

Lesson 2: Names

“Our names are an incredibly important part of our identity. They carry deep personal, cultural, familial, and historical connections. They also give us a sense of who we are, the communities in which we belong, and our place in the world.” —Iman Baobeid

Social Justice Standard: Diversity 7

Summary

Names are powerful. They can carry with them a lot of meaning, history and culture. A lot of similarities and differences exist across names. Sometimes a name that sounds the same is spelled differently. Sometimes names that look the same are pronounced differently. Many people know others with their exact same name, while others may be used to being the only person with that name in their class or neighborhood.

Many people also have the experience of their name not being pronounced correctly or understood well by others they encounter. Sometimes people report feeling left out when their name isn't well understood by others. Some people and families changed their names when they immigrated to this country. Others had their names taken from them when they were enslaved and brought here. Some people have multiple names and identities that they use in different communities.

In the following lesson, you will find an opportunity to think about the significance of names and the different relationships our friends and fellow citizens might have to their names—and yours.

Booklist

- *My Name Is Sangoel* by Karen Lynn Williams and Khadra Mohammed, illustrated by Catherine Stock
- *My Name Is Yoon* by Helen Recorvits, illustrated by Gabi Swiatkowska
- *The Name Jar* by Yangsook Choi
- *The Favorite Daughter* by Allen Say
- *Alma and How She Got Her Name* by Juana Martinez-Neal

Consider This

- Who named you? Is there meaning behind your name?
- If you are someone that has ever changed your name, first or last, what were your considerations in changing it?
- What is an interesting story you've learned or heard about someone's name?
- What do you do when faced with a name that is difficult for you to pronounce or remember?

Talk Together

- Use the books to share the meaning behind the names in your own family. What was their significance, and why were they chosen?
- What naming traditions exist in your family and among your ancestors? How might your family or ancestors' names have changed over time?
- What do you love about your name?

Engage

- Play with the names in your family by combining them together to make new names. These can be as silly as you'd like them to be. Example: Simone and Miles can make Smiles =)
- Make a name guessing game. Choose someone and list out information about them. This can be simple like a favorite food, or more specific about their identity. See if someone can guess the name of the person you're talking about from your clues.

Explore More

- "Why Getting A Name Right Matters" by Zulekha Nathoo (BBC, January 11, 2021)
- "Honor Your Students' Heritage by Pronouncing Their Names Correctly" by Françoise Thenoux (PBS SoCal, December 8, 2020)