

Investigation:

Explain to students that they will be writing a short poem called an “I Am From” poem to explore the forces that have shaped their personal identities. This format is based on a famous poem called “Where I’m From” by George Ella Lyon. Our first step is to read the original poem.

Provide students with a copy of the poem and read it aloud with the students. Students can also view the video clip of George Ella Lyon reading the poem herself.

[“Where I’m From” Text](#)

[“Where I’m From” Video](#)

After reading, allow students to discuss with a partner or in small groups the following questions:

- What are some things that stand out to you in this poem?
- Why does the author keep using the phrase “I am from...”
- What is this author telling readers about her identity?
- What types of things influenced this author?



Come back together as a class and briefly discuss some of their observations. Explain that next, students will try creating their own “I Am From” poem.

Create and Produce:

Students will create their “I Am From” poem using information about themselves. Explain the procedures for writing using the instruction sheet linked below. Give time for students to brainstorm, write, and decorate their poem with colors and images that are meaningful to them. This could be done on a sheet of paper or digitally. Explain to students that while a format for writing is provided, they are free to phrase their stanzas differently if they have other ideas.

[Instruction Sheet](#)

[Teacher Exemplar*](#)

**Teachers should consider creating their own exemplar poem to use with their students. This will help build community in the classroom and encourage students to share their own ideas.*

Differentiation options:

[“I Am From” Poem Frames](#) (two options included in this document)*

**Note that students may not want or need a frame.*

Communicate and Present:

Three options are listed below. Teachers should select the option that works best for their students and their teaching style.

Option 1: After finishing their poems, students will select their single favorite stanza and recreate it on a sheet of paper. The teacher will collect all the stanzas and combine them into a single collaborative poem to be displayed on the wall.

If completing this project digitally, students can recreate their single favorite stanza on a single Google Slide. The teacher can copy/paste everyone’s slide into a single presentation that can be digitally shared.

Once the collaborative poem is assembled, students can view it to get a sense of all the different identities that make up the class.

Option 2: Organize students into small groups and let them present to each other.

Option 3: Organize a gallery walk for students to view each poem.

Reflection:

After viewing their peers' "I Am From" poems, students should reflect on what they have learned about self identity and about the array of different identities that make up their class in their reader's notebook.