



# Literacy Connects

A Content Literacy Newsletter from Regional  
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## NCTE National Day on Writing Celebrating Who We Are!

When writing is celebrated and shared with others, it becomes a powerful and authentic way to create community in your classroom. *The National Council of Teachers of English* (NCTE) has established October 20, 2009, as the **National Day on Writing**. To celebrate the importance of this event and to showcase writing from across this nation, NCTE has created an online *National Gallery of Writing*. On October 20<sup>th</sup>, the Gallery will open its virtual doors and share all submissions. Writers in Las Vegas can participate in this event by submitting their writing to our own Las Vegas Gallery—“*What Happens in Vegas*.” You can access our online LV Gallery by going to <http://galleryofwriting.org>; there you can browse the National Gallery using the keyword “Vegas.” Although all types of writing are welcome on *The Gallery of Writing*, following is a writing activity that invites students to share their families, homes, and neighborhoods with each other and with the rest of the nation.

### ***Where I’m From: Inviting Students’ Lives into the Classroom*** (adapted from Reading, Writing, and Rising Up by Linda Christensen)

1. Have students read “Where I’m From” by George Ella Lyon (***a copy of the poem and student samples are posted in the “Additional Resources” file of your Literacy Connects Interact Icon and on RPDP.net, ELA, Literacy Connects Resources.***)
2. Discuss the poem, asking students to notice the details the poet uses to bring alive her home, family and memories. For additional support, students can read the student samples and discuss what the details say about each writer.
3. Ask students to create lists that match the ones from the poems they read:
  - a. Items found around their home: bobby pins or stacks of newspapers, grandma’s teeth, discount coupons
  - b. Items found in their yard: broken rakes, dog bones, hoses coiled like green snakes
  - c. Items found in their neighborhood: the corner grocery, old cars, parks, an old plum tree
  - d. Names of friends and family: especially ones that link them to their past
  - e. Sayings they grew up with: “If I told you once...”
  - f. Names of foods and dishes that recall family gatherings or favorite family recipes
  - g. Names of places, streets, animals, favorite songs, stories, anything specific that says something about who they are
4. Ask students to share their lists with their classmates and encourage them to make their piece “sound like home” using the language they hear at home. When students use vague nouns like “shoes” or “books,” ask them to be more specific, “worn, pink satin ballet slippers” or “a tattered copy of *Cat in the Hat*.”
5. Once students have their lists of specific words, phrases, and names, ask them to write a poem. Encourage them to find a link or phrase like “I am from” to weave the poem together, and to end with a line or two that ties their present to their past. Use the Lyon poem and student samples as examples/models.
6. Before having students type and submit their poems to the writing gallery, encourage them to work in response groups to share, revise and edit their work.

**Extension:** Once the poems are completed, have students share aloud a single “golden line” from their piece. Using each of these favorite “one-liners,” create a class poem that celebrates the diversity of our community, as well as the commonalities that unite us all.

Visit the RPDP website ([www.rpdp.net](http://www.rpdp.net)) for a complete selection of *Literacy Connects*.