



I Define Myself

An Arts Greenhouse Anthology

Fall 2019

Schiller Academy

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Introduction

In the fall of 2019, I met with two groups of creative writers at Schiller STEAM Academy for several weeks, for an introduction to poetry. Both groups spent time trying to answer the question What is a poem? We read definitions from various writers and thinkers and then the students created their own, which you'll find here in their anthology. After collaborating, the students set out to write their own pieces.

The first group of writers thought about the ways they are experts. Inspired by "How to Ride the Chicago Transit After Dark" by Nate Marshall, "When the Burning Begins" by Patricia Smith, and "How to Triumph Like a Girl" by Ada Limón, students wrote their own "How To" poems, describing the things they know best.

The second group of writers thought about the elements of storytelling—setting, character, and tension—to create short poems. Hometown poet Cameron Barnett gave us so many great images in "Solemn Pittsburgh Aubade." After reading this poem and Bob Hicok's "A Primer," we wrote our own "I'm From" poems, describing the environments that have shaped our lives. We read Eloise Greenfield and Raymond Carver to help us write portraits of people we know and love. And finally, we read Rita Dove's "Primer" and listened to "The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill" to get us ready to write about big moments of change or decision.

Poetry is not everyone's first choice, especially in middle school! But the students participated, listened, and wrote their own interesting poems, collected here. I hope you'll enjoy reading them as I have. Each student has a story to tell, images to share, and their own idea of what it means to write a poem.

Julie Albright

I had the honor of teaching some sessions of the Fall 2019 Creative Writing program. Connecting with the themes of poetry and music, I introduced students to a few writing schemes and exercises, challenging them to use images and music to connect with the words and world around them. What emerged from these few sessions were a handful of poems and raps, ranging from the strict form of haiku to the free-flowing

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stream of consciousness-in-verse. While some students submitted only a few works and others requested some poems not be printed, it was wonderful to watch the development of their storytelling capabilities through the structure of poetry. And, it was apparent that each submission came with its own unique voice, personality, and point of view.

I want to give a special thank you to the Schiller Spring 2020 class that provided the artwork for this volume. Using their own writings as inspiration, they helped provide a title for this volume: I Define Myself.

Shun-Sho Carmack

Collective Poems

Group 1

Mohamed Abubaker
Loren Clemm
Eric Harper
Daniel Killmeyer
Lena Parker
Malachi Polite
Macklin Ryan
Ja'Mere Wade
Antonio Williams III

Group 2

Aiyanna Adzogba
Zoey Christopher
Reona Cutler
Aniyah Everett
Brady Dugan
Zechariah Hines
Anthony Jetter
Ahlaya Malloy Rivers
Noah McMurtry
Naijah Stevenson
Chaniya Walker
Saniyah Whitley
Brian Wiggins

Poems of Opportunity

Poetry is a crime that cannot be committed
Poetry is a bomb ready to explode
Poetry is emotion using words
Poetry is very warm and makes you sleepy
Poetry is like an oven with cookies in it
Poetry is like Coke and Mentos going to bust
Poems are like video games
Poetry is like water it can flow it can crash
Poetry is like a volcanic eruption
Poetry is a song with rhythm or with beats
Poetry is like seeing a snowstorm in the summer
Poetry is love at first sight
Poetry is like sipping a milkshake in a snowstorm

—a collaborative poem by the Schiller creative writers (group 1)

What a Poem Is

Poems are in every sentence of speech.

Poetry is describing events in life.

A poem is baking soda and vinegar bout to explode

A poem is the beginning of my day going bad.

Poems are like eating cake: I don't like it

When I read poetry I feel like I'm in cold water in the middle of summer

Poetry is like a rocket ready to take off

Volcanoes are our heart and soul, when the lava is the poetry

A poem is an intense way of expressing feelings

A poem is happiness, violence, and anger

Poetry is a paper with words on it

Poetry is an egg ready to crack

—a collaborative poem by the Schiller creative writers (group 2)

Untitled (A Flooretry Exercise)

A

Noise

In

The

Dark

It

Echoes

Throughout

The night.

--- a collaborative poem by some of the Schiller creative writers (group 2)

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A Poem Is...

A poem is a hug from a stranger.

Poetry invalues effort.

Poetry is like math: it's hard.

Poetry makes me feel motivated.

A poem is like butter.

A poem makes me feel warmth. <3

A poem makes me feel understood deep down.

Poetry makes me feel like icy cool!

