

# Man Bites Prawn: A Koreatown Seafood Adventure

by **Jonathan Gold**

Illustration by **J. Michael Walker**

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## OVERVIEW

### Quick Glance 10 Points for Usage Guide

Student Population	
Age/Grade Level Appropriateness	* Ages 12+ * Grades 7+
Genre/s	* Essay * Food journalism
Length	866 words
Content Advisories	* Graphic description of live animal food preparation and consumption
One Sentence Summary	This essay recounts Jonathan Gold's experience eating raw prawns at an authentic Korean cafe in Los Angeles.

Lesson Planning	
Topics & Key Themes Overview	<b>Topics</b> * Food * Korean food * Cultural experiences * Exploration * Personal growth and reflection
Topics & Key Themes Overview	<b>Themes</b> * Food reflects the culture from which it is created. * Eating foreign food is a worthwhile cultural experience. * Eating foreign food can be a complex experience that elicits contrasting feelings. * Experiences outside of one's comfort zone are unpredictable but often rewarding. * Expectations of new experiences may not be accurate.

Lesson Planning	
Historic Events / Time Periods for Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Korean migration to Los Angeles (<a href="http://www.scpr.org/blogs/multiamerican/2014/12/05/17645/koreatown-origins-korean-migration-los-angeles/">http://www.scpr.org/blogs/multiamerican/2014/12/05/17645/koreatown-origins-korean-migration-los-angeles/</a> (<a href="http://www.scpr.org/blogs/multiamerican/2014/12/05/17645/koreatown-origins-korean-migration-los-angeles/">http://www.scpr.org/blogs/multiamerican/2014/12/05/17645/koreatown-origins-korean-migration-los-angeles/</a>))</li> <li>* Koreatown's history and development over time (<a href="http://www.reconnectingamerica.org/assets/Uploads/htai_koreatown.pdf">http://www.reconnectingamerica.org/assets/Uploads/htai_koreatown.pdf</a> (<a href="http://www.reconnectingamerica.org/assets/Uploads/htai_koreatown.pdf">http://www.reconnectingamerica.org/assets/Uploads/htai_koreatown.pdf</a>))</li> <li>* A history of Korean Americans (<a href="http://www.naka.org/resources/history.asp">http://www.naka.org/resources/history.asp</a> (<a href="http://www.naka.org/resources/history.asp">http://www.naka.org/resources/history.asp</a>))</li> <li>* "Fish Cheeks" by Amy Tan: <a href="https://www.ncps-k12.org/cms/lib8/CT01903077/Centricity/Domain/638/LA/Short%20Story%20-%20Fish%20Cheeks.pdf">https://www.ncps-k12.org/cms/lib8/CT01903077/Centricity/Domain/638/LA/Short%20Story%20-%20Fish%20Cheeks.pdf</a> (<a href="https://www.ncps-k12.org/cms/lib8/CT01903077/Centricity/Domain/638/LA/Short%20Story%20-%20Fish%20Cheeks.pdf">https://www.ncps-k12.org/cms/lib8/CT01903077/Centricity/Domain/638/LA/Short%20Story%20-%20Fish%20Cheeks.pdf</a>)</li> <li>* "Indigestion" by Anton Chekhov: <a href="http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1996/12/23/indigestion">http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1996/12/23/indigestion</a> (<a href="http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1996/12/23/indigestion">http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1996/12/23/indigestion</a>)</li> </ul>
Complementary Classic and Historic Texts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* <i>The Omnivore's Dilemma</i> by Michael Pollan</li> <li>* <i>The Man Who Ate Everything</i> by Jeffrey Steingarten</li> <li>* Other articles by Jonathan Gold in the <i>LA Times</i>: <a href="http://www.latimes.com/food/jonathan-gold/">http://www.latimes.com/food/jonathan-gold/</a> (<a href="http://www.latimes.com/food/jonathan-gold/">http://www.latimes.com/food/jonathan-gold/</a>)</li> </ul>
Author and Artists Information	<p><b>Jonathan Gold</b> was the award-winning <i>Los Angeles Times</i> food critic.</p> <p><b>J. Michael Walker</b> is the founding Literature for Life (renamed Locavore Lit LA) artist and lives in Los Angeles, CA.</p>

