Poetry of Agriculture

Overview: Students will sharpen their observation, listening and vocabulary skills with this poetry writing exercise that features items with an agriculture connection. For higher grades, have students create a haiku, acrostic, mirrored refrain or cinquain poems.

Activity:
1. Collect a group of Florida agricultural items or pictures of items (citrus, vegetables, peanuts, dairy, beef, fish, etc.)
2. Create stations around the room with the agriculture item, a brown paper bag and several blank slips of paper. (Students will be moving around classroom so make sure to space the bags far enough apart.)
3. Explain that agriculture has long inspired artists and writers. Read aloud some examples of poetry with agricultural themes. Samples of poetry can be found on page two.
4. Instruct students to visit each station around the room and record their impressions of each agricultural product on the slips of paper. Each student should write a single word or short phrase describing the item on a slip of paper then place it in the station’s bag. Encourage them to record whatever stands out about the item - color, shape, smell or texture. Have them use their senses and creativity. (If you have a large class you can have the students only go to two or three stations.)
5. Once everyone has had a chance to visit all of the stations, break students into small groups. Give each a bag. Explain they will be using the words and phrases inside the bag to create a piece of free verse poetry about their item.
6. Challenge them to not mention the item by name in their poem. Then, from their writing, the rest of the class will guess the subject of each poem.

Lesson Source: Lesson developed by Oregon Agriculture in the Classroom Foundation, http://aitc.oregonstate.edu/
**Ode to the Pig: His Tail**
by Walter R. Brooks

My tail is not impressive
But it’s elegant and neat.
In length it’s not excessive —
I can’t curl it round my feet —
But it’s awfully expressive,
And its weight is not excessive,
And I don’t think it’s conceit,
Or foolishly possessive.
If I state with some aggressiveness that it’s the final master touch
That makes a pig complete.

**Pigs**
by Charles Guigna

Pigs are playful
Pigs are pink
Pigs are smarter than you think.
Pigs are slippery
Pigs are stout
Pigs have noses Called a snout.
Pigs are pudgy
Pigs are plump
Pigs can run
But never jump.
Pigs are loyal
Pigs are true.
Pigs don’t care for Barbecue.

**This is Just to Say**
by William Carlos Williams

I have eaten the plums that were in the icebox
and which you were probably saving for breakfast.

Forgive me they were delicious so sweet and so cold.

**I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud**
by William Wordsworth, 1804

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o’er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze
Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

**Theme in Yellow**
by Carl Sandburg

I spot the hills
With yellow balls in autumn.
I light the prairie cornfields
Orange and tawny gold clusters
And I am called pumpkins.
On the last of October
When dusk is fallen
Children join hands
And circle round me
Singing ghost songs
And love to the harvest moon;
I am a jack-o’-lantern
With terrible teeth
And the children know
I am fooling.

**Watermelons**
by Charles Simic

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

Visit AITC Oklahoma website for more ag poetry samples and additional poetry lessons - http://http://oklahoma4h.okstate.edu/aitc/lessons/extras/songs/food.html