

“Where I Am From” Poem

By: Taylor Johnson

Education level: Elementary, Junior High

Genre: Poetry

Time frame: One to two 60-min class periods

Objective: To write a poem that celebrates identity and pushes the boundaries of what it means to be "from" somewhere beyond the literal understanding of place.

Prior knowledge and skills: Students need basic orthographic skills; otherwise, younger elementary students may benefit from a scribe to help them capture their spoken ideas in the template.

Required materials: [Packet](#), pencil

Literary model: any sample "Where I Am From" poems can be used, but the packet includes several.

Sequence of activities:

1. (5-10) Discuss as a class what it might mean to "be from" something that isn't a physical or geographical place such as the name of a city or town or country. Can we "be from" people? Can we "be from" our likes and dislikes? Can we "be from" our favorite kind of music or food?

2. (5-10 min) Distribute the packet and invite student volunteers to read aloud the two model poems to the class, or in small groups as desired.

3. (10-15 min) Invite students to brainstorm by either writing on the packet or discussing aloud their answers to each bulleted category of subtopics about where someone could "be from" that isn't a literal place.

4. (5-15 min) Invite students to read along as you read the additional model poem in the packet aloud. As the teacher, you could also or alternatively write your own version of the "Where I Am From" poem using (or breaking with) the template and share your own work with students. Ask them which were their favorite details from the additional model poems. Tell stories, showcasing where you are from through what you remember about the people, places, and interesting experiences that shape your life. This will model for students the level of detail you'll want them to put in their poems.

5. (15-30 min) The packet provides a template that students can use or modify to help them write their own "Where I Am From" poems. Emphasize that the more specific and detailed their

answers on the template are, the more engaging and unique their portrait of where they are from will be. Also emphasize that if they don't like any part of the template, they can change it or leave it out.

6. (5-15 min) Have willing students share out their drafts, and as desired provide time for them to type up and/or transcribe their ideas (for teachers assisting with younger or pre-orthographic writers who need help writing down their spoken thoughts).