

Blackout poems – Update from Curiosity

Blackout poetry is a way of creating new works of art without starting with a blank page.

We'll give you a creative prompt. All you need to do is cross out some words and leave others legible to create your own original work.

How a blackout poem works

Your finished text might look something like this:

~~It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age~~
~~of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of~~
~~belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light,~~
~~it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was~~
~~the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had~~
nothing ~~before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were~~
~~all going direct the other way in short, the period was so far~~
like the ~~present period, that some of its noisiest authorities~~
~~insisted on its being received, for good or for evil, in the~~
~~superlative degree of comparison only.~~

Example from *A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens

Finished poem

Wisdom was nothing like
The noisiest authorities

On the following page, you'll find a prompt to create your own blackout poem. Get your pen out and start scribbling!

Update from the Curiosity Rover

In 2011, the Curiosity Rover set out to explore the surface of Mars. Since then, it has collected rock samples, explored ancient lake beds and discovered some of the building blocks of life. As of 2025, it's still sending mission updates.



Use this as a starting point for your blackout poem

Earth planning date: Wednesday, March 12, 2025

What IS That Lumpy, Bumpy Rock?

The days are getting shorter and colder for Curiosity as we head into winter. So our rover is sleeping in a bit before waking up to a busy plan.

We are seeing a lot of rocks with different, interesting textures, so Curiosity's day begins with a lot of targeted imaging of this interesting area. The two rocks right in front of us are different from anything that we have looked at before on the mission, so we are eager to know what they are. We are taking Mastcam images of "Manzana Creek" and "Palo Comado," two of these interestingly textured rocks, and also of an area named "Vincent Gap," where the rover disturbed some bedrock and exposed some regolith by driving over it in the prior plan.

After a nap, Curiosity wakes up to get in her arm exercise. The rock of interest has jagged, vertical surfaces and a lot of crazy rough texture. Examining this rock is even more challenging because our primary targets are on the left side of the rock, rather than the side that is facing the rover.

The next morning, after again getting to sleep in a bit, Curiosity will make some more targeted observations, starting with another dust-devil survey.

Curiosity will then be ready to drive away. Today's drive is on slightly better terrain that we have been seeing recently, with fewer large and pointy rocks. Though, the mobility rover planners still have to be careful about picking the safest path through. We're heading about 25 meters (about 82 feet) to another rock target named "Humber Park," where we hope to do additional contact science. After the drive, we have our standard set of post-drive imaging, a Mastcam solar tau, and then an early-morning Navcam cloud observation.

Adapted from a Curiosity update written by Ashley Stroupe, Mission Operations Engineer at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, and provided by NASA.