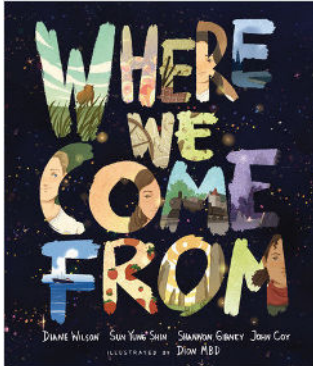


Discussion and Activity Guide for All Ages



Book Title: *Where We Come From*

Written by: Diane Wilson, Sun Yung Shin, Shannon Gibney, & John Coy

Illustrated by: Dion MBD

Publisher: Lerner Publications, Lerner Publishing Group

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ISBN #: 9781541596122

Age Range: 5 and up

About the Book

*We come from stardust
our bodies made of ancient elements.
We come from place, language, and spirit.
And each of us comes from story.*

We all come from something, somewhere, someone. In this extraordinary collaboration, four authors beautifully express their origins—both literally and metaphorically—while reflecting on the shared experiences that connect us all. Through their personal stories, they delve into themes of place, heritage, migration, challenges, resilience, and hope. Their poetic writing, paired with vivid and intricate illustrations, bridges the past and present, offering an engaging and visually captivating exploration of family, history, and identity.

For Conversations With Children Under 12

Recommended for librarians, educators, caregivers/families, and other intergenerational groups that include children under 12.

A Note for Adults Reading to Children

In the book, the authors mention historical events and struggles their ancestors faced, such as slavery, the Dakhóta-US War of 1862, boarding schools, and Jim Crow laws. For more information about what is referenced, see the **“More about Where We Come From”** section in the back of the book to help you answer questions children may have and to help give appropriate context. For older children, you may want to give more detailed information to provide additional historical context. For all children, be sure to provide straightforward, factual answers to their questions, and check in throughout your discussion to see what they are feeling and understanding. The back of the book also contains a helpful pronunciation guide, and the back flap gives more information about each of the authors.

Questions for Adults to Reflect on Before Reading with Children

Before you read this book, think about:

- In the book, author Diane Wilson says she comes from old stories passed down from generations. What old stories do you come from? What old stories would you like to pass on to the next generation?
- In the back of the book, there’s a part that talks about how *“many of us have gaps large and small in our family histories, and that’s also part of the larger human story.”* What gaps exist in your knowledge of family history? What thoughts or emotions surface for you when you think about those gaps?
- In the back of the book, they also say, *“Each child’s story is priceless, but to shine its fullest, it must be shared, because we are in this life and on this one green-and-blue planet together.”* Which parts of your story do you proudly share? Which parts do you struggle to share and why? How can you hold all the parts of your story together as priceless and share your story as an integrated whole so it can shine its fullest?

Introduce the Book to Children

In this book, four different authors use poetry to tell about the places, ancestors, movement, struggles, and hopes that have shaped who they are. Throughout the book, the authors weave together their individual stories to help us see that our beautiful diversity brings us together and unites us as humans. As you listen to their stories, think about the things that have shaped who you are.

Discussion Questions

1. The first line of the book reads, *"We come from stardust, our bodies made of ancient elements."* Why do you think the authors started with this line? How do you feel when you hear this line read aloud?
2. Author Diane Wilson talks about how the *"cornfields remember a vast prairie."* What does she mean by this? What does it mean for the land to remember? What else do you think the land remembers?
3. Author Sun Yung Shin writes about coming from Korea and *"five thousand years of a people, kingdoms that rose and fell, an empire, movable metal type, and a native alphabet created so all the people could read and write."* Why do you think it was important to her to name such a long and specific Korean history?
4. Author Shannon Gibney is from Ann Arbor, in Michigan. She talks about how it's a *"city grown by the river."* What does this mean? Think about the cities you know. How does being near water influence how a city grows?
5. Author John Coy writes about how he comes from animals, *"bear, boar, elk, and deer, who kept us alive long ago in Ireland and Scotland,"* and plants, *"groves in the forest—bounty of nuts, berries, and mushrooms..."* What does he mean by this? What animals and plants do you come from?
6. Even though the four authors come from different places, what do their stories have in common? What makes them different?
7. Which parts of the authors' stories are similar to your or your family's story? (What do you have in common with the authors?)
8. Which parts of their stories are very different from your or your family's story? What questions do you have about their stories, and what do you want to learn more about?

