

BLACKOUT POEM ASSIGNMENT

Directions: Read through the following [introduction/tutorial](#). Then follow the steps provided below.

1. Come up with a title for your Blackout Poem that accurately encapsulates Richard Blanco's message in "One Pulse - One Poem." *Don't be vague! Make sure you clearly express Richard Blanco's attitude and feelings. The title should express the same information that you'd convey in your thesis statement. Your title can be long!
2. Go through the poem and black out everything EXCEPT the specific words he uses to convey his feelings toward the tragedy in its wake. Use the HIGHLIGHT function to do this. When you are done, your poem should, theoretically, convey the same message as Blanco's original work. In other words, it should - to an extent - make sense when read from beginning to end!

Title of Blackout Poem

**Don't be vague! Make sure you - through your chosen words - clearly express the same message as Richard Blanco. The title should express the same information that you'd convey in your thesis statement. Your title can be long!*

Original Poem

One Pulse-One Poem

By Richard Blanco

*To honor the lives and memory of the victims
of the Pulse tragedy, and to help us all heal.*

Here, sit at my kitchen table, we need to write this together. Take a sip of café con leche, breathe in the steam and our courage to face this page, bare as our pain. Curl your fingers around mine, curled around my pen, hold it like a talisman in our hands shaking, eyes swollen. But let's not start with tears, or the flashing lights, the sirens, nor the faint voice over the cell phone when you heard "I love you . . ." for the very last time. No, let's ease our way into this, let our first lines praise the plenitude of morning, the sun exhaling light into the clouds. Let's imagine songbirds flocked at my window, hear them chirping a blessing in Spanish: bendición-bendición-bendición

Begin the next stanza with a constant wind trembling every palm tree, yet steadying our minds just enough to write out: bullets, bodies, death—the vocabulary of violence raging in our minds, but still mute, choked in our throats. Leave some white space for a moment

of silence, then fill it with lines repeating the rhythms pulsing through Pulse that night—salsa, deep house, electro, merengue, and techno heartbeats mixed with gunshots. Stop the echoes of that merciless music with a tender simile to honor the blood of our blood, without writing blood. Use warm words to describe the cold bodies of our husbands, lovers, and wives, our sisters, brothers, and friends. Draw a metaphor so we can picture the choir of their invisible spirits rising with the smoke toward disco lights, imagine ourselves dancing with them until the very end.

Write one more stanza—now. Set the page ablaze with the anger in the hollow ache of our bones—anger for the new hate, same as the old kind of hate for the wrong skin color, for the accent in a voice, for the love of those we're not supposed to love. Anger for the voice of politics armed with lies, fear that holds democracy at gunpoint. But let's not end here. Turn the poem, find details for the love of the lives lost, still alive in photos—spread them on the table, give us their wish-filled eyes glowing over birthday candles, their unfinished sand castles, their training-wheels, Mickey Mouse ears, tiaras. Show their blemished yearbook faces, silver-teeth smiles and stiff prom poses, their tasseled caps and gowns, their first true loves. And then share their very last selfies. Let's place each memory like a star, the light of their past reaching us now, and always, reminding us to keep writing until we never need to write a poem like this again.