Poetry makes me confused like the blues.

A Poem is like ice cream on a hot summer day.

A poem makes me feel like my friend on Fortnite... bored.

A poem is like ice cracking on my head.

Poems melt my heart and warm me up.

Poems are like video games, they bring me joy.

Poetry is the air to my lungs, the socks to my feet

-- a collaborative poem written by students and guardians at Schiller Family Night

Individual Poems

How to be a Good Soccer Player

Mohamed Abubaker

Be skinny like a twig.
Be smart about the game like Albert Einstein.
Train yourself like a personal trainer.
Watch videos and watch players like a scout.

My Family

Aiyanna Adzogba

When my sister dances she makes
the whole house shake. My sister is light skinned
she's tall and skinny. My sister is in 10th
grade. She only gets As and Bs. She does
cross country and cheerleading. But I have
more than one sister. I have another
sister named Aaliyah. She's younger
than me. She is eleven. She is
in fifth grade. She is also tall and skinny.
But if I were starting from the
beginning the first one
of my siblings is Thaddeus.
He's 23, he has two kids.
He did football then
basketball then swimming.
After swimming he did
wrestling. Then my sister
Shawneada, she is 21
with no kids. Then
came Layla. She is

fifteen. Then came
Shea Shea, that's her
nickname. She is 13
years old. Then me
I'm Aiyanna. I'm 12
years old. I swim
and I'm really
good at it. I'm
sassy, funny, and
mean sometimes.
Then came Aaliyah.
And then my little
brother Tj he's
5 years old and he
likes to play with
his toy cars. And
that's my big happy
family.
The end.

The Shoot Up

Aiyanna Adzogba

Why did they shoot up?
The house? Maybe drugs? Money?
I just want to know.

Comforting Sun

Zoey Christopher

Rosy pink petals,
frail,
and cold from the rain
alone,
drifting off into the horizon
the sun's hot rays
beaming down onto his skin
drying him
allowing him to receive comfort
relieving the tension in his petals
Once again the rose can rest
thanks to the comforting sun

Not a Ciginal (A.K.A. Not a Thief)

Zoey Christopher

We're sending out a tank,
Your memes are too dank.

All day I stay inside
And make all of my memes with pride.

You cannot steal memes
And you cannot steal themes.

Unlike pewds, my content is original
I am not a ciginal!

Steps for Art

Loren Clemm

Getting in a comfortable spot feels like you're in another world.
Thinking about what you're gonna draw is like a million dollar question.
Getting all your stuff together you have to have it organized.
Getting to work feels like you're escaping reality.

Where I'm From

Reona Cutler

I am from Ramen noodles.
I am from the dark red apartment on the very top floor.
I am from the tall trees.
I am from opening one present on Christmas Eve.
I am from really nice hair
I am from Sharon and Brenda.
I am from fighting my cousins.
I am from always being told never talk to strangers.
I am from going to church every Sunday.
I am from pizza and wings.
I am from kindergarten pictures on the fridge.

Supposedly Drowning in Two Feet

Reona Cutler

The summer time of 2019
Me and my friend Aniyah were at the
pool. As we got in the pool and she decided to jump
in. We were literally in two feet and she thought she
was drowning. Then she decided to scream "REAONA!"
"REONA!" so everyone started staring at us
like we were crazy

Mmmmmmm....

Brady Dugan

I am from chicken, from Lego and Charlie
From infinite stairs
From dove calls in the backyard
Playing clue every Christmas
and screaming our lungs out
From Regina, Steve, and Joe
or arguing over stupid stuff
Mixed religion or lack thereof
and a stash of pictures
in every drawer

Charlie

Brady Dugan

With her eyes locked on
the feast before her
her messy black hair,
her arms extended forward
she bit straight down
as everyone laughed.
She wasn't supposed to,
but she couldn't help it
as she chowed down again
leaving no one with a frown
and then,
someone placed her on the
ground & lightly sighed

when she remembered she
was a dog
the whole time...

Bury It (Or planting a flower and framing it as a murder)

Brady Dugan

I had my fun
The deed is done.

Neither of us can get hurt
As long as it is in the dirt.

No one knows
About its woes.

Wide Wings, Sharp Talons

Brady Dugan

Horns glowing purple,
The pit fiend prepares attack
Wide wings, sharp talons.