9. What were some challenges that contributed to the four author's stories? (Examples: Diane Wilson's story includes the Dakhóta-US War of 1862 and Indian boarding schools where Dakhóta language and culture were lost. Sun Yung Shin's story includes migration across the Pacific ocean and working on sugarcane and pineapple plantations. Shannon Gibney's story includes enslavement of Africans and crowded tenements and factory work during the Great Migration. John Coy's story includes the Irish potato famine and immigration to the US.)
10. The book ends with the following two questions: *"What do the stars, the fields, and the rivers sing to you? What stories does the wind whisper in your ear?"* Why do you think the authors end with these questions? What do they want you to think about?
11. In the back of the book, the authors give more information about the writing of the book. One thing they talk about is how *"all of human history holds violence and brutality but also times of peace, cooperation, sharing, helping, caring and adapting to change—otherwise we wouldn't be here at all."* What examples of cooperation, sharing, helping, caring, and adapting to change have you experienced that have shaped your story and who you are?

Activities for Deeper Connection

- **Journal and Reflect:** Invite children to list the different things that have shaped their stories by drawing or writing, including places, people, stories, language(s), food, struggles, and hopes. Providing a template might be helpful.
 - **For groups or classes:** Invite students to share. Create a class mural depicting all the different things shared using whatever art supplies/mediums available, making sure each student is able to contribute the same number of things.
 - **For families:** Do this activity together with your child(ren), and provide space for storytelling. Encourage children to ask other family members about what has shaped them.
- **Create Hanging Mobiles:** Using images children draw, paint, or find in magazines, as well as words, help children each create their own hanging mobile about the things that have shaped them. Show children how to trace the shape of each picture or image they want to hang on their mobile onto cardstock and glue the images/words to the cardstock with a string in between to hang it from. Tie the strings to hangers, sticks, or hoops. Be sure each mobile includes the child's name.

- **For groups or classes:** Give children a chance to share about their mobile and hang them from the ceiling to display them before they are sent home.
- **For families:** Do this activity together, adding in your own elements to your child's. Display the mobile someplace visible, and encourage your child(ren) to add to it as they wish.
- **Write Bio Poems and Share in Two Voices:** Use the instructions and structure provided by [Lerner Publishing's Free Activity Guide](#) to guide children in writing bio poems.
 - **For groups or classes:** To have them share their poems, pair children up or create small groups of up to four, so children read their poems aloud one line at a time, while alternating between the different voices, much like the four authors in the book did. Afterwards, discuss common themes they noticed. Ask, *How did hearing from different voices in the poem connect to the book we read? What did you learn about each other?* Afterwards, provide space for children to honor each other's sharing.
 - **For families:** Write your own poem. When you both are finished, read your poems aloud one line at a time, while alternating between your different voices, much like the four authors in the book did. Talk about what you noticed or learned about each other.

For Conversations Among Adults and Youth Older Than 12

Recommended for adult book clubs, young adults, and intergenerational groups that include youth 12 and older.

Discussion Questions

1. The first line of the book reads, *"We come from stardust, our bodies made of ancient elements."* Why do you think the authors started with this line? What emotions arise for you when you read this?
2. One of the authors, Diane Wilson, talks about how the cornfields remember a vast prairie. Think about the places that are important to you. What does that land remember?
3. What do the four authors have in common when it comes to their stories and where they are from? What makes them different?
4. Which parts of the authors' stories could you connect with? Which parts spark questions and curiosity to learn more about?
5. The book ends with the following two questions: *"What do the stars, the fields, and the rivers sing to you? What stories does the wind whisper in your ear?"* Why do you think the authors end with these? What do they want you to think about?
6. *"Where are you from?"* is a question that some Americans get asked more than others. How might this question cause people to feel like they don't belong? How can we express curiosity about each other in ways that foster belonging? (Reference the last page for more context and information.)
7. What were some challenges that contributed to the four author's stories? Why was it important for the authors to acknowledge and name the complex histories of violence, oppression, poverty, and migration in their stories? What hard historical truths live in your story that need to be acknowledged and named?

