



ODE TO A VEGETABLE

Grade Level

4-8

Length of Lesson

45-60 minutes

Objective

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to create multiple forms of poetry.

Materials Needed

- Copy of [Ode to an Onion](#), by Alexandria Giardino

Standards

Common Core

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.4.5;
RL.5.2; RL.5.4; RL.5.4;
RL.6.4; RL.7.4; W.4.9;
W.5.9; W.4.3; W.5.3;
W.6.3; W.7.3

Lesson Summary

This lesson is designed to introduce or strengthen students' skills of writing poetry. Students will write multiple "odes" to vegetables using simple, common poetic forms. This lesson would work well in a larger poetry unit.

Suggested Sequence of Events:

1. Read through the AITC Seasons Ag Mag to learn more about specialty crop and vegetable production in Illinois.
2. Read *Ode to an Onion*, by Alexandria Giardino, to learn the (fictional) story behind Pablo Nerudo's poem "Ode to an Onion."
3. Depending on the age of your students, you may also choose to read some or all of Nerudo's poem, available both online and in the back of *Ode to an Onion*.
4. Complete the activity following the procedures:
 - Ask students to make a list of their favorite vegetables.
 - Next, have them choose a few of their vegetables and make a list of the qualities of each. You may also choose to have them practice using word webs or other graphic organizers utilized in your classroom.
 - Share the types and examples of different poetic forms provided (or choose your own) and ask students to choose a poetic form to use to write their "Ode to a Vegetable" poem.
 - For older students, and if time allows, you might have students write poems in more than one form.
4. Whole class discussion and reflection of activity. Ask students to share their "odes" to the small groups or the whole class. Discuss the different poetic elements and styles used by each student.

TEACHER RESOURCES

Background Information:

- Ode poems were originally written in Ancient Greece and were meant to be performed publicly. Later, English romantic poets used this form to express emotions using rich, descriptive language. In the present day, the term “ode” is used to describe an outpouring of praise for something. Modern odes have evolved over time to reflect many different styles and forms. There are many online resources to learn more about odes and read examples.
- Chilean poet Pablo Nerudo wrote a total of 225 odes, all of them about ordinary, everyday objects. They serve as a great example for students of how we can write poems about *anything!* Some of these odes were also about food, including tomatoes, corn, and artichokes. All are available at various places online and would serve as excellent resources for this lesson.

Extension Ideas:

- Incorporate this lesson into a larger poetry unit and/or study of poetic elements.
- Have students who chose the same vegetable compare their poems.
- Have students research other poetic forms and try to re-write one of their poems using this new form.
- Have students create other poems using their choice of any of our AITC Ag Mag topics.
- Invite a specialty crop farmer who grows vegetables into your classroom to talk about pig farming.
- Create a “Poetry Garden” bulletin board in your classroom to display students’ poetry.
- Incorporate student poems into your school garden project. Poems can be laminated and attached to stakes and placed in the garden near plantings of each vegetable.
- Go to agintheclassroom.org to contact your County Ag Literacy Coordinator for free classroom sets of our Ag Mags!

If students need some inspiration, share these examples with them:

- *Acrostic Poem: the first letter of each line is arranged vertically to spell a word, usually the topic of the poem.*

Example:

Can words capture the beauty of a carrot?

After months of growing, only just now ready to be pulled, no

Ripped, from the clutches of the warm brown earth, quickly brushed off and

Ready to snap between the molars of a hungry gardener.

Other vegetables stand no chance, when compared to the

Tremendous technicolor beauty of a fresh orange carrot,

Shaded from the sun for so long, but now ready to serve its final purpose.

TEACHER RESOURCES

- *Autobiographical Poem: usually written from the point of view of the author, but this version asks students to pretend they are the vegetable.*

Structure of the poem:

Line 1: ___ Your name
Line 2: __, __, __ 3 personal characteristics or physical traits
Line 3: Brother or sister of ___ or son/daughter of ___
Line 4: Who loves __, __, and __ 3 people, things, ideas
Line 5: Who feels ___ about ___ 1 emotion about 1 thing
Line 6: Who needs __, __, and __ 3 things you need
Line 7: Who gives __, __, and __ 3 objects you share
Line 8: Who fears __, __, and __ 3 items
Line 9: Who'd like to see, __ 1 place, or person
Line 10: Who dreams of __ 1 item or idea
Line 11: A plant of _____ (location, etc.)
Line 12: Nickname, or repeat your name from Line 1

Example:

Green bean
Long, skinny, very green
Cousin of the less beloved lima bean
Who loves warm soil, full sun, and summer rain
Who feels hatred about caterpillars
Who needs long sunny days, no frost, and busy pollinators
Who gives fresh summer flavor to eaters, nitrogen to the soil, and shade to the earthworms
Who fears pesky weeds, erratic hoes, and unexpected cold snaps
Who'd like to see George Washington Carver
Who dreams of symbiotic relationships with soil bacteria
A plant of gardens around the world
Green bean

- *Color Poem: this form is usually used to teach metaphor by using a color as the subject of the poem, but in this version students will have their vegetable serve as the subject.*

Structure of the poem:

_____ looks like _____.
_____ sounds like _____.
_____ smells like _____.
_____ tastes like _____.
_____ feels like _____.

TEACHER RESOURCES

Example:

Zucchini looks like a caveman's club, always ready against a foe.
Zucchini sounds like the thunderous claps of a summer rainstorm.
Zucchini smells like the final bell on the last day of school.
Zucchini tastes like the bright summer solstice sunlight.
Zucchini feels like a newborn lamb, nestled in the straw.

- *Concrete/Shape Poem: words are arranged on the page so that they form a shape, sometimes the subject of the poem. This can be accomplished either on the computer or handwritten on a sheet of paper, depending on the students' age and ability.*

Example:

Corn:
cultivated
for centuries
by Native Nations,
grown around the
world to feed all the
people and animals of
the Earth. Corn is also
used in thousands of things
from starch to sweetener to
ethanol. There are three types
of corn: field, sweet, and popcorn.
Each ear of corn allows the corn to
hear for miles and miles. No, I am
only kidding, the ears just hold the kernels, equal
to about 800 arranged in 16 rows. Pollinated not by
insects, but by the wind, knocking the pollen down to land on
the waving silks: one for every. single. kernel. Here in IL corn is a pretty
big deal. Farmers plant about 12 million acres every year, which means they
then harvest about one hundred and twelve billion pounds of corn from the
fields each fall. That's a lot of corn! Knuckleheads might say that this corn is
boring. But they're wrong! Corn fields are full of life, of technology housed
in the seeds, in the tractors, in the combines, and in every aspect of the
farm. Corn is a part of our lives every day, whether we realize it or not.
What can possibly be boring about THAT? The history of our country
is tied up in this simple grain. Corn has cultivated civilizations and
it's a big part of ours. The world needs more poems about corn.