"Ode to Family Photographs" Lesson

Preparation: Create a worksheet that has the poem structured with enough room to write in the margin. You may want to put relevant questions on the side. Also Xerox copies of the I Am poem, make sure you don't print off the examples. The examples are simply to share with students.

- 1. Students will read the poem "Ode to Family Photographs" and make annotations on the side. Lower level students may need to have the reading modeled for them.
- 2. As a class, read the poem a second time and discuss.

For lower level students, you may want to discuss line by line what is happening in the poem. Upper level students may be able to get into groups and discuss the poem with the class discussion being more of a Paidea seminar or a sharing of big ideas in a gallery walk.

- 3. The discussion needs to center around
 - theme (What message is the author conveying? What are the big ideas?)
 - images (What do you "see" in the poem?)
 - structure (rhyme? ideas? long lines, short lines)
 - patterns/repetition
- 4. Create an "I Am Poem" using the worksheet. Share the poems.

Options for extension:

- 1. Bring in some different looking family photos and write a poem about them.
- 2. Look at the yearbook and select a page of pictures to create a poem about.

Ode to Family Photographs



by Gary Soto

Mama was never good at pictures.

This is a statue of a famous general who lost an arm, And this is me with my head fut off.

This a trash can chained to a gate, This is my father with his eyes half-closed.

This a photograph of my sister And a giraffe looking over her shoulder.

This is our car's front bumper.
This is a bird with a pretzel in its beak.
This is my brother Pedro standing on one leg on a rock.
With a smear of chocolate on his face.

Mama sneezed when she looked Behind the camera: the snapshots are blurry, The angles dizzy as a spin on a merry-go-round.

But we had fun when Mama picked up the camera. How can I tell? Each of us laughing hard.

Can you see: I have candy in my mouth.