

Mi Madre

Poem by Pat Mora

Canyon de Chelly

Poem by Simon J. Ortiz

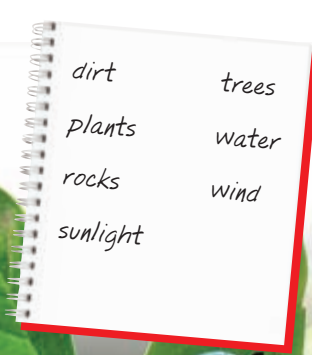
What gifts does the **EARTH** provide?

COMMON CORE

RL 4 Analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning. **RL 6** Analyze how differences in points of view create effects.

It's not hard to appreciate nature when you're taking a walk on a sunny day or swimming at a scenic beach. But the earth gives us many gifts that we may not always recognize. The gas that warms our homes, the concrete we use to pave our sidewalks, even the paper we write on—these things are all precious resources provided to us by the earth. The poets whose works you're about to read share their appreciation for the earth's gifts through words.

LIST IT The earth's resources can be used in multiple ways. In a small group, choose one of the resources shown, and brainstorm at least five ways we can use it. Did you discover any new uses for these resources? Share your list with the class.



dirt	trees
plants	water
rocks	wind
sunlight	

Meet the Authors

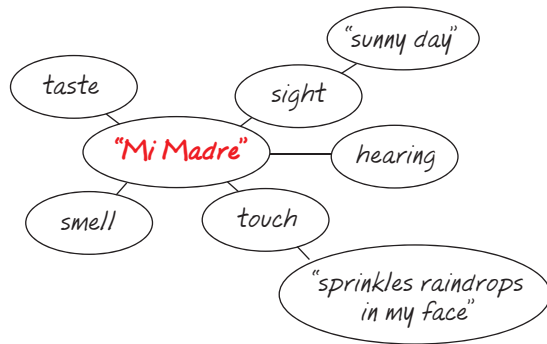
● TEXT ANALYSIS: IMAGERY

The use of description that makes something seem real or easy to imagine is called **imagery**. Poets create imagery by using words and phrases that appeal to our senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch. Paying attention to imagery can enable you to “experience” a poem as if you were there. For example, look at the following lines from “Mi Madre”:

I say tease me.

She sprinkles raindrops in my face on a sunny day.

The image “sprinkles raindrops” appeals to the sense of touch, while “sunny day” appeals to the sense of sight. If you combine these images in your mind, you can almost share in this scene. As you read “Mi Madre” and “Canyon de Chelly,” use a word web to keep track of these and other examples of imagery.



● READING SKILL: UNDERSTAND SPEAKER

In poetry, the **speaker** is the voice that “talks” to the reader and relates the ideas presented in the poem from a specific point of view. It is important to understand that the speaker is not the same as the poet. For example, a poet may choose to write about a subject from the perspective of a child. In that case, the ideas that are expressed are those of the child, not necessarily the poet. As you read “Mi Madre” and “Canyon de Chelly,” look for clues that will help you decide who each speaker is and how he or she feels about the subject of the poem.

Pat Mora

born 1942

Literacy Advocate

The granddaughter of Mexican immigrants, Pat Mora realized early in her writing career that her cultural heritage was “a source of pride.” Her books celebrate family, the desert in which she grew up, and the Mexican-American experience. Her children’s books frequently feature Latino characters, because she believes that children of all backgrounds should see themselves reflected in the books they read.

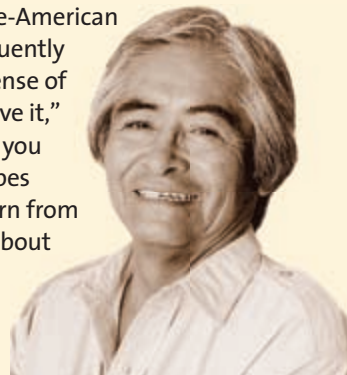


Simon J. Ortiz

born 1941

Native New Mexican

Raised on New Mexico’s Acoma Pueblo, Simon Ortiz is regarded as one of today’s greatest Native-American writers. His work frequently focuses on having a sense of place. “You have to have it,” Ortiz says. “Otherwise you are drifting.” Ortiz hopes that all people can learn from his poetry. “I tell you about me and my world,” he says, “so you may be able to see yourself.”



BACKGROUND TO THE POEMS

Arizona’s Canyon de Chelly (pronounced *sha*) is home to a Navajo tribal community that has preserved this sacred land for centuries. The canyon, now a national park, is known for its stunning landscapes, tribal artifacts, and rock paintings.



Complete the activities in your **Reader/Writer Notebook**.

Authors Online

Go to [thinkcentral.com](https://www.thinkcentral.com). KEYWORD: HML8-431



Mi Madre¹

Pat Mora

I say feed me.
She serves red prickly pear on a spiked cactus.

I say tease me.
She sprinkles raindrops in my face on a sunny day.

5 I say frighten me.
She shouts thunder, flashes lightning. **A**

I say comfort me.
She invites me to lay on her firm body.

