



SPARK

If I Were a Pizza

Grades 3–5

Type

Poetry

Social-Emotional Learning

We are all parts of a whole, just like a pizza! In this Spark, students will think about all the things that make them who they are and then write a poem in the shape of a pizza.

What Your Students Will Learn

Students will learn about self-portraits and concrete poetry.

What You Will Need

- Scrap paper or writing journals
- Computer and projector
- If I Were a Pizza—Handout
 - 1 per student

What You Will Do

This Spark was inspired by 826 New Orleans’ annual Pizza Poetry Day. Since 2014, 826 New Orleans has celebrated National Poetry Month, and the power of youth voices, by publishing student poems on pizza boxes for delivery across the city. You can learn more about Pizza Poetry Day on 826 New Orleans’ [website](#).

This Spark utilizes two techniques: self-portraits and concrete poems. A self-portrait is a visual representation of how the artist views themselves—sometimes in a painting or a photograph, but in this case, a poem. That poem’s final form will take the shape of a pizza, which is what makes it a concrete poem!

Before you start, think of 3 nouns that all students will be familiar with and construct an example of a simile and a metaphor for each of the 3 nouns.

STEP 1

First, project the mentor text on page 1 of [If I Were a Pizza— Handout](#) on the board and read it out loud. This poem is an example of a self-portrait. After you’ve finished reading it, ask students what they think a self-

portrait is, based on what they read, and write their answers on the board. Keep the poem projected on the board.

STEP 2

The Mentor Text uses metaphors and similes to help create a detailed poem. Next, students will practice identifying and writing some of their own.

A **simile** makes a comparison by using “like” or “as” to connect the things being compared. **Metaphors** also make comparisons, but they do not use “like” or “as.” Explain the differences to students and then draw their attention back to the Mentor Text. Do they see both similes and metaphors, or just one of the types? Ask them to read out lines that they think are similes.

First, everyone will focus on co-creating similes. Write the 3 nouns you came up with before class on the board. Ask students to shout out adjectives that describe each noun and write their ideas on the board. Examples:

- Orange: Round, sweet, tangy, sticky
- Cat: Furry, soft, cute, annoying, sharp
- Sweater: Fuzzy, warm, cozy, colorful

After students have come up with adjectives that describe those nouns, ask them to shout out other nouns that share those adjectives. For example, oranges and baseballs are both round; sweaters and summer days are both hot. Write their ideas on the board. Then, work together to use “like” and “as” to connect the items from both lists. Examples:

- This orange is **as** round **as** a baseball.
- My pet cat has claws **as** sharp **as** nails.
- The sweater is hot **like** a summer’s day.

Next, focus on metaphors. Similes often compare two very concrete ideas to one another. In all of the examples above, the nouns in the similes could be held in your hands. Metaphors, however, often compare abstract nouns, such as feelings or ideas..

Write the same 3 nouns on the board again, this time asking students to shout out feelings these nouns evoke or other nouns that they can’t hold in your hands as easily. Repeat the same process of connecting the two parts to create your new metaphors, without using “like” or “as.” Examples:

- Fridays are a sweet, ripe orange.
- Happiness is a furry cat in my lap.
- A fuzzy sweater is a cozy hug.

STEP 3

Next, students will use page 2 of the handout to brainstorm the parts of themselves that they’d like to represent in their self-portrait poem. Reassure them that it’s OK to write about the sad or hard parts, too. Our lives, much like a pizza, are made up of lots of different components that create a pretty spectacular whole.

After students have finished the brainstorming questions, they can begin writing a poem similar to the one they read in the Mentor Text. They can take details from their brainstorming sheet and create metaphors and similes, using the same process as above.

STEP 4

Last, after students have written a poem that they feel describes them the best, they can turn it into a concrete poem. Use page 3 of the handout to write their poem in the blank spaces of the pizza shape. They should allow the poem to follow the curved lines of the crust, or write some of the words in the shape of pepperonis or another topping they enjoy. By the end of this activity, students will have turned themselves into pizzas—which is another example of a metaphor!