

CET Shanghai: Heritage Essay

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Who is the intended audience(s) for your Perspective Piece?: Heritage Students

Being a heritage student made my study abroad experience in China richer and more meaningful. I was able to explore and learn more about my heritage, understand and see the land where my parents grew up in, and experience firsthand, the local culture.

Growing up as a Chinese American in the United States, I always wondered what my parents' home country was like. My parents and all of the generations before them were all born and raised in China while I was the first generation to be born in the U.S. In order to maintain my Chinese identity, my parents enrolled me in Chinese School so that I could learn more about the language and culture. Despite attending Chinese class for over 15 years, I never felt a true connection to what I was learning. It was only through this study abroad experience did my years of studying Chinese finally connect. Living in China for those two months gave me exposure to what China really was like, showing me what the intricate culture is like and aspects that couldn't be explained in a textbook. Furthermore, as a heritage student able to speak Mandarin comfortably, I was able to communicate with locals more effortlessly, allowing for more natural and personal interactions. Since I grew up in a traditional Chinese family, I could relate culturally with my roommate and we were able to develop a deep friendship.

Overall, the two months I spent in China truly changed my view of the country, the people, and its culture. Not only did I learn more about myself as an individual, but I gained so much insight into my own family's culture and history.