

BLUE POTATOES AND SQUARE WATERMELONS

by Omar Naid

Science

Genre

Online Encyclopedia Entries

contain information about real people, living things, places, situations, or events.

Text Features

A **Hyperlink** is an electronic connection within text on a Web page that provides direct access to other documents or information.

A **Key Word** is a specific word that helps you find information when searching the Internet. It is often typed into a search box.

Content Vocabulary

flukes **crossbreeding**
hybrids

Visit the produce section of any large supermarket. You may be astonished by the variety of unusual fruits and vegetables. Square watermelons, blue potatoes, and purple cauliflower attract shoppers' attention. Some plants are unusual because they are grown in special ways. For example, square watermelons grow inside square glass cases. The result is a specially shaped melon that is easy to cut and store in the refrigerator. Some plants, called **flukes**, result from odd, sudden changes that happen only once. Other plants are "designed" when they are seeds.

Here are two online encyclopedia articles to help you learn more about how these unusual plants come about.

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Hybrids

Hybrids are new plants created by scientists. They are a combination of two different "parent" plants that form a whole new kind of plant. Foods from hybrid plants might taste better or stay fresher when they are shipped. For example, a new fruit called the **pluot** is a cross between a plum and an apricot. It looks like a plum, but it is sweeter and firmer than most plums.

This is a Key Word.



This is a hyperlink to more information.

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Crossbreeding

Crossbreeding is when two plants of the same kind are combined to create a better plant. A farmer might crossbreed a small, sweet tomato with a large but tasteless tomato to create a large, sweet tomato, which will provide delicious slices that fit better on sandwiches. Farmers must use plant selection, which means choosing the

plants with qualities that people want and then growing more of these plants.

The next time you go to the supermarket and see a square watermelon or pluot, remember how much work went into producing it.

TOMATO
CROSSBREEDING



Connect and Compare



1. How would you find more information about the pluot?

Hyperlinks

2. What type of produce would you like to improve? How could you find out more about how to improve it? **Synthesize**
3. Think about “Blue Potatoes and Square Watermelons” and *Weslandia*. How is the process of growing produce different in each story? **Reading/Writing Across Text**



Science Activity

Research a plant that is a hybrid. List the traits of this hybrid and compare and contrast it to the two parent plants using a Venn Diagram.



Find out more about new produce at www.macmillanmh.com

Write a Play

Writer's Craft

Mood

Writers use dialogue to reveal a character's personality, thoughts, and feelings. Dialogue also shows the conflict between characters. Writers use precise words to reinforce the **mood** established by the dialogue.

I used precise words to reinforce the mood established by the dialogue.

I showed the characters' feelings with dialogue.

The Four Eaters

by Mary W.

Setting: The school cafeteria during lunch.

Jorge: (tasting a french fry) Mia, you aren't eating. Consider the french fry, so tender on the inside, so crispy on the outside.

Mia: (frowning) They're too greasy.

I hate grease.

Todd: (stuffing his face with a handful of fries)

Who has time to notice? I'm starving! Hey, Mia, if you aren't eating any can I have them? (Mia slides her tray over to Todd.)

Kelli: Mia, we're not supposed to trade food. Todd, don't you think about the importance of nutrition? I'm not sure about the vitamin content of those fries.

Todd: (mouth full) The whaaaa?

Jorge: Nutrition? It's about taste! (takes another bite)

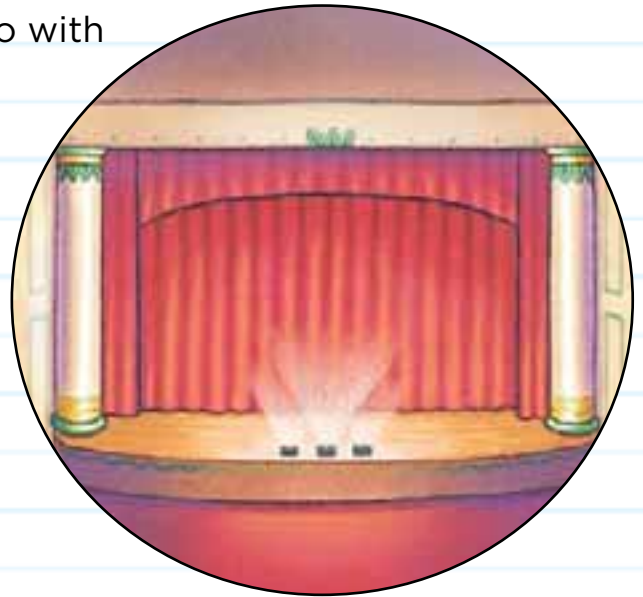
Kelli: Don't you guys ever think about anything but your stomachs? This food should come with a warning label.

Mia: Yeah. It should say: "Eat at your own risk."

Your Turn

Write a play so that you can practice using dialogue.

Choose a theme that has something to do with food. Plan to use strong characters with unique personalities. Make sure that the words you choose for each character fit that character's personality. Remember that the best way to show conflict between characters is through what they say to each other. Use the writer's checklist to check your writing.



Writer's Checklist

- Ideas and Content:** Did I choose a theme about food that interests me?
- Organization:** Does the conversation among the characters flow easily from person to person?
- Voice:** Did I choose words for each character that those characters would really use when speaking?
- Word Choice:** Did I choose precise words that help to reinforce the **mood**?
- Sentence Fluency:** Do the sentences in the dialogue among characters flow smoothly?
- Conventions:** Did I punctuate my play properly?
Did I check spelling?