

Lesson Guide: Blue Corn

Vocabulary:

- Antioxidants
- Kernel
- Maiden
- Anthocyanins
- Cornmeal

Engage:

- Show students a photo of blue corn mush, blue cornmeal, blue corn, or blue corn tortilla chips.
- Ask students the following questions:
 - Have you ever seen blue corn before?
 - Why do you think it is blue?
 - Do you know how it is grown?
 - Did you know that the Hopi, Zuni, and other Pueblo peoples have been growing blue corn for nearly 4,000 years! They knew it was special long ago!
- For a visual, please show students photos of each attached to the educators guide.

Explore and Explain:

- Activity 1: Show your students photos of corn (blue, red, yellow, and white).
 - Then, have students color the *Colors of Corn* worksheet. Included are sections to learn colors in the students' given languages.
- Activity 2: As a class, listen to the [Blue Corn Maiden](#), the story of spring among the Hopi people.
 - Then, with students, discuss why the Blue Corn Maiden was important to the Hopi people.

Elaborate

- Show students the [Blue Corn Mush](#) video to learn more about the cultural and nutritional benefits of blue corn.
 - Host a blue corn tasting experience where students sample a small bite of blue corn mush or tortilla chips (if allowed by your school). Pair it with a short classroom discussion or written reflection.
 - **Discussion Prompts:**
 - How does blue corn taste compared to other corn products?
 - What surprised you about its texture, flavor, or color?
- As a class, talk with students about antioxidants.
 - Antioxidants are like tiny superheroes in food that help keep our bodies healthy and strong! They protect our cells from damage, much like a superhero protects a city. The more color and the darker the color of foods, the more antioxidants they contain. Blue corn has MORE antioxidant superheroes than yellow corn! The blue/purple color comes from special antioxidants called anthocyanins (say: an-tho-SY-uh-nins). You can find these same superheroes in blueberries, too! Remember that eating colorful foods, such as blue corn, gives your body the superhero protection it needs!

- Talk to students about other dark colored foods: Plums, purple grapes, blackberries, purple yams, etc.
- Then, have students complete the following writing prompt: If blue corn were a superhero, what would its powers be?
 - Optional: Upon completion, let students create a *Superhero Shield Craft*: Students will create a paper shield decorated with blue corn kernels, listing body parts that antioxidants help protect (ex., eyes, heart, skin).

Evaluate

- Blue corn has been grown by Native American families in the Southwest for thousands of years. Why do you think they chose to grow and save blue corn seeds?

Suggested Lesson Activities:

- The Colors of Corn Worksheet
- The Blue Corn Maiden Story
- Indigi-Genuis: Blue Corn Mush Video
- Writing: If blue corn were a superhero, what would its power be?
- Superhero Shield Craft Worksheet

Additional Educator Resources:

- [Blue Corn Mush: Indigi-Genuis \(Video\)](#)
- [Blue Corn State of Mind \(Article\)](#)
- [Acoma Blue Corn Restored to its Community of Origin](#)

The Story of the Blue Corn Maiden

For Grades K–5: Please feel free to modify these lessons as needed to fit the needs of your students.

A long time ago, the Hopi people lived in a village on top of a high mesa. The people worked hard to grow all types of corn: yellow corn, red corn, white corn, and blue corn. Each kind of corn had a special spirit, known as a Corn Maiden. The kindest and most gentle of all was the Blue Corn Maiden. Wherever she went, blue corn grew tall and strong. Her corn tasted sweet and gave the people strength. The people loved Blue Corn Maiden. They sang songs to her and thanked her for bringing food to their families.

Winter Comes

One cold day, Winter Katsina came down from the mountains. He wore a mask made of frost and carried icy winds in his hands. When he saw Blue Corn Maiden, he was amazed by her kindness and beauty. Winter said, “Come with me to my snowy home. Stay with me where it is quiet and cold.” Blue Corn Maiden did not want to leave her people, but Winter’s magic surrounded her, and soon she was taken to his icy cave.

