



DESIGN OF FORMATIVE
EXPERIENCES
FORM8840

IN YOUR
OWN WORDS
PORTFOLIO

EMILY KENT



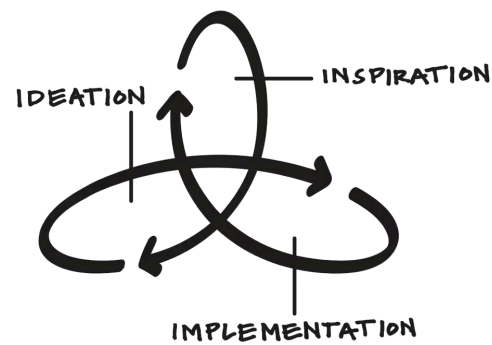
IN MY OWN WORDS

As part of our course, we created an exhibit in a museum of formation. We were invited to think individually and collectively about formation and different formative experiences.

As is often the case when asked about this, my mind went to literature and the power of being able to interpret one's experience in creative ways. In moments when I've been unable to express myself directly, I've found that my words might come more clearly through poetry or, as participants are invited to in this exhibit, by creatively interpreting my experience.

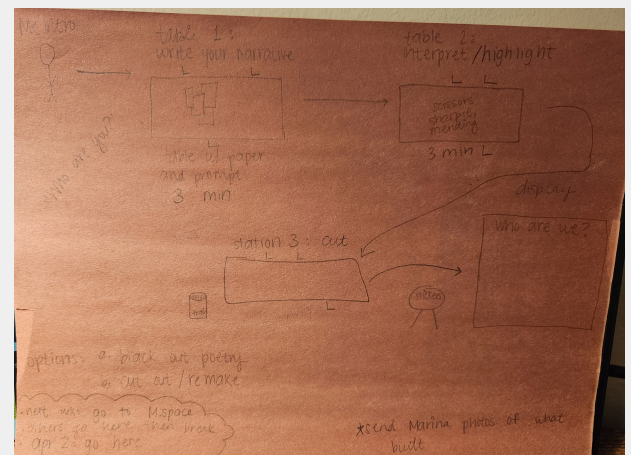
In Your Own Words developed across many iterations, paralleling IDEO's design thinking framework of inspiration, ideation, and implementation. I'm indebted to my colleagues, who often met me in the interstitial space between ideation and implementation and helped me bring this to life.

IDEO'S DESIGN THINKING FRAMEWORK

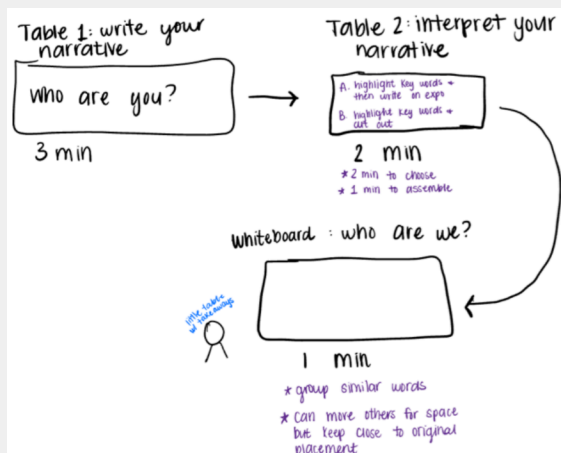


The 3 core activities of design thinking
IDEO

I drew **inspiration** from my own experiences and my research on the ways in which literature can be transformative. In discussions with my professor, it became clear that, when I spoke about literature, I was focused on the way readers interpreted the text and their own understandings. In keeping with current movements to make museum exhibits more interactive, I knew I wanted my exhibit to involve an act of interpretation and a creative one.

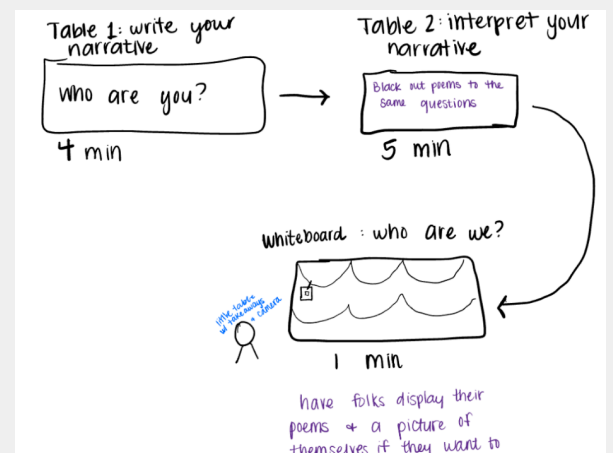


When it came time to **ideate**, I knew poetry was the ideal form given the time constraints of the participants. Initially, I imagined an adaptation of “fridge poetry”. This form provides participants with pre-selected words, and they create their own poem from them.



