



My Strawberry

O marvel, fruit of fruits, I pause
To reckon thee. I ask what cause
Set free so much of red from heats
At core of earth, and mixed such sweets
With sour and spice: what was that strength
Which out of darkness, length by length,
Spun all thy shining thread of vine,
Netting the fields in bond as thine.



I see thy tendrils drink by sips
From grass and clover's smiling lips;
I hear thy roots dig down for wells,
Tapping the meadow's hidden cells.

Whole generations of green things,
Descended from long lines of springs,
I see make room for thee to bide

A quiet comrade by their side;
I see the creeping peoples go
Mysterious journeys to and fro,
Treading to right and left of thee,
Doing thee homage wonderingly.



I see the wild bees as they fare,
Thy cups of honey drink, but spare.

I mark thee bathe and bathe again
In sweet uncalendared spring rain.

I watch how all May has of sun
Makes haste to have thy ripeness done,
While all her nights let dews escape
To set and cool thy perfect shape.

Ah, fruit of fruits, no more I pause
To dream and seek thy hidden laws!
I stretch my hand and dare to taste,
In instant of delicious waste
On single feast, all things that went
To make the empire thou hast spent.

—Helen Hunt Jackson

Discussion and Activities

1. Students will take turns reading the poem straight through. Students should be listening for the sound of the poem at first reading rather than trying to understand its meaning.
2. Read through again, pausing often to discuss imagery and use of words.
3. Students circle unfamiliar words, discuss their meanings in context and look them up in a dictionary.
4. What is the poem's tone? Students will identify words or phrases that set the tone.
5. Discuss the rhythm.
6. What is this poem about?
7. What is the poet's purpose in writing this poem? An ode is a poem that is written for an occasion or on a particular subject. It is usually dignified and more serious as a form than other forms of poetry. Students will consider how this poem does or does not fit the definition of an ode.
8. Students read through the poem and underline words and phrases that describe what they know about strawberries (e.g., "sour and spice", "netting", "tendrils").
9. Find words and phrases that describe the life cycle of the strawberry plant.
10. Students underline examples of figurative language (simile, metaphor, words with multiple meanings.) Discuss.
11. Students describe in prose the action that these lines describe: "...that strength which out of darkness, length by length,/ Spun all they shining thread of vine,/ Netting the fields in bond as thine."
12. What does the poem tell you about the poet's attitude toward her subject? What words does she use to express her attitude?
13. What does this poem teach about strawberries?
14. Students will compare this poem with Pablo Neruda's "Ode to Tomatoes."
15. Students will write their own odes to strawberries or another favorite fruit or vegetable.

P.A.S.S.

Grade 6: Reading— 1.1ab,3ab; 3.1ac,2a,3ab,4d; 4.1a,2c,3acd. Writing - 2.7

Grade 7: Reading— 1.1,3bcd; 3.1ac,2a,3ac; 4.1a,2c,3ac. Writing - 2.8

Grade 8: Reading - 1.1,3ac; 3.1ab,2a,3a; 4.1a,2b,3ac. Writing - 2.8

