



Ode to Sorrento

A poetry anthology by Vince DeMiero

3rd | 4th | 5th Periods | English 9 Honors | Mountlake Terrace High School

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Forward

Each of the poems in this anthology in some way relate to my affinity for the beautiful town of Sorrento, Italy, which rests along the Amalfi Coast just south of Naples on the Mediterranean Sea.

Life in Sorrento is a beat slower, a grain of sugar sweeter, a twist of orange zestier and a layer warmer than any place I have ever been.

This is my ode to the place and its beautiful people.

Sorrento

By Vince DeMiero

Sun-soaked bathers bake
on lacy chaise lounge racks
perched proudly along the rocky reach

fresh tomatoes and basil fuse
with mozzarella and hand tossed dough
inside the cliff-side stone oven
molten mouth agape just steps above
the ebony beach.

Demeter to Persephone

by Alicia Suskin Ostriker

I watched you walking up out of that hole

All day it had been raining
in that field in Southern Italy

rain beating down making puddles in the mud
hissing down on rocks from a sky enraged

I waited and was patient
finally you emerged and were immediately soaked

you stared at me without love in your large eyes
that were filled with black sex and white powder

but this is what I expected when I embraced you
Your firm little breasts against my amplitude

Get in the car I said
and then it was spring

The Traveling Onion

by Naomi Shihab Nye

"It is believed that the onion originally came from India. In Egypt it was an object of worship – why I haven't been able to find out. From Egypt the onion entered Greece and on to Italy, thence into all of Europe." – Better Living Cookbook

When I think how far the onion has traveled
just to enter my stew today, I could kneel and praise
all small forgotten miracles,
crackly paper peeling on the drainboard,
pearly layers in smooth agreement,
the way the knife enters onion
and onion falls apart on the chopping block,
a history revealed.

And I would never scold the onion
for causing tears.

It is right that tears fall
for something small and forgotten.
How at meal, we sit to eat,
commenting on texture of meat or herbal aroma
but never on the translucence of onion,
now limp, now divided,
or it's traditionally honorable career:
For the sake of others,
disappear.

Poetic Devices: Imagery

How I Changed My Name, Felice

by Felix Stafanile

In Italy a man's name, here a woman's,
transliterated so I went to school
for seven years, and no one told me different.
The teachers hardly cared, and in the class
Italian boys who knew me said Felice,
although outside they called me feh-LEE-tchay.

I might have lived, my noun so neutralized,
another seven years, except one day
I broke a window like nobody's girl,
and the old lady called a cop, whose sass
was wonderful when all the neighbors smiled
and said that there was no boy named Felice.
And then it was it came on me, my shame,
and I stepped up, and told him, and he grinned.

My father paid a quarter for my sin,
called me inside to look up in a book
that Felix was American for me.
A Roman name, I read. And what he said
was that no Roman broke a widow's glass,
and fanned my little Neapolitan ass.

Italian Food

by Shel Silverstein

Oh, how I love Italian food.
I eat it all the time,
Not just 'cause how good it tastes
But 'cause how good it rhymes.
Minestrone, cannelloni,
Macaroni, rigatoni,
Spaghettini, scallopini,
Escarole, bracirole,
Insalata, cremolata, manicotti,
Marinara, carbonara,
Shrimp francese, Bolognese,
Ravioli, mostaccioli,
Mozzarella, tagliatelle,
Fried zucchini, rollatini,
Fettuccine, green linguine,
Tortellini, Tetrazzini,
Oops—I think I split my jeani.

Poetic Devices: Rhyme, Meter

Italy in One Day

by Mike Orlock

If I could feed you Italy in one day,
served within a cup for you to savor,
I'd begin in sunny Sorrento
south of Naples,
the morning air perfumed by lemon trees
whose fruit is distilled into the liqueur
that the locals pride themselves in making;
you hold a small espresso cup between index finger and thumb
and wrinkle your nose at the bitter flavor
of a first tentative sip
between nibbles of cheese and bread and fruit
in a tiny cafe that overlooks the Mediterranean
and the hazy outline of the island of Capri in the distance.

If I could feed you Italy in one day,
pressed between the slices of a fresh panini,
I'd take you to the Tuscan hills
far from the beaten paths of tourists
north of Siena,
the afternoon as fresh as laundry
drying on the lattice of clothesline
of the apartment across the piazza;
women's voices dart like birds overhead,
flying in and out of open windows
as we share bites of our sandwich,
thick with tomato, cheese, and basil—
simple ingredients that yield a complexity
of tastes washed down with swallows of cold beer
under an ice blue sky.

If I could feed you Italy in one day,
prepared al forno like a primo piatto of lasagna or gnocchi,

I'd take you to an obscure osteria just outside the Duomo
in central Florence,
where the waiters sing you to your table
with operatic theatricality
and the vino della casa is the rich ruby colors
of the evening as it settles on the city,
soft as a silk scarf slipping through your fingers;
we feel the heat of the kitchen
press against the cool of coming night,
our noses florid with the spices of our meals
as we feed each other forkfuls from our plates;
the streets are alive with the commotion of traffic
and the banter of voices bouncing like balls
down the cobblestones of the Via.

If I could feed you Italy in one day,
poured like dark grappa in a delicate tulip glass,
I'd end at a taverna in a remote campo
in the heart of Venice,
where the tables are draped in checkered linen
under quiet awnings far from
the chaos of the Grande Canal;
the sweetness of the day lingers
in the echolalia of lapping water
and the sounds of gondoliers at work;
we indulge ourselves in the ablutions
of vin santo, biscotti dipped in sweet wine,
in limoncello or amaro sipped
from chilled glasses,
in espresso black
as the Venetian sky at night.

If I could feed you Italy in one day,
would we ever feel the need to eat again?

Poetic Devices: Imagery