

Book Club Kit

NOT EVERY LOVE STORY IS WRITTEN IN THE STARS



FINDING  
JUPITER

*Kelis Rowe*



Dear Reader,

It was important to me that my debut novel feature creative teens with joyful, artistic outlets. Orion is a studious, competitive athlete who plays guitar, but only in private because he's shy about it. Jupiter is a brilliant artist who creates found poetry to process her thoughts and feelings. Both characters are dealing with the repercussions of unavailable or absent fathers, and they make art for themselves, not for an audience, an important representation of self-care for modern day teens.

Originally, Jupiter was going to create poetry in verse for her journals. But there's a magic to found poetry. In a world where many young readers search for books that feel like home, I want to show them that they can find their own reflections and discover deep personal truths in words previously intended for another purpose. What a gift to be able to find poetry anywhere. I hope Jupiter and Orion's love starts conversations that will heal and uplift Black people and enrich everyone who reads their story. Thank you so much for reading my debut novel.

XO, Kelis Rowe

# Discussion Questions

## Getting started:

To begin with, ask for general thoughts on *Finding Jupiter*. What did members like about it? How did they feel about the characters? Was the book what they were expecting? If not, in what ways? Would anyone like to expand on their feelings about the novel?

### 1 Finding Jupiter

'If you tell people your name's Jupiter, they have questions, you know?'—p. 136

Why is the title of the novel *Finding Jupiter*? Which Jupiter is being found? Discuss the implication of self-discovery, against the moreconventional romance of stargazing, that comes up during the story. Does the name Ray—the one Jupiter is known by—carry additional meaning, as well as being her father's? If so, what does anyone think this suggests?

### 2 Perspective

'I can feel her watching me, but I'm afraid to look at her.'—p. III

What impact does the dual narrative voice of the novel have on the reader? How would the reading experience differ if it was written in, say, third person, past tense? How does Rowe create differing personalities through the two narrative voices? Why does this matter to the development of the plot?

### 3 Found poetry

'An ember stoked by deep love / Made promises as sure as the grave.'—p. 180

What did members think of the found poetry that forms the backbone of the book? You might like to consider the author's note at the end. What is significant about the three books from which the poetry is made? (Establish who has read these books: *The Great Gatsby*, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and *Black Boy*.) What comparisons, if any, can be made between these books and the plot of *Finding Jupiter*? How does the form—found poetry—relate to the wider narrative of Rowe's novel? Consider the idea of discovery of something new from something old, of forging anew from what has gone before.

### 4 Orion

'Very funny. I know that one. It's the three stars in a row ... there.'—p. 132

How did readers respond to Orion as a character? What is the importance of his name? Is he a typical 'star-crossed' lover? Compare Orion to other romantic leads—what are the similarities? What are the differences? How does he compare to Ray? You might like to consider his absolute belief in his feelings for Ray coupled with his nervousness and shyness, compared to Ray's constant uncertainty coupled with herself-confidence and assuredness of her own desires.

# Discussion Questions

## 5 Friendships

'Bri knows me better than I thought.'—p. 296

What parts do Mo and Bri play in the novel? How do they contrast with the two protagonists? Why is the novel about Orion and Ray, and not their friends? Is it important that Orion and Ray only meet because of Mo and Bri?

## 6 Coping mechanisms

'... she disappears into the back garden for her Sunday meditation.'—p. 94

Throughout the novel we see various coping mechanisms from different characters. Some are emotional, some relate to identified conditions. Discuss how different characters find ways to cope with what they're dealing with. You might like to consider not just Orion's swim rituals, or Ray's art and poetry, but also Ray's mother and her garden, or Orion's father channeling energies into, e.g., Orion's swimming, or supporting Ray anonymously.

## 7 Secrets and secrecy

'It's fine. It's not a secret or anything. But all fairy tales start like that, right?'—p. 115

What part do secrecy and revelation play in the novel? How important is it that both Ray and Orion have parts of their history that must be revealed to each other? And how does this contrast with the secrets held from them by their families? How does Rowe present the decisions of Orion's father and Ray's mother? Who felt sympathetic toward them withholding the truth? Why? Or why not?

