



Where I'm From

Poetry



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Grade Level	8th – 10th Grade	Time Frame	50 minutes
Subject	English/Language Arts	Duration	3-4 days

Essential Question

How can poetry help people understand one another? What is the value in knowing your family history?

Summary

In this lesson, students explore themes of community and identity by analyzing a poem and creating their own poem inspired by the themes. Through these activities, students reflect deeply on their lives and learn to apply a variety of literary devices that allow them to express their creativity and share their voices. This lesson is written with 9th graders in mind; however, it could be used for many grade levels. This is a multimodality lesson, which means it includes face-to-face, online, and hybrid versions of the lesson. The attachments also include a downloadable Common Cartridge file, which can be imported into a Learning Management System (LMS) such as Canvas or eKadence. The cartridge includes interactive student activities and teacher's notes.

Snapshot

Engage

Students watch a spoken word poem video and respond using the First Turn/Last Turn strategy.

Explore

Using their five senses, students brainstorm memories and experiences from their lives.

Explain

Using Categorical Highlighting, students read George Ella Lyon's poem, *Where I'm From*, and analyze it for literary devices and figurative language.

Extend

Students compose their own *Where I'm From* poem.

Evaluate

Students reflect on their writing process.

Standards

Oklahoma Academic Standards: English Language Arts (Grade 8)

- 8.2.W.1:** Routinely and recursively prewrite (e.g., develop ideas and plan).
- 8.3.R.4:** Analyze literary devices to support interpretations of a text:
 - figurative language (i.e., simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole, imagery, symbolism, idiom)
 - sound devices (i.e., onomatopoeia, alliteration)
 - verbal and situational irony

Attachments

- [Audio—Where Im From.mp3](#)
- [Brainstorming Graphic Organizer—Where Im From - Spanish.docx](#)
- [Brainstorming Graphic Organizer—Where Im From - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [Brainstorming Graphic Organizer—Where Im From.docx](#)
- [Brainstorming Graphic Organizer—Where Im From.pdf](#)
- [Common Cartridge—Where Im From.zip](#)
- [I Am From Example—Where Im From - Spanish.docx](#)
- [I Am From Example—Where Im From - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [I Am From Example—Where Im From.docx](#)
- [I Am From Example—Where Im From.pdf](#)
- [I Am From Template—Where Im From - Spanish.docx](#)
- [I Am From Template—Where Im From - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [I Am From Template—Where Im From.docx](#)
- [I Am From Template—Where Im From.pdf](#)
- [Lesson Slides—Where Im From.pptx](#)
- [Original Poem— Where Im From - Spanish.docx](#)
- [Original Poem— Where Im From - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [Original Poem—Where Im From.docx](#)
- [Original Poem—Where Im From.pdf](#)
- [Padlet Presentation Rubric—Where I'm From - Spanish.docx](#)
- [Padlet Presentation Rubric—Where I'm From - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [Padlet Presentation Rubric—Where I'm From.docx](#)
- [Padlet Presentation Rubric—Where I'm From.pdf](#)
- [Poem Rubric—Where Im From - Spanish.docx](#)
- [Poem Rubric—Where Im From - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [Poem Rubric—Where Im From.docx](#)
- [Poem Rubric—Where Im From.pdf](#)
- [Talk Moves—Where Im From - Spanish.docx](#)
- [Talk Moves—Where Im From - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [Talk Moves—Where Im From.docx](#)
- [Talk Moves—Where Im From.pdf](#)

Materials

- Brainstorming Graphic Organizer (attached; one per student)
- Padlet Presentation Rubric (attached; one per student)
- I Am From Poem (Template) (attached; one per student)
- I Am From Poem (Example) (attached; optional)
- Lesson Slides (attached)
- Poem Rubric (attached; one per student)
- Talk Moves (attached; one per student)
- *Where I'm From* Poem (Original) (attached; one per student)
- Highlighters (multiple colors)
- Pencils or pens
- Writing Paper

30 minutes

Engage

Teacher's Note

In this lesson, students use their memories of growing up to compose an original poem. Please take into consideration when planning this lesson the many diverse backgrounds that may, at times, have been difficult for students. The activities are meant to be reflective and can be healing for some, but you know your students best. You decide how best to proceed. One option to consider is to allow students to write about their present if they are in a good place to share.

Use the attached **Lesson Slides** to follow along with this lesson.

Display **slide 3**. Read aloud the essential questions. *How can poetry help people understand one another? What is the value in knowing your family history?* Ask students to consider these questions and volunteer their responses.

Display **slide 4** and read aloud the lesson objectives. Explain to students that they will analyze poetry and determine how literary devices support one's interpretation of poetry. They will also compose an original poem of their own.

Display **slide 5** and play the spoken word poetry video "[Hands](#)" by Sarah Kay.

Embedded video

https://youtube.com/watch?v=kqCMHcdYR_E

After the class has listened to Sarah Kay's poem, sort students into groups of 3-5. Pass out a copy of "[Hands](#)" by Sarah Kay to each student.

Introduce the poem by telling students: *In this poem, Sarah recites her memories of her own hands and what hands mean to us as humans. Read through the words of the poem and highlight a few lines that "speak to you." Take a few minutes to write about what you chose and why you chose it in the margins of the poem.*

Display **slide 6**.