To **implement** this form meant that participants might want to use words that were not available, diminishing some of the personal aspect of the piece. Instead, I tested what would happen if participants wrote their own narrative, picked key words, and then created their poem on small, dry erase sheets. This option was scrapped as it created too many end pieces without a clear takeaway.

I returned to the **ideate** phase, centering myself again on the **inspiration** of the exhibit. This time, I would focus on one paper that participants could take with them, simplifying the steps and allowing for a physical reminder of the practice they engaged in. It was time for the next phase of **implementation**.



IN YOUR OWN WORDS

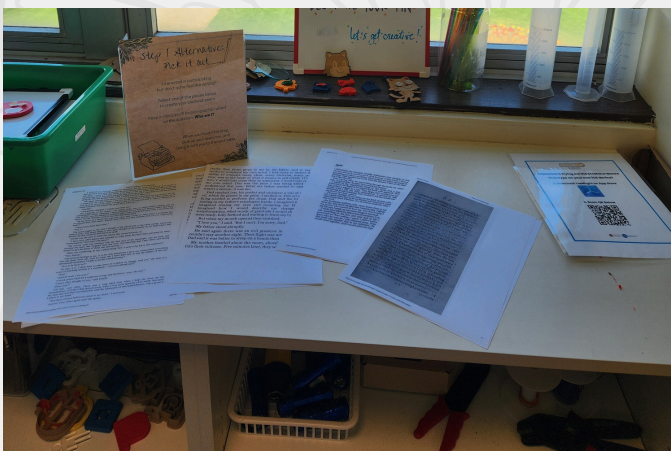
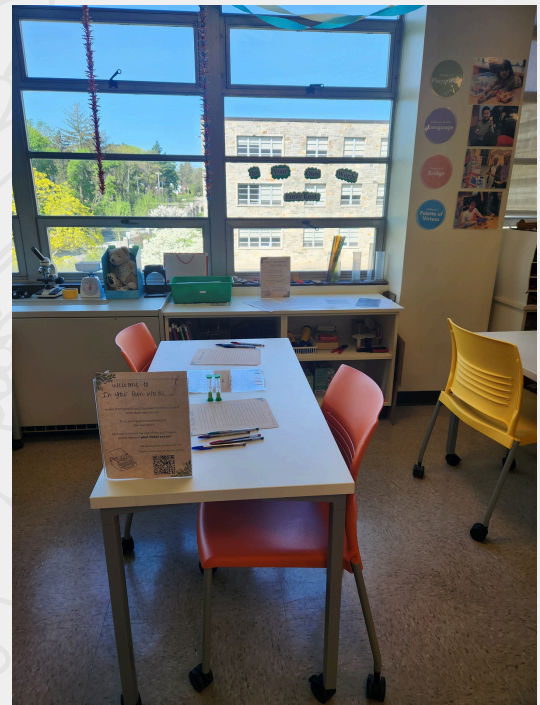
THE PROTOTYPE

The exhibit prototype had three steps.

1. *Write it out*: Participants were asked to write a brief narrative in response to the question: Who am I?
 - a. *Pick it out*: This alternative pathway for busy participants would let them select an excerpt from a novel and go straight to step 2.
2. *Make it new*: Participants were asked to make a blackout poem from their narrative or selected text.
3. *Bring us together*: Participants were asked to display their poem alongside others'.

1. WRITE IT OUT

Participants were given a sheet of paper where they could write their narrative. The sheet was lined, and the spacing was designed to give participants enough space for the next step of the exhibit. This paper also paralleled the theme of the instruction pages.



Alternatives

1A. PICK IT OUT

This alternative pathway was meant to accommodate participants who might not be able to stay for the whole exhibit as designed. I selected four texts that had strong themes of identity, self-discovery, and reflection, and then picked pivotal scenes from each. I selected two classics, a memoir, and a young adult book.