## 8 First love

'Love ends, but... / While it shines, you stand in the sun.'—p. 329

What does Rowe have to say about the idea of first love? What are Ray and Orion's starting points in this regard? And how does this change or develop across the novel? How do Orion and Ray come to understand the idea of first love, by the end? How does the countdown of days that start some chapters fit into this? Consider the final lines of the novel—the end to Ray's poem. What does anyone take this to mean?



# 5 Things To Know About Kelis Rowe

Adapted from an interview with Female First UK

**1** I did things late-ish, and that's okay. I started writing my first book at **39**. Sold it the same year I had my second child at **42**. Please, if you see a life for yourself that looks different than your life today, keep visualizing it and dreaming about it until the visions turn into actions toward that life. If it's a deep desire that feels like it's been with you forever, that's your purpose. Get after it!

**2** I have social anxiety, and that's okay too. I rarely ate in the cafeteria in high school. I'd eat under the stairs outside or share poetry in a more intimate dim space of the theater with the other artsy kids. I'm a fish out of water most places, but my life is full of friends and invitations. Do I accept the invitations? Yes, a lot of the times. Do I need at least two days of solitude and silence to recover? Sure! Do I get those two days? Sometimes. Now, as a published author, I'm going to have to do a lot more socializing, but interacting with readers, especially teen readers, who are touched by the book that I wrote for them is worth the amount of growth it's going to take me to keep writing for them. This is my dream and it requires growth and I'm here for it.

**3** I love Beyoncé. I really, really love Beyoncé. Aside from being Queen of my zodiac sign, she creates art with intention and meaning that is often clearly meant to celebrate, uplift and inspire Black and marginalized people, yet it inspires her fans from all walks of life. Goals.

**4** I love James Taylor. When I was a little kid in the **80's**, I saw him singing "Jellyman Kelly" on Sesame Street. It was the combination of his voice, his nice-person face, the silly song— whatever it was I was hooked. There was a black girl sitting right next to him singing along and I was so jealous. His Greatest Hits cassette tape was the first music I purchased when my brother got me a boom box in middle school. I attend his concerts solo, because I don't know anyone who loves him as much as me and you are not welcome unless you stand and sing along to everything- don't kill my vibe. The main character in my book is listening to James Taylor and Beyoncé in key scenes in Finding Jupiter.

**5** I'm **6'2"** barefoot. I'm from a tall family— the shortest person in my family is **5'10"**, the tallest person is **6'6"**. When you see me in person, you'll probably comment on it, which is fine. But to save you the trouble: Yes, I played basketball but only recreationally. Yes, it feels great towering over most people in the room, like an Amazon warrior queen, especially wearing 3-inch heels. Sure! I'll grab that item for you off the top shelf, my pleasure.

# FINDING JUPITER'S LAVENDER LEMONADE

Jupiter's mom has the greenest of thumbs and lavender is the star of her lush herb garden. While you'll never catch her with store-bought lavender simple syrup, you should feel free to buy it wherever you buy your beverages. Also, feel free to make your own simple syrup the day before, and elevate basic lemonade for your book club meeting.

## What you'll need:

- Culinary grade fresh or dried lavender flowers
- White sugar
- Meyer lemons (or any variety)
- Boiled and cold water
- Cute glasses, straws and Ice

## Lavender Simple Syrup:

1. Add a tablespoon of lavender flowers, or a handful of fresh lavender to 1 cup of sugar.
2. Mix with your gloved hand and rub the lavender between your fingers or mix with a spoon, pressing the flowers releasing the aroma and oils and all that good stuff.
3. Pour 2 cups of boiling water on the mixture and stir until the sugar is dissolved.
4. After 30 minutes strain the liquid into a mason jar or glass container for storage.