Tell students: *You will use the [First Turn/Last Turn](#) strategy in this activity. First, one person will share one of the passages they chose from the poem with the group. Do not explain why you chose this passage. Share only the words from the poem. Each person in the group will then respond and explain why they believe you chose that passage or any other comment they would like to make about the passage. When every group member has responded to the passage you shared, it is your turn to explain why you chose that passage. The next person in the group now takes a turn and continues as before until everybody has had a chance to share a passage from the poem.*

30 minutes

Explore

Display **slide 7**. Pass out copies of **Brainstorming Graphic Organizer** to each student.

Tell students: *Sarah Kay shared her memories of growing up in her poem "Hands." Think about the memories you have of growing up. They can be good or bad, but a mix of both would be ideal. When you recall your memories, try to think about the small things rather than the large moments. For instance, Sarah talked about holding her father's hand. That is what some might say is a small thing that made a large impact on her life and created lifelong memories for her. Create a list by brainstorming memories from your life. Use all five senses while brainstorming ideas. Be descriptive. Don't just say "a large slice of pizza", say "a pizza slice the size of my chest. Here are some ideas to get you started:"*

- Familiar foods: a scene at the table, helping cook
- Family gatherings
- Familiar sayings while growing up
- Family members
- Ancestors, family names
- Parents' work: Did you get to help them? Were you in the way?
- Memorable experiences (small or large)
- Family traditions
- Vacations
- Description of where you grew up: the geography, house, town
- Familiar music, movies, books, games

Teacher's Note: Brainstorming

If students have memories that do not fit into the categories listed on the graphic organizer, allow them to create their own categories.

40 minutes

Explain

Display **slide 8**. Explain to students they will listen to George Ella Lyon read her poem "[Where I'm From](#)." Ask students to close their eyes and just listen to the words. Play the audio recording on **slide 8**.

Pass out a copy of the attached **Where I'm From Poem (Original)** to each student.

Ask students to read George Ella Lyon's "Where I'm From." Tell them, *"As you read, think about how the poet creates a sense of flow in the poem. How does the poet use word choice to bring her poem alive?"*

Display **slide 9**. Explain to students they will be using the [Categorical Highlighting strategy](#) to analyze the poem. The categories are listed below:

- Pink - repetition
- Yellow - specific, vivid verbs and adjectives
- Green - imagery words (think five senses)
- Blue- figurative language (metaphor, simile, personification, symbolism, alliteration)

Optional: Differentiation

If students need further instruction on figurative language, this [infographic](#) could be used to help refresh their memory.

Display **slide 10**. Ask students to answer the following questions when they finish highlighting the poem.

- What parts of the poem stand out to you the most?
- What images come to mind as you read/listen to the poem?
- How does the author create a sense of flow and rhythm and movement?
- What inferences can you make or conclusions can you draw about the poet after reading her words?

When they finish answering the reflection questions, instruct students to: *"Go back to your brainstorm list and add more of your memories to it. Remember to focus on your word choice using specific verbs and vivid adjectives and adverbs. Think of ways to describe your memories using all five of your senses. What did it sound like? Taste like? Smell like? How did it feel? What exactly did it look like? Could you compare it to something using a simile or metaphor?"*

Allow students time to complete the graphic organizer.

60 minutes

Extend

When students have completed their brainstorming, pass out the attached **I Am From Poem (Template)**. Then, ask students to go back to their brainstorming list and plug those memories into the template to create an original piece of writing. When students complete the template, ask them to write their poems on a blank sheet of paper.

Remind students to include literary devices such as similes, metaphors, and imagery in their poem (refer back to the linked [infographic](#) on figurative language, if needed). See the attached **Poem Rubric** for assessment, distributing copies to students if desired.

Instruct students: *When you write, you want your reader to be swimming in your memories! They should be able to close their eyes and experience the memories with you. No one else sees the world as you do. You don't have to know where to begin. Just start and let the words flow.*

Allow time for students to write and revise their poems.

Teacher's Note: Venturing from the Template

Allow students to venture away from the template if they choose to do so. Giving students more choice helps create a sense of ownership of their writing.

Optional: Differentiation

You may want to provide more examples of the *Where I'm From* poem format. Two examples of poems written with similar format are given below:

- "[I am From](#)" by [Shelby Blackwood](#); also attached as **I Am From Poem (Example)**
- "[Where I'm From](#)" by [Melanie Poonai](#)

Optional: Tech Integration

Students may choose to record themselves reading their poems aloud on Padlet. They can then add responses to their classmates' recordings.

30 minutes

Evaluate

Display **slide 11**. Hand out the attached **Padlet Presentation Rubric** to guide students' reflections. Consider distributing a copy of the attached **Talk Moves** handout to help guide student discourse. Review the steps for the reflection activity.

1. First, think about the steps you took in writing your poem.
 - Listened to a model poem;
 - Analyzed the model poem for literary devices;
 - Considered the literary devices used in the poem and how the use of the devices affected the rhythm and flow of the poem;
 - Brainstormed ideas for your poem;
 - Used the basic form of the model poem to write your own.
2. Next, write your thoughts about the process down on paper. Think about how each step helped you write your poem.
3. Submit your reflection.

Optional: Tech Integration

Students could alternatively complete their reflection using a Padlet recording.

Resources

- *I am from* poem template. [PDF]. Life Path. <https://www.lifepathsresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/Narrative-I-am-from-Poem->
- K20 Center. (n.d.) Categorical Highlighting. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/192>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). First Turn/Last Turn. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/50>
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