

## **Perhaps these questions will inspire you as you write your “We Came to America” Poem**

### **MOTIVATION FOR MIGRATING**

There is a story behind every decision to migrate.

- What was yours (or your parents)?
- What were your (or your parents) hopes for your new life here?
- Why did you choose to come to this country instead of somewhere else?

### **THE JOURNEY**

- Who did you come with and who did you leave behind? Did anyone come ahead of you?
- What was the most difficult part about leaving?
- What was your journey to this new country like?
- What was the most difficult part of coming here?
- What was it like when you first arrived?
- What most surprised you?
- What did you miss most about the country you came from?
- Who was most helpful with getting you settled?
- Migration can be hard. Where did you find strength in difficult times?
- How do you think that migration has changed you?

### **HOPES & REALITIES**

- As time has passed, how does your experience compare to what you expected?
- What have been your biggest challenges?
- What have been your greatest sources of joy?
- Overall, how do you think your family is doing after the migration?
- Can you think of times when you have felt unwelcomed as an immigrant? What about when you have felt welcomed?
- If you have DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival) status, how did your life change once you attained that status?
- How might losing DACA status affect your life?
- How do you think the new proposed legislations by the Senate and Congress to extend more permanent protections to undocumented youth affect you if they passed?
- Do you have a story about someone you care about that was deported?
- What is the thing you are proudest of so far and why?
- What are you hoping to accomplish in the future?
- What do you think may get in the way of those dreams?
- What do you think may help your dreams come true?
- In what ways do you think migration has made you a stronger person?

## **Suggestions for writing poems**

Writing where we come from captures our own story, our own voice, our own complexity and history.

**There are many ways to write a poem and many kinds of poems. One way to write a poem is an “I’m From” poem.**

**Here are two examples of an “I’m From” poem.**

**Where I’m From**

George Ella Lyon

I am from clothespins,  
from Clorox and carbon-tetrachloride.  
I am from the dirt under the back porch.  
(Black, glistening,  
it tasted like beets.)  
I am from the forsythia bush  
the Dutch elm  
whose long-gone limbs I remember  
as if they were my own.

I'm from fudge and eyeglasses,  
from Imogene and Alafair.  
I'm from the know-it-alls  
and the pass-it-ons,  
from Perk up! and Pipe down!  
I'm from He restoreth my soul  
with a cottonball lamb  
and ten verses I can say myself.

I'm from Artemus and Billie's Branch,  
fried corn and strong coffee.  
From the finger my grandfather lost  
to the auger,  
the eye my father shut to keep his sight.

Under my bed was a dress box  
spilling old pictures,  
a sift of lost faces  
to drift beneath my dreams.  
I am from those moments--  
snapped before I budded --

leaf-fall from the family tree.

### **Where I'm From**

by Norma Miller

I'm from the auto state  
from GM, Ford and Chrysler I'm from fast paced and busy where slow is not a gear

I'm from the factory which is a long way away a good drive to and from home everyday

I'm from smog, steel and hard work  
from the peddle to the metal, shiny and new  
to faster is better and last's year models are few

I'm where dollar signs are the guideposts in life  
rust and rot poles are my demise  
I'm from clutches which are burned up,  
motors who blow up, and tires which tare up where the gas and oil are never filled up

I'm from the sports car  
to the family mini van  
to the monster truck  
to the most economical way from point A to B

I'm from over priced to under valued from the showroom to the scrap yard  
I'm from riding in style to being

a Classic sheltered with tender loving care

**This is an exercise if you would like to write your own "I'm From" poem.**

1. Think about where you come from. Think of some of the experiences you had growing up in the different places you lived or visited.
2. Identify different categories of experiences in your life. Think about your family, your family's history, the food you've eaten, the songs you sang growing up, the people who have changed your life, the homes you've lived in, the vacations you've taken. For each category write a list of what you remember.
3. Now make a list of five experiences that you've had in your life and choose the one that has the most meaning or "energy" to you.
4. Look at your lists and see if you can put together a poem starting with the words "I'm From". Use your lists as inspirations.