaper articles. In 2010, author, illustrator and web-designer Austin Kleon invented Blackout poetry itself, overcoming his severe case of writer's block. Blackout poetry uses a technique of crossing out words to create a different meaning or highlight a mood in the words left behind. Kleon recommends finding one or two "anchor words" -- or a combination of phrases -- in the text that you are using. This will then reveal a message hidden inside the original text which you have unlocked.



### 2 How to do it?

- You can choose to read the whole text beforehand or just jump right in. Sometimes it is best not to read it too closely. Try not to be too influenced by the original text and focus on create your own unique effect
- Think what mood you are trying to create beforehand and develop this as you go along
- Use a permanent marker to remove or eliminate unnecessary or irrelevant words and leave behind words that for whatever reason, really strike you
- Choose between creating a punchy poem made of impactful big words like nouns, verbs, and adjectives or a more narrative style adding in little words like "is," "of," and "the" to move the story along more coherently.
- You can completely eliminate all the white paper and just leave your words or draw bubbles around words or phrase you want to particularly highlight
- You might like to draw lines to lead readers from one phrase to another, or focus the eye on a particularly striking image
- You can decorate the sheet with lettering, pictures and doodles to further develop your mood
- The rules are only as limited as your poetic imagination, there are no right or wrong answers here.

### 3 Overleaf is some selected text to experiment with from "Angel of Grasmere" by Tom Palmer.



### 4 Finished examples from pupils at Greenbank School using Tom Palmer's "Armistice Runner"

### 5 Optional certificate signed by Tom

More here: [www.tompalmer.co.uk/angel-of-grasmere/](http://www.tompalmer.co.uk/angel-of-grasmere/) Free stuff : [www.tompalmer.co.uk/free-stuff/](http://www.tompalmer.co.uk/free-stuff/)

## SIX

When Tarn removed the blackout blinds from her bedroom window on Christmas morning, she saw St Oswald's churchyard blanketed in snow, some of it sculpted up against the gravestones in strange twisted shapes. The Grasmere gingerbread shop at the church gates was invisible, a snowdrift reaching almost to its roof. The fells were white with snow and the skies were blue.

Tarn climbed out of bed fully aware that she had to try her hardest today. Her parents would be low. This was the first Christmas without Joss. How would they cope with that?

78

She knew that they would put on brave faces and try to hide their pain so that she could enjoy the day. And that she had to do the same. Hearing them in the kitchen, Tarn grabbed the stocking that had been filled at the bottom of her bed and bounded loudly down the wooden stairs.

Her mum and dad looked dishevelled but smiled when they saw her.

"Merry Christmas," Tarn said, faking excitement, trying to be what she had always been on Christmas morning. The child. The thing that gave her parents' lives meaning. After hugging them both hard, she showed them what she had found in the stocking at the end of her bed.

An apple. A thruppenny bit. A small packet of crayons.

Smiling, her parents gave her three wrapped presents. A thick notebook. A new set of pencils.



never never anywhere.  
 scrambled I ran think to give up, I  
 I got there. bunker.  
 No  
 screaming like an animal  
 dropped in the collapsed trench,  
 saw a man, I  
 everywhere There was blood  
 save him.  
 there,  
 in the bunker  
 But I had to pass on the message  
 my duty That was,



