

Unit 2: Resilience and Resistance
Lesson Title: Resilience in the Oromo Culture and Justice System

Learning Targets

- I can verbally discuss with a partner or my small group how Oromo culture and justice systems focus on helping each other, repairing harm, and building community, and connect these ideas to real-life situations.
- I can analyze key Oromo cultural practices (Jiga, Qabo, Afoosha) and justice systems (Jaarsummaa, Gumaa, Araara), and apply these concepts to interpret Tashitaa's story and propose alternative approaches.

Essential Questions

- What is Oromo culture?
- How do Oromo resolve conflict?

Grade Level

- Grades 9–12

Ethnic Studies Standards

- **9.5.25.2** Analyze contemporary representations (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) of Indigenous history, iconography, imagery, symbolism, and culture today

English Language Art Standards

- **LSEVI (9-12.3.1.2)** Extend conversations by posing and responding to questions that relate the current discussion to broader themes or larger ideas; actively incorporate others into the discussion; and clarify, verify or challenge ideas and conclusions, demonstrating preparation for the discussion.

Time Frame

- 1–2 class periods

Materials

- *Green Card Entrepreneur Voices*– Tashitaa Tufaa's [story](#) or [video](#)
- Appendix: Student Handouts
- [Oromo Lesson Slides](#)

Connection to the 7 Cs of Ethnic Studies

- **Center:** centering Oromo indigenous culture of helping each other and the Oromo knowledge system of justice and reconciliation

Instructions

Ignite

- Ask students the following questions. (Students can answer in English or a heritage language. They can also draw their answer, if they'd like.)
 - What do you think culture means? If it helps, you can describe our classroom culture, our school culture, your family or community's culture, our culture in America, etc.
- What do you think justice means? If it helps, you can describe what justice looks like when there is a conflict in our classroom, our school, your family, your community, or our society.
- Have students share their answers.

Chunk 1

- Give a student-friendly definition of culture and justice.
- Provide the lesson on Oromo culture below.

The Oromo Culture of Helping Each Other

- *Jiga* is when people come together to help each other with work. Everyone shares the effort so no one has to do it alone.
 - The focus is on teamwork and shared responsibility.
- *Qabo* is when people quickly show up to help someone they care about who is in trouble, without needing to be asked.
 - The focus is on community being there whenever it's needed.
- *Afoosha* is when a group of people regularly support each other, especially during emergencies, by sharing money or resources.
 - The focus is on financial and social support.

Oromo Justice and Reconciliation

- *Jaarsumaa* is when respected elders in the community help solve problems by listening to both sides and helping people make peace.
 - The focus is on the relationship, not blame.
- *Gumaa* is when someone or their family takes responsibility for harm they caused, and gives something back (like support or compensation) to make things right.
 - The focus is on repairing the harm, not punishing.
- *Araara* is a way of bringing people back together after conflict through apology, forgiveness, and community healing.
 - The focus is on finding peace and healing, which is what matters most.

Chunk 2

Compare American and Oromo culture and justice.

- Show the [T-chart](#) (see attachment/appendix 1).

- Give a scenario of a conflict between two students in your school. What harm was caused? What would justice look like? How would the principal handle it?
 - Expected answers would be that our schools traditionally focus on who started the fight (highlighting who is “guilty”) and a punishment system (referral, detention, suspension).
- Now, given our lesson on the Oromo justice system, how do you think this same conflict would be handled in the Oromo culture?
 - **Jaarsumaa:** Respected elders would mediate the conflict and listen to both sides. The two students would talk it out.
 - You can ask students: What questions would you ask? How would you help both sides be heard and understood?
 - **Gumaa:** Harm would be repaired through positive action (providing support, taking responsibility, restoring balance).
 - You can ask students: What support would be needed for both students? How can their relationship be restored going back in the classroom? How can each person take responsibility for the conflict that feels productive for all?
 - **Araara:** The conflict settled, the community would come back together.
 - You can ask: What would peace look like afterward for the two in conflict? How would students in the class feel when the two students return after mediation?

Chew

- Watch or read Tashitaa Tufaa’s [story](#) or [video](#). If reading, highlight/annotate the parts where you can find the answers to the Turn and Talk prompts.
- Turn and Talk, sharing with a partner:
 - What Oromo culture did Tashitaa mention?
 - What disagreements or conflicts did he mention?
 - How did he use his Oromo cultural upbringing to persevere when he was learning English, working multiple jobs, and starting his own business?
- At the end of partner sharing, share with the students: Tashitaa’s story connects to this topic because he is an Oromo immigrant who has lived in Minnesota since 1992. He is a hardworking and community-oriented person who supports his community financially and socially. As an educated entrepreneur, he demonstrates strong commitment to his cultural values, especially the Oromo tradition of helping one another. Helping each other is a core part of Oromo culture, and Tashitaa lives out this value in his daily life. Oromo people value their culture by practicing it through tradition, respect, and community cooperation, just as Tashitaa does.
- In small groups or with a partner, have students take on one of these topics to design what justice could have looked like for Tashitaa. If the Oromo justice system had been used, how would Tashitaa’s experience have been different? Refer to the handout “Why Is Oromo Culture Important?” (attachment/appendix 2) and the prompts below.

- Students can craft their response on paper or digitally, being creative as they visually show how Tashitaa's experience would be different.

