Note: These mini-lessons are intended to be used in a writers workshop. I included either my own writing or current published literature as mentor texts for each of these three lessons. References to Atwell are from her 2015 book *In The Middle: A Lifetime of Learning About Writing, Reading, and Adolescents*. A text that focuses on creating and facilitating reading and writing workshops.

Mini Lesson 1: Introducing Odes:

* Bring students together.
* Put up Neruda’s “Ode To The Pomegranate” and give students a copy of the poem.
* Have students read once to themselves. Then read once aloud as a group before discussing.
* Discuss what resonated/stands out. Come together to parse out what the content of the text is.
* Give context on odes and Neruda (reference Atwell’s description, p. 391). ”Pablo Neruda, regarded as the greatest Latin American poet of them all…He developed a loose form called an irregular ode by retrofitting the intricate, choral odes of the ancient Greeks. Neruda abandoned weighty topics, threw out the rules about stanzas and meters, and went over-the-top singing the praises of common things-an apple, an onion, socks, salt.” (Atwell. 2015. p. 391)
* Reread after learning some background/context.
* Use Atwell’s “Tips for Neruda-Esque Odes” (p. 393)
* Present my “Ode to Toast” (give students a copy).
* Have student go and challenge them to write their own after generating a “Potential Subjects for an Ode”

**Ode To an Artichoke**

**by Pablo Neruda**

The artichoke
of delicate heart
erect
in its battle-dress, builds
its minimal cupola;
keeps
stark
in its scallop of
scales.
Around it,
demoniac vegetables
bristle their thicknesses,
devise
tendrils and belfries,
the bulb's agitations;
while under the subsoil
the carrot
sleeps sound in its
rusty mustaches.
Runner and filaments
bleach in the vineyards,
whereon rise the vines.
The sedulous cabbage
arranges its petticoats;
oregano
sweetens a world;
and the artichoke
dulcetly there in a gardenplot,
armed for a skirmish,
goes proud
in its pomegranate
burnishes.
Till, on a day,
each by the other,
the artichoke moves
to its dream
of a market place
in the big willow
hoppers:
a battle formation.
Most warlike
of defilades-
with men
in the market stalls,
white shirts
in the soup-greens,
artichoke field marshals,
close-order conclaves,
commands, detonations,
and voices,
a crashing of crate staves.

And
Maria
come
down
with her hamper
to
make trial
of an artichoke:
she reflects, she examines,
she candles them up to the light like an egg,
never flinching;
she bargains,
she tumbles her prize
in a market bag
among shoes and a
cabbage head,
a bottle
of vinegar; is back
in her kitchen.
The artichoke drowns in a pot.

So you have it:
a vegetable, armed,
a profession
(call it an artichoke)
whose end
is millennial.
We taste of that
sweetness,
dismembering scale after scale.
We eat of a halcyon paste:
it is green at the artichoke heart.

**Tips for Neruda-Esque Odes (Atwell, p. 393)**

* **“Choose an ordinary subject from your every day life”**
* **“Begin by writing off the page”**
* **“Exaggerate its admirable qualities until it becomes central to human existence: hyberbole rules”**
* **“Tap all five sense”**
* **“Use metaphors and similes”**
* **“Directly address the subject of the ode”**
* **“Tell your feelings about the subject and give exalted descriptions of its qualities”**
* **“Keep the lines short”**
* **Push for sensory diction, plus language that’s packed with meaning and cut to the bone”**

**Ode to Toast –**

Your golden flesh

outshines

the rising sun.

As steam

curls up from

your delicate

crisp

surface,

I ponder a world

without your presence.

Alone,

or joined with

a companion

you create a beacon

by which

joy can be found.

Student Example:

Ode To Fidget Spinners

by Owen

Round

and round

you go.

You are

the earth

and sun.

You orbit

yourself.

An endless loop.

Faster and

faster.

Mesmerizing.