Poetry Writing: An Ode to Odes!

Student Name:

Ode to Kool-Aid

By Marcus Jackson

You turn the kitchen  
tap’s metallic stream  
into tropical drink,  
extra sugar whirlpooling  
to the pitcher-bottom  
like gypsum sand.  
Purplesaurus Rex, Roarin’  
Rock-A-Dile Red, Ice Blue  
Island Twist, Sharkleberry Fin;  
on our tongues, each version  
keeps a section, like tiles  
on the elemental table.  
In ninth grade, Sandra  
employed a jug of Black Cherry  
to dye her straightened  
bangs burgundy.  
When toddlers swallow you,  
their top lips mustache in color  
as if they’ve kissed paint.  
The trendy folks can savor  
all that imported mango nectar  
and health-market juice.  
We need factory-crafted packets,  
unpronounceable ingredients,  
a logo cute enough to hug,  
a drink unnaturally sweet  
so that, on the porch,  
as summer sun recedes,  
Granddad takes out his teeth  
to make more mouth to admit you.

Use these guidelines when working on your odes:

* + Pick an ordinary place or thing.
  + Give your subject praise or thanks. *(Oh, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_!)*
  + Speak directly to the object.
  + Use adjectives to describe it.
  + Use verbs to bring that object to life. *(Personification)*
  + Use repeated lines
  + Write an ode to something you love on a separate page
  + Make it long – like at least 30 lines!

Stuck… Having trouble getting started?

1. ***Just get emotional.***What really makes you emotional, either in a positive or negative way? Think of a person, concept, place or thing that you are deeply connected to. This will be a potential topic for your ode. Remember, an ode is focused on the many nuances of a *single thing*, so make sure that whatever you pick is something that you feel strongly about, so you have enough to write.
2. ***If you feel something, say something.***When someone brings up the thing you have chosen to write about in conversation, how do you react? Write down what you would say in such a situation, and even more importantly, how you would (or do) feel. You may end up needing many words that have the same definition or meaning, so checking out a thesaurus can be hugely useful.
3. ***Size matters.***How long do you want your poem to be? Odes are traditionally very long, and chances are, if you’ve picked a topic you really feel passionately about, you will have a lot to write. Start by splitting up your poem into groups, or stanzas, of ten lines. Many traditional odes have three to five of these stanzas, but if you want to write more, by all means do!
4. ***To rhyme or not to rhyme?***Do you want your poem to rhyme? Most odes do, and making your ode rhyme would be a fun challenge, but you can also write irregular odes, which don't have to rhyme or maintain a perfect rhythm. If you *do* decide to make your ode rhyme, think about how you want to format the rhyme scheme of this poem. You can make every two lines or every other line rhyme. A certain kind of popular ode uses a more complicated pattern. You can also make up your own pattern -- just commit to it, and use it in every stanza of your ode.