Life in the Cold

In Winter Katsina’s cold cave, Blue Corn Maiden felt lonely. She missed the warm sun, the children’s laughter, and the green fields. Winter Katsina was kind to her, but the world outside stayed frozen. The people on the mesa grew hungry. Their corn could not grow. They prayed for the Maiden to return.

The Coming of Summer

Then one day, Summer Katsina came. He brought sunlight, rain, and green plants. When he learned that Blue Corn Maiden was trapped with Winter Katsina, he grew angry. Summer Katsina and Winter Katsina met in the middle of the world. Winter blew his icy winds, and Summer sent warm rain and light. They struggled until they realized the world needed both of them for balance, offering both cold and warmth, rest and growth. So, they made an agreement.

The Seasons Begin

Blue Corn Maiden would stay with Winter Katsina for half of the year. During that time, the land would rest under the snow. Then she would return to her people for the other half of the year, bringing sunlight, rain, and tall blue corn. The people celebrated when she came back. They sang, danced, and planted their corn, knowing she would visit them again and again.

The Lesson

And that is why the seasons change. When the wind feels cold, it means Blue Corn Maiden is resting in Winter Katsina’s home. When the corn grows tall and the sun warms your face, she has returned, bringing life back to the land.

Blue Corn: Superfood from the Earth



Figure 1: Blue Corn, photographed by Antonio Diaz.

Blue corn is a healthy and tasty food that helps our bodies grow strong! It has essential vitamins and nutrients that help our bodies fight off germs. The deep blue and purple colors in blue corn come from special nutrients called anthocyanins – tiny helpers that protect our bodies, like superheroes inside our food! Blue corn also contains a lot of fiber, which helps our digestive system function properly and keeps us feeling full and energized.

Long ago, families ate blue corn in many ways: ground into flour for bread, made into porridge, or cooked in stews. This is because it provided them strength and energy when other foods were hard to find. Today, many still enjoy blue corn in tortillas, pancakes, and other dishes. Eating blue corn connects us to the generations of Indigenous families who have grown and cared for blue corn for hundreds of years.

Growing Blue Corn with Care: Seeds, Sun, and Dry Farming

Every blue corn plant starts as a tiny seed planted in warm, fertile soil. Some families use a special method called dry farming, where they grow the corn without much water, relying on the rain and careful care of the soil. With sunshine, water, and attention, the seed begins to grow tall stalks with long green leaves. Bright yellow flowers appear, and bees help the plants make kernels that will become blue corn.

As the corn grows, the tiny kernels swell and take on their rich, deep blue color. When it is ready, people carefully gather the ears and hang them up to dry for several weeks. Once the kernels are completely dry and hard, they can be removed from the cob and ground into flour using special grinding stones or mills. This flour is then used to make tortillas, bread, and other delicious foods! Families also set aside some of the best seeds for the next planting. Saving seeds keeps the tradition alive and links us to the families who have nurtured blue corn for generations. From planting to harvest, blue corn teaches us that patience, care, and tradition help both food and people thrive!

