

## CULTURAL MARKER EXERCISE

This is an excellent exercise for students and teachers, senior centers, families, and other community groups to get individuals thinking about their own cultural heritage and to gain respect and understanding for the cultural identity and heritage of others.

### PURPOSE:

To identify and report on an item (object, photo) that serves an important role in your own cultural (ethnic, family, regional) identity.

### ASSIGNMENT:

Think about an object or photo that you feel helps define who you are and/or where you are from. Write at least one page about the item's significance. (For instance, think of a family heirloom — a photograph of your grandparents, an old tool used by your father, a piece of lace from a wedding gown — that speaks to your family's roots. How does this item help explain your life and culture?) Be prepared to give a three-minute presentation about this item (to your class, your extended family, a senior center gathering). Plan to bring the item with you if possible. Take three minutes to present your cultural marker to the group. Then engage in an exercise where participants break into pairs and take turns interviewing one another, using the cultural markers as points of departure.

### HOMEWORK:

Review the information you collected from your interview. Think about how you might improve your interviewing skills. Refer to the *Smithsonian Folklife and Oral History Interviewing Guide* for advice and suggestions.