

Naming Places Lesson - Megan McBride, Alaska Studies

Introduction 5 min

- Introduce theme of “naming places”. Share overview of activities & flow of lesson. Don’t give away Alaska connection. Group students into groups of 4-5.
- Opening questions, discuss with a partner:
 - ◆ Who named you, are you named after someone, does your name have a particular meaning?
 - ◆ Would you ever change your name?
 - ◆ Do you know anyone who has changed their name?
 - ◆ What is the significance of a name?

Video & Story 10 min

- Play [Hodja & the Foreigner video](#). Then pass out reading that is a continuation of the story from the video.
- One person in each group reads the story aloud to their group. While listening, ask students to identify different perspectives on the issue and to imagine reasons for why different characters might have different points of view.

Discuss 10 min

- Students discuss questions in small groups:
 - ◆ Why do some people want to change the name back to Kivga’iktu?
 - ◆ Why do some people want to keep the name Worrab?
 - ◆ Who should get to decide the name of this place? And how should they decide? Make a case for your plan.

Reveal: Utqiagvik/ Barrow 15 min

- Write “Utqiagvik” on the board.
 - ◆ *Now I’m going to tell you about a real place. It’s called Utqiagvik. Let’s practice. Repeat syllable by syllable. “Oot-kay-AHG-vik” Say the whole word together.*
 - ◆ *Has anyone heard of a town called Utqiagvik? (If not, Has anyone heard of Barrow?) What do you know about it? (Northernmost city in AK, on the Arctic Ocean, Inupiaq, hub community, etc).*
 - ◆ Reveal:
 - *Taipuni = Inupiat*
 - *Kivga’iktu = Utqiagvik*
 - *Worrab = Barrow*
- Project & read [ADN article](#) or [Smithsonian article](#) on the name change.
 - ◆ As you read, have students take notes to identify reasons to change the name to Utqiagvik and reasons to keep the name Barrow.
 - ◆ Have students share out the reasons they heard for each side. Ask if they can think of any other reasons.
- Ask students to reflect on the connections they see between the Parable of Hodja and the Foreigner and the story of Utqiagvik. Did they feel differently about the story once they knew it happened in Alaska? Were there any pieces of the parable that didn’t really fit with what happened in Utqiagvik/ Barrow?

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Reflect & Share

10 min

- Students write for 5 minutes reflecting on the significance of the names and naming of places (can be about Utqiagvik or in general). Students share their writing with a partner. Then open it up for class discussion.

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Instructions: Read aloud in your group. Listen and follow along.

As you read, look for different points of view. Imagine reasons for why different characters might have different points of view.

Story: Hodja and the Foreigner Continued...

Adapted with permission from "Is Everyone Really Equal?" by Özlem Sensoy and Robin DiAngelo:

Key:

Foreigner - one of the characters in the sign language conversation, who is from a faraway land and who talks about the elements of the Earth

Hodja - one of the characters in the sign language conversation, who is from the local town and who talks about sharing a meal. Hodja is a Taipuni person.

Taipuni- Hodja's people

Kivga'iktu- The original name of the town, named by the Taipuni

Worrab- The new name of the town, named by the Foreigner

There is more to the story of Hodja and the Foreigner....

Because Hodja and the foreigner do not speak the same verbal language, they move to a form of sign language and assume that they share the same understanding of what is being signed. Although both men leave the exchange feeling satisfied, we realize that they have completely misunderstood each other.

If we evaluate carefully, we might see that it goes deeper than a simple misunderstanding - they have completely different ways of organizing the world and different values. For the foreigner, he is focused on the elements of the Earth; he has a more scientific focus. For Hodja, he is focused on sharing a meal; he has a more community orientation.

As their ideas about each other form and as they communicate back to their groups, imagine that one of them has the power to enforce his worldview on the other. Imagine that the foreigner and his entourage are not just passing through, they are in town because their nation has recently invaded Hodja's. The foreigner has been installed to govern Hodja's town and he now controls all of the land - land that Hodja and his people (the Taipuni) have lived on and hunted their food on for all of their lives as did their grandparents and ancestors.

Now Hodja and the Taipuni must pay the foreigner large fees to use this land. The foreigner moves in and appoints his own people to keep positions of government and sets up his culture's rules and social norms. The foreigner imposes these new rules and norms upon Hodja and the townspeople. He changes the name of this place from *Kivga'iktu*, which it was called in the Taipuni language, to *Worrab*, the name of a rich Lord from the Foreigner's homeland.

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Which one of these men is going to need to learn to understand the perspective of the other? While they each have their own worldview and neither worldview is inherently superior, only one of them is in a position of power that enables him to impose his worldview on the other. Hodja and the Taipuni's ability to work and feed their families now depend upon the foreigner and his customs, language, or traditions. Indeed, the foreigner, who now controls the resources needed for Hodja's livelihood, will profit from Hodja and the Taipuni's labor without ever having to understand their perspective.

Now fast forward two hundred years later to today. The descendants of the Taipuni changed their entire way of life, customs, and even language to survive. Many of them have become very educated in the ways of the foreigners and have been successful in this new society. Others have struggled to be successful in a new world that is so different than their ancestors'. Now, descendants of the foreigner and descendants of the Taipuni both have positions of leadership and power, but the language, customs, and laws are based on the foreigner's culture. Some Taipuni have passed on their traditions to their young children, but others see little value in cultural traditions that don't seem to get them anywhere in society.

However, there are some Taipuni who want to bring back more elements of their traditional culture to connect with their heritage. A group of them comes up with the idea of changing the name of the town from *Worrab* back to *Kivga'iktu*.

Many people are excited about this idea because it is an opportunity for the society to incorporate a small piece of Taipuni history into a town that is still ruled by the foreigners' language and culture. Many other people are frustrated. They can't understand why anyone would want to change the name - it's been Worrab since before any of them were alive. Why can't these troublemaker Taipuni just get over their history and accept the way things are today so everyone can live in peace?

Discuss:

- Why do some people want to change the name back to Kivga'iktu?
- Why do some people want to keep the name Worrab?
- Who should get to decide the name of this place? And how should they decide? Make a case for your plan.