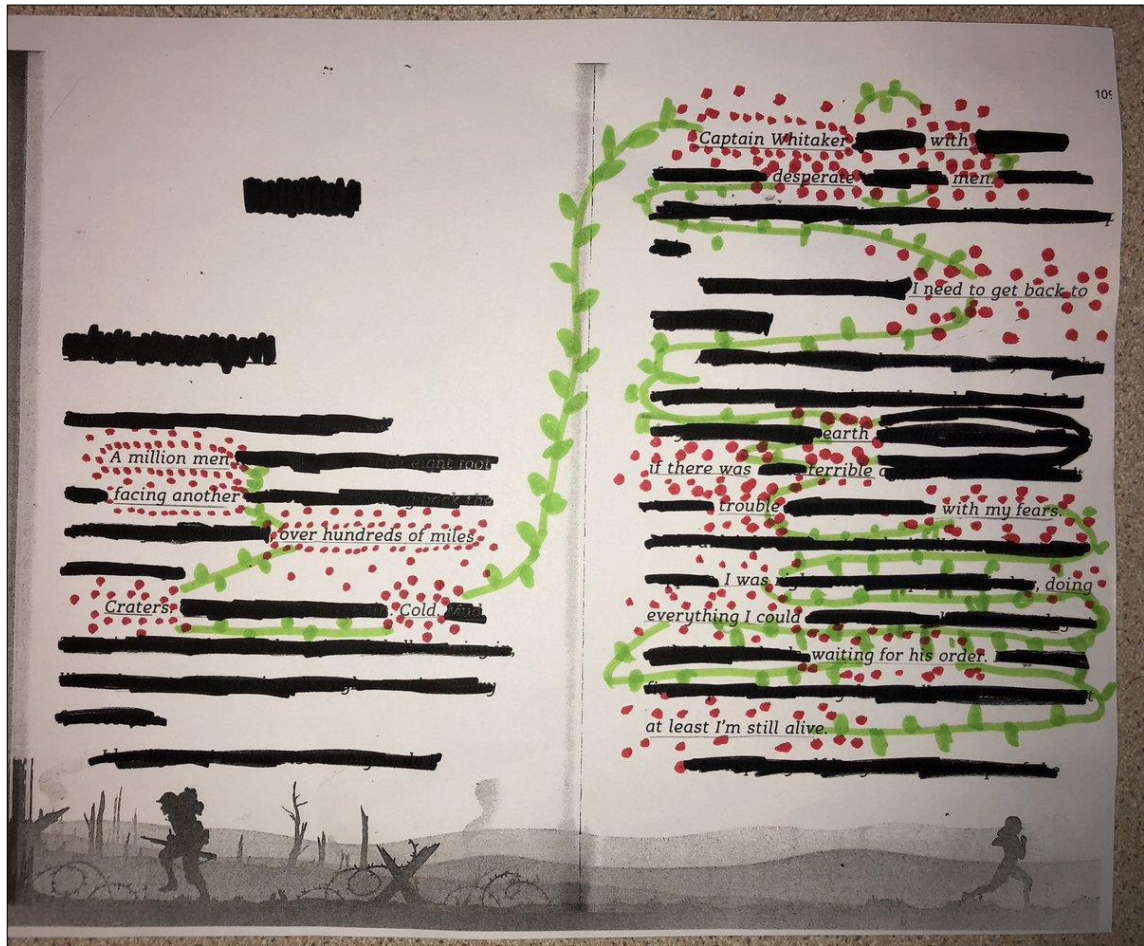
**FOURTEEN**

France, 5 August 1918

How do I describe the front line, Fred?  
 A million men lined up in a trench eight foot  
 deep, facing another million men looking back the  
 other way at them. This, over hundreds of miles  
 across Europe.  
 Craters. Collapsed trenches. Rain. Cold. Mud.  
 The stink of death. And the noise of shells coming in,  
 like a dozen trains ripping through a station every  
 few seconds.

I hardly need to describe it to you, do I?

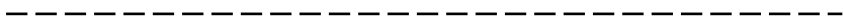
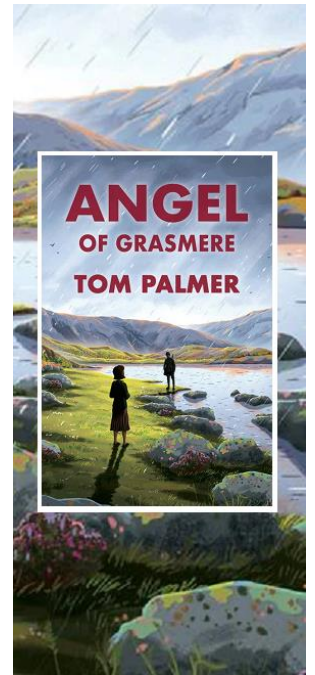






# Certificate of achievement

for completing the  
Angel of Grasmere  
blackout poem challenge  
awarded to



Signed

*Tom Palmer*

Date

December 2024

