



# **Step Inside This House**

A STUDENT EXERCISE



# Step Inside This House

## A Student Exercise & Worksheet by Essential Partners

The purpose of this exercise is to help students explore the cultural influences that have shaped their identities, values, and beliefs. It lets them reflect on the important people, stories, traditions, and artifacts from their lives. This can be used as a way to introduce themselves to others in a way that lets students write their own stories. It can also be a way to invite someone into “your house” for a look around.

### Supplies Needed

- Writing Utensils
- Scrap Paper
- Worksheet
- Whiteboard / Chalkboard / Flipchart to Record and Display Agreements

### Instructions

Ask the students to quietly think about the following:

Imagine you're inviting someone into a house. This house contains the people, stories, traditions, things that you have collected through the years—all the things that are most important to you. This may be the house you live in now, a previous home, or some other place.

On a piece of scrap paper, I'm going to ask you to list the names of people, traditions or customs, and things that belong in the corresponding room.

**In the Room of People:** This is the room that contains the important people from your life—those people who have influenced your outlook on life and made you who you are. List their names and, if you want, your relationships with them. For example, you might write: “Jordan, my brother.” The people could be family members, friends, coaches, neighbors. They could be real or fictional, alive or not. Make a list of all the people and their relationships with you on your scrap paper.

**In the Room of Traditions or Customs:** This is the room that contains the important traditions or customs that have shaped who you are. If someone understood these traditions or customs, it would help them understand what is important to you. These could be activities at holidays, weekly routines, daily habits, or even phrases. Make a list of them on your scrap paper.

**In the Room of Things:** This room contains the physical objects that are meaningful to you. These objects tell a story about what you value in life. They might be things that people have given you as gifts, things passed down in your family, things that you collected while traveling, or things you collect as a hobby. On your scrap paper, make a



list of the things that you would want to show people to help them understand what matters most to you.

After you have made lists in each room of the worksheet, go back and read through the lists again. What feels most important to show a visitor, so they understand what's important to you? If you could choose one person, one tradition, and one thing to show them on their first trip into your house, what would those be?

Choose one item from each list. On the following worksheet, write about what those choices mean to you. What do you want other people to understand about you?

Take two minutes to write your responses to the questions above each box on the worksheet. Take the full two minutes to write. Write as much as you can.

After two minutes, you will find a partner. Each of you will share what you have written.

Give the students two minutes to write. Then pair them with a partner. Each pair of students will talk for four minutes about what they have written. After the four minutes of paired sharing is over, bring the class back together. Have the students go around one-by-one, naming one thing that came up as being really important to them.

## Exercise Timing

This exercise needs some time in order to be effective. The scrap paper, worksheet, and paired sharing take fifteen to twenty minutes. The timing of the large group sharing depends on the group size, about two minutes per person. There should be a discussion following the group sharing that takes about twenty minutes.



# Step Inside This House

**1. What does this person mean to you? What did they teach you? What part of you was affected by them?**

People

**2. Where does this custom come from? What does it mean to you and about you? How has it changed for you? What does it give you?**

Customs or Traditions

**3. Where did the object come from? What does it look like? What story does it hold? What personal value does it represent?**

Things