

THE EXQUISITE CORPSE: A Community Creation

The WFL invites Wareham community members to join us celebrating World Art Day 2024 (4/15) and National Poetry Month (April) in a year-long challenge to create your own “Exquisite Corpse” picture or poem – or you can get really inventive and find a way to combine both! The “Exquisite Corpse” game was a collaborative effort used by artists during the Surrealist Movement intended to bring fresh perspective to their work while setting their imaginations free.

The Library will provide both online and in-house forms that can be used by any group of friends, family, school mates, co-workers, or random gatherings, to create your own uniquely interesting and surprising work. Interested in learning more about the history of “Exquisite Corpse” poetry/art? ALA and MoMA articles and site links follow these instructions.

Creating Your “Corpse” Rules, almost anything goes EXCEPT:

1. Imagery and verbiage that is exaggeratedly graphic, overtly hostile and/or exhibits extreme biases just for the sake of eliciting a negative reaction.
2. Submissions must be original (words and artwork); any graphics should be original or open-sourced materials that have the permission of the original creator to be utilized by others.

The steps are simple:

1. Gather 3 or more persons together – the more the merrier!
2. Use the formatted “Corpse Outline” to capture your words or imagery OR create your own sentence/anatomical structure.
3. Make sure that the outline is folded hiding each person’s “addition,” before it’s passed to the next person – this ensures an interesting and surprising result.
4. Once the outline is completed, unfold it to reveal the final “corpse.”
 - a. If you are creating a “corpse” poem, this is when you may add in articles, conjunctions, and revise verb tenses if you’d like (if you keep them as written, it’s more challenging).
 - Consider how you’d like the poem to be presented – on one line, multiple lines, one word per line, etc. – for the maximum desired effect.
 - b. If you are creating a “corpse” drawing, it really needs nothing more at this point; but if you REALLY want to add a few more lines, text, or other embellishments, you may do so with your group’s creative input.
 - Consider how you’d like the poem to be presented – framed, matted, as is – for the maximum desired effect.

“Exquisite” Poetry:

If you are interested in illustrating the work – paint, draw, collage, photograph, film, graphics - you may create your own artwork to accompany the poem for submission to the library OR you may join

us monthly during our Art of CANVA design classes to illustrate the work using the graphics program on site. When creating your artwork, consider a group collaboration, or perhaps one of the group members, for your "artist(s)." If you'd prefer a librarian to design the illustrations/graphics to accompany the work, that can be arranged as well.

"Exquisite" Pictures:

You may always reach out to the Reference & Outreach Librarian for assistance with your process or to ask questions.

All Works:

1. Sign off on the permission for WFL to use your creation and SUBMIT your work to the WFL!
2. Submissions MUST be received by December 31, 2023 to be added to the final collected work.

With your permission, submissions of your work will be captured digitally for the Library website and in a "book" format onsite (if you'd like to donate the physical piece). The collected works will be edited and arranged for public viewing during the 2024 National Poetry month and a celebration of our community's collected creativity will be held at the Library.

Please note, if you'd like to keep your original physical work, please bring it to the library during scheduled open hours so that we may capture it digitally.

If your work is done with a computer graphic design program and you can share the file, please send a copy of the work to:

- Melissa Dyer (Reference & Outreach Librarian) at mdyer@sailsinc.org

Any questions, suggestions or concerns may also be directed to Ms. Dyer by email or phone at 508.295.2343 x1012.



(1)

Exquisite Corpse is a collaborative poetry game that traces its roots to the Parisian **Surrealist movement**. Exquisite Corpse is played by several people, each of whom writes a word on a sheet of paper, folds the paper to conceal it, and passes it on to the next player for their contribution.

In order to write a poem, participants should agree on a sentence structure or line length beforehand. For example, each sentence in the poem could be structured "Adjective, Noun, Verb, Adjective, Noun." Articles and verb tenses may be added later or adjusted after the poem has been written. The game was also adapted to drawing, where one participant would draw the head of a figure, the next the torso, etc. The name "Exquisite Corpse" comes from a line of poetry created using the technique: "The exquisite corpse will drink the young wine."

