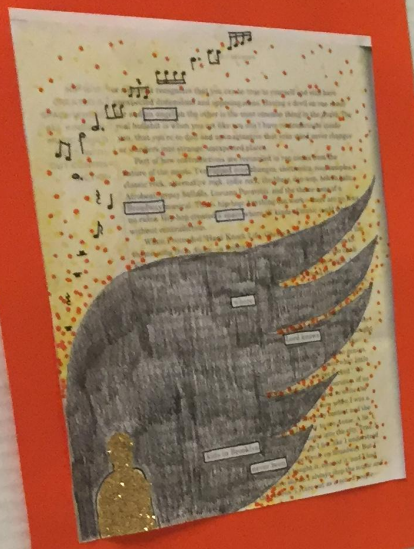
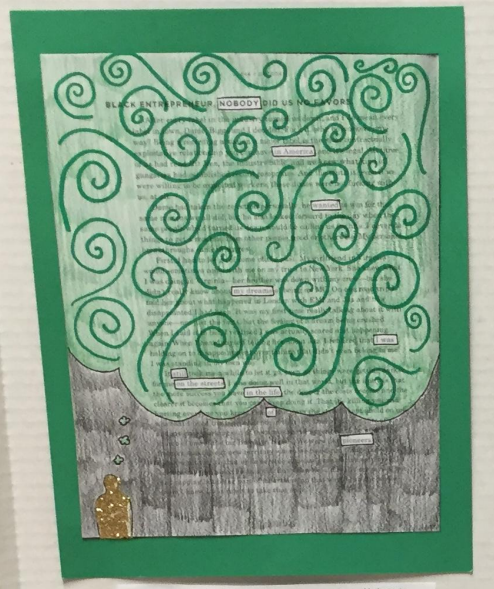
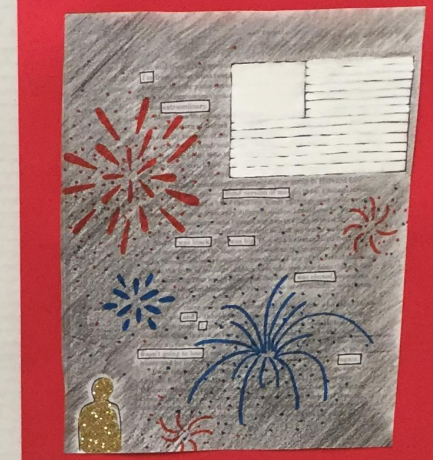


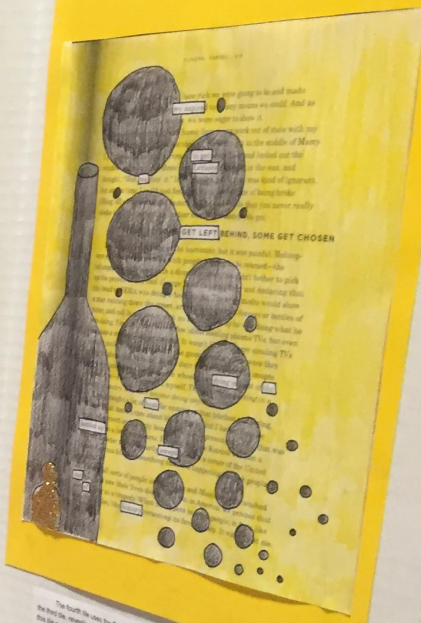
The first tile addresses Jay-Z's own hopeful story. The key terms for this tile are "angel," "space," and "kids in Brooklyn." Jay-Z is the angel who represents one of the few young black men who overcome the racism that forces them to choose the crooked ladder and stay on it throughout their lives. The gold figure, who is gold because of his value and power even in such darkness, represents an anonymous young black American man. He will appear in each tile through justaposing the dark gray environment of the figure (which represents the racism and poverty) with gangs due to the systemic racism and oppression that work against him in such cheerful yellow and orange lifestyle). I emphasize the rights of Broadway rap comments, and a generally prosperous urban lifestyle). I emphasize the rights of Broadway rap comments, and a poverty/disenfranchisement and the life of creativity and prosperity as few young black men get to live. Jay-Z is one of the few who get access to these spaces, while other people like him are rejected from there. The rising music get access to these spaces, while other people like him are symbolize Jay-Z's rise to prosperity and creativity through his music. Finally, the religious imagery in this poem, which appears in the repeating angel and the Lord who is knowing, draws attention to the injustice of this situation and suggest that redemption must be forthcoming.



