



**FACING  
HISTORY &  
OURSSELVES**

**CLASSROOM VIDEO • VIEWING GUIDE**

# TEACHING STRATEGY: FOUND POEMS

## Overview

In this classroom video, history teacher Denny Conklin leads students in the construction of found poems based on their research about the eugenics movement in the early twentieth century in the United States. A *found poem* is one that is created using only words, phrases, or quotations that have been selected and rearranged from

another text. To create found poems, students must choose language that is particularly meaningful or interesting to them and organize the language around a theme or message. Writing found poems is a structured way to have students review material and synthesize their learning.



## Questions to Consider

1. What does Mr. Conklin do to make the found poem activity more accessible to his students?
  2. A creative writing assignment such as a found poem might seem unexpected in a history classroom. What opportunities does such an assignment present for students? What challenges do you foresee in using this strategy, and what might you do to address these challenges?
  3. At **5:52**, Mr. Conklin reflects: “We learned from this experience—of taking these words from people and making it into something else—that words are powerful, language is powerful.” What do you think Mr. Conklin means when he says this? What evidence of the power of language do you see in the finished found poems created by his students?
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## Featured

### Denny Conklin

Teacher

11th & 12th Grade

Arlington High School

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## Video Goals

- **Understand** the definition of a *found poem* and how to help students create these poems.
- **Determine** why having students write found poems is a useful strategy, even beyond the English language arts classroom.
- **Consider** how you might use this strategy in your own classroom.

## Lesson Resources

- Reading 12, Confronting a ‘Twisted Science,’ from **Race and Membership in American History: The Eugenics Movement** (pages 283–287)
- **Teaching Strategy: Found Poems**