

"Where I'm From"

Name _____ Period _____ Date _____

"If you don't know where you're from, you'll have a hard time saying where you're going." Wendell Berry, among others, has voiced this idea that we need to understand our roots to know our place in the world. A poem by George Ella Lyon is called "Where I'm From." The poem lends itself to imitation and makes a wonderful exercise of exploration in belonging.

The prompts have a way of drawing out memories of the smells of attics and bottom-drawer keepsakes; the faces of long-departed kin, the sound of their voices you still hold some deep place in memory. You'll be surprised that, when you're done, you will have said things about the sources of your unique you-ness that you'd never considered before. What's more, you will have created something of yourself to share--with your parents, relatives, siblings, friends--that will be very unique, very personal and a very special gift. (adapted from: <http://www.swva.net/fredlst/wif.htm>)

Goal: I will demonstrate how my background makes me who I am today. To be able to do this, I will reflect upon my family's history, the geographical places I've lived and the memories that stick out in my mind. I will show I can do this by writing a poem called, "Where I'm From," which will contain biographical information about myself.

Due Dates:

Pre-Write: _____

Template: _____

Rough Draft: _____

Edit and Revise: _____

Peer Edit: _____

Rewrite: _____

Final Copy (**print out two**): _____

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Process:

Step 1: Pre-Write/Brainstorm/Family Portrait

Think about what makes you YOU. Answer the questions and fill out the Family Portrait form.

Step 2: Poem Template

Directions: Fill in the blanks of the attached poem template.

Step 3: Rough Draft

Handwrite a rough draft of your poem, copying from the template. Leave out the words in the parenthesis. Make sure to give it a title. “I Am From...” or “Where I’m From” is fine.

Step 4: Edit and Revise (use a red pen)

Revise your poem. This means you are looking for places where you should be more specific, descriptive or could include a poetic device. Can your reader visualize what you are describing? Use your five senses and poetic devices (metaphors, similes, alliteration, onomatopoeia, personification rhyme) to help create a sense of being there.

Edit your poem. You are now looking for convention errors. Circle any words you think may be spelled incorrectly. Underline words that need to be capitalized. Add punctuation where appropriate.

Step 5: Peer Edit (use a green pen)

Have a partner read your poem/Read a partner’s poem. Mark any area that needs clarification or is confusing to you with a question mark. Circle any misspelled words. Underline words that should be capitalized.

At the bottom, print your name, as the editor. Then write down one thing you enjoyed about the poem you read and one question you have.

Step 6: Rewrite

Now that editing and revision is completed, rewrite your poem by hand (no typing), fixing all that was marked in the previous steps.

Step 7: Final Draft

Type your poem. Include your title, name and date at the top. The font should be size 12 and easy to read.

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Family Portraits

Name:

Please share a special family memory that represents your unique cultural heritage.

Step 1: Draw your memory. Stick figures are acceptable. It does not need to be colored.



Step 2: Describe your memory/picture.

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Pre-write:

Step 1: Answering the following questions will prepare you to write your “Where I’m From” poem.

1. Describe where you live. What does it look like? What does it smell like? What does it feel like? (This could be your actual house, or it could be another place that represents where you are from.)

2. What objects or belongings can be found in your home or room? (List at least three.)

3. What are the names of people in your “family” (they could be alive or deceased, they do not need to be blood-relations)?

4. List two or three family traditions.

5. What phrases, words or sayings are important to you or to members of your family?

6. What are some beliefs that represent where you are from?

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7. What foods are important to you or your family?

8. List 2 or 3 important childhood memories.

9. Describe the weather where you are from.

10. What do people do where you are from?

11. What are your favorite things to do?

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Incorporate your answers to the pre-write into your “Where I’m From” poem. Simply add “I’m from” or “From” to the beginning of each line, in the same style as the sample you have been shown. You do not have to use all of the words or categories you brainstormed under Step 1. As you compose your poem, you can add new words and phrases that describe where you are from. You could also use the template below to help you write.

TEMPLATE:

First Stanza:

I am from (specific ordinary item) _____

from (product name) _____

and (another product name) _____

I am from the (home description) _____

Adjective that describes the above home description _____,

It (tasted, sounded, looked , felt –choose one) _____

I am from the (plant, flower, or natural item) _____,

the (plant, flower, or natural item) _____

(Description of natural item) _____

I’m from the (family tradition) _____

and (family trait) _____ **from**

(name of family member) _____ and (name of family member) _____

and (another name) _____

I’m from the (description of family tendency) _____ **and**

(Another family tendency) _____

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Second Stanza:

From (something you were told as a child) _____ **and**

(another thing you were told as a child) _____

I’m from (representation of religious or spiritual beliefs or lack of

it) _____,

(further description of spiritual beliefs) _____

I’m from (place of birth and family ancestry) _____,

(Two food items that represent your ancestry) _____ and _____.

From the (specific family story with a detail about a specific person) _____

the (another detail of another family member) _____. **I am**

from (general statement with DETAILS about who you are or where you are

from) _____
