

“Where I’m From”

TIME

This lesson is to be implemented in one 50-minute period on Tuesday, March 1, 2011

SETTING

11th grade English classroom with 25 students

THEORY INTO PRACTICE BACKGROUND

1. Relying on Jim Burke’s suggestion to model before asking students to do “thinking work,” I endeavored to preface and model this lesson as clearly and explicitly as I can. Burke discusses that teachers need to model how to do “thinking work,” especially if “we are introducing a new type of thinking into the class or a new context for established thinking” (Burke 240). Bearing that in mind, I do a few different things to model what students are supposed to do with the “Where I’m From” template. I first introduce students to Lyon’s poem in three different ways (independent reading, read aloud, read aloud by the writer herself). And because even reading and listening to the poem doesn’t suffice to ask students to break up and produce their own poem, we discuss the various “things” that Lyon’s from and talk about what these things might mean. After I feel that students have gotten a good grasp of what the poem is about, I then break students off into groups so that they can engage in their own “thinking work”—producing the poems from Holden’s perspective. It is in this way that I model to students what they are supposed to do before they do it.
2. Prior to this lesson, students will have completed their Essay Test on *The Catcher in the Rye*, received it with feedback, and have had a lesson on Writer’s Workshop to develop the essay tests into longer, formal essays. Each student should be writing their essays on a critical aspect of Holden’s character, whether it may be about his diminishing state of mind, emerging sexuality, or view on relationships/companionship.
3. The poem “Where I’m From” by George Ella Lyon and the template is intended to help students continue to investigate their understanding of Holden’s character, which can help them at their current, beginning phase of the essay. As they collaboratively complete a part of the poem from Holden perspective, they are to analyze and interpret the text and surmise what different things Holden might be from.

The “Where Are You From?” homework assignment is designed to help students reflect on the memories, people, traditions and values that help define their own identity and convey it through a poem. Ideally, students will have had ample opportunities to

reflect on the different characteristics / features that make up their identity through prior lessons. This homework assignment will continue to guide their ongoing process of self-discover / search for self.

4. After this lesson, students will work with other supplemental materials (poems, video) related to the theme of identity. At the end of the week, they will begin their second novel of the unit—Sherman Alexie’s *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*—through which students will continue and further their understanding of the different facets that affect and frame one’s identity.

OBJECTIVES

After this class, students will be able to (1) determine the degree to which a poem is affected when it is read silently, aloud, and aloud by the poet him/herself; (2) produce the “Where I’m From” from the perspective of Holden, displaying an in-depth and personal understanding of his character; (3) reflect on the memories, people, traditions and values that help define their own identity and convey it through a poem.

MATERIALS

- *The Catcher in the Rye* by J. D. Salinger
- Elmo Document Camera / Projector System
- “Where I’m From” poem by George Ella Lyon (Worksheet #1)
- “Where I’m From” template (Worksheet #2)
- My “Where I’m From” poem (Worksheet #3)
- “Where Are You From?” Homework Assignment (Worksheet #4)
- “Where Are You From?” Homework Assignment Rubric (Worksheet #5)
- “Where I’m From” Group Poem Rubric (Worksheet #6)

PREPARATION

- Predetermine 7 groups of 3 and 1 group of 4
- Make appropriate copies for Worksheets #1 and #2

PROCEDURE

Before Class

- Have the audio version of George Ella Lyon’s “Where I’m From” ready to go.
- Stand by the door and distribute a copy of “Where I’m From” by George Ella Lyon.

Introduction of Lesson: 14 min.

- Ask students if they have any questions about their essay, which is due on Friday.
- 2 min Give students time to read “Where I’m From” to themselves silently.

- *2 min* Read George Ella Lyon’s “Where I’m From” aloud to class. Ask students how they feel about the poem—if they like it, don’t like it, what it’s about, etc.
- *2 min* Listen to George Ella Lyon read “Where I’m From.” Ask students if they feel any differently about the poem after hearing the poet read it. Does it somehow make more sense? How is a piece different when it is read silently than when it is read aloud and when it is read aloud by the author?
- *3 min* Break students off into groups (by proximity) and ask them to analyze the poem. Students should write down the various “things” she’s from and talk about what these things might mean.
- *5 min* Regroup as a class and discuss each group’s findings. Write these ideas on the board. They should have come up with categories of “things”—such as food, adjectives, quotes, etc. Do you find these “things” to be adequate in identifying a person? Why or why not?