I say heal me.
10 She gives me *manzanilla, orégano, dormilón*.²

I say caress me.
She strokes my skin with her warm breath. **B**

I say make me beautiful.
She offers turquoise for my fingers, a pink blossom for my hair. **C**

15 I say sing to me.
She chants lonely women's songs of femaleness.

I say teach me.
She endures: glaring heat
 numbing cold
20 frightening dryness.

She: the desert
She: strong mother.

Analyze Visuals ►

Compare this painting with your own mental image of the desert. Are the images similar or different?

A IMAGERY

Reread lines 1–6. To what senses do these images appeal? Record your answers in your word web.

B IMAGERY

Reread lines 11–12. What feelings does this image suggest?

C SPEAKER

What type of person is the speaker? How do you know?

1. **Mi Madre** (mē mǎ'drā) *Spanish*: my mother.

2. **manzanilla, orégano, dormilón** (mǎn'zə-nē'yə, ə-rĕg'ə-nō', dōr-mē-lōn') *Spanish*: sweet-smelling herbs that can be used to make home medicines.



Canyon *de* Chelly

Simon J. Ortiz

Lie on your back on stone,
the stone carved to fit
the shape of yourself.
Who made it like this,
5 knowing that I would be along
in a million years and look
at the sky being blue forever?

My son is near me. He sits
and turns on his butt
10 and crawls over to stones,
picks one up and holds it,
and then puts it into his mouth.
The taste of stone.
What is it but stone,
15 the earth in your mouth.
You, son, are tasting forever. **D**

Analyze Visuals ►

Is this a photograph or a painting? Tell what led you to your answer, and why others might **conclude** differently.

D SPEAKER

What do you know about the speaker of this poem?



We walk to the edge of cliff
and look down into the canyon.
On this side, we cannot see
20 the bottom cliff edge but looking
further out, we see fields,
sand furrows, cottonwoods.
In winter, they are softly gray.
The cliffs' shadows are distant,
25 hundreds of feet below;
we cannot see our own shadows.
The wind moves softly into us.
My son laughs with the wind;
he gasps and laughs. **E**

30 We find gray root, old wood,
so old, with curious twists
in it, curving back into curves,
juniper, piñon, or something
with hard, red berries in spring.
35 You taste them, and they are sweet
and bitter, the berries a delicacy
for bluejays. The plant rooted
fragilely into a sandy place
by a canyon wall, the sun bathing
40 shiny, pointed leaves.

My son touches the root carefully,
aware of its ancient quality.
He lays his soft, small fingers on it
and looks at me for information.
45 I tell him: wood, an old root,
and around it, the earth, ourselves. **F**

E IMAGERY

Reread lines 27–29.
Add the images in these
lines to your web. What
emotions do these
images suggest?

F SPEAKER

Reread lines 41–46. Why
do you think the speaker
brings his son to the
canyon?

Comprehension

1. **Recall** In “Mi Madre,” how does the desert heal the speaker?
2. **Recall** In “Canyon de Chelly,” what two things does the speaker’s son taste?
3. **Represent** Reread lines 13–14 from “Mi Madre” and lines 17–22 from “Canyon de Chelly.” Choose one of these groups of lines and sketch the image created in your mind.



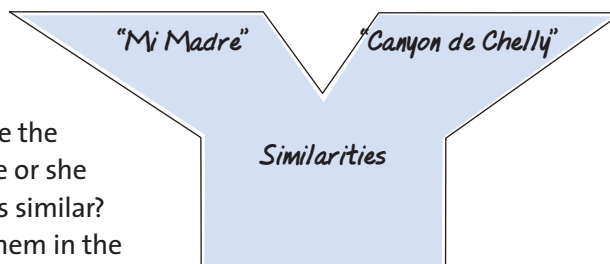
COMMON CORE

RL 4 Analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning.


RL 6 Analyze how differences in points of view create effects.

Text Analysis

4. **Interpret Poem** In “Mi Madre,” the speaker refers to the desert as a “strong mother.” How is the desert in the poem like a mother?
5. **Make Inferences** Reread the first three lines of “Canyon de Chelly.” To whom do you think the speaker is talking? Why do you think so?
6. **Compare and Contrast Speakers** Using a Y-chart like the one shown, fill in the top part with what you know about each speaker’s relationship to the earth. Include the gifts he or she receives from it and how he or she feels about it. How are these relationships similar? Then cross out the similarities and write them in the bottom part.
7. **Evaluate Imagery** Both “Mi Madre” and “Canyon de Chelly” are about real places the poets have visited. Review the imagery webs you created. Which poem’s imagery best helped you to picture the subject of the poem?



Extension and Challenge

8. **Creative Project: Poetry** Think of a place in the outdoors that you enjoy. Jot down notes about how the place looks, smells, feels, sounds, or tastes. Then write a poem about the place. Be sure to include **imagery** that appeals to at least three of the five senses.
9.  **SOCIAL STUDIES CONNECTION** The Navajo, or Diné, make up the largest Native American nation in the United States. Research their history and traditions, including their preservation of Canyon de Chelly as a national landmark. Share your findings with a group.

What gifts does the **EARTH** provide?

Now that you have read the poems, what other gifts might you add to your list?