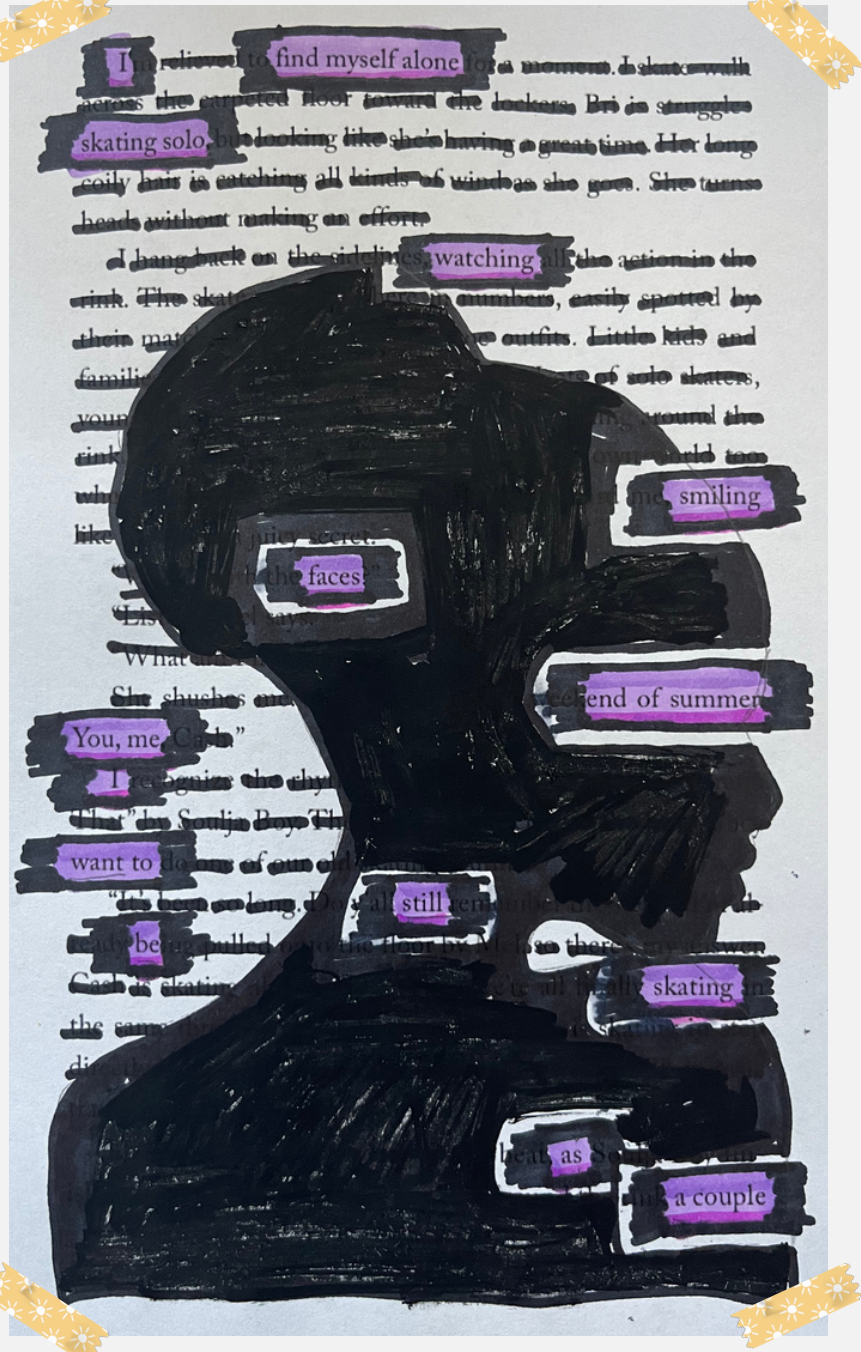
## The Lemonade:

Use the lavender simple syrup in a 1:1 ratio to water with fresh-squeezed lemon juice to your taste to make it by the glass, or a whole pitcher. For example, 1 cup of water to 1 cup of syrup with lemon juice to your desired taste. Adjust as needed.

Like creating found poetry, this recipe comes down to a little bit of this and a little bit of that. There's no exact science-- like art! Be sure to use sliced lemon and fresh sprigs of lavender to garnish. Enjoy!



