

Sample Assignment

Eating Together, Eating Alone: Body and Identity

As we've discovered this week, our bodies are crucial sites for negotiating identities. In Rita Dove's "Parsley," small differences in the way one pronounces a word mean the difference between acceptable and unacceptable, between life and death. And in Eduardo C. Corral's poem "In Colorado my Father Scoured and Stacked Dishes," the details of the father's body—the silver belt buckle, the words he speaks with an accent, the shirt he wears—seem to carve out his identity for others. In this way, our bodies help determine not only how the world perceives us, but also how we perceive ourselves.

This week, I'd like you to take a cue from Li-Young Lee's poem "Persimmons" and write about a food that is central to your identity. Lee uses his experience of persimmons—the process of choosing a fruit, cutting and tasting it, and even speaking the syllables of its name—to move through various important memories from his life that contribute to his sense of identity. In this poem, choose a food that will take you to important, formative memories of your own.

The poem you write should have the following qualities:

1. Please center on *one* specific food or dish throughout the poem, concentrating on the techniques for using imagery to appeal to the senses that we discussed in class.
2. Just as Lee moves to three very different scenes using the link of persimmons, you should also include *three* distinct scenes or memories within the body of your poem.
3. Finally, include *three* italicized lines of direct address to someone or something in your poem.