

# Minnesota Writing Project

## --- Demonstration Lesson ---

**Title of lesson: Where I'm From: Giving Voice to the Threads that Comprise the Fabric of our Lives**

**Suggested grade/age:**

Although I would contend that this lesson can be adapted for any age, K-12, this iteration was designed with 3<sup>rd</sup> graders in mind.

**Approximate time needed to complete lesson:**

From introduction through revision and finally publication on VoiceThread, this lesson takes about seven 45-minute periods. I teach this lesson in early fall, as a community-building piece.

**Learning objective(s) and significance of lesson:**

Rationale:

- build community.
- initiate courageous conversations.
- meet state standards.
  1. MN grade 3 standards met by this lesson:
  2. Students will write in a variety of modes to express meaning, including poetic writing.
  3. students will Give oral presentations (VoiceThread) to different audiences for different purposes.
  4. students will Use, print, pictures, audio and video to express ideas and knowledge.

**Brief summary/outline of lesson:**

Activating Schema:

(aka, Day 1)

- Pass out tapestry/brocade squares and have students examine (individually, and then discuss in pairs).
- Ask what they notice. They'll likely notice all of the little threads that make up the piece. If not, draw their attention to the threads.
- Draw the parallel between the threads in the fabric and the threads/stories within each of us. (At this point, I would play the piece by spoken word poet, Mystic. As far as I have been able to tell, this piece is not available alone on iTunes. It is the intro track from the album "Say G & E". If you give me a disc, I'm happy to burn it for you 😊.)
- Ask the kids to think about, and briefly discuss with a partner, how the poem and fabric might be related.
- Have the kids tape (Double-sided tape works well here.) the squares into their Writers' Notebooks.
- Introduce George Ella Lyon. She is the poet who created the "Where I'm From" poem. Her website has an mp3 of her reading her version of the poem.
- Play your version of the poem. If you are going to have students finalize their work using VoiceThread, then you should show them a completed example using this software.

### Beginning to Write:

(aka, Day 2)

- Sit with the students and discuss the template. Be sure to stress that the template is not hard and fast, and can be manipulated to help students tell the world what *they* want to say.
- Unpack the language around each line. (I change the part about religion, and discuss beliefs instead (i.e., everyone is created equally, respect the earth, etc.) The template requires that students think pretty deeply.
- Model by writing the first two or three lines with the students. You can differentiate here by allowing the students who feel confident to head back to their desks to write, while those who would like to see more modeling can do that.
- Supply students with paper copies of either your model or George Ella Lyon's piece. These will be good references as they sit down to write.

### Writing and Revising:

(aka, Days 3-4)

- As students are writing, conference with groups of two to find out how their poems are going.
- (Day 4) Do a mini-lesson on revision, and then set kids to work.
- Invite students to share at the end of work time each day.

### Image Creation:

(aka, Days 5-6)

(These projects are really powerful if kids create some or all of the associated images. If you have kids draw pictures, simply photograph them and upload them to VoiceThread. Don't drive yourself crazy scanning 4-5 images x 25 kids. If you have kids use images from the web, just make sure they're using image outlets that aren't going to lead them to inappropriate pictures.)

- Kids who finish collecting/creating their images early should practice reading their poems.

### Recording:

(aka, Day 7)

- This part is up to you, so make sure you've had time to play with VoiceThread.
- Prior to recording, you'll need to photograph your kids and insert their identities.
- Make sure that kids can read their poems fluently.

### Related Resources:

Christensen, Linda. *Reading, Writing and Rising Up: Teaching About Social Justice and the Power of the Written Word*. Milwaukee: Rethinking Schools Ltd, 2000. Print.

Singleton, Glenn E., and Curtis Linton. *Courageous Conversations About Race: A Field Guide for Achieving Equity in Schools*. Thousand Oaks: Corwin Press, 2005. Print.

### Related Resources (cont.):

[www.voicethread.com](http://www.voicethread.com)

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

### Possible extensions or adaptations for different purposes/student needs:

#### Other ideas for using this poem:

- Have students use the poem to describe characters from the books they're reading.

- Include copies of students' personal poems in their Writers' Notebooks, and refer back to individual lines as seed stories.
- Have younger students work on one or two lines of the poem at a time, and take a couple of weeks to complete the poem.
- Write a class "We Come From" poem celebrating students' differences.

For additional information, contact:

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