

"Where I'm From"

Many Perspectives or Just One?

Identifying Perspectives from a Turkish Cypriot, a Greek Cypriot, 2Pac, George Lyons,
and You- The Student!

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Overview:

Cyprus is a very attractive place. However, it is full of conflict and of people who are in search of their identity. The people of this nation are considered Cypriots, but *not just* Cypriots. They usually refer to themselves as Turkish-Cypriots or Greek-Cypriots. It is hard to find a person who would only use the word Cypriot to describe their identity.

Purpose:

This lesson is designed for students to analyze poetry of both Greek and Turkish Cypriots. It is designed to fit within your existing junior high or high school poetry unit. Examples of a Greek-Cypriot Poem and a Turkish-Cypriot poem, obtained from the author's Fulbright visit to Cyprus is provided so students can analyze the text and explain their understanding of the multiple perspectives being described in the poetry. Students will write a poem about their identity and explain and describe who they are. George Lyons poem "Who Am I" can be used as a writing example for students to read and reference. The theme of the lesson is more or less that we all come from somewhere and that we all have obstacles to overcome. To extend the lesson students can then analyze Tupac Shakur's (2Pac) lyrics, "Me Against the World." It is a poem about the fight for survival – like the many perspectives portrayed by Cypriot poets. Students will most likely not have any prior knowledge on the Cyprus Conflict but can identify the theme of conflict through their readings and interpretations of the poems.

Grade Level:

7-9, adaptable

Time:

Two or three class periods, depending on time constraints

Materials:

Turkish-Cypriot Poem "Wartime" by Mehmet Yasin

"Wartime" Discussion Questions

Greek-Cypriot Poem "The Way I Feel" by Myrto Meletiou

"The Way I Feel" Discussion Questions

African American Hip Hop Artist Lyrics "Me Against the World" by Tupac Shakur

"Me Against the World" Discussion Questions

George Ella Lyon's Poem, "Where I'm From"

"Where I'm From" Think Sheet Handout

Daily Appointment Calendar Handout

Daily Appointment Calendar Teacher Questions

Sample Student Poetry from Vicktor Russell and Angelique Martinez

Notes:

*Teachers should make copies of all of the above handouts to show on their overhead during the guided practice phase of the learning cycle. If you have a smartboard or overhead projector feel free to display Microsoft word materials via that mode of instruction. Teacher Answer Keys are the last documents located within the last pages of this document.

*There are many opportunities for students to submit their own poetry in writing contests. Try using the following list of resources for students to submit their work for publication:

<http://www.winningwriters.com/index.php>

<http://www.poeticpower.com/>

<http://www.potatohill.com/contest.html>

<http://www.madpoetry.org/contests/contests.html>

Objectives:

The student will be able to:

- determine the poet's main idea(s)
- discuss the similarities and differences between the Greek-Cypriot poem and the Turkish-Cypriot poem
- distinguish differences and similarities in the poetry through discussion and by creating a list, using the daily appointment calendar strategy
- list and discuss the various points of view communicated in the poetry
- create and develop their own "Who Am I" poem describing their identity with personal meaning using introspective reflection

Standards:

Arizona State Language Arts-**Writing** Standards

S1: C1: PO4 Establish a central idea appropriate to the type of writing

S1: C1: PO5 Use organizational strategies (outlines, charts, webs, story may) to plan writing

Arizona State Language Arts-**Reading** Standards

S2: C1: PO2 Compare and contrast themes across works of prose, **poetry**, and drama

S2: C1: PO4 Contrast points of view in literary text

Assessment:

The teacher can evaluate the student's mastery of content by grading poems based on Arizona's Six Traits Writing Rubric and by observation in the discussion of the poetry. The teacher can also review student handouts.

Procedures:

Session 1

- 1) Students read "Wartime" together. The poem probably needs be reread several times. Students review questions and then reread each line of the poem, analyzing the poet's ideas.
- 2) Students answer questions 1-4 from discussion questions. Students should work with a partner in class in order to discuss and answer the questions. Students should record their responses on the handout. At this point, the teacher is not really providing direct instruction, rather guiding students through the individual lines of the poem.
- 3) Students then read "The Way I Feel" together. The poem probably needs be reread several times. Students review questions and then reread each line of the poem, analyzing the poet's ideas.
- 4) Students answer questions 1-4 from discussion questions. Students should work with a partner in class in order to discuss and answer the questions. Students should record their responses on the handout. At this point, the teacher is not really providing direct instruction, rather guiding students through the individual lines of the poem.

