



Agricultural Awareness Through Poetry

Grades 9-10

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Agriculture in the Classroom

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California Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom

Vision: An appreciation of agriculture by all.

Mission: To increase awareness and understanding of agriculture among California's educators and students.



California Foundation for
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California Foundation for
Agriculture in the Classroom

Agricultural Awareness Through Poetry

Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to increase student awareness of the role agriculture plays in everyone's lives. Students will see how poets have used farming as an interesting and important topic and then will write a poem on how and why agriculture is important in his or her life.

Time

Two 50-minute sessions

Materials

For each student:

- *Agricultural Awareness Through Poetry* worksheets

Content Standards

Grades 9-10

Reading-Language Arts

Reading • 3.12

Writing • 1.0, 2.2a, 2.2b

Written and Oral

Language Conventions

1.3, 1.4

Procedure

Use the following procedure with each poem provided or poems in your current literature:

1. Introduce the poem by writing the title and author's name on the chalkboard.
2. Read the poem aloud to the students and then distribute a copy to each student. Instruct the students to listen for specific details related to agriculture. Read the poem aloud again.
3. Discuss the vocabulary and assist students with the definitions and pronunciation of any difficult words.
4. Have volunteers read the poem. Discuss concepts dealing with agriculture and other current issues. If the poetry mentions foreign countries, use a world atlas to locate the areas.
5. Have the students complete the worksheets and/or writing assignments associated with the poem.

Assessment

- In cooperative groups, have students brainstorm ways that agriculture affects their personal lives. Have each student write a poem that illustrates how agriculture impacts his or her life and display it in a unique way. The California Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom's Commodity and Natural Resource fact sheets may be useful in providing background information. See page 8 for ordering information.

Variations and Extensions

- Have a poetry reading at a local bookstore, farm, or nature center. Invite students, parents, and local poets to read their work.
- Invite a local farmer to your classroom to talk about his/her operation or take students out to a local agricultural operation. Have students write poems about their experiences.
- Invite a local poet to class to read poetry aloud.
- Hold a Cowboy Poetry session at school.

An Orchard

Name _____

Date _____

Good-by and Keep Cold

By Robert Frost

This saying good-by on the edge of the dark
And the cold to an *orchard* so young in the bark
Reminds me of all that can happen to harm
An orchard away at the end of the farm
All winter, cut off by a hill from the house.
I don't want it *girdled* by rabbit and mouse,
I don't want it dreamily nibbled for *browse*
By deer, and I don't want it budded by *grouse*.
(If certain it wouldn't be idle to call
I'd summon grouse, rabbit, and deer to the wall
And warn them away with a stick for a gun.)
I don't want it stirred by the heart of the sun.
(We made it secure against being, I hope,
By setting it out on a northerly slope.)
No orchard's the worse for the wintriest storm;
But one thing about it, it mustn't get warm.
How often already you've had to be told,
"Keep cold, young orchard. Good-by and keep cold.
Dread fifty above more than fifty below."
I have to be gone for a season or so.
My business awhile is with different trees,
Less carefully *nurtured*, less fruitful than these,
And such as is done to their wood with an ax—
Maples and *birches* and *tamaracks*.
I wish I could promise to lie in the night
And think of an orchard's *arboreal* plight
When slowly (and nobody comes with a light)
Its heart sinks lower under the sod.
But something has to be left to God.

Vocabulary and Discussion

For each definition below, find the correct word in the word bank. Place the letter that matches the correct word next to the definition.

- _____ 1. A deciduous tree of the northern temperate zone; a flavor.
- _____ 2. An encircling cut through the bark of a branch or tree.
- _____ 3. To feed on leaves or shoots.
- _____ 4. Of or like a tree.
- _____ 5. Well cared for, loved.
- _____ 6. A game bird with rounded body and mottled plumage.
- _____ 7. Grassy top soil held together with matted roots of weeds or grass.
- _____ 8. A tree related to the pine.
- _____ 9. Safe, protected.
- _____ 10. An area containing trees for their products.