Lesson Planning	
Key Common Core Standards (found in detail following the curriculum)	CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.1 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.3 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.1 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.7.3 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.7.4 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.7.4.C CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.7.5.B CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.7.6 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.1 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.1.C CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.1.D CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.1 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.3 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.4 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.6 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.1 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.3 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.3.B CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.3.D CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.2 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.4 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.4 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.6

## Author Biography

**Jonathan Gold** was the 2007 Pulitzer Prize-winning food critic for the *Los Angeles Times*. A Los Angeles native, he began writing the Counter Intelligence column for the *L.A. Weekly* in 1986, wrote about death metal and gangsta rap for Rolling Stone and Spin among other places, and was delighted that he managed to forge a career out of the professional eating of tacos. Gold died July 21, 2018. (*Los Angeles Times* biography)

## Artist Biography

**Michael Walker** is the founding Locavore Lit LA artist. He has been an exhibiting artist since 1984 and has participated in more than 100 exhibitions, received a dozen grants, fellowships, and residencies, and enjoyed solo shows at the following institutions: the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies, Harvard; el Museo Nacional de Culturas Populares, Mexico City; the National Museum of Catholic Art and History, East Harlem, New York City; and the Arkansas Arts Center, among others. As a writer, J. Michael is the author and illustrator of *All the Saints of the City of the Angels: Seeking the Soul of L.A. on Its Streets* (Heyday 2008), which was awarded the Eric Hoffer Award for Art Book of the Year and the Independent Publishers Association Award for Best Regional Non-Fiction on the Pacific-West, and is co-editor of *Waiting for Foreign: L.A. Writers on (and in) Guadalajara* (Peregrino Press 2010).

## SYNOPSIS

This essay recounts, with compelling imagery, Pulitzer Prize-winning food critic Jonathan Gold's experience of eating an authentic Korean meal in the Koreatown neighborhood of Los Angeles. Although

most of the meal is unpleasant and mediocre at best, the final serving of live prawns is the most unique food Gold has ever consumed. Eating the live prawns leaves him feeling conflicted.

## CURRICULUM

### Pre-Reading & Themes Activity Options

#### Topic and Main Ideas

Respond to the following journal prompt in 4-5 complete sentences:

*What is the strangest food you've ever eaten? Where and when did you eat it? Did you like or dislike it?*

Share your response with a partner and/or out loud to the whole class.

#### Passage-Specific Themes

Read the following excerpt from the essay:

From its name I had always inferred Living Fish Center was a vivarium, a Korean analogue to Maine lobster pounds or posh Chinatown seafood palaces. But inside, the restaurant seemed more like a road-house really, a basic Korean cafe sparsely populated with students, elderly Korean couples, and knots of workers still in their technicians' overalls.

Discuss the following questions with a partner:

How does the author describe this restaurant? Does the restaurant meet the author's expectations? What specific language from this excerpt reveals what the author thinks about the restaurant?

#### Universal Themes

Think of an experience you've had in which ALL of the following happened:

- The experience involved doing something you've never done before.
- The experience included good parts.
- The experience included bad parts.
- You appreciated having the experience.

Write some brief notes about the experience in your journal so you fully remember it. Share your experience with a partner and/or out loud to the whole class.

## Key Vocabulary

Definitions are very context-dependent. Make sure that any definitions you look up or work from are the ones that most correctly fit in the context of the story.

Level One	Level Two	Level Three
brilliant	briny	chum
intimately	innumerable	hangool
primal	intuit	roe
proxy	tepid	soontofu
sautee	sashimi	vivarium
whitefish	sea urchin	
shellfish	spinnerets	
squid	unfathomable	
teeming		
trout		
tuna		
unsettling		

## Vocabulary Activity Options

- Working with a partner, find all of the vocabulary words that indicate a specific type of fish. Create an original brochure, flier, or information page on all the fish featured in this story. Research information on at least (but not only) the following:
  - Where does this fish live?
  - What does this fish look like?
  - How long does this fish live?
  - What is one fun or unusual fact about this fish?