Session 2

The teacher reviews the previous session information and allows students to discuss the two poems using the differentiated instruction strategy- Daily Appointment Calendar. "The appointment calendar is a great way to pair off students for any activity or discussion. Step By Step: 1) Make one copy of the Daily Appointment Calendar for each student in your class. 2) Give each student a copy. 3) Have students stand up, take their appointment calendars, and find other students with whom to make appointments. Explain that each time a child makes an appointment; he/she should enter the appropriate name in his appointment book next to the agreed-upon time. The calendars must agree. If Jose is Karla's 10:00 appointment, then Karla must be Jose's 10:00 appointment. 4) Students are responsible for keeping up with their daily calendars once the calendars are filled in. 5) You now have a way to pair students. This comes in handy when you want kids from different groups to be moving and interacting with each other (Hollas, p. 8-9)." For example, you might say, "Each of you get your appointment calendar and meet with your 8:00 appointment. The two of you should discuss how Mehmet Yasin felt in the first two lines of his poem and write down your response on the line next to the 8:00 time slot." Or you might say, "Please meet with your 1:00 appointment and discuss why 2Pac says in line 8 of his poem you should 'Be grateful for your blessings.'" 6) The appointment calendar is a way of identifying who's paired with whom and gets a pair of students to discuss the content. 7) Ask each student to meet with their 10 partners and provide the questions in between each appointment so that students have a question to answer and discuss. You can use the questions provided in this lesson

or make up your own. 8) "This strategy is great for those bodily/kinesthetic learners, and that's a help for them and you (Hollas, p. 9)." It is also a fantastic Structured English Immersion, SEI strategy, since it gets students talking and discussing the content.

If you do not want to do the optional enrichment skip to step #7.

- 5) * Optional Enrichment- Students read 2Pac's "Me Against the World" together. The poem probably needs be reread several times. Students review questions and then reread each line of the poem, analyzing the poet's ideas. Students answer questions 1-5 from discussion questions. Students should work with a partner in class in order to discuss and answer the questions. Students should record their responses on the handout. At this point, the teacher is not really providing direct instruction, rather guiding students through the individual lines of the poem.
- 6) Students then read "Where I'm From" together. The poem probably needs be reread several times. Students review questions and then reread each line of the poem, analyzing the poet's ideas.
- 7) Students brainstorm their own ideas and experiences using the "Where I'm From" Think Sheet Handout. Students should work independently in class in order to think about their own lives and experiences. Students should record their ideas on the handout. At this point, the teacher is not really providing direct instruction, rather guiding students through the thinking about their own lives and prompting students to record their own experiences.
- 8) The teacher can show Vicktor Russell's or Angelique Martinez's student work as an example. These samples can be put on overheads and displayed for the entire class or they can be printed and passed around. The teacher uses these samples to model what the end version of the poem could look like.

Session 3

- 9) The student creates their own "Where I'm From" poem, approximately 18-28 lines long, using a free verse format for creating the poetry.
- 10) Students should create a final draft (in ink or typed) that can be read aloud and published. Minimally, the teacher should create some sort of wall of poetry, where student work can be displayed. Submitting the work in a poetry or writing contest should also be emphasized and encouraged.

Turkish-Cypriot Poem:

Wartime
Mehmet Yasin

I used to talk within myself so that no one could hear me,
and they all suspected wisdom in my silence!
Turkish was dangerous, must not be spoken,
and Greek was absolutely forbidden...
My elders who wanted to save me, were waiting,
Each one trigger-ready before a machine-gun.
Anyway, everyone was then a willing soldier.
English remained right in the middle,
a slender paper-knife for cutting schoolbooks,
a tongue to be spoken at certain times
especially with the Greeks!
I was often unsure in which language to shed tears,
the life I lived wasn't foreign, but one of translation -
my mother-tongue one thing, my motherland another,
and I, again, altogether different...
Even in those days of blackouts it became obvious
I could never be the poet of any county,
because I belonged to a minority. And 'Freedom' is still
a little word uneasy in any nation's lexicon...
then in my poems, the three languages got into a wild tangle:
Neither the Turks nor the Greeks
could hear my inner voice, nor the Others...
But I don't blame them, it was wartime.

