

AUTOBIOGRAPHY WRITING

LESSON 4: *WHERE I'M FROM*

INTRODUCTION

Class:	Advisory
Grade:	9 th
Timeframe:	40-Minute Lesson
Materials Needed:	Autobiography Notebooks Copies of George Ella Lyon's "Where I'm From" poem (attached)
Essential Question:	How have the people, places and events of your past shaped who you are today?
Unit Question:	Why is it important to reflect on one's past?
Rationale:	In this early stage of autobiography writing, it's important for students to reflect on the past somewhat broadly at first, in order to gain perspective on the multiple factors that make up where they are "from." The model poem, "Where I'm From," will help illustrate to students that where one is from is more than geographic...we are also "from" people, events, ideas and even <i>things</i> , like clothespins and backyard swings.

LESSON

- 1. Prewriting Activities (10 mins):**
 - a) Before reading George Ella Lyon's "Where I'm From" poem, ask students to finish the phrase, "I'm from..." Have them write it three different times. They should feel free to finish this sentence any way they wish. Ask students to share.
 - b) Read-Aloud: Teacher reads aloud "Where I'm From," students read along silently.
 - c) Post-Reading: Ask students to underline lines that they like, share these lines and explain why they like them. Ask students to make a list of things, places, people, beliefs and ideas that they are from.
- 2. Focused Free Writing (20 mins):** Now have students construct their own poems using their lists, and using the model given out.
- 3. Sharing (8 mins):** Popcorn for students who feel comfortable sharing one line from their poem.
- 4. Closing (2 mins):** Teacher can create an advisory packet of poems to display or read aloud. Student poems can be revisited/revised to be included as a passage in their autobiography, or used as "seeds" for other writing activities.

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 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.