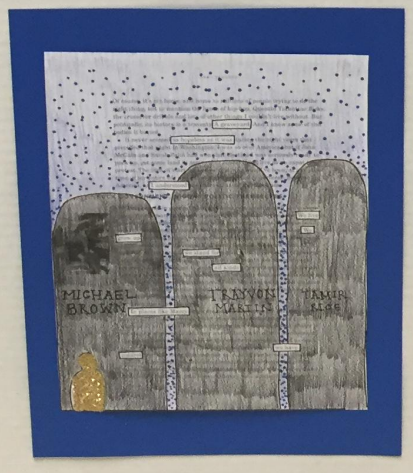
The second tile addresses the more common experience of young black men in America, who continue to struggle against poverty and oppression like pioneers. The key terms for this tile are "America," "dreams," "streets," and "pioneers." When we synthesize these tiles, we can see that unlike Jay-Z, many of these men have dreams that they never realize because of the systemic racism that works against their creativity and ambition and positions them as inherently criminal and hopeless. The color green represents prosperity, as it is reminiscent of the green color of money and abundance and growth of springtime. While the gold figure dreams of this prosperity and achieving his dreams, he remains shrouded in darkness – he is prevented from reaching these dreams because of the systemic racism and oppression that holds him back. He must, therefore, make do with the living he can make through becoming involved in gangs. Just as this figure is separate from his dreams and the life he truly wants to live, so too are young black men on the streets from successful and privileged people who lead privileged and prosperous lives.



The third tile addresses the hope many young black Americans experienced when Obama was elected, but reveals the reality that they continue to experience political disenfranchisement – just because we elect a black president does not mean racism no longer exists. The key terms for this tile are "black," "elected," and "lose." The poetry represents the excitement and hope of some young black Americans after the election of Obama. He looks like them and organized communities in poverty-stricken urban areas that resembled the areas many of them grew up in. However, it is through considering the artwork that surrounds the poetry that we can understand the whole picture: the gold figure remains shrouded in darkness, living a life of criminality because of the forces of systemic racism and oppression that act against him. While he celebrates the election with fireworks and excitement from his disenfranchised position, the American flag, which represents the American government, remains whitewashed. Though we had a black president, most of our government is made up of white men. Though we had a black president, corruption leads to the political disenfranchisement of black Americans. The flag's immovability and rigidness represents the truth that this system of white control in government is so well-established and maintained that it is virtually impossible for marginalized groups such as young black men to become involved in government today.



The fourth tile uses the RSM "Expression" to explore another angle of the claim made by the first tile, revealing the implications of such political disenfranchisement. The key terms for this tile are "depression," "hopeless," and "hungry." The poetry reveals the disparities between the systems of control rising black men, which include poverty and stability, and America's actual treatment of them, instead of suffering their gains, they are stamped and forgotten (as the treatment of the poor). Instead of celebrating, which, Jay-Z's text describes, the color yellow in the tile focuses on the idea of increasing Katrina, which, they are stamped and he represents the failure on behalf of government to protect black people from the storm and fight, it is oppression of these people in fear of the sun (in other words, instead of cheering the sun and light, it is the building in the gold figure in darkness and in a life of criminality. When synthesized with the tile, it is clear that the implications of political disenfranchisement are quite real. Even when they are left to die, as they were in the aftermath of the hurricane, they are left to suffer and quietly die, as they were in the aftermath of the hurricane. They are left to suffer and quietly die, as they were in the overcome the power of the repressive forces that work against them.



The final tile explains that involvement in gangs, as a result of oppression and systemic racism, becomes a viable and even secure way of life for many young black men in America. They key terms for this tile are "graveyard," "hopeless," "places like Marcy," and "control." The poetry reveals that even though this life of crime is dangerous and sometimes fatal, gangs offer security and belonging that young black men sometimes need to survive and cope with their lack of opportunity. The calming colors blue and purple contrast with the ominous gravestones in which the gold figure is concealed, revealing the truth that while being a black man in a poor community in America is dangerous, gang involvement offers some measure of peace and control over the outcome of the events of one's own life. Even if young black men cannot control the trigger fingers of white cops, they can control their own streets and their own community. Although they cannot control whether they live or die, they can control the security they have during their lives.