Lesson Instruction:

- *1 min* Pass out the “Where I’m From” template.
- *10 min* Break off students into predetermined groups. Explain to them that they are to work together to write a part of the poem from Holden’s perspective based on their interpretation of his character. They should write this as if Holden is writing it himself—use the kind of narrative voice and words that he would use. When everyone is done, we will put the poems together under the Elmo Camera, read the whole thing together. They should use the template for reference, but write the poem on a separate sheet of paper for easy viewing. Students should try their best to display their understanding of Holden through this assignment. As students work, circulate around the room to help them think critically about what kinds of things Holden is from; if there are blanks that isn’t necessarily mentioned in the book, encourage them to make something up that is plausible and consistent with Holden’s character and the novel.
- *15 min* Regroup as a whole class; put the completed components under the Elmo and have a representative from each group read it aloud to class. After reading through it once, each group should share their rationale for choosing to fill in the blanks the way they did. Overall, does this poem do an accurate job portraying Holden as a person? Collect the poems; ensure everyone’s names are on the poem.
- *3 min* Read my “Where I’m From” poem aloud to the students. Put a copy of the poem under the Elmo for all to see.
- *2 min* Now that students have gotten a better understanding of the format and purpose of the poem, tell students that they are to write their own “Where I’m From” poem for homework. Distribute the “Where Are You From?” assignment and read the prompt to them.

Closure/Wrap-Up

- Dismiss students.

DISCUSSION IDEAS

- How is a poem different when it is read silently, aloud, or aloud by the poet him/herself? Why is this so?
- How are the “things” that George Ella Lyon writes adequate or inadequate in identifying a person?
- What “things” are Holden from? How is this plausible in relation to his character?
- Overall, does this poem do an accurate job portraying Holden as a person?
- What are some people, memories things, traditions and values that help identify you as a person?

BILINGUAL/ESL AND ENGLISHES ACCOMMODATIONS

Spanish

- The ELL whose L1 is Spanish will be accommodated in these following ways:
 - ✓ Spanish-English and English-Spanish dictionaries will be provided in the classroom as his L1 resource. He may refer to these whenever necessary.
 - ✓ This student will be encouraged to incorporate any Spanish words or phrases that help truly describe “where he’s from.”
 - ✓ This student will be assigned to a group with students who are patient, helpful, and diligent.
 - ✓ I will closely monitor this student during small group activity to provide additional assistance, if necessary.

African American English

- Students who speak African American English will be accommodated in these following ways:
 - ✓ Students will be free to contribute to class and small group discussions in alternatives to Standard English. They will be allowed and encouraged to use the dialect with which they are most comfortable—one that truly defines who they are—in writing their own “Where I’m From” poem. SWE is not required for neither poems (collaborative and individual “Where I’m From” poems).

SPECIAL EDUCATION ACCOMMODATIONS

“*Asperger’s disorder* is characterized by severe, sustained, and often lifelong impairments in social interactions and the development of restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, and activities” (Rosenberg et al 263).

- The student with Asperger’s disorder will be accommodated in these following ways:
 - ✓ Student will be provided with an agenda of the day’s lesson, which outlines the instructional activities, so that they know what to anticipate when they come to class.
 - ✓ Student will receive plenty of notice if there is any change in routine.

- ✓ Student will be assigned to a group with classmates who are helpful and can serve as good role models for social behavior.
- ✓ Student will be asked in advance whether or not he would like to be the representative to share his group component of the poem with the class.
- ✓ When introducing the activity and leading discussions, I will use language that is direct and literal, avoiding unnecessary idioms and irony, which may cause confusion.

ASSESSMENT

- Students will be informally assessed on their individual and small group participation throughout the lesson. I will be circulating around the room to see whether or not they are taking notes and collaborating meaningfully. Their participation / group presentation of the poem will also be a way to informally assess their learning.
- Students will be formally assessed on their collaborative product of the “Where I’m From” poem. Students will receive a group grade based on thoughtful completion and plausible content (Worksheet #6). They will also be formally assessed, based on a rubric, on their “Where Are You From?” homework assignment (Worksheet #5).

EXTENSION IDEAS

- Instead of breaking up the poem into 8 different parts, students in small groups can complete the entire poem from the perspective of Holden.
- As an extended project, students can record a Podcast of their reading of the poem, which directly relates to the discussion about the changed effect of the poem when read silently vs. aloud vs. aloud by the author.
- Instead of sharing them in small groups the following day, there can be a whole day allotted to the presentation of poems, where students bring in a visual artifact to share.

SOURCE OF ACTIVITY

I would like to thank Professor Willis for introducing this poem to our CI 403 class. I would also like to acknowledge the website through which she retrieved the template for the “Where I’m From” poem: <http://www.georgeellalyon.com/where.html>. Lastly, I thank my group mates who first came up with the idea of incorporating this poem as an end-of-the-novel activity.