# Found Poetry Activity



# About The Poetry in Finding Jupiter...

I created the poems for Finding Jupiter before I ever had a story. I knew I wanted to include poetry crafted by the main character, but I had no idea who she was. I knew she would create poetry, so I wrote a poem (the one performed on Jupiter and Orion's date night) and I kept exploring. I considered haikus and rhymes, before landing on found poetry. I sat down with three of my favorite old books from my school years— *The Great Gatsby*, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and *Black Boy*, and tabbed the moments in each book that marked the height of emotion for the main characters— where the language is the most expressive, and got to work finding poems.

I hope that you're inspired to find poetry wherever there are words, and that the writers among you, have been inspired to write stories that feel like home to you.

Happy creating!

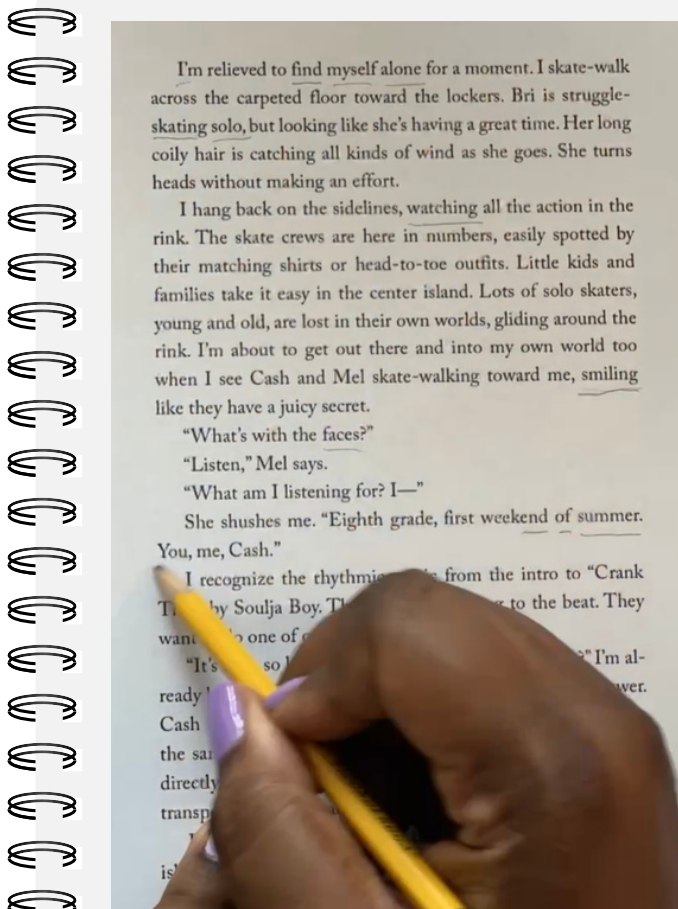


# Finding Poetry

## Materials

- A page from an aggressively used book from a thrift store or a copy from a page in your favorite book. Tip: The more action or emotion on the page, the more poetic the words.
- Pencil with an eraser
- Sharpies, pens, markers, paint-- basically your art supplies of choice
- Thick construction paper or a notebook and any kind of adhesive or craft tape if you want to "frame" your creation

