



# Found History

Grades 2-5

## Duration

30-60 minutes

## Location

Becoming Los Angeles Hall

(Optional post-visit in classroom)

## Supplies

- Worksheet
- Pencil
- Clipboard (optional)
- Presentation materials

## Standards

### CCSS ELA

W.7, W.8, SL.1.b.d

### CA CONTENT

History

2.1.2, 2.5

3.2, 3.3

4.1.5, 4.4.2, 4.4.3

## Vocabulary

Point of View

Found Text



## Concepts

- Poetry can be created using found text in exhibits
- People experience the same event in different ways
- Students can share their own experience through writing

## Objectives

- Students will build a poem using found-text fragments
- Students will discuss how point of view can change a story

## Outline

1. Educator will introduce students to concept of point of view and lead them through an example poem-build
2. Students will free-explore the BLA exhibit and collect fragments of text from exhibit signs and artifacts that interest them.
3. Students will build a poem from the fragments using examples as a guide.
4. In a group discussion, students can voluntarily share their poems and discuss the differences in how they interpreted the exhibit.

## Introduction (5-10 min)

Inside the *Becoming Los Angeles* exhibit, lead students to a section of your choice (for example, the Mission paintings, or the Ranchero section). Introduce the concept of point of view. Depending on where the students are standing, they see different parts of the exhibit. Ask students to volunteer what they can see that other people might not be able to or might not notice. Explain that in a similar way, people who have lived in the same place (Los Angeles) have lived through and seen very different versions of Los Angeles. Some people who lived here saw it before there were any cars, or tall buildings. Some people saw it before there were any houses!

## Group Example (5-10 min)

Pass out strips of paper and explain to students that they will be exploring their point of view using “found text,” and that you’ll do an example together first. Ask students to look around this section of the hall to find a text fragment or phrase that they like or that makes them think. Build one or two examples in front of them, showing them how to cut phrases in interesting ways by violating normal structures or cutting the sentences too short. **It is important to note that the phrases don’t have to make sense—they should just be interesting or “sound cool” to the students.** Once the students have found their phrase, ask them to write it in big letters on their paper strip and post it on the wall underneath your examples. You may end up with some nonsensical phrases, but as long as it came from the text of the exhibit, feel free to use it.

Next, show students how to build a found text piece by putting some of the pieces together. Add or cut single words as necessary to help it fit. When the piece is done, read it out loud and ask students what they hear or observe. Does the poem make sense? What point of view does it present? Is it the same one they see? Why or why not?

## Exhibit Exploration (15-30 min)

Ask students to wander the entire exhibit, collecting as many phrases and words as they can in 15 minutes. Remind them not to try to fit the phrases together beforehand, but just to pick whatever attracts them. Quantity is more important for this step, and they can always cut more as they build. Students can focus on a single area or try to view the whole exhibit, but they should have at least 15 separate words or phrases by the time they’re done.

## Poem Build (15-30min)

**Note:** This can be done back in the classroom if more time is needed for the exploration

Once the students have collected poem/prose fragments, regroup and show them an example piece or two. Ask them to build their own pieces by fitting together some of the phrases they found. The piece can be short and does not have to include all of the phrases. They can add words like “and, the, except” if necessary, but they should limit that as much as possible. The pieces can be nonsensical, and students do not have to use all of the phrases they collected, but they should have a finished product to discuss or share.