My Childhood

Aniyah Everett

I am from noodles
I am from the brown apartment
buildings
I am from the front steps
on the side of the grass
I am from presents under the tree
I am from arguing where
we fight to make up
I am from school Monday-Friday

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and party on Saturday
I am from where the whole
last name is Everett
I am from where we always
have worldstar over grandma
I am from Pittsburgh hamburgers
and fries
I am from "Never talk to strangers"
I am from the dances I made
up in elementary
I am from the pictures on
my mother's wall

Reona Walking

Aniyah Everett

When my friend Reona walks she
walks so slow and stops and talks!
I can hardly see he legs moving.
She walks slower than a turtle
she stops walking to see her
favorite friend Dontay she
asks a million questions and
makes me angry. When Reona
walks she walks entirely too
slow that she even holds
up the line, but she doesn't
care, she just keeps talking to
Dontay to tell him the
same thing she told him on the
phone.

I'm Hungry

Aniyah Everett

Hamburgers are food.
Burgers are made different ways.
They are big and fat.

Sneakers

Eric Harper

You want the new, want the new
Bred 11s that came out, but
can you really afford it?
You're drooling at it like a kid in a toy store window
You work, you work, you work
until your arms and
feet feel like concrete
Then when you have
the time, go to
the store and buy those
Bred 11s, but just
know whenever you
want something you have to
work for it.

Where I'm From

Zechariah Hines

I am from TVs
I am from the white wooden house
I am from poison ivy

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I am from having Thanksgiving at my cousin's house every year
I am from my mom and dad
I am from being told Santa was real
I am from Sunday School
I am from DA Ghett
I am from Kool-aid and chicken
I am from baby pictures hanging up

Sister's Pink Sled

Zechariah Hines

Outside, watching my sister play in the cold snow last year in December. I could picture her sliding down the hill with her pink sled.

Untitled (Couplet Rap)

Zechariah Hines

I think all the time
I like to rhyme
Rappin an bay
About to go pray
I'm going to sleep
Rapping on the beat
Tie my shoe
You know what I do
Playing my PS4
Close the door
I rap too good
Put on my hood
Looking at the clock
Tik-tik-tok

Balling like Jordan
Wake up on the morning.

Neighborhood

Anthony Jetter

I am from cereal, from Cinnamon Toast Crunch a bowl
I am from the white house with four floors
I am from the thorned flower that scratched my arm
I am from the Perrys, tall people, and Anthony, Jaylen, and Azzyrick
I am from very competitive yell when you lose
I am from “ur bad at sports” and “ur good at everything else”
I am from “I believe in God and I’m a Christian”
I am from Garfield and pizza and cookies
I am from the time I fell turning around the corner
too fast, and I am from the time I jumped off the roof.
I am from a football signed by a football player.

Azzy

Anthony Jetter

I was cold he was wearing sweatpants and a hoodie
we were walking to his house to grab some
equipment we would push each other and
call each other names

Untitled (Couplet Rap)

Anthony Jetter

I like to rhyme
While I rhyme, I take my time.

I be rhyming on the fly
Half the time I don't try
I _____ a dog in its eye
And my kicks is ta fly
I'm out of my mind
They call me Jetter
And I'm better
Then you at Fortnite
When I start running you'll see me take flight.
I go out at night
I don't like the light.

Learning How to Play Basketball

Daniel Killmeyer

You must keep your eyes
On their legs or defense
so you
can take the ball
and
make a shot so you
can be on offense
Stay
Focused when you're
dribbling so you
can cross them
up and win
the game

Ahlaya

Ahlaya Malloy Rivers

I am from a mom named Taliya
I am from a bougie family
I am from a beautiful sunflower
 that's ready to blossom
I am from seafood every Sunday
I am from a beautiful smile
I am from Jennifer, James, Malloy
 from always on time
 to never be late
I am from family vacations
I am from nice meals.

A Moment in Life

Ahlaya Malloy Rivers

At this moment
Jaden is on the
beach laying in
the gold like sand.

At this moment
Jaden has his hands on his
head with
a huge sunny
smile on his face.

His eyes
glowing with
excitement
and joy with

no care in the
world that his
phone might
die.

