

# Lisa Bullard ... Writing Road Trip

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## Treasure Hunt

### A “Found Poem” Activity

1. Explain to students that they are going on a Treasure Hunt for words. Their goal is to collect as many written-out words or phrases as they can find without leaving the classroom. (In other words, they won't simply see an apple and write down “apple,” they should actually see the word “apple” written out somewhere.) Encourage students to check out less-than-obvious places: someone's T-shirt, the list of fire drill instructions, the cafeteria menu posted on the wall. I don't allow students to open books to find their words – too easy!
2. Tell students how long they will have for their Treasure Hunt. This activity works well with a wide variety of ages, but new writers need more time because they are still laboring over the formation of letters. I would give older students 5 minutes, and new writers 10 minutes. You can set a timer or act as the “clock-watcher” for the students.
3. Ask students to take out a notebook and a sharpened pencil.
4. Start the timer and turn students loose. When time is up, students should return to their desks. Their notebook is now their “Treasure Chest” of words. Explain to students that they are going to write a “Found Poem,” where they will take the words and phrases they have found and craft them into a poem. You can find examples of Found Poems online that you can share with students.
5. This activity can be repeated at different times during your classroom's exploration of poetry-writing. If students are brand-new poets, then the poems they create might be as simple as combining words in unexpected or interesting-sounding ways. For older students, this can be a great opportunity to talk about concepts such as figurative language or symbolism: how could they take the language they discovered on the fire drill instructions and turn it into a poem about asking somebody on a first date? Or perhaps your students have already written haikus, and you are now going to have them write a “found” haiku.
6. I often allow students the free use of “helper words” such as “the,” “and,” and “to” because they forget to collect these simpler words. But you can instead add a math element that younger students enjoy. Hand around play money, and tell students this is their budget to purchase additional words for their poem (\$1 per word? \$10 per word? It depends on what play money you have available). Students can either come to you as the banker to “purchase” their additional words, or you can have them keep accounting records in their notebooks. Or, you can allow students to “barter” words with their classmates.
7. When the poems are finished, post them so students can “find” inspiration in them all over again.