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2. MAKE IT NEW

Participants were provided with step-by-step instructions to help create a blackout poem. These are poems that are created from another piece of text, often newspaper articles or excerpts from books. Participants would box in key words, find connecting words, and create their own poem from the text, again reflecting on who they are.



3. BRING US TOGETHER

Finally, participants would display their poems alongside others that had been made. This mosaic of poems would provide participants - or visitors - with a sense of the other people who had participated, in theory connecting them to one another.

Participants could leave their contact information to get their poem back or take a sticker with a Google Drive of other poems.



IN YOUR OWN WORDS IN PRACTICE

On museum day, participants engaged with the exhibit in unexpected and exciting ways. No one utilized Step 1. Instead, all participants selected a text from the alternative pathway and created their blackout poem from these texts.

Three participants requested that they get their poems back, and one even proudly posed for a photo with hers.

[Live view](#)



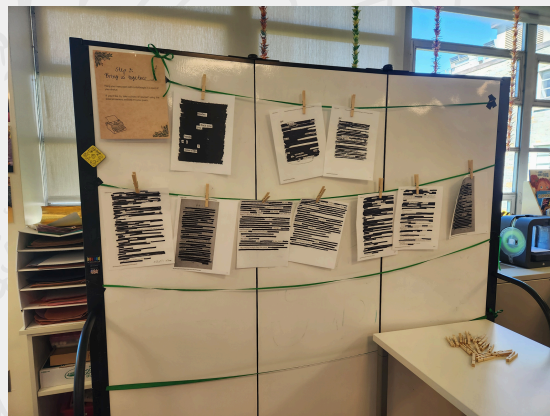
The exhibit before the museum opened



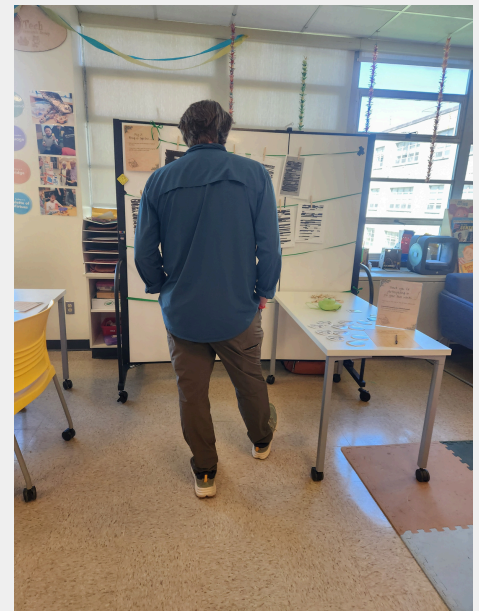
The exhibit at its height
*Not featured: two additional participants
in a breakout location*



The Step 1 options used
to test pens and keep
marker off the table



The poems created:
9 in total



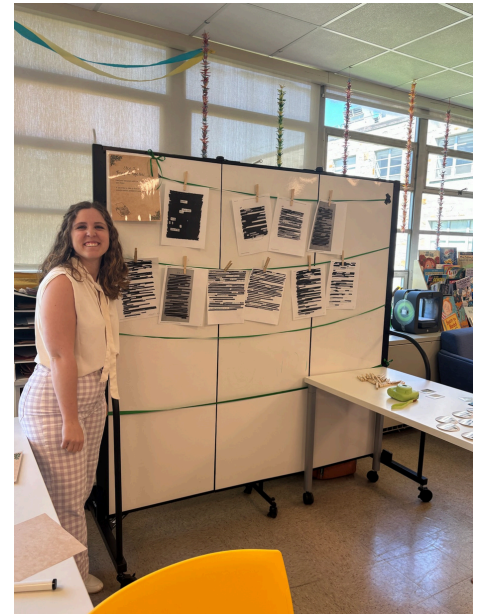
A visitor reading
through the poems

IN MY OWN WORDS

It was rewarding to see people participate with the exhibit in a way that appeared meaningful for them. Many were proud of the work they created, and many others - who weren't able or willing to participate - reviewed the poems displayed and wanted to talk with me about them.

It was clear that modifications were needed in terms of how much text participants actually engaged with, the amount I was asking them to do with the given time, and their willingness to write themselves compared to interpreting another's words into their own ideas.

Overall, even with these needed modifications, I think participants were able to interpret their experiences and the excerpts in meaningful ways. I look forward to continuing to encourage this creative interpretation.



[How it works](#)

Want to see the materials?

[Instructions](#)

[Sticker](#)

[Poems](#)