**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.

George Ella Lyon

**Genealogy**

I was born in a forest.  
I don’t know my name.  
I was born on a mountain but changed  
my mind. I was born  
in the desert. All my people died  
in the fire and left me  
with the gods. They called me dust.  
How it burned me. I come from the sea,  
I believe. I come from beryl,  
aquamarine. All my people  
rode their horses off  
the edge of the world and left me  
on your doorstep. They called me  
sorrow. I don’t know my name.  
I come from wartime. How it burned me.  
I was born aflame, I believe. A sun  
so intentional. A sun in repose, a sun  
in continuous sunset, sinking into the ground.

Camille Rankine

**Assignment:** Write a "Where I'm From" poem of at least 20 short lines that uses metaphor and imagery to show how you are (or are not) leaf-fall from your particular family tree.

**This Took A Lifetime To Write**

I am from periwinkles

deluging the front garden

From mother making

peanut butter cookies

and baking

secret soda bread

From sister dancing

on the living room couch

And father teaching

brother how to shave.

Then I was from college and DC

(not  the going, the left behind bit)

I was from empty homes and

one player video games.

And then from

separations.

From the “I wish

he were dead”  to the

“you shouldn’t have to

worry about it”

From thin walls—

from barricaded

staircases—from thick

childish skin covering

my mother's diary

I was from new

families who knew

they were better than me

From locked closets

From close to obese

From fridge magnets

clutching eating schedules,

From dogs thatwon’tstopbarking

I am from looking

back

at the

plum trees

in my

family’s

yard and

dreaming

of fruit,

ready to

drop

and rot.

Joseph Redmond