

Intended for Grades: 4-12 **Estimated Time:** 45-60 min.

Lesson Title: I AM FROM - Exploring Culture Through Storytelling

Lesson Purpose: Students will:

- * Use a writing template that encourages exploration of their cultural heritage
- * Interview family members & co-write a cultural heritage poem using same template
- * Practice presentation skills by reading aloud their poems
- * Explore diverse mediums of expression for sharing their poems with an audience

Materials & Preparation:

- * Word Bank templates - print two per student if sending home (See below)
- * "I Am From" poem template - print two per student if sending home (See below)
- * Copy of *Where I'm From*, by George Ella Lyon, or other example (See below)
- * Plain or lined paper for final drafts

Background Information:

This lesson can be applied to all cultures and heritages within the classroom. Students spend time reflecting on their own expressions of culture. With this information, they are then able to create meaningful poetry within an easy to use framework. Reading their poems aloud provides students the opportunity to practice public speaking skills.

Steps:

1. As a group, brainstorm the elements of life that define culture. The list will probably include: place, language, beliefs, foods, clothing, music, jokes, stories, etc.
2. For older students, read aloud the poem by George Ella Lyon and/or other examples of poems about cultural identity. See below for a simple example for younger students.
3. Identify and discuss the details that illustrate unique family and cultural communities.
4. Have the students complete the Word Bank template.
5. Students can then use their Word Bank with the "I Am From" template to complete their own, original "I Am From" poem. Encourage students to write a clean, final draft.
6. Share poems. Invite students to rewrite their template poem, encouraging symbolic decorations.

Collaborative Writing / Extended 'Ohana Activity:

7. Have students choose a family member to interview about their personal and cultural heritage. Details that can be included: their birthplace, description of their home, names of family members, languages they heard and spoke, everyday items, everyday foods, foods for special occasions, songs, and family stories.
8. Using the word bank and "I am From" poem templates, the student and family member will co-write a second poem.

WORD BANK DESCRIPTORS

1. **Things that can be found around your house:** Items that hold some significance or special meaning for the author, their family, and/or home. (ex. ipu, poi pounder, toy trains, fishing supplies, portraits on the walls, etc.)
2. **Things that can be found in your yard:** Items that are constantly or commonly present around the author’s yard. (ex. dry box, nets, pooper scooper, folding chairs, tires, etc.)
3. **Things that can be found in your neighborhood:** Things the neighborhood is known for (old cars, mango trees, manapua wagons, people walking, kids riding bikes, etc.)
4. **Names of the people in your family:** Special people in the author’s life. In the poem there are a couple of spaces to write these names, so select the most important on the list. Many times parents top the list.
5. **Sayings you hear a lot:** Phrases family members say a lot, like “stand up straight”, “The grass is always greener on the other side” ,“I love you.”, etc.)
6. **Foods/dishes that are common at your family gatherings:** Things your family regularly cooks & eats on special occasions, like fish and poi, Chantilly cake, Andagi (Okinawan donuts), Sari Sari (Filipino soup), etc.
7. **Place where you collect your memories:** Items or ways you help yourself retain experiences and thoughts (I.e.: diary, box of pictures, computer, head/mind, souvenir shelf, family videos, etc.)
8. This space is provided for the students to add a final thought.

Reflection Questions:

*What was something /important that you learned from writing this poem?
How can this information help you, today as well as in the future?*

Resources: www.georgeellalyon.com

Example:

I Am From

(Anonymous)

I am from mix match dishes, the rice pot steaming,
and a big *pune’e* with lots of soft pillows.
I am from Grandpa’s old garden pots, spare car junk, and Plumeria trees.
I am from lawns with old bushes, small country stores,
and giant mango trees as big as clouds.
I am from Michelle and Manny - M & M;
from Tutu Lei, Papa Tim, Gramma Rose and Grandpa John.
I am from do your best and sit there till you finish your food...
From roast pork, spaghetti, and
Sunday morning French toast cooked by Dad.
I am from my small red journal and the
Old, leather falling apart photo album made lifetimes ago.
I am from many big hearts...

Where I'm From

By George Ella Lyon

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 cotton ball 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.

<http://www.georgeellalyon.com/where.html>

Name: _____

Date: _____

“I AM FROM...” WORD BANK

1. Things that can be found around your house: _____

2. Things that can be found in your yard: _____

3. Things that can be found in your neighborhood: _____

4. Names of the people in your family: _____

5. Sayings (What the adults in your house always say): _____

6. Foods/dishes that are common at your family gatherings: _____

7. Place where you collect your memories: _____

8. Place where author can add anything they like.: _____

“I Am From” Poem Draft Template

1. I am from _____ and from _____
(Things that can be found around your house)

2. I am from _____ and from _____
(Things that can be found in your yard)

3. I am from _____ and from _____
(Things that can be found in your neighborhood)

4. I am from _____ and from _____
(Names of people in your family)

5. I am from _____
and from _____ (sayings).

6. I am from _____ and from _____
(foods/dishes).

7. I collect my memories _____
_____.

8. _____
_____.

By _____ Date _____
(First and Last Name)