Where I'm From

I am from clothespins,
From Clorox and carbon tetrachloride.
I am from the dirt under the black 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 Aretmus and Billie’s Branch,
Fried corn and strong coffee.
From the finger my grandfather lost to the auger
To 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.

George Ella Lyons
“Where I’m From” by Shequin Goring

I’m from trouble.
From the ghetto and hood
I’m from drug dealers and thugs
Who think they run the world
I’m from no rest and loud noises from gun shots or loud parties and parents arguments. I’m from the family saying, “I swear”.
I’m from God. Help me and help my seven brothers and sisters and my single parent mom I ask you to help us.
I’m from these streets of Brooklyn, N.Y. and Brevoide Projects — fried chicken and rice.
I’m from the streets my mom got shot and stabbed on and the burn and death of the five family members my lost.
I’m from the eye my mother shut when she cries.
I’m from each letter that gasps for air thinking of my mom and her hard times.

I’m from those hard and painful memories of my mom, sisters, and brothers. And no family member will fall from this tree.
Where Are You From?

"If you don't know where you're from, you'll have a hard time saying where you're going." Wendell Berry, among others, has voiced this idea that we need to understand our roots to know our place in the world. Before you investigate the events that shaped world history you have to first understand where You come from.

I'd like to suggest that you give it a try. The prompts have a way of drawing out memories of the smells of attics and bottom-drawer keepsakes; the faces of long-departed kin, the sound of their voices you still hold some deep place in memory. You'll be surprised that, when you're done, you will have said things about the sources of your unique you-ness that you'd never considered before. What's more, you will have created something of yourself to share--with your children, spouse, siblings--that will be very unique, very personal and a very special gift.

The WHERE I'M FROM Template

I am from _______ (nation, region of origin), from _______ (characteristic of the area) and _______.

I am from the _______ (home description... adjective, adjective, sensory detail).

I am from the _______ (plant, flower, natural item), the _______ (plant, flower, natural detail)

I am from _______ (family tradition) and _______ (family trait), from _______ (name of family member) and _______ (another family name) and _______ (family name).

I am from the _______ (description of family tendency) and _______ (another one).

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

I am from (representation of religion, or lack of it). Further description.

I'm from _______ (place of birth and family ancestry), _______ (two food items representing your family).

From the _______ (specific family story about a specific person and detail), the _______ (another detail, and the _______ (another detail about another family member).

I am from _______ (location of family pictures, mementos, archives and several more lines indicating their worth).