

I am from

Word Count- 485

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I am from 1

Mama, where are you from? Time and again I have heard you ask this question. At the time I was too scared to give you an answer. At the time I was ashamed that if I told you, you would be ashamed of your past. But now I realize I have been selfish. The answer is no longer a story I must bury away in the past. This story is not mine to keep, it is mine to give. It is mine to pass on to you, to your children, to your children's children. This story isn't just my background, it is yours. And one day, you too will be asked, Mama, where are you from?

I am from the smell of musty wood as I crouch in the basement,

Watching my home being given to people that were once my friends and neighbors.

I am from the pattering sound of a heart,

Beating against the strong body that holds me close.

I am from hunger that stretches for years,

Hunger that can wrap its greedy tendrils around a whole community and will not stop until it has taken what there is not to give.

I am from dirty hands gripping tight,

From a need of human love and friendship even in the darkest of places.

I am from tender skin and blossoming bruises,

From pain that everyone can feel,

And everyone is forced to share.

I am from whispered words in the night,

Words that fight off the nightmares and bring hope for a new day.

I am from 2

I am from the burning smell of gunfire,  
From the screams that become the unspoken stories of the lives lost,  
From the anguish when another body hits the ground.  
I am from hands toughened and bleeding,  
Cracked and blistered and frost-bitten and hurt.  
But I am from more than just pain.  
I am from the smell of the earth,  
Fresh after rain.  
I am from blossoms that promised a new life,  
And held that promise long after they were gone.  
I am from journeys, both good and bad.  
I am from new beginnings.  
I am from the belief that you can be scared without being weak,  
That courage can mean waking up to face every new morning and the challenges it brings.  
And all of this, my loves, is where you're from too.  
You're from struggles you've yet to face,  
You're from the mistakes of the past,  
That will live on to make the future strong.

I am from death and fear and plague,  
From strength and hope and redemption.

But I have lived my life.

Now it is your turn.

#### Works Cited

Ayer, Eleanor H., Helen Waterford, and Alfons Heck. *Parallel Journeys*. New York: Atheneum for Young Readers, 1995. Print.

Frank, Anne. *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl*. New York: Bantam, 1993. Print.