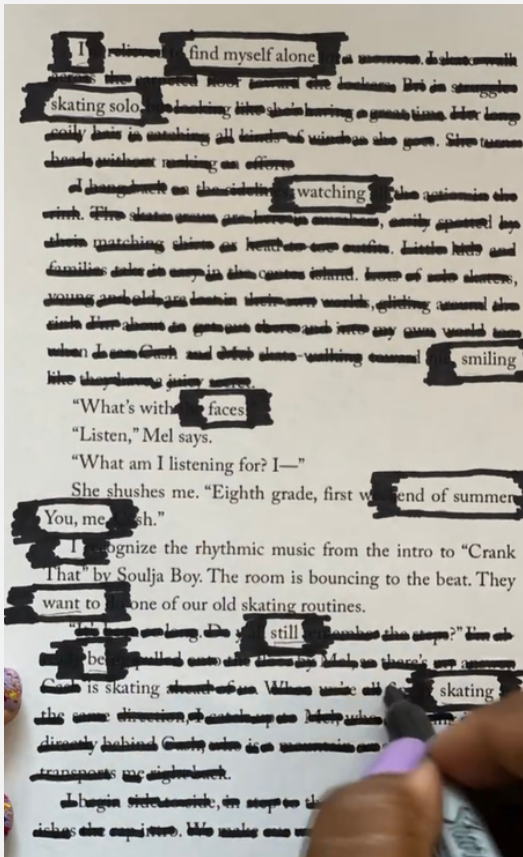
## STEP 1: Create Your Poem



Same as Ray does in the beginning of Finding Jupiter, scan each line on the page and with a pencil, lightly mark each word that you find interesting. There's no such thing as marking too many words. The more words you select the better. Make as many passes as you need to until you've marked all the adjectives, verbs and nouns that speak to you.

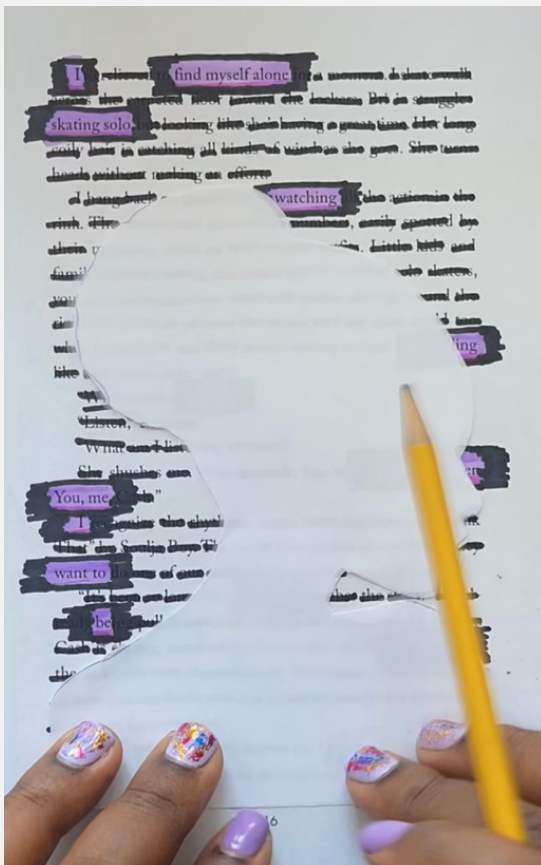
Read the words in the order that they appear and you'll be surprised how quickly phrases start to materialize. Erase the words you no longer need until you have your poem. There's a little bit of magic in this step because you're in the process of creating something that doesn't exist in the world yet. That's the amazing thing about art and the written word.

## STEP 2: Make It Pretty



If you're not feeling artsy, just take a black sharpie and draw a rectangle around every word, then blacken every bit of white space on the page. Make it more interesting by creating interesting shapes or 3D boxes (see example on the next page) and strike through all remaining words on the page and stop there.

