

# Choosing My Name

“Choosing My Name” is a poem written by Hawaiian author, Puanani Burgess. It can be found in her book, Growing Up Local: an anthology of poetry and prose from Hawai‘i.

## Choosing My Name

By Puanani Burgess

When I was born my mother gave me three names.  
Christabelle, Yoshie, and Puanani.

Christabelle was my “English” name.  
My social security name,  
My school name,  
the name I gave when teachers asked me  
For my “real” name, a safe name.

Yoshie was my home name,  
My everyday name,  
the name that reminded my father’s family  
that I was Japanese, even though  
my nose, hips, and feet were wide,  
the name that made me acceptable to them  
who called my Hawaiian mother *kuroi*,  
a saving name.

Puanani is my chosen name,  
My *piko* name connecting me to the *‘aina*  
and the *kai* and the *po’e kahiko*  
my blessing; my burden,  
my amulet, my spear.



Puanani Burgess. Credit: PBS Hawaii

### Hawaiian Word Definitions

- *kuroi* = black
- *‘aina* = land
- *piko* = belly button
- *kai* = ocean
- *po’e kahiko* = ancestors

# Choosing My Name

Use Puanani Burgess’ poem to help you think of three of your own names to write about. Answer the prompts in the blank spaces of the chart below.

<p>“When I was born my mother gave me three names.”</p>	<p>What is the history of a name? <b>Does your name have any history attached to it?</b></p>	
<p>“My social security name, My school name”</p>	<p>What is a “safe” name? <b>Do you have a safe name?</b></p>	
<p>“My everyday name, the name that reminded my father’s family”</p>	<p>What is the family story behind this name? What is a home name? <b>Do you have a home name?</b></p>	
<p>“Puanani is my chosen name, My <i>piko</i> name connecting me to the ‘<i>aina</i>”</p>	<p>What is a chosen name? How can she choose it, if her mom gave it to her? <b>What is your chosen name?</b></p>	

**Do you have a name that doesn't fit into any of the categories above?  
You can free-write about it in this box.**

# Choosing My Name

Now that you've identified three names that you have, use the chart below to brainstorm words and feelings that come to mind when you think of each name.

<b>Name 1:</b>	<b>Name 2:</b>	<b>Name 3:</b>
<p>What words and feelings come up when you think about Name 1?</p>	<p>What words and feelings come up when you think about Name 2?</p>	<p>What words and feelings come up when you think about Name 3?</p>



# Choosing My Name

Now that you’ve completed your research, use the information you learned to write a draft of your poem. Follow the prompts on the left side of the chart, and write the lines of each stanza in the blank spaces.

## Organize Your Poem into Stanzas:

<p><b>Stanza 1</b></p> <p>Write an opening line that includes the names you are going to write about. (3 Lines)</p>	
<p><b>Stanza 2</b></p> <p>Write about the name you would say is your “safe” name. What is the story of that name? Try and use a simile to describe this name. (6 Lines)</p>	
<p><b>Stanza 3</b></p> <p>Fill it out with your second name-usually your middle or nickname? Who calls you this second name and why? (6 Lines)</p>	
<p><b>Stanza 4</b></p> <p>End with the name that you love the most, that makes you who you are. Tell us who you are and why this is the name you prefer. This is a good place for symbolism! (6 Lines)</p>	