
**Where I'm From
by George Ella Lyons**

I am from clothespins,
from Clorox and carbon-tetrachloride.
I am from the dirt under the black 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.

Planning Your Poem

1. Think about items that you would find around your house/apartment/etc. that remind you of 'home' or of a certain person/time in your life. Example: bobby pins, stacks of newspapers, grandma's teeth in a glass.
2. Items found in your yard/things you used to do in the yard: dog bones, broken fences, flashlight tag, a hose coiled like a snake. (Feel free to think metaphorically.)
3. Items/People found in your neighborhood: The corner store, Mr. Tate's beat-up Ford pick-up truck, the plum tree that served as 'home base', that crazy man with the weird hat.
4. Names of relatives (or other important people) and/OR descriptions of things they did: Aunt Jane's Jell-O salad, Grandma Sue's biscuits, Uncle Ed's silent stare, Aunt Judy, Cousin Leslie, the neighbor lady who always baked cookies for the kids on the block.
5. Sayings that you remember your parents always saying or that remind you of someone/something: "If I've told you once" or, "I love you thiiiiiiiiis much".
6. Names of foods and dishes that recall family gatherings: black-eyed peas, that smelly broccoli dish that Aunt Elaine always brings. Also, rituals of holidays & family gatherings: opening one present on Christmas Eve, dressing for church on Easter Sunday, sitting on the curb for the forth of July parade.
7. Names of places where you keep childhood memories: Diaries, boxes, underwear drawers, the back of the closet, family Bible.
8. Now, take your list and write a poem that incorporates the images you have collected.

The *WHERE I'M FROM* Template

I am from _____ (specific ordinary item), from _____ (product name) and _____.

I am from the _____ (home description... adjective, adjective, sensory detail).

I am from the _____ (plant, flower, natural item), the _____ (plant, flower, natural detail)

I am from _____ (family tradition) and _____ (family trait), from _____ (name of family member) and _____ (another family name) and _____ (family name).

I am from the _____ (description of family tendency) and _____ (another one).

From _____ (something you were told as a child) and _____ (another).

I am from (representation of religion, or lack of it). Further description.

I'm from _____ (place of birth and family ancestry), _____ (two food items representing your family).

From the _____ (specific family story about a specific person and detail), the _____ (another detail, and the _____ (another detail about another family member).

I am from _____ (location of family pictures, mementos, archives and several more lines indicating their worth).