

# Lesson 1: An Invitation to Write

**Purpose of Lesson 1:** This is an invitation to write.

**Skills:** Creative thinking, critical thinking, decision making, reading comprehension, self-reflection, vocabulary and writing.

## Words to Learn:

**extended family** - relatives/close friends other than the immediate family: *Although I am an only child, my extended family is huge.*

**free write** - write without rules, without limits: *Free write and your ideas can flow better.*

**generation** - all the people living at the same time or of approximately the same age: *Many generations of Europeans came to the United States after World War I.*

**immediate family** - mother, father, brothers, sisters: *My immediate family lives in Yonkers.*

**newsletter** - report giving news of interest to a special group: *Our school sends out a monthly newsletter for parents.*

**reflect** - to think about: *My sister Marcia and I often reflect on our childhood and parents.*

**sift** - a mixture, an assortment: *A sift of delicious candies made the children happy.*

**significant** - meaningful, important: *Not all of what she said was significant.*

**version** - an interpretation, a particular point of view: *My version of the accident is different from yours.*

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**Directions:** Read the conversations below and complete the exercises that follow.



1

I just got an e-mail from my cousin, Tonya. She wants to have a family reunion.

2

That sounds like fun. What else did she say?



3

She wants to know if we are interested and if we can help her. She's planning to have it next summer.

4

Good idea. It would give the kids an opportunity to know their relatives better. How can we help?



5

She mentioned a family newsletter to get things started. Would you be interested? She wants to name it the Mack Gazette. She has a "to-do" list a mile long.

6

I think a newsletter would be a very clever way to get the family together. Our kids would love to be involved, too. Tell Tonya that we are coming and we will help.



Everyone has memories of gatherings with close friends and family. Think about your own personal recollections of times spent with significant people in your life. Below are some ideas that Tonya wants everyone to reflect upon. This information will help everyone to get to know each other better. Writing is helpful, and can be fun! You'll see.

7

Mom, look at this beautiful poem Tonya sent us. She wants us to read the poem aloud, and gave us an invitation to write our own family poem.

8

Tonya is very creative. This sounds like fun.



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9

The poem is called *where I'm from*, and is written by George Ella Lyon.

10

We can take turns reading the stanzas.



## *where I'm from* by George Ella Lyon

### (Stanza 3)

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.

### (Stanza 4)

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.



11

So the writer's parents were Artemus and Billie. They liked fried corn and strong coffee. Her grandfather lost a finger. Do you think her father had to pretend he didn't see something in order to stay alive?

12

I thought he covered his eye to save his sight. That's what poetry is, it means different things to different people. The author is explaining who she is and how she is part of all the moments that past generations have experienced.



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Continued after Lesson 1 Quiz 1

13



This poem makes me want to know more about myself and our family.

14

That's what Tonya sent the poem. Before we are done, we will have lots of memories and stories to share. That's what a family reunion is all about.



15



Let's get dad and do our own version of the poem.

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## ***where I'm from***

by Ella George Lyon

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 Joe Mack

I am from **Sinbad and Zoe's Tree**, (Joe's parents)  
**spicy grits and fresh lemonade**. (favorite  
food/drinks)  
**From the house my grandpa built** (a place or  
event of note)  
**with his own hands,**  
**the babies that died of diphtheria.** (an important  
event)

Under my **porch was a sink basin** (a place he  
remembers)  
**lodging snappers and sliders**, (describe it)

**a horseshoe, jacks and marbles** (childhood  
things)

**that were trophies of my youth.** (describe their  
importance)

**I am from those fields at sunset--**(a place/time  
he remembers)

**buried in dirt, hands and feet**—(what he did  
there)

**head first into the pond** (an activity he did)

16



This poem tells a great deal about my family's background. I hope I was able to include many interesting facts about their lives.

17

You did a fine job, Joe. I can just see you as a child playing with those turtles. Times were hard, but you enjoyed the simple things in life.



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As you can see, the stanzas of this poem get you to think about where you are from. The Macks enjoyed writing their version of the poem. I hope you were inspired to write about yourself and your family. Use their poem and your memories to guide you. **Free Write.** Write as much or as little as you want. This is about you. There are no wrong answers. Have fun!

Continued after Lesson 1 Quiz 2

18



Dad, I'm helping Mom with the "to-do" list. Tonya also sent a wonderful quote by the American painter, Georgia O'Keeffe, about first memories. I

19

What was the quote?  
I'd like to hear it.



20



My first memory is of the brightness of light... light all around. I was sitting among pillows on a quilt on the ground...Very large, white pillows.

21

The first thing I can remember is eating something that tasted terrible. It was so bad, I got sick and Nana washed me off with a hose.



22



That's interesting. Every time I hear wind chimes, it reminds me of summer and Nana Zoe.

23

Our senses of taste, smell, sight, hearing and touch can bring back memories.



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24



You're right.  
Our senses do help us  
remember.

25

Let's think of a memory  
for each of the five  
senses. Mom and Dora  
will like that.



Continued after Lesson 1 Quiz 4



Last on the “to-do” list, Joe is to free write about a special place, person or event. Dora gave him guidelines from her class.

- Make yourself comfortable.
- Use your favorite pen.
- Don't worry about punctuation, grammar or spelling.
- Do not erase or cross out what you have written.
- Write whatever comes into your mind.
- Write until you feel your creative juices have run dry.
- Take a break if you need to, but don't stay away too long.
- Nothing is a mistake. Everything you write is good.
- Write as much or as little as you want.
- Feel good about whatever you write.
- When you free write, you own what you write. It is for you and you alone.
- Just write!

## Your Turn:

Now you are invited to write about a person, place, or event that is special to you! Or, maybe there is another memory that is sparked by one of your senses that you would like to write about. Feel free to write **anything** that comes to mind.