

Play with Your Food

By: Claire Hong

Education level: Elementary, junior high, and/or high school

Genre: Poetry, Hybrid

Time frame: 30+ minutes or self-paced

Objective: Students experiment with word play to create a poem that represents their own unique relationship to identity, culture, or language.

Prior knowledge and skills: None

Required materials: Paper and pen/pencil for writing their poems; a handout of the poem example and/or a digital display of the poem.

Literary model: Brandon Som's "Chino"

Sequence of activities:

- 1) Read Brandon Som's poem "Chino" as a class and watch/listen to him read it at the Poetry Center. The whole class can simultaneously read the poem out loud together to get a sense for the word play and sounds. **(10 minutes)**

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/142869/chino>

<https://voca.arizona.edu/reading/brandon-som-october-17-2024>

Note: If time allows, students can hear him describe his connection to Tucson and Phoenix under "Remarks on *Tripas* and family in Tucson and Phoenix."

- 2) Discussion Questions: **(5 minutes)**
 - a. What words are you unfamiliar with? Who can define them for us? What languages and cultures exist within the world of this poem?
 - b. Where are there moments of word play? This could be words that have multiple meanings, invented words, or moments where you see the poet reflecting on or experimenting with meaning and sound.
 - c. Can anyone identify what type of food centers itself in this poem?
 - d. Is this a poem just about food? What else does it make you think about or feel?
 - e. What family or cultural foods are important in your own life? What meanings do they have for you beyond their taste?
- 3) Write a poem that either: **(10+ minutes or self-paced)**
 - Describes a food or multiple foods that are important to you, your family, or your culture.
 - Plays with words and their meanings. If you're multilingual, consider how this might appear in your poem. Represent your unique relationship to language.
 - Bonus: or try to do both in one poem!
- 4) If time allows, students can volunteer to read their drafts to the class. **(5+ minutes)**