

HOW TO WRITE AN ODE

Oh, Hello!

Has something in your day ever made you smile or frown or giggle or cry?

Have you ever said, “Oh, I love that!” or “Oh, I don’t like that!”

Then you are the perfect person to write an ode.

You probably guessed it from our story: an ode is a type of poem. And like many forms of poetry, it has its own rules. But these rules make it FUN.

RULE ONE: FIND YOUR SUBJECT

An ode has a job to do. Traditionally, its job is to celebrate a person, event, or an object.

But you can also write an ode to something that makes you feel negatively, as we did in our story.

The most important thing is to find a subject that makes you *feel* something.

Try looking around your classroom, your bedroom, or your neighborhood. What do you see that excites you? Frustrates you? What gives you butterflies in your belly or makes your skin crawl? What is that something you can’t stop daydreaming about?

For most odes, the subject is an inanimate object.

Maybe it’s your stuffed bunny or your treehouse. Maybe it’s a lick from your dog or a high five from a friend. Maybe it’s a splinter in your thumb or a pebble in your shoe.

You can write an ode to just about anything, as long as it makes you feel a feeling.

RULE TWO: TALK TO YOUR SUBJECT

The best part of an ode is that you get to talk directly to the subject you are excited about! Let’s say you pick your stuffed bunny. What would you say to it? What feelings stir when you think about it? Are you skipping up and down? Smiling ear to ear? Is your heart beating like a drum?

Or let’s say you picked that pesky pebble. Are your fists clenching and your cheeks getting red hot?

Write down all of the things that come to mind as if you were writing it a letter or calling it on the phone.

RULE THREE: LANGUAGE

Once you have your subject, and you know what you want to say, you can dive into the language. You want your ode to include lots of vivid, lively language. Use your senses. What does it look like, smell like, or taste like? What adjectives paint its picture? What verbs bring it to life? How does it make you feel?

RULE FOUR: STRUCTURE (BASIC)

Very simply, it is a collection of verses, or stanzas, made up of 6-10 lines.

You can write your ode as one verse, as we did with our Ode to an Ode, or you could discover ways to extend it into more, as we did for Ode to a Bad Day.

You start by addressing your subject, (Oh, Subject). Speak directly to it. Use adjectives to describe it and verbs that bring it to life or “personify” it, you can ask it a question or tell it how you feel, then finish the same way you began, (Oh, Subject).

An ode does not have to rhyme, but it’s always fun to try!

There is no set rhyme scheme or meter for an ode, so have fun creating your own. If you like, you can follow our pattern from the book. Just be consistent.

RULE NUMBER FOUR AND A HALF: STRUCTURE (ADVANCED)

But wait, there’s more!

A classic ode is structured in three parts.

The Strophe: Also known as the “turn,” the strophe is the first half of the argument (and the last). It sets the tone or point of view for the entire ode. In our story, this was defined by each of our “Oh, XX” stanzas.

The Antistrophe: Also known as the “turn back,” the antistrophe is the other side of the argument. It is meant to respond to the strophe and to complicate the issue. In our story, this was defined by our three couplets dispersed throughout the story reflecting on yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

The Epode: Also known as the “after song,” is the third and final section of the ode. It’s the conclusion stanza, and it can differ in meter from the strophe and antistrophe. In our story, the epode was the final “Oh, Bad Day” stanza, which was extended to reflect the promise of a new day full of ordinary goodness, the opposite of our main character’s bad day.

Now that you have all the ingredients to write your own ode, we have only one thing to say:

Oh, Goodbye (and Good Luck)!