Word Bank

- a. arboreal
- b. orchard
- c. tamaracks
- d. grouse
- e. nurtured
- f. browse
- g. girdled
- h. secure
- i. sod
- j. maple



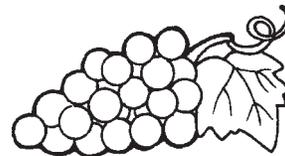
Grapes

Name _____

Date _____

The Fox and the Grapes

By Marianne Moore



A fox of Gaseon, though some say of Norman descent,
When starved till faint gazed up at a trellis to which grapes were tied—
Matured till they glowed with a purplish tint
As though there were gems inside.
Now grapes were what our adventurer on strained haunches chanced to crave.
But because he could not reach the vine
He said, “These grapes are sour; I’ll leave them for some knave.”
Better, I think, than an embittered wine.

On a separate piece of paper, answer the following questions about the poem, *The Fox and the Grapes*. Use complete sentences.

1. What image does the poet give you of the grapes?
2. What is the fox’s predicament?
3. The fable on which this poem is based usually ends with line, “It is easy to despise what you cannot have.” Does the last line of the poem suggest the same meaning? Explain.
4. List two adjectives that describe the grapes.
5. Using the Internet or other resources, research one of the following questions and report your findings to the class:
 - Investigate how the sugar content of grapes is determined and why it is important for farmers to know this.
 - California has many regions where grapes are grown. Investigate the climate requirements for grape-growing.
 - Find out what types of grapes are grown for commercial raisin production. How are these grapes processed into raisins?
 - The glassy-winged sharpshooter threatens grape production. Learn about the life cycle of this pest.

George Washington Carver

Name _____

Date _____

Green-Thumb Boy

By Dr. L.H. Pammel

Hybridization, cross-breeding, evolution:
He takes to new theories
like a puppy takes to ice cream.
We whisper that our Green-Thumb Boy
is the black Mendel, that Darwin
would have made good use of Carver's eyes.
So clear his gift for observation:
the best collector I've ever known.
I think we have an entirely new species
of *Pseudocercospora*.
And always in this threadbare lapel
a flower, Even in January.
I've never asked how.

We had doubts
about giving him a class to teach,
but he's done a bang-up job
with the greenhouse. His students
see the light of genius
through the dusky window of his skin.
Just yesterday, that new boy,
what's-his-name, from Arkansas,
tried to raise a ruckus when Carver
put his dinner tray down.
He cleared his throat, stared, rattled
his own tray, scraped his chair legs
in a rush to move away. Carver
ate on in silence. Then the boys
at the table the new boy had moved to
cleared their throats, rattled their trays
and scraped their chair legs as they got up
and moved to Carver's table.

Something about the
man does that, raises the best
in you. I've never asked what.
I guess I'll put his name next to mine
On that article I'm sending out.

George Washington Carver was born a slave about 1864. He was raised in Missouri by a couple who owned his mother. At the age of thirteen, Carver left home in search of an education.

He spent his life as a scientist who sought answers that would make farming a possibility for black farmers. He is best known for his work with peanuts, cowpeas, and sweet potatoes.

From an Alabama Farmer

Author Unknown

Dere Dr. Carver, I bin folloring
the things I herd you say last planting time.
I give my cow more corn, less cottonseed
and my creme chirms mo better butter. I'm
riting to you today, Sir, jes to tell
you at I furtulize: 800 pounds
to the acur las March. Come harves, well
it were a bompercrop. How did you found
out you coud use swamp mock? I presheate
your anser Dr. Carver by mail soon.
What maid my cotton grow? It do fele grate
to see the swet off your brow com to bloom.
I want to now what maid my miricle.
Your humbel servint, (*name illegible*)

Essay

In a well-written essay, describe what you learned about George Washington Carver by reading these poems. Site examples from the poems that support your thoughts. You may also include what you learned about the time period—about people's beliefs, education, and actions.

