

Objective: Students will practice odes and anaphora by writing poems in praise of and in defense of water they have a personal connection to.

Curricular Context: This is a lesson that could be easily adapted for different middle and high school ages and could appear as soon as three classes into a residency. This particular lesson was designed for a two hour Powerhouse class but could also be split into 2-3 lessons.

Agenda

1. Check in (10 minutes)

- a. Names, pronouns, access needs
- b. How are you doing + something you consider essential for life

2. Theme for this workshop: Water

3. Brainstorm forms of water (10 minutes)

- a. Examples: River, ocean, fountain, rain, our bodies
- b. What specific bodies of water exist close to where you live?
 - i. The Bay, Strawberry Creek, YMCA pool, waterfall in Golden Gate Park. These can get really specific! One student said “the pothole that fills with water all the time that I jump over to get to school” and another student said “armpit sweat.” Once the brainstorm gets through all the most known forms of water, you can go to some funky and creative places.
- c. Try to fill up a whole whiteboard/ get at least 20 examples

4. Introduce Odes (15 minutes)

- a. Ode: A poem that addresses and often celebrates a person, place, thing, or idea
- b. Read and discuss [Ross Gay “Ode to Drinking Water from My Hands”](#) (a copy of this poem is also below with “poop” switched out for “shit.” Facilitator note: I rarely do this, but sometimes, depending on the students/ partner teacher/ classroom expectations, I will share the “radio edit” of the poem if it doesn't impact the meaning of the poem. Obviously, each word a poet chooses is intentional and has impact, so use your discretion to be in integrity with the artist's work. If it would alter the impact / meaning of the poem significantly, and it's a stretch for appropriateness in the class, I'll choose a different poem. By being in communication with partner teachers about language that I bring in, I've successfully been able to advocate for students to use whatever language they want to in the poems they write (as long as it's not oppressive language), which is most important to me.
 - i. Discussion Questions:
 1. What do you notice? What questions do you have?
 2. What is this poem about? It's about drinking water from hands, but what else is it about?
 - a. Pull out multiple meanings and layers, show multiple possibilities are present and an “ode” is often praising more than one thing or more than one angle of one thing.

5. Personal Brainstorm (5 minutes)

- a. Choose one form of water from the brainstorm that you're feeling particularly drawn to and write at least 5 things you love about it or 5 memories you have with that form of water.

6. Write (10 minutes)

- a. Prompt: Write an ode to a form of water
 - i. Ghostline / starter line options:
 1. Praise the....
 2. I love the way you...
 - ii. Challenges:
 1. Remember anaphora from last class? Try using anaphora in your poem by repeating the ghostline at the beginning of each line.
 - a. Anaphora: the repetition of a word or words at the beginning of successive phrases, clauses, or lines to create a sonic effect.
 2. Share at least one memory or personal association you have with this body of water

7. Share (10 minutes)

8. Break (5 minutes)

9. Discussion (15-20 minutes)

- a. What pollutes water?
 - i. Have students brainstorm about 5 examples (oil, lead, trash, etc)
 - ii. How do people protect the water and resist pollution?
 1. Hear a couple examples from students
 2. Share examples of:
 - a. Oglala Lakota Water Protectors at Standing Rock
 - b. Little Miss Flint
 - c. Palestinians carrying water across long distances to each other (show photo then [graphic](#) and [video](#) from Visualizing Palestine)
 3. What pollutes the water (if it hasn't been mentioned by students already)? Settler colonialism, white supremacy, worldview of extraction.
 - iii. Read [Palestinian Love Poem](#) by Fargo Tbakhi (Page 43 in the linked publication)
 1. Discussion question: How is water an act of love in this poem? How is caring for water an act of love?

10. Write (10 minutes)

- a. Prompt: Write a poem about why and how you care for water.
 - i. Ghostlines:
 1. Water needs protecting because...
 2. Water is sacred because...
 3. Without clean water, we can't...
 4. I remember the water that helped me...
 5. I will defend the water by....

6. I am most like the river/rainfall/bay when...
- ii. Note: Depending on how familiar students are with freewriting, they can either chose their own ghostlines to write to, or they can use a worksheet-type structure as you can see below. This can help students write more lines and develop a structure of a poem, building their confidence and sense of story before taking on more of a blank page on their own.

11. Share (10 minutes)

12. Closing (5 minutes)

ode to drinking water from my hands

Ross Gay

which today, in the garden,
I'd forgotten
I'd known and more
forgotten
I'd learned and was taught this
by my grandfather
who, in the midst of arranging
and watering
the small bouquets
on mostly the freshest graves
saw my thirst
and cranked the rusty red pump
bringing forth
from what sounded like the gravelly throat
of an animal
a frigid torrent
and with his hands made a lagoon
from which he drank
and then I drank
before he cranked again
making of my hands, now,
a fountain in which I can see
the silty bottom
drifting while I drink
and drink and
my grandfather waters the flowers
on the graves
among which are his
and his wife's
unfinished and patient, glistening
after he rinses the bird poop
from his wife's
and the pump exhales
and I drink
to the bottom of my fountain
and join him
in his work.

Prompt: Write a poem about why and how you care for water.

Water needs protecting because...

Water is sacred because...

Without clean water, we can't...

I remember the water that helped me...

I will defend the water by....

I am most like the _____ [fill in the blank with a form of water you want to care for like river, rainfall, bay, etc] when...
