

*I remember... When we lived at... In the summertime...
... In fourth grade... Every night... I dreamed that...*

M I N I - L E S S O N

Who am I? What has made me who I am?

*There was a child went forth every day,
And the first object he looked upon and received with
wonder or pity or love or dread, that object he became,
And that object became part of him for the day or a certain
part of the day . . . or for many years or stretching
cycles of years.*

*The early lilacs became part of this child,
And grass, and white and red morning-glories, and white and
red clover, and the song of the phoebe-bird,
And the March-born lambs, and the sow's pink-faint litter,
and the mare's foal, and the cow's calf, and the noisy
brood of the barnyard or by the mire of the pond-side
. . . and the fish suspending themselves so curiously
below there . . . and the beautiful curious liquid . . . and
the water-plants with their graceful flat heads . . . all
became part of him.*

from "There Was A Child Went Forth,"
by Walt Whitman

Everything we have seen and touched and heard and experienced has, in some way, made us who we are. Whitman considers all the many things in just one day that will touch on the life of a child. From here he goes on to think about the child's teachers and classmates, the people he passes on his way to school, his parents, the streets he walks, and finally the changing light of sunset, and a solitary bird flying across the sky.

Who am I? Activity

You may want to share the whole poem with your class or just the excerpt above. Either way it serves as an invitation to your students to think about all the many things that have (either obviously or subtly) affected them in their own lives.

Using the activity worksheet sheet provided, have students begin to make their own lists of influences that they can write about later. Of course, there



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is room on the sheet for students to create their own categories, and they may want to share these with each other.

After creating their lists, have the students choose just one of the items to write about in their notebooks. At various times throughout the genre study, students may want to return to these lists, either to add to them or to use them for inspiration in their writing.

Themes and Variations

A list could also be created simply by noting all the details of a single day, as does Whitman in his poem. Have students carry their notebooks with them, jotting down all that crosses their path from morning to night. What do they notice? What's important to them?

WORKSHEET

Who am I? What has made me who I am?

People		Teachers	Other
Relatives	Friends	Ms. Clark	
Mom Dad Pop & Mom Ralph	Cal Nash		

Places		Vacations	Travel Routes
Homes	Special Places	The Beach	
Our home now - the only place I've ever lived.	The Park		

Nature		Water	Other
Trees and Plants	Weather	I like any kind of water because I love to swim	
I have a favorite tree in the park. Everyone likes to climb it.	I hate thunderstorms. I love snow		

Stories		Movies	Family Stories
Books	Television	Star Wars	
Harry Potter! Star Wars books	The Simpsons		

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WORKSHEET

Who am I? What has made me who I am?

Animals		Wild Animals	Insects	Other
Pets			I hate bugs - especially spiders	
Sasha - our dog My lizard				

Sensations		Smells	Music	Other
Food		Cinnamon apple pie	I like Will Smith a lot!	
apples ice cream chocolate				

Diversions		Sports	Dreams	Daydreams
Games		Baseball Soccer Swimming	Design a video game	
Zelda				

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Daydreams