

*Disclaimer: This is a machine generated PDF of selected content from our databases. This functionality is provided solely for your convenience and is in no way intended to replace original scanned PDF. Neither Cengage Learning nor its licensors make any representations or warranties with respect to the machine generated PDF. The PDF is automatically generated "AS IS" and "AS AVAILABLE" and are not retained in our systems. CENGAGE LEARNING AND ITS LICENSORS SPECIFICALLY DISCLAIM ANY AND ALL EXPRESS OR IMPLIED WARRANTIES, INCLUDING WITHOUT LIMITATION, ANY WARRANTIES FOR AVAILABILITY, ACCURACY, TIMELINESS, COMPLETENESS, NON-INFRINGEMENT, MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE. Your use of the machine generated PDF is subject to all use restrictions contained in The Cengage Learning Subscription and License Agreement and/or the Gale Literature: LitFinder Terms and Conditions and by using the machine generated PDF functionality you agree to forgo any and all claims against Cengage Learning or its licensors for your use of the machine generated PDF functionality and any output derived therefrom.*

## Ode to Gumbo

**Author:** Young, Kevin (American writer)

**Date:** Summer 2008

**From:** The Kenyon Review (Vol. 30, Issue 3)

**Publisher:** Kenyon Review

**Document Type:** Poem

### ABOUT THIS WORK

**Title:** Ode to Gumbo (Poem)

**Published:** January 01, 2008

**Genre:** Poem

**Author:** Young, Kevin (American poet)

**Occupation:** American poet

Text:

For weeks I have waited for a day without death or doubt. Instead the sky set afire or the flood filling my face. A stubborn drain nothing can fix. Every day death. Every morning death & every night & evening And each hour a kind of winter-- all weather is unkind. Too hot, or cold that creeps the bones. Father, your face a faith I can no longer see. Across the street a dying, yet still-standing tree. \*\* So why not make a soup of what's left? Why not boil & chop something outside the mind--let us welcome winter for a few hours, even in summer. Some say Gumbo starts with *filé* or with *roux*, begins with flour & water making sure not to burn. I know Gumbo starts with sorrow-- with hands that cannot wait but must--with stirring & a slow boil & things that cannot be taught, like grace. Done right, Gumbo lasts for days. Done right, it will feed you & not let go. Like grief you can eat & eat & still plenty left. Food of the saints, Gumbo will outlast even us--like pity, you will curse it & still hope for the wing of chicken bobbed up from below. Like God Gumbo is hard to get right & I don't bother asking for it outside my mother's house. Like life, there's no one way to do it, & a hundred ways, from here to Sunday, to get it dead wrong. \*\* Save all the songs. I know none, even this, that will bring a father back to his son. Blood is thicker than water under any bridge & Gumbo thicker than that. It was my father's mother who taught mine how to stir its dark mirror-- now it is me who wishes to plumb its secret depths. Black Angel, Madonna of the Shadows, Hail Mary strong & dark as dirt, Gumbo's scent fills this house like silence & tells me everything has an afterlife, given enough time & the right touch. You need okra, sausage, bones of a bird, an entire onion cut open & wept over, stirring cayenne in till the end burns the throat-- till we can amen & pretend such fiery mercy is all we know.

**Copyright:** COPYRIGHT 2008 Kenyon Review

<http://www.kenyonreview.org>

**Source Citation**

Young, Kevin (American writer). "Ode to Gumbo." *The Kenyon Review*, vol. 30, no. 3, 2008, p. 77+. *Gale Literature: LitFinder*, <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A180941230/LITF?u=lapl&sid=LITF&xid=8e796da1>. Accessed 7 Jan. 2020.

**Gale Document Number:** GALE|A180941230

---