



CREATING COMMUNITY IN YOUR CLASSROOM: I AM POEMS

SUGGESTED GRADE LEVEL: 2 – 5

LENGTH OF TIME: Two sessions of 30 – 45 minutes

GOAL

- To build community by learning about one another through poetry.

OBJECTIVES

- To use descriptive language in poetry to help others understand their lives.
- To enhance the written word with visuals that add meaning and interest.

ACADEMIC STANDARDS

- CCSS SL 2.1 Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about grade 2 topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups. Also SL 3.1, 4.1 and 5.1.
- CCSS SL 4.5 Add audio recordings and visual displays to presentations when appropriate to enhance the development of main ideas or themes. Also SL 2.5, 3.5 and 5.5.
- Social Studies Strand 1: Culture – Learners interact with class members and discover culturally-based likenesses and differences.

EDUCATORS' NOTES

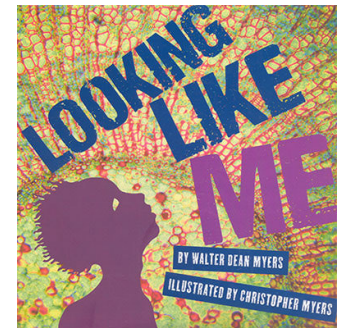
Writing an “I am” poem is a great activity for the beginning of the school year as it will help you to get to know your students and for your students to get to know each other. The activity provides opportunities for students to make connections. Students may find unexpected similarities and/or differences between themselves and others in the class. This can open discussion and help create community in your classroom. This lesson could also be used before a back to school night if you post the poems on a wall in your room as a way to highlight student work and share with families.

Looking Like Me by Walter Dean Myers is a great read aloud as it looks at the many ways a boy is seen in his world. He’s a brother, son, writer, city kid, artist, dancer, talker, runner, and dreamer.

MATERIALS NEEDED: Copies of the template for the “I Am Poem,” *Looking Like Me* by Walter Dean Meyers, if you are planning to use the book.

OPTIONAL: Read and Discuss *Looking Like Me*

- What are some of the ways that Jeremy sees himself?
- What are some of the ways that others see Jeremy?
- How’s Jeremy feeling when people give him a “bam”?



PRE-WRITING

- Consider sharing an “I Am” poem that you have written before asking students to write their own pieces. If you make yourself vulnerable, students will be more comfortable doing the same.
- Talk the class through the brainstorming template allowing students time to think and write as you go along.

REVISING / EDITING / PUBLISHING

- After you have walked through the “I Am” template or you have allowed students time to write a first draft, give additional time in class or as homework ask your students to revise and edit to create a final draft.

CREATIVE PRESENTATION ACTIVITY WITH LOOKING LIKE ME

- Look at the book again with your students. Discuss the way the book looks. Notice the way the words are written in different fonts, some are grouped together in different ways, and some are at different angles.
- Have students use colored pencils or markers, to write a final version of their poem using different colors and different sizes of writing for each line.
- Or, have students use computers for the final version of their poem using different types and sizes of fonts or different colors (if you have the capacity to print it in color.)

SHARING THEIR POEMS

- Break the class into small diverse groups (4-6 students each). Either you could choose who is in each group, students could count off to avoid existing friendship groupings working together.
- Sharing the poems with other students in the class will help build community in your classroom. Options for sharing include:
 - Read aloud to the whole class. After each student reads their poem, have some way for the rest of the class to give appreciation to that student.
 - Divide the class into small groups. Have each student read their poem aloud to their small group.
 - Post the poems around the walls of your classroom. Have students walk around in groups of 2-3 to read each other’s poems and discuss.
- While they are sharing their poems, ask them to look for connections with other students.

EXTENSION

- Mount on construction paper and post on wall of your classroom or in the hallway.
- Have each student take a piece of construction paper or colored paper which they can cut it into any shape. Have them write an “I am” statement on the paper stating some kind of positive attribute such as smart, loved, patient, strong, etc. Include their names on the paper. Post in the hall next to your classroom as a large collage.

ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

- Use an exit card for students to write down a new connection with a classmate that they made from reading or hearing the poems.

TEMPLATE FOR YOUR “I AM” POEM

I am

Full name

I am a

Ways that people might see you

I am from

What do you like doing? What are you good at?

I am a

Name who you are in relationship to people important to you – brother, daughter, friend...

I am from

People who are important to you, family, people who take care of you

I am from

Family traditions or customs

I am from

Favorite foods or special foods you like from home

I am from

Important things that have happened in your life

I am from

Names of books or types of books you like

I am from

Names of movies, TV shows or video games you like

I am from

Name of the place you live

I am

Full name

SAMPLE I AM POEM USING THE CREATIVE PRESENTATION ACTIVITY

I am Elena Juarez Cohen.

I am a writer, a soccer player, a student.

I am from eating ice cream with friends to baking cookies.

I am a daughter, a good friend, a cousin.

I am from my grandmother, Mema, and from Dad.

I am from matzoh ball soup at **Passover** and buñuelos at **Christmas**.

I am from chocolate chip cookies and ginger snaps.

I am from jumping into lakes and canoeing down a river.

I AM FROM THE WARRIORS CAT SERIES.

I am from *Glee* and SuperMario.

I am from West Roxbury.

I am Elena Juarez Cohen.