Make your brochure, flier, or information page colorful and easy to read. Be creative with how you present your research and use technology if possible. Present your finished product to the class.

2. Find all of the adjectives (words that modify nouns) in the vocabulary list and define them. Then create an original description of something other than fish using each of these words at least once. Be sure to underline each adjective in your description.
3. Look up the word “vivarium.” Then create a vivarium for some creature or being — either real or imaginary. Describe the following:
  - What creature is your vivarium for?
  - What would you put in your vivarium?
  - How would you maintain your vivarium?

Draw a picture of your vivarium and present it to a partner.

## Post-Reading Class Discussion Options

1. Do you think the author’s expectations of the restaurant were too high, too low, just right, or otherwise off? What happens when people’s expectations don’t match reality? Is it possible for expectations to match reality?
2. How do the author’s food descriptions enhance the essay? What did you think or feel when you read these descriptions?
3. How do you imagine the author feels about the unique experience he had at this restaurant? Do you think he regrets or would relive it? Put yourself in the author’s shoes and describe how you’d feel, given what the experience entailed.
4. Is eating live animals ethical? Conduct a class debate over this topic. Students should cite relevant and reliable information to support their arguments.

## Text-Dependent Question Options

1. Identify and explain at least one simile or metaphor in this essay. How does the simile or metaphor contribute to the writing as a whole?
2. Based on the author’s behavior with his food, what can you infer about his character? How would you describe the author himself, based on his actions presented in this essay?
3. There are different types of sensory imagery, according to which of the five senses it activates: touch (tactile imagery), sight (visual imagery), sound (auditory imagery), taste (gustatory imagery), and smell (olfactory imagery). Select one of the five types of imagery and find at least three examples of it in this essay.

4. Describe this essay's illustration. When you read this essay and picture it in your head, how does your mental image compare to the illustration?
5. This essay is full of contrasts in words, ideas, and descriptions. Select and explain one such contrast.

## Writing Exercise Options

### Narrative

Write an short essay about a time you experienced something – anything – new.

### Descriptive

People are increasingly going vegetarian and vegan, but Jonathan Gold is an avowed hardcore meat eater. He has no concern for any of the ethical considerations about the treatment of animals or the perspective of animals. Rewrite Gold's review from the prawn's perspective.

## Complementary Reading Text Option

### Fish Cheeks

by Amy Tan

I fell in love with the minister's son the winter I turned fourteen. He was not Chinese, but as white as Mary in the manger. For Christmas I prayed for this blond-haired boy, Robert, and a slim new American nose.

When I found out that my parents had invited the minister's family over for Christmas Eve dinner, I cried. What would Robert think of our shabby Chinese Christmas? What would he think of our noisy Chinese relatives who lacked proper American manners? What terrible disappointment would he feel upon seeing not a roasted turkey and sweet potatoes but Chinese food?

On Christmas Eve I saw that my mother had outdone herself in creating a strange menu. She was pulling black veins out of the backs of fleshy prawns. The kitchen was littered with appalling mounds of raw food: A slimy rock cod with bulging eyes that pleaded not to be thrown into a pan of hot oil. Tofu, which looked like stacked wedges of rubbery white sponges. A bowl soaking dried fungus back to life. A plate of squid, their backs crisscrossed with knife markings so they resembled bicycle tires. And then they arrived – the minister's family and all my relatives in a clamor of doorbells and rumples Christmas packages. Robert grunted hello, and I pretended he was not worthy of existence.

Dinner threw me deeper into despair. My relatives licked the ends of their chopsticks and reached across the table, dipping them into the dozen or so plates of food. Robert and his family waited patiently for platters to be passed to them. My relatives murmured with pleasure when my mother brought out the whole steamed fish. Robert grimaced. Then my father poked his chopsticks just below the fish eye and plucked out the soft meat. “Amy, your favorite,” he said, offering me the tender fish cheek. I wanted to disappear.