After writing your first draft, proof it for proper sequencing, word usage, grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

Answer Key

Good-by and Keep Cold

1. j 2. g 3. f 4. a 5. e 6. d 7. i 8. c 9. h 10. b

Jamaica Market

Fruit

ackees
bananas
breadfruit
citrons
coconuts
granadillas
guava
lemons
limes
mangoes
oranges
plantains
tangerines

Meat

fish
pidgeons
turtles

Other

baskets
cho-cho
conch shells
goat skins
golden rum
hats
honey
kola-nuts
mats
sugar
tobacco

Vegetables

bamboo shoots
congo-beans
leeks
okras
yams

Spices

allspice
cinnamon
ginger-roots
pepper
saffron (*but in this poem refers to a color*)
thyme



Literature

Adair, Gene. *George Washington Carver, Botanist*. Chelsea House Publishers, 1988. A detailed account of George Washington Carver's life. Includes actual photographs and a sequential history.

Fleischman, Paul. *Seedfolks*. HarperCollins Publishers, 1997. One by one, a number of people of varying ages and background transform a trash-filled inner-city lot into a productive and beautiful garden. In doing so, the gardeners are themselves transformed.

Frost, Robert. *Versed in Country Things*. Bulfinch Press, 1996. Twenty of Frost's poems are complemented with black and white images of New England stone walls, farmhouses, and snowy woods.

Masumoto, David Mas. *Epitaph for A Peach*. HarperCollins, 1997. Four seasons in the life of a California peach and raisin farmer are clearly described in this personal accounting. Many examples of poetic language are interspersed in this picturesque book.

Masumoto, David Mas. *Harvest Sun*. WW Norton & Co., 1998. In his second book based on his life as a California farmer and philosopher, Mas creates a tribute to family, farm, and community using prose described as having zen-like calm and clarity.

Nelson, Marilyn. *Carver, A Life in Poems*. Front Street, 2001. Born a slave in Missouri, George Washington Carver obtained an education and spent his life seeking solutions to the poverty among landless black farmers by developing new uses for soil-replenishing crops such as peanuts, cowpeas, and sweet potatoes. This collection of poems provides a compelling and revealing portrait of Carver's complex and profound life.

Teacher Resources and References

Commodity and Natural Resource Fact and Activity Sheets

These California fact sheets include information on production, history, nutrition, top producing counties, and economic values. The activity sheets provide specific lesson ideas and fun facts for each topic. These can be used as information sources for student-written poetry.

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Cowboy Poetry On-Line

This Web site defines cowboy poetry and provides the actual poems of cowboy poetry winners from selected contests.

Cowboy Poetry On-line
Web site: clantongang.com/oldwest/trade/htm

What's Bugging You?

This unit available on-line or for purchase; has readings on agricultural pests including the Glassy-winged Sharpshooter.

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Content Standard Details

Content Standards for California Public Schools Addressed in *Agricultural Awareness Through Poetry**

Obtained from the California Department of Education

Grades 9 and 10	
Standard	Description
Reading/Language Arts	
Reading 3.12	Analyze the way in which a work of literature is related to the themes and issues of its period.
Writing 1.0	Write coherent and focused essays that convey a well-defined perspective and tightly reasoned argument. The writing demonstrates awareness of the audience and purpose. Student progresses through the stages of the writing process as needed.
Writing 2.2a	Demonstrate a comprehensive grasp of the significant ideas of literary works.
Writing 2.2b	Support important ideas and viewpoints through accurate and detailed references to the text or to other works.
Written and Oral Language Conventions 1.3	Demonstrate an understanding of proper English usage and control of grammar, paragraph and sentence structure, diction, and syntax.
Written and Oral Language Conventions 1.4	Produce legible work that shows accurate spelling and correct use of the conventions of punctuation and capitalization.

* For a complete listing of the Content Standards for California Public Schools, contact CDE Press, Sales Office, California Department of Education, Post Office Box 271, Sacramento, CA 95812-0271; (916) 445-1260, www.cde.ca.gov.