Engage



Yellow Corn



Blue Corn



White Corn



Red Corn

Activity 1



Blue Corn Mash



Blue Corn



Blue Corn Chips



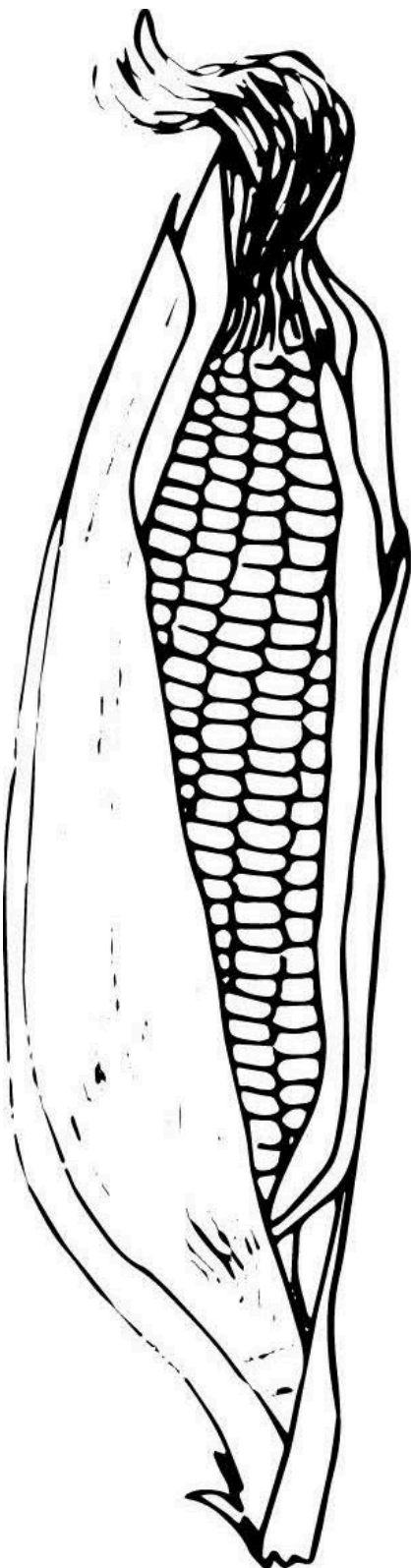
Blue Cornmeal

COLORS OF CORN

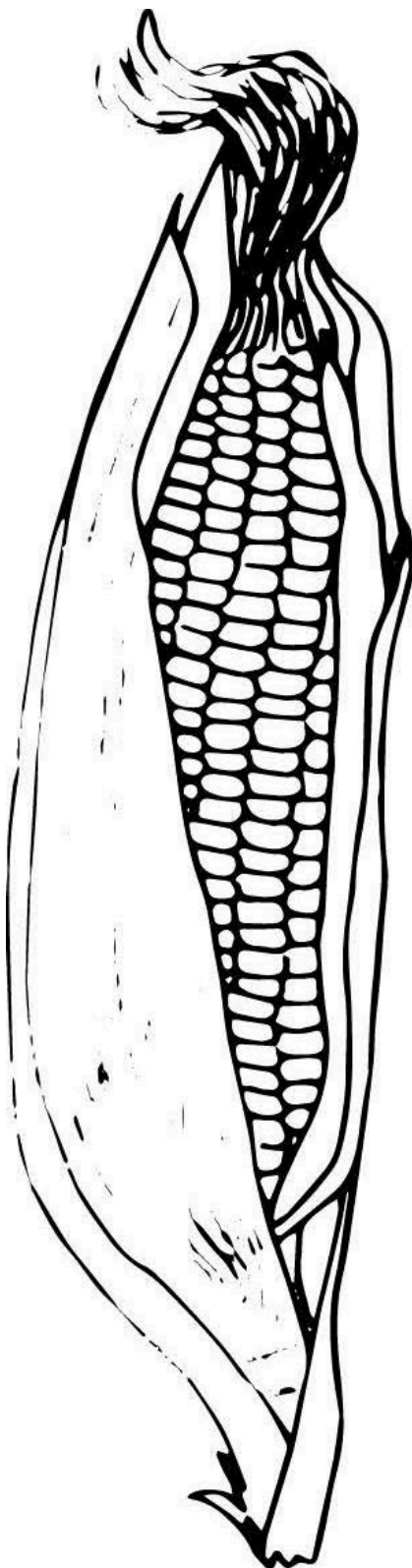
Corn is known to come in different colors; yellow, white, red, and blue.
Color the corn below and write the word for corn and the colors in your Native Tribal Language
and practice pronunciation.