At the end of the meal my father leaned back and belched loudly, thanking my mother for her fine cooking. “It’s a polite Chinese custom to show you are satisfied,” explained my father to our astonished guests. Robert was looking down at his plate with a reddened face. The minister managed to muster up a quiet burp. I was stunned into silence for the rest of the night.

After everyone had gone, my mother said to me, “You want to be the same as American girls on the outside.” She handed me an early gift. It was a miniskirt in beige tweed. “But inside you must always be Chinese. You must be proud you are different. Your only shame is to have shame.”

And even though I didn’t agree with her then, I knew that she understood how much I had suffered during the evening’s dinner. It wasn’t until many years later – long after I had gotten over my crush on Robert – that I was able to fully appreciate her lesson and the true purpose behind our particular menu. For Christmas Eve that year, she had chosen all my favorite foods.

## Writing Exercise

Both “Fish Cheeks” and “Man Bites Prawn: A Koreatown Seafood Adventure” are essays about experiences with food that inspired reflection in the authors. Write a brief essay that discusses how food changed the authors’ respective thinking about themselves and different cultures.

## Activity Options

### Classroom Activity One

1. Select a day about a week in advance for a “food exchange.” For this exercise, students will bring their favorite food and/or dish to class and share it with others.
2. Instruct students to think about their favorite food(s). Guide them in selecting one food or dish that they can feasibly bring to class to share.

NOTE: Students may not all be equally able to bring food for the whole class. Encourage students to bring what they can, but don’t expect them to bring enough food for everyone. Tell students to try to bring enough food to share with at least one other person in the class. Tell students who might have

any financial or logistical difficulties in bringing any food whatsoever to speak with you privately. Make accommodations for these students accordingly.

3. On the food exchange day, instruct students to have a small sample of the food they brought individually. Have them describe the experience of eating their food in their journals, using different forms of imagery, figurative and descriptive language, and vivid diction. Instruct students to share their descriptions with the class.
4. Once students have completed descriptions of their individually brought foods, facilitate an exchange during which students sample the foods of others. Try to maximize the number of different foods each student tries during the exchange.
5. For each food the students try, instruct them to write a brief description of it in their journals, using different forms of imagery, figurative and descriptive language, and vivid diction. Instruct students to share their descriptions with the class.
6. At the end of the exchange, have students discuss the foods they liked and disliked the most and why.

NOTE: Prior to this discussion, warn students about being courteous to each other. Even if they didn't like a certain food, students should not disparage or insult each other. Model polite ways for students to share their opinions if you think it's necessary.

### **Classroom Activity Two**

1. Inspire some competitive spirit in your classroom by challenging your students to an imagery competition.
2. Review the five forms of sensory imagery to make sure students understand them: touch (tactile imagery), sight (visual imagery), sound (auditory imagery), taste (gustatory imagery), and smell (olfactory imagery). Provide examples from the text if necessary.
3. Split students into two or three different teams.
4. Challenge students to work in their teams to describe several different nouns of your choice using all five forms of sensory imagery. Sample nouns could include: cat, tacos, fire, mangos, etc.
5. Give students five minutes after you present them with a noun to create original descriptions of it using all five forms of sensory imagery.
6. Students must write their descriptions down and share them with the class.
7. The teams that create the most vivid descriptions using all five forms of sensory imagery win one point per noun.
8. Play this game until the end of the period, students grow tired of it, and/or one team wins.

NOTE: You, the teacher, will probably serve as judge of this competition. However, if other teachers/volunteers are available, you should ask them to serve on a judge's panel so your students don't complain about your biases.

## Home Activity

1. Students have a couple different options for food-related home activities.

Option One: Students will ask family members or friends if they have a special traditional food recipe that has been kept within the family for generations. Once students find a specific recipe, they should conduct an interview of the person providing using (at minimum) the following questions:

Who originally created this recipe?

Why was the recipe created?

When is the recipe made?

How often is the recipe made?

How does the recipe reflect your family's culture and values?

Students should transcribe their interviews, take photos of the finished recipe (if possible), and share their findings with the class.

Option Two: Students will partner up and select a recipe they can make outside of class off the Internet. They will make their selected dish and write a brief essay describing the experience of finding the recipe, buying\*\* ingredients, preparing the dish, and then eating it.