Name: _____

Date: _____

“Wartime” Student Worksheet

By: Mehmet Yasin

Meaning: What is the poem about?

1. What is the essential, overall “meaning” of Yasin’s poem?

2. Explain why the elders were “trigger ready”- line 6?

3. The poet’s circumstances are so dire. Why does the poet consider himself “altogether different?” -Line 15.

4. Explain the ending of the poem. Who can hear Yasin’s voice if neither the Turks no the Greeks are listening? –Lines 21-23.

Greek-Cypriot Poem:

The Way I Feel
Myrto Meletiou

Written about a mother whose son was first missing and later confirmed killed during the 1974 invasion of Cyprus.

To fly away from this never-ending
madness
won't stop the dreams from bleeding.
nor will it mend the shards of this glad-made mask
You – so silently –
placed upon me.

And people pass me by, not knowing how, or when, or why.
I am just an invisible cry, with no home...no place to hide.

Chorus:

For you are nowhere to be found
You are lost within the clouds
And though I scream your name aloud
The Gods keep you from finding out
The way I feel...

To fly away from the smiley faces that
hide behind the stones
won't set the anger free
or give voice to my mute laughter.

And people pass me by, not knowing how, or when, or why.
I am just an invisible cry, with no home...no place to hide.

Chorus:

For you are nowhere to be found
You are lost within the clouds
And though I scream your name aloud
The Gods keep you from finding out
The way I feel...

My broken hopes add to the dust that so
vigorously landed on your desk
demanding to be redeemed; yet,
salvation is put on hold

Chorus:

For you are nowhere to be found
You are lost within the clouds
And though I scream your name aloud
The Gods keep you from finding out
The way I feel...now you are gone...away from home.
The way I feel...Alone...

Name: _____

Date: _____

“The Way I Feel” Student Worksheet

By: Myrto Meletiou

Meaning: What is the poem about?

1. What is the essential, overall “meaning” of Meletiou’s poem?

2. Who is Meletiou referring to when he states “You” in lines 5-6?

3. The poet’s circumstances are so dire. Why does the poet’s “salvation” put on hold?
-Line 28.

4. Explain the ending of the poem. Why does the poet feel alone?—Lines 33-34.

Where I'm From

By George Ella Lyons

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.

Name: _____

Date: _____

"Where I'm From" Think Sheet

Directions: Draw a few branches or arrows from each bold word and then think of words that fit in that category. Remember, this poem is all about **YOU**. Try to be as specific as possible.

Objects

play

Images

shapes

Central events

church experiences

Tastes

voices

Other people's words

town or street names

Stories

hiding places

Smells

what grew in your yard

Relatives' names

parents work

school

other/miscellaneous

"Me Against the World"

By Tupac Shakur (2Pac)

With all this extra stressin'

The question I wonder is, after death, after my last breath

When will I finally get to rest? Through this suppression

They punish the people that's askin' questions

And those that possess, steal from the ones without possessions

The message I stress: to make it stop study your lessons

Don't settle for less - even the genius asks questions

Be grateful for your blessings

Don't ever change, keep your essence

The power is in the people and politics we address

Always do your best, don't let the pressure make you panic

And when you get stranded

And things don't go the way you planned it

Dreamin' of riches, in a position of makin' a difference

Politicians and hypocrites, they don't wanna listen

If I'm insane, it's the fame made a brother change

It wasn't nothing like the game

It's just me against the world

“Me Against the World” Student Worksheet
(Cirelli and Sitomer, 2004)

Meaning: What is the poem about?

1. What is the essential, overall “meaning” of Tupac’s lyrics?

2. Explain the forces that create a “Me Against the World” situation in the poem?

3. How does Tupac suggest we overcome oppression?

4. If the poet’s circumstances are so dire and life has so much injustice, explain why the poet would tell the reader to “Be grateful for your blessings” – Line 8?

