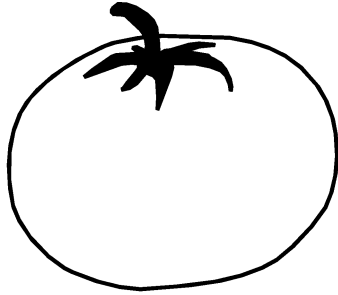


Ode to Tomatoes

The street
filled with tomatoes,
midday,
summer,
light is
halved
like
a
tomato,
its juice
runs
through the streets.



In December,
unabated,
the tomato
invades
the kitchen,
it enters at lunchtime,
takes
its ease
on countertops,
among glasses,
butter dishes,
blue saltcellars.
It sheds
its own light,
benign majesty.
Unfortunately, we must
murder it:
the knife
sinks
into living flesh,
red
viscera
a cool
sun,
profound,
inexhaustible,
populates the salads
of Chile,
happily, it is wed
to the clear onion,
and to celebrate the union

we
pour
oil,
essential
child of the olive,
onto its halved hemispheres,
pepper
adds
its fragrance,
salt, its magnetism;
it is the wedding
of the day,
parsley
hoists
its flag,
potatoes
bubble vigorously,
the aroma
of the roast
knocks
at the door,
it's time!
come on!
and, on
the table, at the midpoint
of summer,
the tomato,
star of earth, recurrent
and fertile
star,
displays
its convolutions,
its canals,
its remarkable amplitude
and abundance,
no pit,
no husk,
no leaves or thorns,
the tomato offers
its gift
of fiery color
and cool completeness.

—Pablo Neruda

Discussion and Activities

1. Bring some tomatoes to class and cut them in half to set the stage for reading this poem.
2. Students will take turns reading the poem aloud.
3. Students will list words they don't understand, look them up in a dictionary and discuss their meaning in the context of the poem.
4. Discuss the ode as a poetry form (ode: a lyric poem usually marked by exaltation of feeling and style, varying length of line, and complexity of stanza forms). What makes this poem an ode?
5. Divide the poem into parts based on changes in setting. (the street, the kitchen counter, etc.)
6. Students will discuss the poet's purpose: to persuade, inform or entertain.
7. What crime is committed in this poem? (murder) What does the crime represent? (cutting the tomato)
8. In one part of the poem, Neruda describes a wedding. Who (what) is getting married? (the tomato and an onion) The wedding is a metaphor for what? (combining the flavors of the onion and tomato)
9. What other foods are mentioned in the poem? (onion, potato, olive oil, salt, pepper, olive oil)
10. Find and discuss other examples in the poem of symbolism, imagery, metaphor, personification and simile.
11. What time of year is described in the poem? (summer) What is the month? (December) Discuss. (The poem is set in Chile, which is located in a different hemisphere. Seasons are opposite ours)
12. Where is the geographical setting for the poem? Find this country (Chile) on a world map. The tomato's birthplace are thought to be Peru. Where is Chile in relation to Peru?
13. Discuss the poet's use of short lines. What is the effect of using using short lines.
14. Student will select images from the poem to illustrate or act out.
15. Students will choose their own topic and write an ode.

P.A.S.S.

Grade 4: Reading - 1.4b; 3.1ab,2abd; 4.1ab,3ab. Writing - 2.2. Oral Language - 3.3

Grade 5: Reading - 1.4b; 3.1ac,2abe,4ad; 4.1ab,2c,3bcd. Writing - 2.1,3. Oral Language - 3.2. Social Studies - 7.1,2,5

Grade 6: Reading - 1.3b; 3.1a,3a,4d; 4.1a,2c,3acd,4b. Writing- 1.4; 2.7. Visual Literacy - 3.1. Social Studies - 1.1,2; 2.3; 3.2,3

Grade 7: Reading - 1.3bcd; 3.1ac,2a; 4.1a,3ac,4b. Writing - 1.4; 2.8. Oral Language - 1.2. Visual Literacy - 3.1. Social Studies - 1.1; 2.4; 3.2; 5.2

Grade 8: Reading - 1.3bcd; 3.1a; 4.1a,3ac. Writing - 1.4; 2.8. Oral Language - 1.2. Visual Literacy - 3.1

