

Where I'm From *

by Sandra Effinger

I am from America...

I am from the home place, alone in a red dirt field.
I am from chopping cotton in the summer,
green tomato pickles in the fall,
and sorghum popcorn balls for Christmas.
I am from Jell-O salads and raisin cookies,
from rocking chairs and the razor strap.

I'm from Carter, Oklahoma,
the Preskitts, the McIntyres, the Stowers,
Scotch-Irish immigrant in covered wagons,
from homemade quilts a hundred years old,
from hand-cranked homemade ice cream,
from Granny Zem's hand-carved moon,
its stair steps filled with angels,
from Grandpa Bert whittling big sticks into little twigs,
from Great Grandma Preskitt,
blind eyes seeking the lightning.

I am from Lebanon or Syria, and a forgotten name,
changed at Ellis Island, all Andrews's now,
dusky and alien with their almost British name,
Greek Orthodox shopkeepers fleeing Muslim oppression,
just to become Arabs in America, shunned and ridiculed.
I am lebnî started in saddlebags on desert camels,
treasured and passed down from daughter to daughter,
still spread on hand-tossed bread with calamata olives
and lemon juice.
And Grandma's "ha'dam, ha'dam, ha'dam."

I am from rock and roll and blues and jazz,
from the Beatles wanting to hold my hand,
from Eric Clapton's Hellhound on my trail,
from Bonnie Raitt making me cry late at night.
I am from the "Amen Brother"
of Southern Baptist Churches
and the "Amazing Grace" of country choirs.

I am from the open-air sleeping porch,
from bedtime stories under the stars,
from Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego
in King Nebuchadnezzar's Fiery Furnace,
from Jonah in the Whale's Belly and
Joshua at the Battle of Jericho.

I am from High Noon and Gone with the Wind,
from I Love Lucy and Leave It to Beaver
I am from Altus Bulldogs,
red and white OU Sooners,
Millwood Falcons, Central Cubs,
and Norman Timberwolves,
from Heidelberg Lions and Naples Wildcats.

I am from do-it-yourself and
stand-your-ground, from
never-start-a-fight but
finish-them-all,
from pick-your-own-switch
and take-your-punishment,
from it's all good
and no worries.

I am from America.



*Derived from the original by George Ella Lyons

Your Turn: Be as specific as possible. Use this to brainstorm specific details. Where are you from...

Places (man-made)	Landscapes (natural)	Traditions	Genealogy
Food	Symbolic Objects/Places	Music, Art, Movies, Games	Sayings
Smells	Other Sensations	Something else detailed	More details

Please remember that linebreaks matter in free verse poetry, just as rhyme matters in traditional poetry. Establish patterns in your poem through careful repetition of sentence structures. Remember parallel structure emphasizes your word choices. This should not read like a rough draft. Due _____.