

*MINNESOTA WRITING PROJECT*  
*DEMONSTRATION LESSON TEMPLATE*

Title: "Where I Am From"

Grade appropriate: Any

Objectives:

1. To have students understand and identify the following terminology: metaphor, personification, imagery, allusion, denotation, connotation, symbol, mood/tone.
2. To have students imitate Lyon's writing style and create their own I Am From poem, focusing on deliberate word choice to create imagery that involves all of the senses.
3. To have students better understand the values, influences, and places that shape the identity of a figure (fiction or non) in literature. Possibilities: Richard Wright (Black Boy), Odysseus, Huck Finn, Jane Eyre, Captain Ahab, etc.

\*Note: this activity could be done singularly, completing only objective 2 or 3, or together.

Process:

1. Have students brainstorm. There are so many different ways to enter into this activity, but I like to direct them to do the following: Describe an unforgettable smell that is somehow important to them. It could be that the smell connects you to your early childhood or a more recent memory. It may be associated with a person, place, or object. (This is not the easiest brainstorming, so you may want to wait till they have plenty of senses writing under their pencil.) They can share this example with the class or small groups. I then discuss my example and ask them which one paints a better picture of the place and the actual smell.
2. TP-CASTT. Introduce George Ella Lyon's poem, "Where I am From." [below] I have them predict, based only on the title, what they think the poem will be about. This is what the "T" in TP-CASTT stands for. Will it be about a place? A childhood? A person (what gender?) who has just come home from work and is crabby? They should be creative in their responses (but serious).
3. Poetry reading. Have the students read the poem silently, then aloud. If you'd really like to hammer it in, have one person read it aloud, and then have each person in the class read a line (for a total of THREE, yes three, readings. By now my kids are throwing knives at me with their eyes.)
4. There are certainly things in the poem they may not be familiar with, I have them put a ? mark by those things now. We discuss their questions. Sometimes I wait to discuss the questions, or else I basically end up explaining the whole poem.
5. Have them complete the TP-CASTT. Instructions are included below.

6. After discussing their TP-CASTT findings, switch to either a) beginning to write a poem about a figure in literature or b) beginning to write their own poem.

### TP-CASTT

What is TP-CASTT? TP-CASTT is one way to approach a poem, and have students examine both literal elements as well as emotional associations.

### TITLE

Think about the title before reading the poem. Write out two questions about the title. There are two kinds of titles: interactive titles and naming titles. Interactive titles have some sort of presence in the poem itself and can affect its meaning. Naming titles may give less crucial information. If a poem lacks a title, you can do this step with the first line of the poem or not do this.

### PARAPHRASE

Translate the poem into your own words. Line for line is my preference, but you could have them do a five-six sentence summary. If you want to spend a lot of time on a poem, one possibility is to have students find synonyms for every possible word.

### CONNOTATION

Read the poem for meaning beyond the literal. Identify and figure out the figurative language/elements. Students can write out each element or just underline and label the personification, metaphors, symbols, etc.

### ATTITUDE

Students identify the subject, and, after identifying a subject/topic of the poem, figure out how the speaker (and/or the poet) feels about it. This is also called tone.

### SHIFTS

Students note transitions in the poem, shifts in subject, attitude, mood, or motif. I have them put a star by the changes/shifts with a brief explanation.

### TITLE

Examine the title again, this time on an interpretive level. Answer your questions. Figure out how the title illuminates the poem. Remember you can do this with the first line of a poem if it lacks a title or you can skip this step altogether.

### THEME

What is the poem's theme? What does the poet and/or speaker want you to feel or know about his topic?

Check out the web page of poet George Ella Lyon (<http://www.georgeellalyon.com/where.html>) for more on her poem, "Where I'm From."