

Name:  
Date:

Period:  
Ms. Lopez

## “WHERE I’M FROM” POEM

The power of an allusion lies in its ability to inspire a host of thoughts and ideas in the reader with a simple reference to something. While authors expect readers to be familiar with those references, you can create your own personal allusions, in a manner of speaking, that have the same effect on those who understand your references.

A poem by George Ella Lyons called “Where I’m From” lends itself to imitation and makes a great exercise for introducing yourself to the class. To prepare to write, complete the prompts to draw out memories of people, places, and events. Next, select your favorites, and follow the stanza outline. Then, decorate your poem in a way that reflects your personal style. When you’re finished, you will have said things about the sources of your uniqueness and created something of yourself to share with others.

### Brainstorming Prompts:

- ★ Parents’ names, significant relatives, descriptions
- ★ Special foods or meals
- ★ Family specific games or activities
- ★ Nostalgic songs
- ★ Stories, novels or poetry that you'll never forget
- ★ Phrases that were repeated often/that you grew up with
- ★ The best things that you were told
- ★ The worst things that you have been told
- ★ Ordinary household items
- ★ Toys you treasured
- ★ Family traditions
- ★ Family traits
- ★ Family tendencies
- ★ Religious symbols or experiences
- ★ Specific story (or stories) about a specific person that influenced you
- ★ Accidents or traumatic experiences
- ★ Losses or illnesses
- ★ Joys
- ★ Important places
- ★ Games you played
- ★ TV shows/movies you watched

### Format:

*First Stanza:* Should be about childhood memories using “I am from” at least four times

*Second Stanza:* Should be about family using “I am from” at least four times

*Third Stanza:* Can be about any combination of your favorite people, places, and events using “I am from” at least three times

*Fourth Stanza:* Should be closure, make a metaphor using a significant object from your life and then end the poem (and extend the metaphor) with your relation to your family/your “role” in your house

**Variations:** You could sometimes use comparable phrasing such as “Raised with” or “Created from” or “Forged by.” Creativity is encouraged!

**SAMPLE #1 – THE ORIGINAL POEM**

*Where I'm From* by George Ella Lyons

I am from clothespins,  
from Clorox and carbon-tetrachloride.  
I am from the dirt under the black 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.

**SAMPLE #2 – AN ORIGINAL POEM**

I am from No Frills brand food,  
from cardboard box duplexes, and climbing trees.

I am from seeing the playpen not as a prison but as an escape.

I am from *Barney Beagle*, "Thumbelina," and the World Book encyclopedias, yearbooks and all  
(they were worth every penny, Mom and Dad).

I am from Mrs. Clean and Frankie four times,  
raised on "family comes first" and "inside, outside, day off."

I am from Thanksgivings here and Christmases there with  
the family that has its own original song: "Off-Key Jamboree,"  
and endless hours of picking up leaves and acorns.

I am from balanced meals of processed foods and miga in the rain  
from drive-in movies, showers in a bucket, watermelon wars, and shoeless summers.

I am from "the city" and "the country" and "on the water"

I am from a family with a long story  
Where I am one small but colorful chapter.