\*\* If students having funds for ingredients is a concern, consider bringing a set of standard

Ingredients for a very simple baking recipe to class and asking students to figure out what they can make with the ingredients before each taking enough home to make a dish.

2. If possible, these students should bring their prepared dish to class to share it. Students will present their written work (and ideally their dish) to the class.

## Guest Speaker

Option One: Invite the story's illustrator, J. Michael Walker to speak.

Option Two: Invite Evan Kleiman, host of KCRW's Good Food radio show and the "fairy godmother of the LA food scene" to speak.

- Contact Evan Kleiman by emailing her at [goodfood@kcrw.com](mailto:goodfood@kcrw.com) (<mailto:goodfood@kcrw.com>).

## Field Trip

Coordinate a field trip to the L.A. Kitchen, a nonprofit organization that trains individuals for jobs in the culinary industry by giving them experience cooking healthy meals with recycled ingredients. L.A. Kitchen’s goal is to “empower, nourish, and engage the community.”

- Contact L.A. Kitchen to schedule a field trip by either emailing the organization: [Join@LAKitchen.org](mailto:Join@LAKitchen.org) (<mailto:Join@LAKitchen.org>)
- Or emailing Janet Won is L.A. Kitchen’s office manager: [jwon@LAKitchen.org](mailto:jwon@LAKitchen.org) (<mailto:jwon@LAKitchen.org>) (818) 213-8818

Writing Exercise:

Prior to the field trip to L.A. Kitchen, tell students that its mission is to “empower, nourish, and engage the community.” Instruct students to consider this think about how L.A. Kitchen lives up to its mission throughout the field trip and to write down some notes as they participate in the field trip.

After the field trip, instruct students to complete a brief reflection on their experience, which could include answers to the following prompts:

- How does the L.A. Kitchen live up to its mission to “empower, nourish, and engage the community”?
- What did you learn from the field trip to L.A. Kitchen?
- What did you like and/or dislike the most about the field trip to L.A. Kitchen?
- What general reflections do you have on the power of food in the lives of individuals and communities?

## TEST PREPARATION COMPONENT

### Writing Exercise

“Man Bites Prawn: A Koreatown Seafood Adventure” illustrates how we rarely consider the fact that we are constantly consuming animals. Write one paragraph explaining your own dietary habits (i.e., Do you have zero restrictions? Are you a vegetarian or a vegan?) Then, write a paragraph arguing for a different diet, one that is not your own.

## COMMON CORE STANDARDS REFERENCE

## Pre-Reading & Themes Activity Options

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.1 Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 7 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

## Vocabulary Activity Options

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.7.3 Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.7.4 Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade 7 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.7.4.C Consult general and specialized reference materials (e.g., dictionaries, glossaries, thesauruses), both print and digital, to find the pronunciation of a word or determine or clarify its precise meaning or its part of speech.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.7.5.B Use the relationship between particular words (e.g., synonym/antonym, analogy) to better understand each of the words.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.7.6 Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases; gather vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.

## Post-Reading Class Discussion Options

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 7 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.1.C Pose questions that elicit elaboration and respond to others' questions and comments with relevant observations and ideas that bring the discussion back on topic as needed.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.1.D Acknowledge new information expressed by others and, when warranted, modify their own views.

## Text-Dependent Question Options

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.1 Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.3 Analyze how particular elements of a story or drama interact (e.g., how setting shapes the characters or plot).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of rhymes and other repetitions of sounds (e.g., alliteration) on a specific verse or stanza of a poem or section of a story or drama.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.6 Analyze how an author develops and contrasts the points of view of different characters or narrators in a text.

## Writing Exercise Options

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.1 Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.3.B Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, and description, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.3.D Use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to capture the action and convey experiences and events.

## Complementary Reading Text Writing Exercise

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

### Activity Options

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.4 Present claims and findings, emphasizing salient points in a focused, coherent manner with pertinent descriptions, facts, details, and examples; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.6 Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate. (See grade 7 Language standards 1 and 3 here (<http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/L/7/>) for specific expectations.)