5. Explain the meaning of why the poet insists the listener should not “ever change/keep your essence” – Line 9.



Name: _____

Block # _____

Date: _____

Daily Appointment Calendar Strategy

<u>Time:</u>	<u>Student's Name:</u>	<u>Answer to question:</u>
8:00	_____	_____ _____
9:00	_____	_____ _____
10:00	_____	_____ _____
11:00	_____	_____ _____
12:00	_____	_____ _____
1:00	_____	_____ _____
2:00	_____	_____ _____
3:00	_____	_____ _____
4:00	_____	_____ _____
5:00	_____	_____ _____

Teacher Answer Keys/ Student Work Samples:

“Me Against the World” Teacher Answer Key

(Cirelli and Sitomer, 2004)

Meaning: What is the poem about?

1. What is the essential, overall “meaning” of Tupac’s lyrics?

In a very straightforward manner, the poet’s meaning is explained in the title. (It is him against the world.) On a wider basis, the poet is speaking metaphorically to people who share the same plight in life that he poet does (i.e., socioeconomically disadvantaged minorities in the U.S.). As a result it is “them” against the world as well.

2. Explain the forces that create a “Me Against the World” situation in the poem?

Injustice has created a “Me Against the World” mentality in the poem. The poet addresses sources of injustice in our society by pointing out that it is often the people who are “askin’ questions” that are punished (Lines 4 & 5).

3. How does Tupac suggest we overcome oppression?

In Lines 6 & 7, Tupac stresses the importance of understanding history (“Study your lessons”) and asking questions (“even the genius asks questions”). Basically, the poet shows how knowledge is the tool by which oppression is overcome. In Line 10, Tupac further highlights ways of addressing power and politics through getting people to recognize that power lies in their hands.

4. If the poet’s circumstances are so dire and life has so much injustice, explain why the poet would tell the reader to “Be grateful for your blessings” – Line 8?

The poet readily admits he has had a hard life (it is a common theme in Tupac’s work- see *Dear Mama*), but he stresses the value in adversity because it makes one stronger. By being grateful, one removes themselves from the destructive forces of self-pity so they can find a positive way to change their circumstances. The poet is not just pointing out the negatives of injustice in this work, but giving positive insights as to ways to overcome them in life.

5. Explain the meaning of why the poet insists the listener should not “ever change/keep your essence” – Line 9.

Tupac Shakur strived to stay true to his ideals throughout his life and a common theme in his music (and this poem) is that people should stay true to their hearts, their cultures and their politics. Essentially, this poem is cautiously warning against all the different forces that someone who tries to stay true to their beliefs is going to run up against (i.e., riches, hypocrites, politicians, power, etc. ...). Yet Tupac, as the voice of experience, implores the reader to hold true to their core values.

“Wartime” Student Worksheet- TEACHER ANSWER KEY

By: Mehmet Yasin

MEHMET YASIN is one of the finest contemporary poets in the Turkish Language. He was born in 1958 in Neapolis, the last cosmopolitan neighborhood of Nicosia, Cyprus. He has studied politics, history and literature in Istanbul, Ankara, Athens, Birmingham, and London. With his own poetic understanding and style, his poetry has been well known in Cyprus as well as in Turkey since 1985, when his first volume of poetry won the Turkish Academy Prize for Poetry (Costello, p. 48).

Meaning: What is the poem about?

*There are many interpretations of this poem. Please feel free to accept many answers as many are appropriate and would apply. The following are some sample interpretations that would be acceptable.

1. What is the essential, overall “meaning” of Yasin’s poem?

In a very straightforward manner, the poet’s meaning is explained in the title. (It is Wartime in Cyprus.) On a wider basis, the poet is speaking to people, explaining he can’t be who he is and he is in search of his identity, he is different- he is neither Turkish, Turkish-Cypriot, Greek-Cypriot nor Greek even though technically he is a Turkish Cypriot.

2. Explain why the elders were “trigger ready”- line 6?

The elders are trigger ready because they had to fight when they were younger and they never got out of the habit of fighting. They still believe it is wartime so they still have their weapons and guns ready to use.

