

Where I'm From

Poetry Activity

Where I'm From is a poem written in 1993 by George Ella Lyon. She wrote this beautiful work to give sensory description of all of the sights, smells, tastes, and feelings of home. In Summer 2019, NPR created a project around her poem to engage their listeners to create their own work. *Where I'm From: A Crowdsourced Poem That Collects Your Memories of Home*.

We invite you to use her words as a loose template to create your own poem, unique to you, your family and your experiences growing up. The poems you and your students create can be compiled in an artful way to build a collective image of our individual home.

This project is adjustable to work for students of different ages and technical ability. Young students can be brought into the narrative by simplifying the prompts for the poem.

On the next page, you will see George Ella's poem followed by a general template to create your own work. You do not have to fill out every line. Use her words and structure for inspiration and write as much as you would like.

Where I'm From

*I am from clothespins,
from Clorox and carbon-tetrachloride.
I am from the dirt under the back porch.
(Black, glistening,
it tasted like beets.)
I am from the forsythia bush
the Dutch elm
whose long-gone limbs I remember
as if they were my own.*

*I'm from fudge and eyeglasses,
from Imogene and Alafair.
I'm from the know-it-alls
and the pass-it-ons,
from Perk up! and Pipe down!
I'm from He restoreth my soul
with a cottonball lamb
and ten verses I can say myself.*

*I'm from Artemus and Billie's Branch,
fried corn and strong coffee.
From the finger my grandfather lost
to the auger,
the eye my father shut to keep his sight.*

*Under my bed was a dress box
spilling old pictures,
a sift of lost faces
to drift beneath my dreams.
I am from those moments--
snapped before I budded --
leaf-fall from the family tree.*

Where I'm From Template

I am from _____
(ordinary item in the home)

From _____
(product name)

I am from _____
(home description)

(adjectives/details)

I am from _____ , _____
(plant, flower, natural item) (description of item)

I'm from _____ and _____
(family traditions)

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

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

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

I'm from _____ , _____
(representation of religion or lack of).

From _____
(a food items that represents your family)

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

(location of personal items, mementos, archives)

(line explaining the importance of family items)