

# Build Community

Grades 4–12

## Objective

Students will use reflective practices and their own life experiences to write personal narratives that describe their core values. Then, build community as a class by agreeing upon a set of shared values.

**Materials** — [Worksheets available on Google Slides](#)

- “Defining My Values” vocabulary and worksheets
- “Classroom Community Values” worksheet
- “Self-Reflection” worksheet (optional)
- Timer

## Class Activity

1. If you haven’t already, review the “[Welcome to the Skirball](#)” introduction, which features collection items that relate to this lesson, as well as information about the Skirball and its permanent exhibition, *Visions and Values: Jewish Life from Antiquity to America*.
2. Review the “Defining My Values” vocabulary page.
3. Using the “Defining My Values” worksheets:
  - Lead students through a close-looking activity using an image of artifacts from the Skirball Cultural Center’s permanent collection of ceremonial and everyday objects of Jewish life.
  - Read about the person who owned the artifacts and lead a discussion about how everyday items can reflect one’s values. More objects for study can be found in the “[Welcome to the Skirball](#)” introduction.
  - Select three prompts from the list below (or create your own!). Give students two minutes per prompt to free write as much as they can. Encourage them to write anything that comes to mind and to keep writing until the time is up.

Who is important to you? Why? Share qualities you admire.

What inspires you and/or gives you hope for the future?

What do you want to change about the world? Why?

What special occasions or events are significant to you? Why?

What character traits are important in a friend? A teacher? A leader?

What are essential truths you live by?

5. After students finish responding to the three prompts, invite them to individually reflect on what they wrote. Students will then highlight or circle two words or phrases from each answer to help identify six personal values. These will help inform the “Classroom Community Values” worksheet, which will be completed in the Share Out.

## Student Instructions

Through close looking and interpretation, learn about a person from the past and what they valued. Then, identify six of your personal values using the “Defining My Values” worksheets.

## Share Out

Ask students to share their values in pairs or as a class, considering the following questions:

- What did they learn about themselves or their classmates?
- What values did the students hold in common with one another?

Based on student responses, create a list of six agreed upon Classroom Community Values. Display and follow them this school year!

## Curriculum Connections

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA: SL.1, 4; R.1, 2; W.3, 9

## Resources

Learn more about Jewish culture and tradition by reading the article “[Judaism](#)” from the organization **My Jewish Learning**.

Learn about diversity within the Jewish community by reading the following articles:

- “[Sephardic, Ashkenazic, Mizrahi and Ethiopian Jews](#)” from **My Jewish Learning**.
- “[Types of Jews: The Many Ethnic and Racial Subgroups within the Jewish Community](#)” from **My Jewish Learning**.
- “[Beyond the Count: Perspectives and Lived Experiences of Jews of Color](#)” from the **Jews of Color** Initiative.

## Connect with Us

Our educators are here to help! If you have questions about this curriculum or would like to share your students’ writing or artwork with us, please email [teacherprograms@skirball.org](mailto:teacherprograms@skirball.org).

## Defining My Values

*Below are some terms you may encounter in this lesson or find useful.*

**Culture** The beliefs, customs, values, arts, language systems, and other uniting features of a particular society, group, place, or time.

**Heritage** Customs and items handed down from one's ancestors; or a characteristic, culture, or tradition from the past.

**Hebrew** The traditional language of the Jewish people originating in the ancient Near East. Its letters, called the *aleph-bet*, are written from right to left. Hebrew is one of the earliest *phonetic* languages, meaning you can look at a written word and know how to pronounce it, or you can hear a word and know how to spell it.

**Judaism** A religion and a culture that follows rules and traditions based on the Hebrew Bible, called the Torah. Like other cultures, Jewish people have special foods, traditions, holidays, and languages. There are also values that many Jewish people (and many other cultures) try to live by, such as welcoming others, taking care of the earth, and teaching and learning.

**Values** Basic beliefs that guide our actions in everyday life. They help us determine what is important and how we engage with others and the world around us.

Name:

## Defining My Values

Take a close look at the photo below. What are three things that you notice about these objects?



This coffee grinder and set of silver coffee cups belonged to Sarota Benveniste. Sarota was a Sephardic Jew. Sephardic Jews—who hail from Spain, Greece, and North Africa—have a tradition of serving tea or coffee to welcome guests and neighbors into their homes. Coffee grinders were also used to make sweet rice pudding, a common snack for children. When Sarota came to Los Angeles from the Greek island of Rhodes in 1916, she brought these items with her as a reminder of the smells, tastes, and traditions of home.

1. What did you learn about Sarota Benveniste through these objects?
2. Based on the objects she brought with her to Los Angeles, what values might Sarota and her family had?
3. How could Sarota use the coffee grinder and cups to **build community**?
4. What smells, tastes, objects, and traditions remind you of your loved ones?

Name:

## Defining My Values

**Values** are basic beliefs that guide our actions in everyday life. They help us determine what is important and how we engage with others and the world around us.

At the Skirball, we share the following six community values: **welcome the stranger, honor memory, seek learning, pursue justice, build community,** and **show kindness**. These values were identified by Skirball community members through conversation and reflection.

Reflect on what is important to you, identify your own personal values, and discover the values you share with others in your class.

Respond to the three prompts provided by your teacher.

1.

2.

3.

Name:

## Defining My Values

Circle two words or phrases from each of your responses during the previous activity and use them to help you define your personal values.

My six essential values are:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

Name:

## Classroom Community Values

As a class, we uphold the following community values:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

Signature:

Name:

## **Self-Reflection**

Reflect on your experience with the activity you completed and share what you learned about yourself, your values, your traditions, or your community.

**Three things I learned about myself:**

**Two things I learned from hearing someone else's story:**

**One thing I am curious to learn more about:**

**My greatest challenge with this activity was:**

**After completing the activity, I am most proud of:**

**A lasting impact I hope to have on my community is:**