Noah

Noah McMurtry

I am from Takis, from hot chips, and chips in general.
I am from a red brick house in a big neighborhood.
I am from the basketball hoop, the one where you can't
see if you made the shot.
I am from going to church every Christmas Sunday
I am from the family of always on time
From being told to be good in school
I from a Christian background, chicken, and rolls
from me breaking my cousin's nose with a boxing
glove

Christmas

Noah McMurtry

Christmas is the best holiday
mostly because of the tree
No, actually I think it's
really because you can be with your family

I love getting presents
It is really fun
then when summer comes back
the present will make you play in the sun

It is fun
when you are skating on ice
but when you fall
it doesn't feel nice

A big part of winter
is that there is snow
but if you live in California
You wouldn't know

Madden

Noah McMurtry

Madden is a good game. It is kinda fun.
All you need to do is learn how to run.

When it rains it is easy to fall.
It is not good to play it at all.

The Cooking Diva

Lena Parker

I like cooking. I'm good at it. I like cooking with my sisters and mom. I like cooking chicken. I like baking cake. I like cooking a lot of things.

I Warned You

Malachi Polite

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My sister is an
annoying person
Even though you
might have to
entertain her
but it won't come
easy

Leave her
alone or
she'll pounce
like a cat.

How to Be a Good Call of Duty Mobile Player

Macklin Ryan

First choose the setting that you like
Then choose a sensitivity that you're as comfortable as a couch with
You must complete the tutorial
Once completed you are as free as a bird to play the game
When you first get in the game you are invincible like Superman for a couple
seconds
Then you are ready for battle.

This Is Me!

Naijah Stevenson

I am from cheeseburgers
I am from a blue house
I am from a sunflower
I am from a perfect present every Christmas morning
I am from lateness

from use manners and defend yourself
I am from Christian
I am from Magee Women's Hospital

My Flippin' Sister!!

Naijah Stevenson

My sister Naudia loves doing flips. When she flips she's upside down with no hands and her hair stays right in place and she lands perfectly. She's been a gymnast since she was 2 years old. She wows and amazes people with her wonderful flips.

Find Your Game

Ja'Mere Wade

I am no expert, but here are some tips
to become the greatest basketball player alive.

Workout

Push yourself to be great

Get shots up

They take off when the ball leaves your hands

Run every morning

To be faster on the court

Play pick up games

To find new strategies to slow down your game

My Life Style!

Chaniyah Walker

I am from Ramen Noodles from Hill District
Rebels and turkeys that never fly brings family
together every Thanksgiving from Amy, Joe, Rashad.
I am from look both ways or don't talk
to strangers.
I am from pray before you eat dinner.
I'm from Oak Hill where I busted my
ankle a bug got stuck in my ear
I'm from my report cards getting put
on the fridge.

Me and My Best Friend

Chaniyah Walker

My best friend Dhaimera makes me laugh all day
long. I can hardly breath right. Every time I
see her purple glasses with a missing earpiece
I get a little smile and
joy inside and start to
shout
The Forever Incomplete Poem
Saniyah Whitley

I am from Oreos[®] and
Chips Ahoy[®] I am from the tan brick house
I am from the light green grass it was always
mowed down
The common family trait is a dark complexion
I am from a place a lazy go through the easy way out
I am from a place
I am from a refrigerator on the wall

My life isn't a thing for me to show and tell to anyone.
Including you.

The Poor Puppet Girl

Saniyah Whitley

Her royal purple to a fiery red short hair
flowing with her as she forcefully danced to the beat

The light purple colored puppet performed
a show for a whole crowd that she didn't
want to see. The bright and cheery crowd
were oblivious to the fact.

Yama was her name and being a pure
toy was her only domain.
To please an audience that were acting like
animals trying to grab her off the stage.

She tried to be free but all she did was
weep. Yama the poor crying puppet leaving
the stage felt like she was trapped in a cage.

One day she ran free from a freeless life
from all one swift to strings to a knife

She ran and ran and ran. Be gone little
puppet, and be free like you should be.

It Makes Me

Saniyah Whitley

Haikus make me slow
I can't find the proper words
It makes my head stop.

Winning in Fortnite

Antonio Williams III

When you land you have to
get great guns
and health
Once you encounter
a person you have to shoot
and build
Do this for the rest
of the game and you will win.

Hush Money

Brian Wiggins

September I walked
in this place called school and
I see this light-skinned kid
with a lot of hair and
his name was Noah
We started talking and then
I told him something and paid
him hush money

I Am Peanut Wop

Brian Wiggins

I am from Ramen Noodles from
school and couches I am from the
red brick house I am from
the racoon, the furry dirty
I am from the turkey liver and
Wiggins from Ross I am
from "hit someone if they hit
you first" I'm from Pittsburgh PA
and wings, from the pics
on the fridge