



# Essential Words: LTAB Online 2020

Lesson plans and writing prompts for teens



## Take Refuge

by Christiana Castillo

DURATION: 1.5 hours  
GRADE LEVEL: High School  
WRITING LEVEL: All levels

FOCUS: joy; celebrating the ordinary  
KEY TERM: ode  
EXAMPLE TEXT: [Ode to the Watermelon](#)  
by [Arecelis Girmay](#)

Check in | 15 minutes

**How do you practice self-care?**

Resource Building | 15 minutes

EXERCISE | **Make a list of 10 things that are small types of joy in your life.**

Example: the cool side of my pillow; my cats' greeting when I come home; sunflowers; etc.

KEY TERM | **ODE**: a poem written in praise of a person, place, or thing.

Close Reading | 20 minutes

**Ode to the Watermelon** by [Arecelis Girmay](#)

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- What is refuge?
- What does Girmay celebrate in this poem?
- How does she celebrate the ordinary?
- What things are taken refuge of in this poem?
- What is joy in this poem?

Writing Prompt | 20 minutes

**What do you take refuge in? Why? OR Write a poem that celebrates the ordinary. Use as much vivid imagery as possible.**

Share Out | 15 minutes



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## Ode to the Watermelon by Aracelis Girmay

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It is June.

At El TaContento near 17<sup>th</sup>,  
the cook slices clean  
through the belly of a watermelon,

*Sandía, día santo!*

& honey bees  
grown in glistening temples  
dance away from their sugary hives,  
ants, in lines,  
beetles, toward your red,  
(if you are east, they are going east)  
over & over,  
toward your worldly luscious,  
blushed fruit freckled with seeds.

Roadside, my obtuse pleasure,  
under strings of lights,  
a printed skirt, in grocery barrels,  
above park grasses on Sunday afternoon  
to the moan & dolorous moan  
of swings.

Ripe conjugationer of water & sun,  
your opening calls  
even the birds to land.  
& in Palestine,  
where it is a crime to wave  
the flag of Palestine in Palestine,  
watermelon halves are raised  
against Israeli troops  
for the red, black, white, green  
of Palestine. Forever,

I love you your color hemmed  
by rind. The blaring juke & wet of it.  
Black seeds star red immense  
as poppy fields,  
white to outsing jasmine.  
Again, all that green.

Sandía, día santo,  
summer's holy earthly,  
bandera of the ground,  
language of fields,  
even under a blade you swing  
your quiet scent  
in the pendulum of any gale.  
Men bow their heads, open-mouthed,  
to coax the sugar  
from beneath your workdress.  
Women lift you  
to their teeth.  
Sandía, día santo,  
yours is a sweetness  
to outlast slaughter:  
Tongues will lose themselves inside you,  
scattering seeds. All over,  
the land will hum  
with your wild,  
raucous blooming.

[Ode to the Watermelon by Aracelis Girmay,  
From the Fishhouse](#)