

Melons

Discussion and Activities

1. Use online or library resources to find the location of "Benidorm."
2. What do the details in the poem tell you about the place the poet is describing? How do you know it is probably not a modern scene in the US?
3. What is familiar? What is unfamiliar?
4. What kind of melon is "egg-shape?" What kind of melon is "world shape." Why does she suggest "bowling one homeward?"
5. How are the seeds like confetti?
6. How many kinds of melon can you identify from the descriptions? List them.
7. List all the adjectives used to describe the melons.
8. Find examples of personification in the poem.
9. Find examples of metaphor, simile and alliteration.
10. What is the mood of the poem? Find two words that help set the mood.
11. Draw a picture of the scene she is describing.

Fiesta Melons

In Benidorm there are melons,
Whole donkey-carts full

Of innumerable melons,
Ovals and balls,

Bright green and thumpable
Laced over with stripes

Of turtle-dark green.
Choose an egg-shape, a world-shape,

Bowl one homeward to taste
In the whitehot noon:

Cream-smooth honeydews,
Pink-pulped whoppers,

Bump-rinded cantaloupes
With orange cores.

Each wedge wears a studding
Of blanched seeds or black seeds

To strew like confetti
Under the feet of

This market of melon-eating
Fiesta-goers.

—Sylvia Plath

Discussion and Activities

1. Explain the imagery. How is a watermelon like a green Buddha?
2. What does "the smile" represent?
3. What do "the teeth" represent?
4. What kind of imagery is used in this poem—metaphor or simile?

Watermelons

Green Buddhas
On the fruit stand.
We eat the smile
And spit out the teeth.

—Charles Simic

Discussion and Activities

1. How is a blacktop city different from a topsoil town? What is "a topsoil town?"
2. Who are the people in the poem sharing the cantaloupe with?
3. How is an ant pile like Times Square and a subway?
4. Explain the use of the word "hemisphere."
5. Explain "blacken and rise and dance."
6. In the last three lines, the poet is comparing the ant pile to what?
7. Find examples of personification.
8. Find examples of metaphor.
9. Find examples of simile.

Ants on the Melon

Once when our blacktop city
was still a topsoil town
we carried to Formicopolis
a cantaloupe rind to share
and stooped to plop it down
in their populous Times Square
at the subway of the ants

and saw that hemisphere
blacken and rise and dance
with antmen out of hand
wild for their melon toddies
just like our world next year
no place to step or stand
except on bodies.

—Virginia Hamilton Adair



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Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle Received from a Friend Called Felicity

During that summer
When unicorns were still possible;
When the purpose of knees
Was to be skinned'
When shiny horse chestnuts
(hollowed out
Fitted with straws
Crammed with tobacco
Stolen from butts in family ashtrays)
Were puffed in green lizard silence
While straddling thick branches
Far above and away
From the softening effects of civilization;

During that summer—
Which may never have been at all;
But which has become more real
Than the one that was—
Watermelons ruled.

Thick pink imperial slices
Melting frigidly on sun-parched tongues
Dribbling from chins;
Leaving the best part,
The black bullet seeds,
To be spit out in rapid fire
Against the wall
Against the wind
Against each other;

And when the ammunition was spent,
There was always another bite:
It was a summer of limitless bites,
Of hungers quickly felt

And quickly forgotten
With the next careless gorging.

The bites are fewer now.
Each one is savored lingeringly,
Swallowed reluctantly.

But in a jar put up by Felicity,
The summer which never maybe was
Has been captured and preserved.
And when we unscrew the lid
And slice off a piece
And let it linger on our tongue:
Unicorns become possible again.

—John Tobias

Discussion and Activities

1. What time of one's life is the time when unicorns are still possible?
2. What does the speaker suggest in the line "Which may never have been at all?" How old do you think the speaker is now? Why?
3. Why is the word imperial a good word to describe the slices of watermelon? (Reread the preceding line.)
4. How do the "bites" taken now differ from those taken earlier?
5. What effect does the gift from Felicity have on the speaker?
6. A symbol in literature is an object that represents an idea. What does the watermelon symbolize in this poem?

P.A.S.S.

Grade 4: Reading - 2.1; 3.1b,2ad; 4.1b,3ab; 4.1; 5.1. Grade 5: Reading - 1.1b; 2.1; 3.2be,3b; 4.1b,3abcd; 5.1a. Grade 6: Reading - 1.1b; 2.1; 3.2a,3b; 4.3acd; 5.1a. Grade 7: Reading - 1.3bcd; 2.1; 3.2ab; 4.3abc; 5.1a. Grade 8: Reading - 1.3bcd; 2.1; 4.3abc; 5.1a

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