3. The poet’s circumstances are so dire. Why does the poet consider himself “altogether different?” -Line 15.

The poet considers himself different because he doesn’t know where he truly belongs or exactly what his nationality is so he simply states that he is “different.”

4. Explain the ending of the poem. Who can hear Yasin’s voice if neither the Turks nor the Greeks are listening? –Lines 21-23.

If neither the Greeks nor the Turks are listening maybe the English are listening? Probably nobody is listening and that is so sad. However, it is hard for others to listen when there is a constant state of violence and war going on.

“The Way I Feel” Student Worksheet- TEACHER ANSWER KEY

By: Myrto Meletiou

MYRTO MELETIOU grew up in Nicosia where she attended Cyprus College. She is a dancer, singer, songwriter, poet, fiction writer, and future psychologist. “The Way I Feel” was written in 2004 and has appeared as both a poem and a song. The song version appears here (Costello, p. 73).

Meaning: What is the poem about?

*There are many interpretations of this poem. Please feel free to accept many answers as many are appropriate and would apply. The following are some sample interpretations that would be acceptable.

1. What is the essential, overall “meaning” of Meletiou’s poem?

In a very straightforward manner, the poet’s meaning is explained in the title. (It is the way the poet feels.) On a wider basis, the poet is speaking to others, explaining her feelings.

2. Who is Meletiou referring to when he states “You” in lines 5-6?

Meletiou is most likely speaking to the Turkish-Cypriots who she may be blaming for the sad way she feels about losing her son in the 1974.

3. The poet’s circumstances are so dire. Why does the poet’s “salvation” put on hold?

-Line 28.

Salvation has been put on hold because problems still exist in Cyprus.

4. Explain the ending of the poem. Why does the poet feel alone?—Lines 33-34.

The poet most likely feels alone because she has lost her son and he will not be coming back since he is dead.

**SAMPLE TEACHER QUESTIONS FOR DAILY APPOINTMENT
CALENDAR STRATEGY:**

1. Why did Mehmet Yasin title his poem, "Wartime"?
2. How does Myrto Meletiou feel?
3. What is George Ella Lyons' poem about?
4. Why does Yasin say there is "no place to hide" in line 19?
5. Who did Myrto Meletiou lose in the 1974 conflict between the Cypriots?
6. What is salvation?
7. Is Yasin hopeful about the future?
8. How are Yasin and Meletiou's poems similar?
9. Is Meletiou pessimistic about the future?
10. How are Yasin and Meletiou's poems different?

Student Work/Poem Sample #1

Where I'm From
By: Vicktor Russell

I am from the country
I am from dirt and plants
I am from army men
(Small, green little toys I play with)
I am from the rock and grass the honey that is oh so sweet in my mouth

I am from chocolate and toe head hair
From Kevin and mom
I am from the play ground and the nice
From psycho and weird
I am from you eat faster and more than a garbage disposal!
And I'm still hungry

I am from the ocean and the library
Pizza and root beer
From the war my grandpa was in to the firing of my dad's job

A closet filled with candy and wrappers
A bunch of smells, textures and tastes
I am from these moments-still with me today-
A branch that helps hold the family and these moments.

Student Work/Poem Sample #2

Where I'm From

By: Angelique Martinez

I'm from Here and There.
From tortillas and tacos.
From an apartment to a home.
(Making new friends along the way)
I am from Arizona cactus,
Whose long arms would try to reach over and squeeze me.

I'm from cheesecake and watermelon.
Dr. Pepper and sunflower seeds.
From overachievers and smarty-pants.
From your going to college.
(I have to get past the 8th grade first.)

From my mom and dad.
From Kool-aid and pistachios.
From young love,
To young mistakes.

Looking at a box with old family love letters.
Each one with different dates.
I am from here on out, a new leaf on an old family tree.

Bibliography/Resources:

Cirelli, Michael and Alan Sitomer. *Hip-Hop Poetry and the Classics for the Classroom*. Beverly Hills: Milk Mug Publishing, 2004.

Costello, Karin B. *Cypriot Identities: Conversations on Paper*. Cyprus: Intercollege Press, 2005.

Hollas, Betty. *Differentiating Instruction in a Whole-Group Setting*. Peterborough: Crystal Springs Books, 2005.

Mediterranean Sea

