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 am 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 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 Assignment

"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. George Ella Ly's poem, "Where I’m From", lends itself to imitation and makes a wonderful exercise of exploration in belonging.

We will work with a prewriting activity involving a series of short writing prompts which 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: I will demonstrate how my background makes me who I am today. To be able to do this, I will reflect upon my family’s history, the geographical places I’ve lived and the memories that stick out in my mind. I will show I can do this by writing a poem called, “Where I’m From,” which will contain biographical information about myself.

“Where I’m From”

Process:
Step 1: Pre-Write and Brainstorm
Think about what makes you YOU.
   • In class, you will respond to a series of short prompts.
   • At home, you will fill out a graphic organizer Due 9/1. Don't be afraid to ask your family members for information about your family and heritage.

Step 2: Poem Template (In Class)
Directions: Fill in the blanks of the attached poem template then handwrite a rough draft of your poem, copying from the template. Leave out the words in the parenthesis. Make sure to give it a title. “I Am From…” Or “Where I’m From” is fine.

Step 4: Edit and Revise (In Class)
Revise your poem. This means you are looking for places where you should be more specific, descriptive or could include a poetic device. Can your reader visualize what you are describing? Use your five senses and poetic devices (metaphors, similes, alliteration, onomatopoeia, personification, rhyme) to help create a sense of being there.
Edit your poem. You are now looking for convention errors. Circle any words you think may be spelled incorrectly. Underline words that need to be capitalized. Add punctuation where appropriate.

Step 5: Peer Edit (In Class)
Have a partner read your poem/Read a partner’s poem. Mark any area that needs clarification or is confusing to you with a question mark. Circle any misspelled words.
Underline words that should be capitalized.
At the bottom, print your name, as the editor. Then write down one thing you enjoyed about the poem you read and one question you have.

**Step 6: Rewrite**
Now that editing and revision is completed, rewrite your poem by hand (no typing), fixing all that was marked in the previous steps.

**Step 7: Final Draft**
Type your poem. Include your title, name and date at the top. The font should be size 12 and easy to read.
I'm From Graphic Organizer: Fill out this graphic organizer with at least three things in each category. Ask your family members to help you brainstorm.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Special Foods your family enjoys</th>
<th>Sayings adults in your family repeat</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Heritage (think about your family roots)</th>
<th>Special family gatherings and traditions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family artifacts and heirlooms</th>
<th>Notable Events (Tragedies/Celebrations)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Memories</th>
<th>Books, Songs, and Movies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</tbody>
</table>

Other Notable Notes (Clubs, Organizations, Family History etc.):
“Where I’m From” Poem Template

Incorporate your answers to the pre-write into your “Where I’m From” poem. Simply add “I’m from” or “From” to the beginning of each line, in the same style as the sample you have been shown. 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. Please use the template as a guide and write your poem on a separate piece of paper.

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) __________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________