The Alchemist:  
a Found Poem Activity

Congratulations! We are officially halfway through our novel! The following activity encourages you to reflect on what we’ve read so far, and it challenges you to think about the ideas we have yet to encounter in the latter half of the book!

What is a Found Poem?

✓ A found poem takes existing, prose writing and reshapes it, reorders it, and presents it as a poem. Like a collage created from words, found poetry is often made from newspaper articles, street signs, graffiti, speeches, letters, or even other poems. The writer decides how to break up the lines and arrange them on the page.

Why Found Poetry?

✓ The Alchemist is so rich in language that is both moving and inspiring, almost like a poem, but not quite...
✓ By recasting the prose of our novel into a new genre, it challenges us as readers to look at the text in a critical way in order to pluck out the gems, while it inspires us as writers to use language to express ideas in a unique and creative way that is entirely our own.

How Do I 'Find' One?

1. Using the novel, The Alchemist, look for approximately 60 words and/or phrases that stand out in the prose.

30 words/phrases should come from pages 3-79.
✓ Through this exercise, you’re reflecting upon what you’ve read and taking some time to appreciate the author’s unique way with words as he crafts his story.

The other 30 words/phrases should come from pages 80-end.
✓ By scanning the text you have yet to read, your brain is simultaneously making predictions about what has yet to happen during the rest of the story. It will help you set a purpose for continued reading; when you come back across these words/phrases later, you’ll watch their meaning materialize on the page!
2. Make a **LIST** of the words and phrases that you find particularly powerful, moving, or interesting. Keep them in the order you found them initially, but later you can move them around to manipulate the message of your poem.

3. Look back over your list and cut out anything that is dull or unnecessary or that doesn't quite fit the poem you're now creating. Aim to cut your list in half, with only the most dynamic phrases remaining, those that could easily work together to develop a single, poetic theme.

4. You can change punctuation and make little changes to the words to make them fit together (such as change the tenses, possessives, plurals, and capitalizations).

5. Pay attention to line breaks, layout, and other elements that will emphasize important words or significant ideas in the poem. Here are some ideas for **FORMATTING** your poem:
   - You can put key words on lines by themselves to emphasize.
   - You can space words out for effect.
   - You can run words together for effect...as long as it's a clear and purposeful reflection of the poem's message!
   - You can shape the entire poem so that it's tall, or wide, or shaped like an actual object, or in a way that the words appear to take on a movement that the poem is generating.
   - Bold, italics, underline, caps, font variety, font size, color, shading...all the usual stops for unique touch-ups.

6. When you're close to an edited-down version, if you absolutely need to add a word or two to make the poem flow more smoothly, to make sense, to make a point, **you may add up to 2-3 words of your own**.

7. Choose a title; it can be a phrase from the text that you've ‘found’ OR you can make up a creative one on your own, as long as it's inspired by what you wrote and demonstrates a thematic connection to your poem as a whole. **BE unique!**

8. At the bottom of the poem, skip a space and write the following: “A ‘found poem’ inspired by *The Alchemist*, by Paul Coelho”.