CORN _____

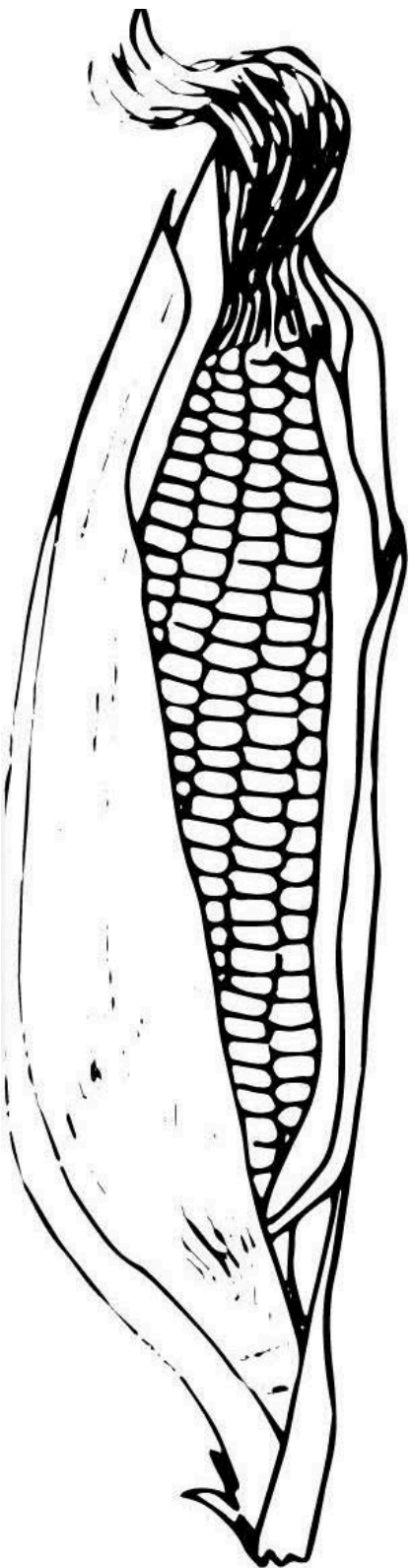
BLUE



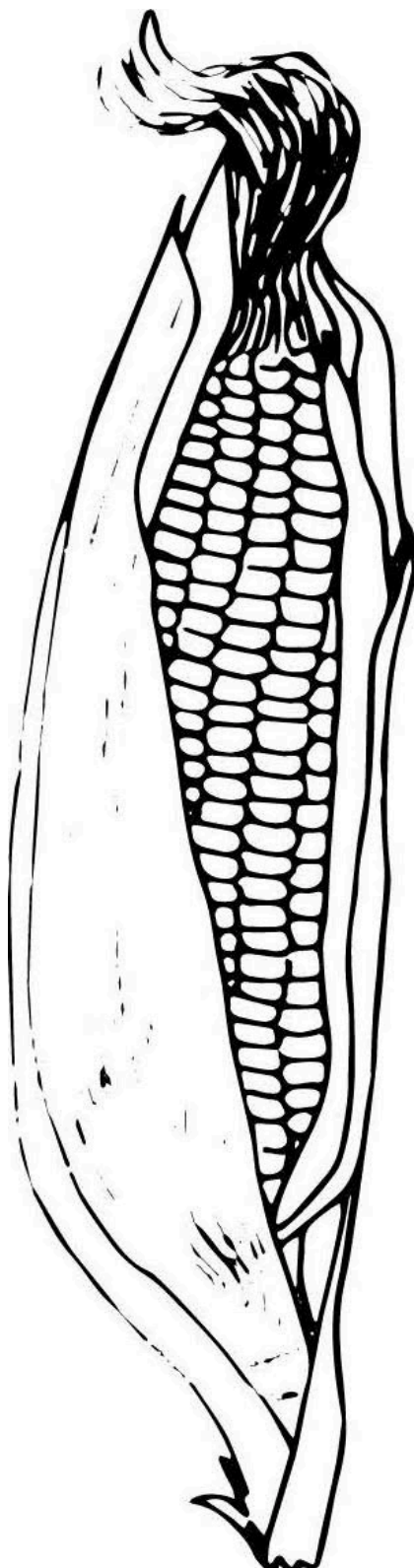
YELLOW



RED



WHITE

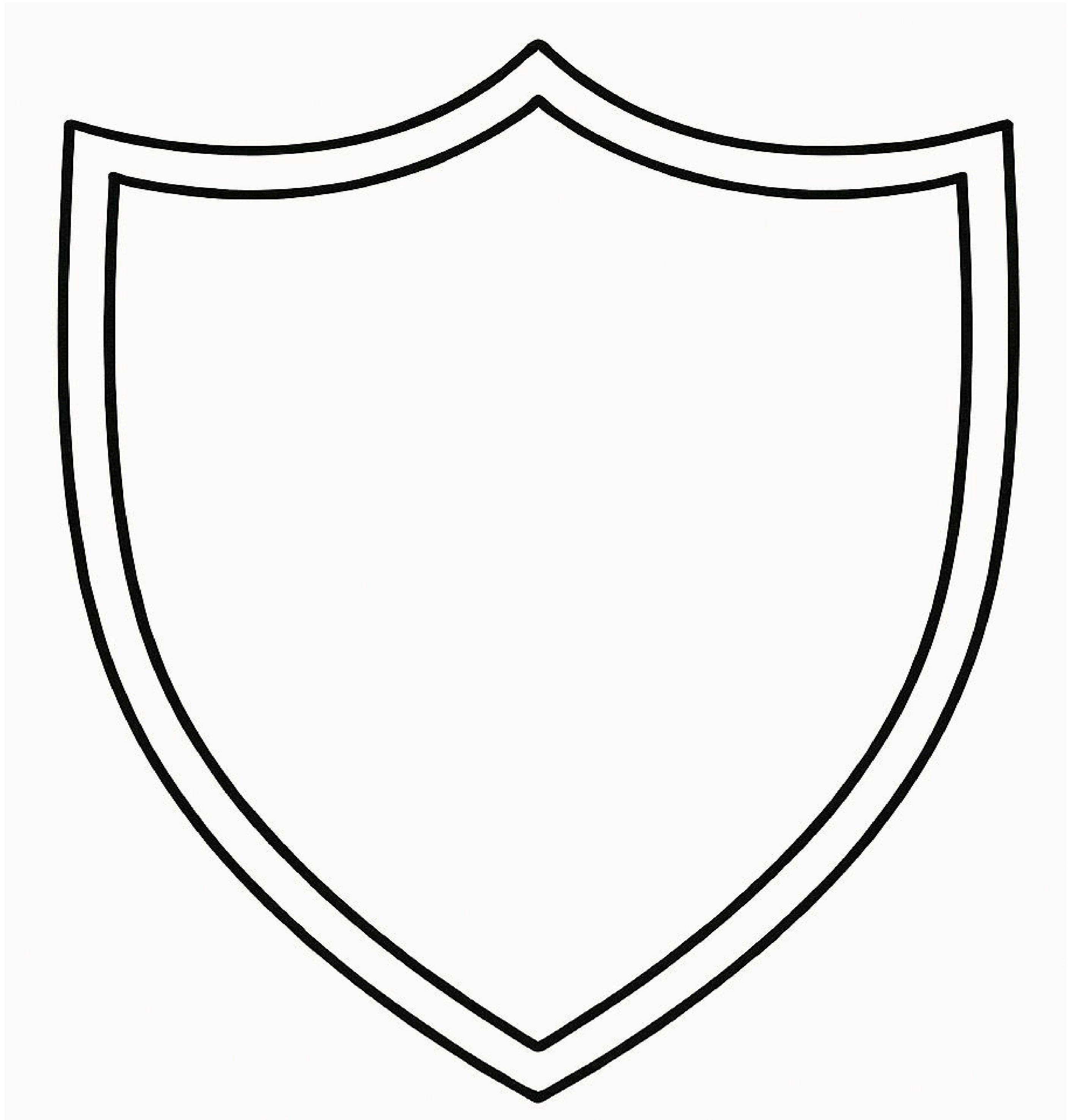


Name: _____

Date: _____

Superhero Shield

Create a paper shield decorated with blue corn kernels (if available). List the body parts that antioxidants help protect inside of the shield (eyes, heart, skin). On the outside of the shield, draw anthocyanin rich foods (purple/blue foods).



Shield Option #1

Name: _____

Date: _____

Superhero Shield

Create a paper shield decorated with blue corn kernels (if available). List the body parts that antioxidants help protect inside of the shield (eyes, heart, skin). On the outside of the shield, draw anthocyanin rich foods (purple/blue foods).