(Examples: Diane Wilson's story includes the Dakhóta-US War of 1862 and Indian boarding schools where Dakhóta language and culture were lost. Sun Yung Shin's story includes migration across the Pacific ocean and working on sugarcane and pineapple plantations. Shannon Gibney's story includes enslavement of Africans and

crowded tenements and factory work during the Great Migration. John Coy's story includes the Irish potato famine and immigration to the US.)

8. In the back of the book, the authors give more information about the writing of the book. One thing they talk about is how *"all of human history holds violence and brutality but also times of peace, abundance, and incalculable and unrecorded moments of cooperation, sharing, helping, caring and adapting to change—otherwise we wouldn't be here at all."*
 - a. How could our society better honor history that holds violence and brutality in a way that offers healing to those most impacted?
 - b. What examples of cooperation, sharing, helping, caring and adapting to change have you experienced that have shaped who you are?
9. Share one word to describe how you're feeling after reading this book and engaging in discussion about its themes and messages.

Activities for Deeper Connection

- **Journal Questions:**

- In the book, author Diane Wilson says she comes from old stories passed down from generations. What old stories do you come from? What old stories would you like to pass on to the next generation?
- In the back of the book, there's a part that talks about how *"many of us have gaps large and small in our family histories, and that's also part of the larger human story."* What gaps exist in your knowledge of family history? What thoughts or emotions surface for you when you think about those gaps?
- In the back of the book, they also say, *"Each child's story is priceless, but to shine its fullest, it must be shared, because we are in this life and on this one green-and-blue planet together."* Which parts of your story do you proudly share? Which parts do you struggle to share and why? How can you hold all the parts of your story together as priceless and share your story as an integrated whole so it can shine its fullest?

- **Write Bio Poems and Share in Two Voices:** Use the instructions and structure provided by [Lerner Publishing's Free Activity Guide](#) to get started with writing your own bio

poem. While this guide was created for educators, the structure provided can be used by people of all ages. After everyone has had a chance to reflect and journal to write their poem, pair up with another person in the group. Read your poems aloud one line at a time, while alternating between your different voices, much like the four authors in the book did. Talk about what you noticed or learned about each other. After all pairs have finished sharing, discuss common themes and messages as well as differences you noticed. To end, honor each other's sharing.

- **Learning About Our Histories:** How much do you know about the historical events and/or different cultural heritages that make up your story? Recognizing that *"many of us have gaps large and small in our family histories"* and that so many of us have lost connections to our ancestors and cultural heritages, how many generations can you connect to with your cultural heritages? How can we reconnect to histories and cultures? Choose one historical or cultural aspect that makes up your story to explore, learn about, and understand better. Suggestions include: genealogy research, ethnic food cooking classes, historical site visits, language learning, family timeline project, family history interviews, learning about historical events, etc.

Connections to Anti-Bias Education, Social-Emotional Learning Competencies, and Minnesota State Standards



Interested in seeing how this Discussion and Activity Guide connects to Anti-Bias Education, Social-Emotional Learning Competencies, and the Minnesota State Standards? Use the QR Code to find the ABE, SEL, and Standards Supplement.

About One Book | One Minnesota:

One Book | One Minnesota is a statewide book club that invites Minnesotans of all ages to read a common title and come together to enjoy, reflect, and discuss. One Book | One Minnesota is a program of The Friends of the Saint Paul Public Library as the Minnesota Center for the Book, sponsored by Blaze Credit Union. Additional funding is made possible through an appropriation from the Minnesota State Legislature.



About AmazeWorks

The mission of [AmazeWorks](#) is to champion equity and belonging for all. We believe that everyone should see their families, identities, and lived experiences reflected in positive mirrors and windows into the lives of others who are different from them. AmazeWorks is happy to partner with Friends of the St. Paul Public Library's One Book | One Minnesota to offer this discussion guide because we all believe in the power of stories to inspire, educate, and connect us all.