

Name_____Period_____Date_____

Where I'm From (0-30L)

"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 is great for exploring "where we come from".

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.

Goal: demonstrate how my background makes me who I am today.

"Where I'm From" 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?

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

Step 2: Incorporate your answers from the pre-write into your “Where I’m From” poem.

Simply add “I’m from” or “From” to the beginning of each line. 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) _____ “

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)

[illegible]

(adapted from: <http://www.swva.net/fred1st/wif.htm>)