

# Minnesota Writing Project

## --- Demonstration Lesson ---

**Title: "I Am" Poem**

**Grade appropriate: 5<sup>th</sup> grade – 8<sup>th</sup> grade (could be adapted for other grades)**

**Approximate Length of time to complete lesson/unit: 3-4 class periods if using computer at school**

**Objective(s) to be covered:**

**Students will create a poem reflecting about themselves, a culmination writing project for the school year.**

**Standards:**

**Student will create expressive writing in the form of poems.**

**Student will engage in a writing process, with attention to organization, focus, quality of ideas, and a purpose.**

**Brief summary/outline:**

**In my classroom I use the "I Am" poem as a closing writing activity for the year. Students reflect about themselves using descriptive words so that the reader can "see", "hear", "touch", "feel", and "smell" what they are! The prompts students will use are:**

**I am**

**What sound?, What animal?, What song?, What number?, What car?, What piece of furniture?, What food?, What musical instrument?, What place?, What element in nature?, What kind of tree?, What is something I am afraid of?, and What is the world hiding behind my eyes?**

**The first year I used the "I Am" poem I used example poems from Leigh Van Horn's book (see resources) to assist me in teaching my students. As I have continued to use the poem as a writing assignment, I have collected student work.**

- The first time through I had my students help me write an "I am" poem about myself. They certainly enjoyed that opportunity!**
- Other years I have used student work and shared the poems on the overhead.**

- The most recent strategy was reading aloud several poems and having the students listen for the categories (i.e. sound, animal, song, etc.). Students had a specific purpose and were able to identify almost all categories.
  - I had poems from varying abilities. I read some aloud again for the purpose of showing how students could describe.
    - Examples
      - I am the sound of a loud ATV, A chicken strutting around (tells the sound and animal with little description.)
      - I am the rustling sound of birds wings as they fly, A dog that always barks (tells the sound and animal with more description)
      - I am a lazy-boy recliner, as laid back as a cold glass of lemonade on a hot summer day (tells the furniture and compares it to the lemonade)
      - I am the sound, willows gently swaying in the wind, grass caressing a tree trunk. The rhythmic flapping of an owl soaring through the night, barely above a whisper, but always worth listening too. (tells the sound and animal with much more description)
  - Students worked on their own planning sheet. I tended to allow students to sit together and talk about what they were and why; another reason why doing it later in the year worked for me – knew each other better. They love to give each other ideas.
  - Once the planning sheet was completed, I shared some selected poems on the overhead to discuss form. I like to stress that it is not necessary for each line to begin with I am and try to use some of those examples.
  - Students are then ready to write the poem out or use word processing.
  - Before the final copy I show some examples to review capitalization and punctuation.

**Resources:**

Van Horn, Leigh, (2001), *Creating Literacy Communities in the Middle Schools*, Norwood, Mass, Christopher-Gordon Publishers, Inc.

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