

Finding Ourselves: Personal Artifacts of Identity *Specialty Track 1*

AUTHOR(S):	Daniel Abramson
SUMMARY:	Using poetry and art to build a vocabulary of symbols - <i>Submitted by Daniel Abramson</i>
TOPIC(S):	Visual Arts, Identity, Community Building
LEARNING OBJECTIVE:	Participants will be able to describe where they are from in a way that is meaningful and creative Participants will create a feeling of community by getting to know one another
AUDIENCE:	Ideal for a group of 15-20 campers 6th-12th grade
TIMING:	90 minutes
APPENDICES:	“Where I’m From” poem by George Ella Lyon with poem worksheet לך-לך “Lech Lecha” text Block Printing Instructional Video https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WmLd4O2ROJo
MATERIALS NEEDED:	12 Acrylic Sheets 9x12 12 Rubber Brayers 1 Tube each of Cyan, Yellow, Magenta, Black, and White Speedball block printing Inks Craft Foam Sheets 8x10 - 1 per participant 9x12 multi-media paper (2 or 3 per participant) (If your camp has the supplies to do linoleum or woodblock printing, then this is a great opportunity to use them)
SET-UP DETAILS:	Art room or other space with tables and chairs and access to toaster ovens

SESSION TIMELINE & OUTLINE:

INTRODUCING THE PARTICIPANTS - 10 Minutes

Participants introduce themselves and respond to the prompt, "Where are you from"?

The answers will likely be based on geography.

ex: I'm from Michigan.

Originally, I'm from Israel, but now I go to school in New York.

I'm from Saskatchewan, Canada.

Facilitator reads "Where I'm From"

Facilitator states that the goal of the session is for us to explore the idea and the complexity of the statement "Where I'm From"

Facilitator introduces self, but uses a more symbolic answer like:

"I'm from fields of wheat in the summer and frostbitten fingers in the winter."

"I'm from being the only one in my class to light a menorah."

Ultimately, the goal of this session is to help participants develop a more complex symbolic vocabulary to describe themselves so that by the end of the session, they can try to answer the question "Where are you from" in a more creative and descriptive way.

INTRODUCING THE TEXTS - 10 Minutes

Facilitator explains that they are going to read a poem by George Ella Lyon called "Where I'm From"

Where I'm From

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.

By George Ella Lyon

Facilitator explains that:

“In this session we will explore symbols and metaphors to meaningfully describe our experiences, but instead of doing it with language as a poem, that we are going to create symbols using the visual arts.”

“Before we brainstorm ideas for our art, we are going to look into Jewish tradition for another idea about how the places we are from, make us who we are.”

Introduce the Lech Lecha Text:

This is best done as a story rather than a handout text, but you should modify the method to suit your style.

<p>א וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-אַבְרָם, לֵךְ-לְךָ מֵאֶרֶץ וּמִמּוֹלַדְתְּךָ וּמִבְּיַת אָבִיךָ, אֶל-הָאָרֶץ, אֲשֶׁר אֶרְאֶה.</p>	<p>1 Now the LORD said unto Abram: 'Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto the land that I will show thee.</p>
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“Why does the text ask Abram to leave the country, then his city, then his home? Wouldn't he necessarily have to leave his city and house if he left his country?”

“Maybe the text is suggesting to us that we get different parts of our identity from different places. We have national, communal, and personal identities.”

BRAINSTORMING SYMBOLS -5 Minutes

Participants can use either the circles of identity worksheet to brainstorm ideas about what makes them who they are, and/or they can use the “Where I’m From” worksheet to brainstorm using the poem as a model. Participants can spend some time creating their own poems if time permits, but the idea here is to generate a list from which participants will be able to choose an object to draw or sculpt.

LEARNING HOW TO USE PRINTMAKING MATERIALS

**This program can be done with other materials. Some suggestions are included at the end. You should choose a medium that fits in your camp’s budget, and that is also age appropriate, challenging, and interesting for participants.

1. Participants draw their symbols onto craft foam with ballpoint pens. The pens will indent the foam.
2. Cut out the foam shapes. They will be used as stamps on the final prints.
3. If you want a colored background, use a brayer to spread the ink evenly onto an acrylic sheet, then use the inked brayer to apply the ink to your paper.
4. Use a brayer to spread ink on an acrylic sheet, and then use the inked brayer to roll the ink onto the side of the foam that you want to print.
5. Place the foam stamp (ink side down) onto the paper and press firmly.
6. Lift the stamp carefully to reveal your printed image.

CREATING THE SYMBOLS - 30 Minutes

Participants are encouraged to spend a while playing with materials to discover different ways to make prints. Then participants can be creative and make an image including one or more of the objects that they brainstormed that tell the story of who they are. Participants can imagine that these images are visual representations of the "Where I'm From" poem.

BUILDING A COMMUNITY OF ARTISTS- 15 Minutes

Once the objects have been made, each artist will have an opportunity to share their creations by showing their print and responding to the same prompt that began the program. "Where are you from"?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS - 10 Minutes

In what way was the concluding round of "Where are you from" more meaningful after thinking about and creating an object to symbolize where you are from?

Why is it important to create a way for campers to talk about their own experiences at camp?

What parts of this project might you use?

What other texts or materials might be used to accomplish the same goal?

ADDITIONAL NOTES FOR BRINGING IT BACK TO CAMP:

You can use almost any good quality art material to facilitate this program. Small objects like charms or necklaces are nice because campers can wear them around camp. For groups that are very "Art Shy" playdoh can be a nice medium because it is fun and evens "the playing field" of artistic skill.

OPTION 1 - POLYMER CLAY

Using FIMO, Sculpey, or another brand of oven-bake polymer clay, participants will create small sculptures of one or more objects from their brainstormed objects lists. Once the objects are created, they are put in the toaster oven to harden (about 15 minutes at 275)

Follow this link for a video tutorial on how to make small polymer clay objects
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=or_Ann8nVjl

OPTION 2 - SHRINK ART PAPER

Participants can also draw the images or words onto shrink art paper. The paper can be hole punched and shrunk in the toaster oven (30 seconds at 350), and then strung onto string like a charm bracelet.

Follow this link for a video tutorial on how to make small shrink art charms
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tH5P3J1RzEU>

For campers who have been at camp for longer, you could consider getting them to think symbolically about where AT CAMP they are from!

ex: I'm from many hours in the lake learning to float, then learning to swim.

I'm from the canoe trip where my aching feet taught me how to persist.

I'm from the very top of the ropes course: scared, excited, and breathless...waiting."