## Discussion (10-15 min)

Ask students to volunteer to share their piece. Ask the group what the point of view of the poem is like. Is it happy, sad, silly, angry, tired? Does it sound like someone from today or someone from a long time ago? Is it about the land and ocean or about people or maybe animals? Encourage students to keep their descriptions positive, and the writers are welcome to help interpret their own work. If students are reluctant to share, it can help for the instructor to go first. Draw students’ attention to how different all the pieces are, but that all the students used the same place to help them write—just like people in Los Angeles through history.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR COLLECTING PHRASES

When collecting, look for a variety of phrases:

Complex or unusual nouns: (“The grandson of slaves”; “Radium Sulphur Springs“)

Complex or unusual verbs: (“became the planet Mars”; “and tenders the mark and brand in the margin”)

Prepositional phrases: (“like this City of Angels;” “on a kitchen table in New York in as little as seven days”)

Try to cut already-interesting sentences open by splitting prepositions from their objects, cutting out prepositional phrases, or splitting adjectives from their nouns:

...Death Valley stood in (for Egypt)

...an elegant refuge in the heart (of Los Angeles)

...the tick-tick-tick of the Rain Bird (sprinkler system)

Pull from artifacts themselves, and not just from exhibit text:

“...and tenders the mark and brand in the margin (as the brand assumed by him and upon examination of the record)”

-from a record of Ranchers’ brands and counterbrands

...”Oh! How it sparkles; oh! how it foams. It chases a microbe wherever it roams...”

-from an early 20<sup>th</sup> century advertisement for Radium Sulphur Springs

“Days of Thrills and Laughter”

-the name of a movie made in early Hollywood

## Sample Line List

at the time Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo arrived  
Unknown Date  
hot tar between rows  
residents used to produce desirable objects  
before being hollowed out into finished  
years when wild crops failed  
landscapes that once resembled well-kept parks  
made up a racially mixed community  
locked young women away separately  
performed in secret  
work acquiring souls...and new subjects...  
like this City of Angels  
the American people were erupting  
The grandson of slaves  
spread non-native grasses in their dung  
burned more easily and more frequently  
Now on this day comes Teresa Palomarez  
and tenders the mark and brand in the margin  
Women's work began  
She died at age 112  
Under American law he lost the right to own land  
caused the Mexican Congress to elevate  
The United States prevailed  
Plan de la ciudad de Los Angeles  
more easily bought, sold, and subdivided  
fly to new locations in swarms  
this devastator locust  
disaster completed the damage  
an elegant refuge in the heart  
settled with knives, guns, or iron knuckles

This wooden pipe  
essentially viewed as nonpersons  
shipped around Cape Horn  
crossfire between rival Chinese groups  
Calle de los Negros  
Key to Los Angeles County Jail  
Poundcake Hill  
Orange Empire Trolley Trip  
There it is! Take it!  
Deadman's Island was deemed a navigational hazard  
Pleasure parks, exotic animals, sports and other  
Oh! How it sparkles; oh! how it foams. It chases a  
microbe wherever it roams  
Radium Sulphur Springs  
on a kitchen table in New York in as little as seven  
days  
City residents limped through  
Death Valley stood in  
became the planet Mars  
Days of Thrills and Laughter  
this rickety plane  
hundreds of thousands of curious spectators  
Todd Shipyards  
Renegade skateboarding in L.A. swimming pools left  
dry  
the tick-tick-tick of the Rain Bird  
early accelerometers

## POEMS:

1.

at the time Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo arrived  
—this devastator locust—  
the American people were erupting  
before being hollowed out into finished  
hot tar between rows.  
Performed in secret  
the tick-tick-tick of the Rain Bird  
became the planet Mars:  
an elegant refuge in the heart.  
Now on this day comes Teresa Palomarez  
shipped around Cape Horn.  
She died at age 112  
on a kitchen table in New York in as little as  
seven days.  
Deadman's Island was deemed a navigational hazard  
like this City of Angels.  
There it is! Take it. [The]  
Key to Los Angeles County Jail.

2.

Poundcake Hill  
settled with knives, guns, or iron knuckles  
burned more easily and more frequently [than]  
this rickety plane.  
In years when wild crops failed,  
hundreds of thousands of curious spectators  
locked young women away separately  
in the margin.  
Women's work began  
to produce desirable objects  
The United States prevailed  
and tender[ed] the mark and brand  
Oh! How it sparkles; oh! how it foams.  
Days of Thrills and Laughter.