MAN I THOUGHT YOU WAS TALKING ANOTHER LANGUAGE THAT DAY
Victor Hernandez Cruz

I WASN’T BORN HERE MAN
BUT HERE I AM
EVERYONE WAS FREEZING LAST NIGHT
I HAD THIS FUNNY FEELING IN MY STOMACH TODAY
TODAY THESE COPS COME DOWN THE BLOCK
AND THEY BEAT TITO ON THE HEAD
TOMORROW THEY DO THE SAME
STILL I WASN’T BORN HERE MAN
TONIGHT NOTHING TO DO
BUT MAYBE LISTEN TO FOOTSTEPS
MAYBE IT WILL RAIN AND I COULD LISTEN TO THAT
OR I COULD SING OR SOMETHING
I WASN’T BORN HERE MAN
BUT HERE I AM

• Consider the idea of the poem:
  ▪ The speaker feels out of place, uncomfortable as he looks at his current place/situation.
  ▪ Choose a situation when you felt uncomfortable or out of place. Think about what you saw around you, what you heard. What aspect of the situation made you feel particularly isolated or alone? (Focus on that.)

• Consider the form of the poem:
  ▪ Use all caps to show strong emotion.
  ▪ Notice how Cruz’ poem is justified to the left margin. Don’t line center or block center your poem.
  ▪ Notice how Cruz’ poem looks on the page—it’s single spaced.
  ▪ Check the general length of his poem. You should aim for a similar length—maybe 14-20 lines.
  ▪ Avoid using punctuation except in contractions (Cruz’ only punctuation is in wasn’t)
  ▪ Notice how repetition is used: “I WASN’T BORN HERE MAN
    BUT HERE I AM”

Some interesting facts about Cruz:
• Born in Puerto Rico in 1949
• Moved to New York City at age four
• Grew up in Spanish Harlem in NYC
• Wrote 1st volume of poetry in 1969 at age 20
• Taught at UCLA Berkley and at U of M