Poet George Ella Lyon’s poem “Where I’m From” is about her memories of her home and life growing up in the mountains of eastern Kentucky, in the United States. It appeals to all the senses (sight, smell, taste, hearing, touch) and uses specific examples to explain what her life was like (lots of people’s names, places, food to stir the imagination). Let’s take a look and listen (you may want to read this out loud):

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.

Just as George Ella Lyon wrote about her home, family, place, sensations and memories of her childhood, you can write a similar poem about yours. You could even follow her pattern. You might want to watch some of these videos to get you started.

1. You could start by watching this introductory video about the “I Am” poem (but you don’t have to):
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r-XjZlzFEsY
2. You could see how young people in Keetmanshoop, Namibia, composed their poems by telling a lot about the food and daily lives of their part of the world, and you could do the same about your part of the world:
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mOcvSahdBdw
3. You can use more than one language, like poet Juan Delgado does in this video, mixing them up artistically, as you see fit: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XFTxflbAC-E
4. Now, you can try to write your own “I Am From” poem, which will very special and unique to your own life and memories. Here is a template you can use from https://freeology.com/worksheet-creator/poetry/i-am-from-poem/

This poem template is inspired by George Ella Lyon’s “Where I’m From” poem. Just fill in the blanks!

Your School

_____________________________________________________

Your country

_____________________________________________________

Your Name

_______________________________

I am from (a specific item from your childhood home)

_____________________________________________________

from (two products or objects from your past)

_____________________________________________________

I am from (a phrase describing your childhood home)

_____________________________________________________

and (more description of your childhood home)

_____________________________________________________

I am from (a plant, tree or natural object from your past)

_____________________________________________________

whose (personify that natural object)

_____________________________________________________

I am from (two objects from your past)

_____________________________________________________

from (two family names or ancestors)

_____________________________________________________

and from (two family traits or tendencies)

_____________________________________________________

from (another family trait, habit or tendency)

_____________________________________________________

I am from (a religious memory or family tradition)

_____________________________________________________

from (two foods from your family history)

_____________________________________________________

from (a specific event in the life of an ancestor)

_____________________________________________________

and from (another detail from the life of an ancestor)

_____________________________________________________

from (a memory or object you had as a child)

_____________________________________________________

I am from the moments . . . . (continue this thought or repeat a line or idea from earlier in the poem)

_______________________________________________________________________________

And now you have your own “I Am From” poem. Read it out loud to someone or to your whole class.