## STEP 3: Add The Sauce



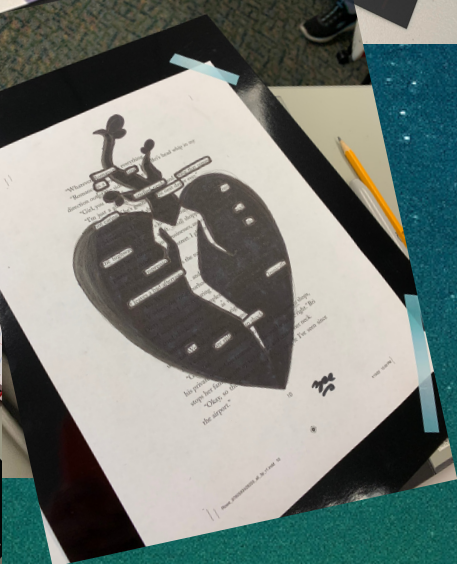
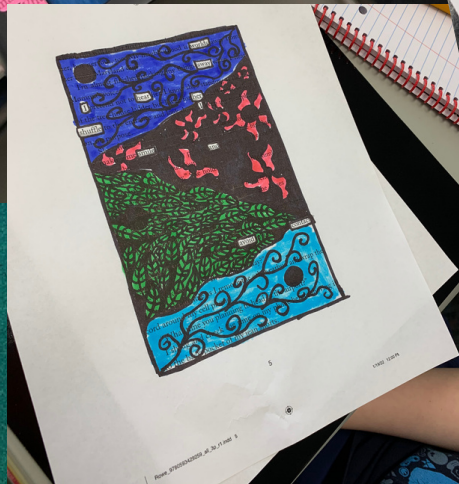
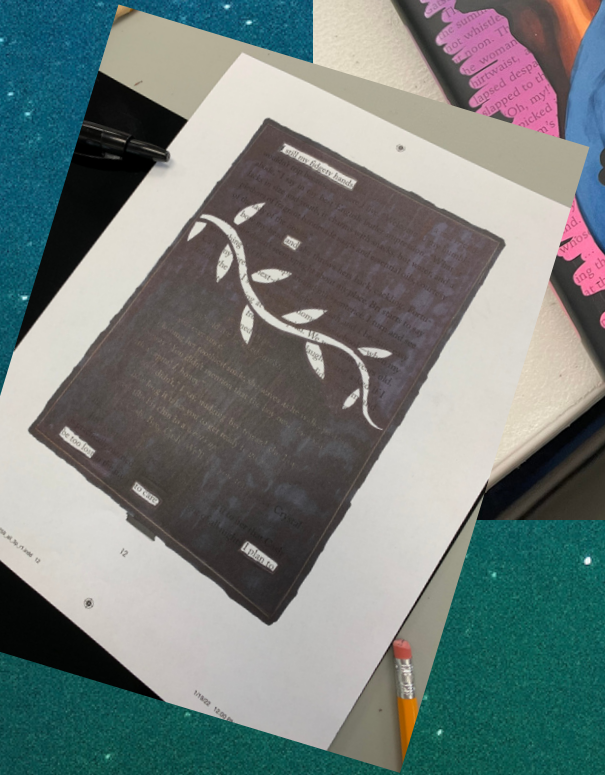
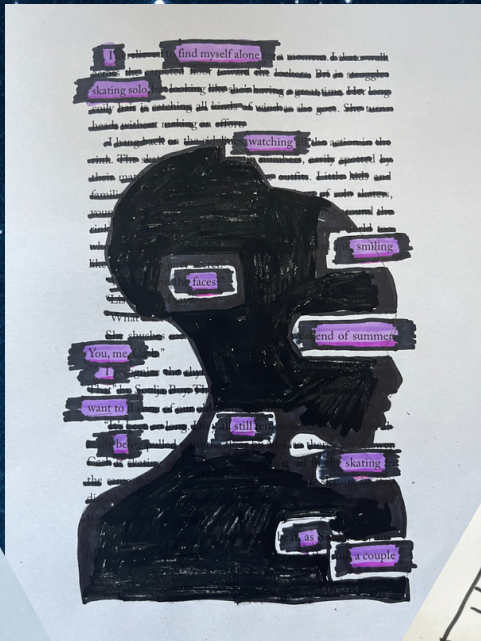
If your poem hasn't inspired a specific work of art yet, take a look at the examples on the next page, or google "blackout poetry" to spark ideas. If your poem is bright and hopeful, consider depicting the sun. If the poem is somber and reflective, consider art related to the night sky, or a moody silhouette like I did here. I drew it free-hand and cut it out so that I could trace the outline in pencil. I filled it in with a sharpie, taking care to avoid my lovely poem and there you have it.

There is a creator in all of us. Always remember that the creating of the art (or poetry or story) is the gift, even more than the art itself.

I made timelapse videos of myself creating the piece in this tutorial and others. You can find them on TikTok.

Create  
and

Be  
Well



Kel

# SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS ONLINE



#FindingJupiter

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[www.kelisrowe.com](http://www.kelisrowe.com)



WALKER  
BOOKS