

Name:

Date:

Cultural Assimilation:

Poetry Activity

Assimilation is the process in which one cultural group is absorbed into the culture of another. The residential school system was one key strategy for the government of Canada's assimilation of Indigenous peoples.

One way to challenge cultural assimilation is to confidently share about who we are, our memories, the things that make us who we are, and the places that we come from. This activity will guide you through writing a poem that celebrates your own life, history, and culture.

Instructions:

1. Read the introduction to Jennifer LaFontaine's poem "Where I'm From" as a class.
2. Read the poem together.
3. Create your own version of "Where I'm From" using the template provided. Follow the guidelines to fill in the blanks with people, things, and details that are important to **you**.
4. As you fill out the template, remember that there are many personal ways to define home, family, and history. You have the right to share all of your emotions, and you have the right to choose how far back your story goes.
5. When you are done, share with a partner, or as a class.

Introduction to the Poem

Jennifer LaFontaine is a Canadian writer who adapted a poem by George Ella Lyon to express her own experiences. The poem, called "Where I'm From", borrows the structure of Lyon's poem to explore and celebrate her personal feelings, memories, and family history.

Jennifer's dad didn't know he was Métis until he was in his 40s, when his own dad asked him to come to a party in Duck Lake, Saskatchewan. There, he was able to meet all of his Métis relatives for the first time. Jennifer wrote this poem to share her experience of putting the pieces back together after years and years of silence.

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"Where I'm From" - By Jennifer LaFontaine, adapted from George Ella Lyon

I'm from the front lawn
From the white Chrysler and black rimmed glasses
I am from the kitchen floor,
Scuffed, ruffed, danced on all night long.
I am from prairie grasses, rustling through my veins
I'm from jigging and michif
From Isadore and Marie
I'm from road trips and silences
From I didn't know until that party and what language was he speaking?
I'm from Riel's fervent visions, guiding our people
I'm from Duck Lake and the resistance
From wild rice and berries
From the day that grandpa asked dad for a ride
The day that dad understood it all.
So many small photos, of the wars, of logging, of Beaton and Ainsworth.
Of great snows, and high mountains, so far, far from the prairies. None from that party.
None from that place.
But everything from that story.

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I Am From Poem - Template

Use this template to draft your poem, and then write a final draft to share on blank paper.

I am from _____

(specific ordinary item or important object from your home or life)

From _____ and _____

(product name or important object)

(product name or important object)

I am from the _____

(description of home or community)

_____, _____, _____

(adjective)

(adjective)

(sensory detail)

I am from _____,

(plant, flower, natural item)

(description of above item)

I'm from _____ and _____

(family tradition or important activity)

(another one)

From _____ and _____

(name of family member or important person in your life)

(another name)

Name:

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I'm from the _____ and _____
(description of family or friends way of being) (another one)

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

I'm from _____ , _____
(symbol of personal beliefs of values) (further description)

I'm from _____
(place of birth and family ancestry)

----- , -----
(important meal or food item) (another one)

From the _____
(story about a specific person and detail)

The _____
(another detail about a family member or important person)

(where you keep your family pictures, personal mementos, and important items)

(line explaining the importance of these items)