

## Foundation Kick-Off Activity

Time needed: 10 minutes

Materials needed: Copy of “My Name” by Sandra Cisneros for every student, writing utensil

### [Introduction of activity and connection to theme]

Your Name.

One of the first things that we’re given when we get to this planet is our name. Your name has been with you since then. Maybe you still go by the exact name that was spoken over you in your first couple days of life. Maybe you go by a nickname. Or your middle name. Maybe family members call you one name but friends call you another.

When someone you love calls you by your name, it’s powerful, sweet, meaningful. When someone you don’t know calls you by your name, it can feel flimsy or wrong in their voice.

Your name is often the first thing that people ask when they meet you. It’s powerful. It’s a word that defines you, but you’re not defined by. It’s a part of your foundation.

I’m going to read you a vignette from *The House on Mango Street* called “My Name.” As I read, will you underline lines or phrases that stood out to you.

### [text]

In English my name means hope. In Spanish it means too many letters. It means sadness, it means waiting. It is like the number nine. A muddy color. It is the Mexican records my father plays on Sunday mornings when he is shaving, song like sobbing.

It was my great-grandmother’s name and now it is mine. She was a horse woman too, born like me in the Chinese year of the horse –which is supposed to be bad luck if you’re born female-but I think this is a Chinese lie because the Chinese, like the Mexican, don’t like their women strong.

My great-grandmother. I would’ve liked to have known her, a wild horse of a woman, so wild she wouldn’t marry. Until my great-grandfather threw a sack over her head and carried her off. Just like that, as if she were a fancy chandelier. That’s the way he did it. And the story goes she never forgave him. She looked out the window her whole life, the way so many women sit their sadness on an elbow. I wonder if she made the best with what she got or was she sorry because she couldn’t be all the things she wanted to be. Esperanza. I have inherited her name, but don’t want to inherit her place by the window.

At school they say my name funny as if the syllables were made out of tin and hurt the roof of your mouth. But in Spanish my name is made out of a softer something, like silver, not quite as thick as sister's name-Magdalena-which is uglier than mine. Magdalenawho at least can come home and become Nenny. But I am always Esperanza.

I would like to baptize myself under a new name, a name more like the real me, the one nobody sees. Esperanza as Lisandra or Maritza or Zeze the X. Yes. Something like Zeze the X will do.

[After text is read]

Allow students a minute to choose their favorite line or phrase. Do a quick wrap-around share to call out favorite lines. No explanation, just the lines.

After everyone shares, wrap around share in the other direction where the only thing that students share is their preferred name.

[Wrap up]

Thank students for being willing to share one of the first things given to them. Encourage students to get to know each others' names and to use them often.