Where I’m From Poem Lesson Plan

*Lesson Topic(s) and/or Essential Question(s)/Essential Understandings:*

**Course:** English 12 Honors

**Topic:** Creative Writing and Building a Classroom Community

**Essential Question:** How can we creatively express ourselves and our uniqueness as individuals through the written word?

**Essential Understandings:** This lesson functions as a creative platform for students to express their unique attributes and quirks by way of a structured poem. The Where I’m From Poem template truly encourages them to write about aspects of their lives, and, moreover, this lesson is structured in a way that also engages them in sharing their written work with their peers in dialogic ways in order to further develop a shared community within the classroom.

*Objectives:*

* SWBAT reflect upon and write about what makes them unique as individuals in poem form.
* SWBAT engage in dialogue as they share aspects of themselves with their peers in both small and large group discussion.
* SWBAT continue to develop a sense of a classroom community through dialogic interaction with their peers and instructors.

*Standards:*

* [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/W/11-12/3/): Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.
* [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3.D](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/W/11-12/3/d/): Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters.

*Instructional Materials and Resources:*

* ELMO (or projecter/computer) in order to project Where I’m From Poem template
* Where I’m From Poem template
* Where I’m From Poem examples as a model for student writing
* Pencils/Pens
* Paper

*Learner Factors:*

By engaging students in writing about themselves in a very structured way, this lesson aims to eliminate at least some of the pressure that students often feel surrounds writing, and writing within the classroom space in particular. The lesson encourages students’ creativity, and allows them to write about what they feel is important to them and in their worlds. Thus, by bringing in what many scholars refer to as students’ “funds of knowledge” or the pedagogical “third space,” we hope to appeal and incite students to feel interested and invested in not only this writing activity, but in future writing activities as well.

*Environmental Factors:*

No environmental accommodations are required for this activity.

*Rationale:*

Implementing lessons that foster students creativity, as well as their personal backgrounds, or as many teaching scholars have coined it, their “funds of knowledge,” through the written word is unquestionably important within ELA classrooms. It is precisely with this in mind that this lesson was created and developed in this way. The Where I’m From Poem offers students a structured poem format that promotes reflection and encourages creativity as students elaborately detail aspects about their personal lives through the written word. Furthermore, as I have structured this lesson to be dialogic, and more specifically, because I will use a think-pair-share strategy to further student involvement and discussion with one another, this activity also effectively acts as a way to further develop a sense of a classroom community between peers as well as with instructors.

*Instructional Tasks and Activities:*

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| What the Instructor Will Be Doing: | What the Students Will Be Doing: |
| **5 minutes:** Project Where I’m From Poem template to the class and explain the structure to the students.  **5 minutes:** Project Where I’m From Poem example poem and discuss aspects of the poem that the students might aim to emulate in their own writing.  **20 minutes:** Circulate around the room in order to make sure students remain on task and to help students formulate ideas for their writing.  **1 minute:** Instruct students to share their writing, or to discuss at least 3 aspects of their poem with a group of 2-3 people.  **5-10 minutes:** Circulate around the room in order to make sure that students remain on task in their conversations with one another and further their discussion by asking them questions about their work and about their lives more generally  **1 minute**: Encourage students to share their own poems, or aspects of it, or to read aloud or share aspects of their partner’s poem.  **10-15 minutes:** Listen as students share out either their own or their partner’s work and facilitate discussion by asking further questions about their writing and about their lives. | **5 minutes:** Remain attentive as the instructor explains the Where I’m From Poem template to the students.  **5 minutes:** Read the Where I’m From Poem example and discuss aspects of the poem that they notice work well within the writing.  **20 minutes:** Work individually and creatively on their own Where I’m From Poem.  **1 minute:** Listen as instructor instructs them to turn to one or two neighbors in either reading their poem or sharing aspects of it with their peers.  **5-10 minutes:** Listen as their peers share their Where I’m From Poems with them and share their own work with their peers.  **1 minute:** Listen as instructor asks them to perhaps share either their partner or their own poem, or aspects of it with the class.  **10-15 minutes**: Read aloud or discuss aspects of a peer’s poem with the class as a whole. Listen as others discuss either their partner or their own writing. Discuss aspects of others’ work that stand out and work well. |

*Reflection:*

One of my favorite aspects of being a teacher is being able to see gears working as students write, whether it be creatively or otherwise (although, to a certain extent, all writing is creative writing). Thus, it comes as no surprise that I absolutely loved explaining and implementing this lesson and watching the students formulate ideas and work on their personal, creative writing pieces. Moreover, while there were a few students who felt a bit nervous about in-class writing and who were worried about the pressure of perfecting their writing, I worked as hard as possible to circulate around the room and ease these students’ worries in telling them to remember that there was no right or wrong way to write their poems. All that mattered, I told them, was that they were sharing aspects of themselves that they felt comfortable sharing, and that they felt were important to them.

Moreover, as I anticipated prior to teaching this lesson, many of the students felt shy about sharing their own work with the class as a whole. For this reason, I intentionally made sure to tell students that they could share their own writing or that of a peer’s, and that they need not feel the pressure to read their piece in its entirety, but just to share aspects of it, or even things about themselves more generally that they’d like to share. This strategy worked very, very well. Unsurprisingly, most of the students chose to share a partner’s poem, and many only discussed particular parts of their partner’s poems with the rest of the class. However, there were quite a few (even more than I had originally expected) who decided to read aloud either their partner’s or their own work, which I loved. The discussions that stemmed from the sharing out of these poems were truly very interesting and engaging for the students, and I was amazed at the detail in all of the students’ work ☺. I also asked students to place a star at the top of their paper if they did not mind if I “showed off” their work with my teaching peers at Michigan State, and to my astonishment and utter joy, many, if not most of the students placed a giant star at the top of their paper. I was overjoyed that they were proud of their work ☺. Many of the students even told my mentor teacher and I that they planned to use this poem for a poetry slam our high school hosts later in the year, which was very exciting for me as a teacher! Nothing, and I truly mean nothing, makes me happier than students feeling confident and pride in their work ☺ ☺ ☺.