The only hard and fast rule of Exquisite Corpse is that each participant is unaware of what the others have written, thus producing a surprising—and sometimes absurd—yet often beautiful poem. Exquisite Corpse is a great way to collaborate with other poets, and to free oneself from imaginative constraints or habits. Remember, many of the most effective phrases or **metaphors** are those that are most surprising.

How do you bypass your thinking mind to make art?

Surrealists played the game Exquisite Corpse to stimulate creativity through collaboration. Players would contribute to a drawing of a figure without seeing what the others had done. Like a game of Telephone, the figure would become stranger with each player's addition. The name Exquisite Corpse came from a version in which each contributor added a word without knowing the ones that came before, resulting in the bizarre phrase, "The exquisite corpse will drink the new wine."

If you're looking for creative inspiration, feel intimidated by the blank page, or are simply seeking a fun game to play with others, try making your own Exquisite Corpse by following these instructions or watching the Spanish-language video below:

- **Take a piece of paper and fold it into four equal parts.**
- **Draw or collage on the top section of the paper** to create the head of an imaginary character. Use whatever materials you have around you.
- **Fold your image back to conceal it.** Extend the lines of your character's neck over the edge of the fold so that your collaborator will know how to connect their image to yours.
- **Pass the paper on to a friend or family member.** Keep your image hidden and have them add a body to your figure in the middle section of the page.
- **Repeat!** Pass the paper to a third person, concealing the first two sections of the page, and have them add the legs. Then hide that section and pass to a fourth person to add the feet. Remember to draw lines over the fold into each new section so the following person knows where to start.
- **Unfold the page and reveal your collaborative image.**

Surrealist artists played this game to get unpredictable results far stranger than an individual could make on their own. How did it feel for you? Were you surprised by the final image?

Sources:

(1) Academy of American Poets. (n.d.). Exquisite Corpse. *Academy of American Poets*.

<https://poets.org/glossary/exquisite-corpse>

(2) *Make Your Own Exquisite Corpse | Magazine | MoMA*. (n.d.). The Museum of Modern Art.

<https://www.moma.org/magazine/articles/457>

Example of a drawn "Exquisite Corpse" shown below:



(Courtesy of MoMA)

(2)

Wareham's "WORKS" 2023 - THE EXQUISITE CORPSE: A Poem

(Write your word at left to correspond to the word form at right and then fold on - - - - lines to keep it a surprise; unfold when page is complete to add articles, prepositions, and conjunctions as you'd like; submit to the WFL with your artwork...or not 😊.) **HAVE FUN!**

Your word: **Adjective**

----- fold -----

Your word: **Adjective**

----- fold -----

Your word: **Noun**

----- fold -----

Your word: **Verb**

----- fold -----

Your word: **Adjective**

----- fold -----

Your word: **Noun**

----- fold -----

Your word: **Adjective**

----- fold -----

Your word: **Noun**

----- fold -----

Your word: **Verb**

----- fold -----

Your word: **Adverb**

----- fold -----

Your word: **Adjective**

----- fold -----

Your word: **Noun**

----- fold -----

Your word: **Adjective**

----- fold -----

Your word: **Noun**

----- fold -----

Your word: **Verb**

----- fold -----

Your word: **Adjective**

----- fold -----

Your word: **Noun**

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THE EXQUISITE CORPSE: A Picture

(Draw, collage, graffiti, paint, design your picture below to correspond to a section of a body at right and then fold on - - - lines to keep it a surprise; unfold when page is complete to add embellishments as you'd like; submit to the WFL with your artwork...or not 😊.) **HAVE FUN!**

Head/Neck

-- fold--

-- fold--

Torso/Arms

-- fold--

-- fold--

Legs/Feet

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THE EXQUISITE CORPSE: A Picture CHALLENGE

(First, fold the paper in half; draw, collage, graffiti, paint, design your picture below to correspond to a section on the LEFT, fold on - - - lines to keep it a surprise; when right side is complete; turn page over and complete the RIGHT side of page; at bottom, unfold completed drawing to add embellishments as you'd like; submit to the WFL with your artwork...or not 😊.) **HAVE FUN!**

|
fold
|

Head left

Head right

-- fold--

-- fold--

Torso/arms left

Torso/arms right

-- fold--
Legs/feet left

-- fold--
Legs/feet right

|
fold
|