

“I am from”

Poetry exercise from Beverly Tatum

In this exercise you will follow a specific four-stanza poem structure with four to five lines per stanza. The finished poems will use sensory details to describe the many people, places, and things that show where we are from. It should also get us thinking about our own personal histories and what we bring to the table based on past experience. When you are done writing your poem, you will be sharing them with the class. You may write about whatever place/saying/food seems appropriate in answering “I am from. . .” Start each stanza with that phrase as seen below. Use this sheet to organize your thoughts and type the final version. Format the poem to fill one page followed by an image of you. You will need to increase the point size and you may choose your own font(s). An example is on the back of this page.

Stanza 1: I am from . . .

(Specific sights, sounds, and smells from your home and neighborhood).

Stanza 2: I am from . . .

(Specific foods, especially those associated with special occasions).

Stanza 3: I am from . . .

(Specific sayings or phrases heard growing up).

Stanza 4: I am from . . .

(Specific people who influenced your life).

I am from

I am from cars honking in the streets, traffic jams, the smell of hot city grime baked in the sun, laughter on the front stoop.

I am from mouth-watering vinegar pie, savory turkey and dressing, chicken and dumplings, thin steak and thick potatoes.

I am from “Daddy, read to me,” “If you can’t say something nice, don’t say anything at all,” and “Don’t talk back to me young lady!”

I am from the watchful eyes of my mother and father, the unwashable perfumed hugs of Grandma Ann and Grandma Lola, and the bruises from my little brother.

