

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.