RESOURCES AND REFERENCES

Burke, Jim. *The English Teacher's Companion: a Complete Guide to Classroom, Curriculum, and the Profession*. 3 ed. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2008. Print.

“George Ella Lyon: Writer & Teacher.” [Georgeellalyon.com](http://www.georgeellalyon.com) George Ella Lyon, 2010. Web. 8 Dec, 2010.

“Illinois State Board of Education: Illinois Learning Standards.” *ISBE.com*. Illinois State Board of Education, 2009. Web. 5 Dec, 2010.

Rosenberg, M.S., *Special Education for Today's Teachers: An Introduction*. NJ: Pearson, 2010. Print.

Salinger, J.D. *The Catcher in the Rye*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1951. 277. Print.

ILLINOIS STATE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS GOALS

- **Goal 2: Read and interpret a variety of literary works**
 - 2.B.5a** Analyze and express an interpretation of a literary work
 - ✓ Students accomplish this goal as they work in small groups to write the “Where I’m From” poem by George Ella Lyon from the perspective of Holden. As they think about the different things that Holden is from, they are to refer to the novel and complete the poem with plausible words / phrases that are consistent with his character. This activity heavily relies on their understanding of the text and their ability to analyze and express their interpretations.

- **Goal 3: Apply Communicate ideas in writing to accomplish a variety of purpose.**
 - 3.C.5a** Communicate information and ideas in narrative, informative and persuasive writing with clarity and effectiveness in a variety of written forms using appropriate traditional and/or electronic formats; adapt content, vocabulary, voice and tone to the audience, purpose and situation
 - ✓ Students fulfill this goal through the “Where I’m From” group poem. They are asked to write from the perspective of Holden, and in doing so, use narrative voice, tone and vocabulary that is consistent with his character.

- **Goal 4: Speak effectively using language appropriate to the situation and audience.**
 - 4.B.4b** Use group discussion skills to assume leadership and participant roles within an assigned project or to reach a group goal.
 - ✓ Students achieve this goal by working collaboratively in small groups of 3 or 4. As they contribute and listen to one another, they will produce a component of the “Where I’m From” poem from Holden’s perspective. In doing so, students will assume different roles—as a leader, participant, recorder, and presenter.

Where I'm From

George Ella Lyon

(Worksheet #1)

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.

Source: <http://www.georgeellalyon.com/where.html>

Where I'm From Template

(Worksheet #2)

1) I am from _____ (specific, ordinary item), from _____ (product name) and _____ (an item you really love).

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

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

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

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

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

5) I am from _____ (something you really believe in), from _____
_____. (further description, if possible).

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

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

8) I am from _____ (description of family pictures, mementos, archives and several more lines indicating the worth of these).

Where I'm From

Anna Lee
(Worksheet #3)

I am from glasses,
from Hagen Daz and soft Jersey sheets.
I am from the room with two windows.
(breezy, sunlit, some days excessively warm.)
I am from the ponytail palm, daisies,
raindrops, the pitcher plant, orchids,
the pink sun over the horizon.
I am from New Year bows
and affectionate hugs,
from Joseph and Esther and Lee.
I am from clipping coupons and eating
leftovers late at night.
From "Pray before you eat!"
and "Wash your feet before bed."
I am from Jeremiah 29.
I am from the heart of Seoul and Korea,
from vegetable stews and baked cookies.
From the knee my sister scraped chasing after me,
the fingernail I lost running away from my sister.
I am from a closet full of old albums,
capturing my mom and dad's first date,
the day I entered kindergarten,
and my sister's trip to Disneyland.
I am from those moments
old and dusty but kept alive
through the stories we tell.

Where Are You From?

(Worksheet #4)

Now that you've had the chance to hear George Ella Lyon's poem AND write one from the perspective of Holden, it's time for **YOU** to share where you're from. Be as creative as you want in writing this; you'd be amazed how many different poems can be produced using the same template. There is so much room for creativity and your personality to shine through! 😊😊

Please type up your poem or print legibly for easy viewing. These will be due tomorrow in class, and is worth **6 points**.

Where Are You From? Rubric

(Worksheet #5)

Content: completes poem using memories, attributes, people, traditions, values, or whatever meaningful in describing his or her identity	/5
Turned in on time: the poem is either turned in at the time it is due, or is not.	/1

“Where I’m From” Group Poem Rubric

(Worksheet #6)

Content: uses attributes that are plausible and consistent with Holden’s character	/5
Presentation: shares with class their part of poem and provides an explanation	/1