Topic options (choose one) and prompts:

- Topic 1: Disagreeing with the government
 - What disagreement or harm was taking place?
 - What could Jarsuumaa (talking it out) and Gumaa (restoring relationship) have looked like?
 - What could Araara (peace) have looked like?
- Topic 2: Learning the English language
 - What barriers did Tashitaa face?
 - How could people and the community have helped him learn English?
 - What could Jiga, Qabo, and Afoosha have looked like for Tashitaa in this circumstance?
- Topic 3: Integrating into a new community
 - How could the community have helped Tashitaa address job and housing access?
 - What support systems could have better helped Tashitaa in his transition?
 - What could Jiga, Qabo, and Afoosha have looked like for Tashitaa in this situation?

Review

- Have students pair-share the following questions:
 - What does justice mean to me now? How could we use aspects of Oromo culture and justice systems in our classrooms, schools, and society?
 - How do my family or my cultural community handle justice and help one another? Is it the same or different from the Oromo culture?

Multilingual and ELL Support

- Provide visuals (see slides/attachments).
- Provide sentence stems for written work and verbal share-outs / small group discussions.
- Provide the chunked parts in the reading ahead of time so students don't have to find it.

Vocabulary and Definitions

- **Culture:** A reflection of how people live and exist as a community or nation. Culture includes many parts of life, such as politics (how people are governed), religion (belief systems), traditions (customs and practices), and the economy (how people work and support themselves).
- **Resilience:** The ability to keep going and not give up when things get hard.
- **Guuza/Jiga (JEE-guh):** When people come together to help each other with work. Everyone shares the effort, so no one has to do it alone. The focus is on teamwork and shared responsibility.

- **Qabo (KAH-boh):** When people quickly show up to help someone they care about who is in trouble, without needing to be asked. The focus is on the community being there whenever you need it.
- **Afoosha (ah-FOO-shah)** When a group of people regularly support each other, especially during emergencies, by sharing money or resources. The focus is on financial and social support.
- **Jaarsumaa (jar-SOOM-mah):** When respected elders in the community help solve problems by listening to both sides and helping people make peace. The focus is on the relationship, not blame.
- **Gumaa (GOO-mah):** When someone or their family takes responsibility for harm they caused and give something back (like support or compensation) to make things right. The focus is on repairing the harm, not punishment.
- **Araara (ah-RAH-rah):** A way of bringing people back together after conflict through apology, forgiveness, and community healing. The focus is on finding peace and healing, which is what matters most.

Resource List

- More about Oromo conflict
 - *Human Rights in Ethiopia: Through the Eyes of the Oromo Diaspora*
www.theadvocatesforhumanrights.org/Res/oromo_report_2009_color_2%202.pdf
 - “Ethiopia” (Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect)
www.globalr2p.org/countries/ethiopia
- More about the Gadaa system in Ethiopia
 - “Building peace by peaceful approach. The Role of Oromo Gadaa system in peace-building” <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2021.2023254>
- Liberated Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum Values and Principles (7 Cs)
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1cGOs7rsY9wT2qI-yIQh5dye8snRjGYxr/view>

Appendix 1: T-Chart – Western School Discipline vs. Oromo Justice System

If There's a Fight at School . . . (Western School Discipline Approach)	If There's a Fight at School . . . (Oromo Justice System Approach)
The focus is on who started the fight.	The focus is on what harm was caused and why it happened.
Students are blamed individually.	Both students are heard and understood in context.
Students are sent to the office/principal.	Students are brought together with elders or trusted adults to mediate (Jaarsummaa).
Students are punished (detention, suspension).	Students work to repair harm (Gumaa).
There is little conversation between students.	Students talk it out and share their perspectives.
Conflict often ends with punishment.	Conflict ends with peace and reconciliation (Araara).
Families may or may not be involved.	The community (family, peers, adults) is involved.
The focus is on rules being broken.	The focus is on relationships being restored.

Appendix 2: Why Is Oromo Culture Important? (Student Handout)

What Is Culture?

Culture is a reflection of how people live and exist as a community or nation. Each person and every group of people has their own culture that guides their daily life. Culture includes many parts of life, such as politics (how people are governed), religion (belief systems), traditions (customs and practices), and the economy (how people work and support themselves).

Culture can be seen in how people dress, how they help each other, how they celebrate weddings, and how they express sadness and joy. In simple terms, culture is the way people live their lives and support one another. It acts like a mirror, reflecting who people are and how they live.

What Is Oromo Culture?

The Oromo people, like all groups, have their own unique culture that shapes their daily lives. This culture influences how they think, act, and interact with others. Oromo culture includes many traditions, such as festivals, marriage practices, systems of helping each other, and ways of resolving conflict. These cultural practices guide how people live and support one another in their communities.

Oromo Culture of Helping Each Other

Helping one another is a very important part of Oromo culture. People support each other and stand together during times of need. There are several ways this support happens in everyday life.

One way is **Jiga**. This is when people come together to do work as a group. For example, people may farm together or help each other build something. This shows the importance of teamwork and shared responsibility, where no one has to do everything alone.

Another way is **Qabo**. This is when people quickly help someone they care about when they are in trouble, even if that person did not ask for help. This shows that the community is always ready to support its members when they are in need.

A third way is **Afoosha**. This is a system where a group of people regularly support each other, especially during important events or emergencies, by sharing money or resources. This provides both financial and social support and ensures that people are not alone during difficult times.

Oromo Cultural Reconciliation (Solving Conflict)

In Oromo culture, there are systems in place to resolve conflicts, from small disagreements to serious situations. These systems have been passed down from generation to generation and are an important part of maintaining peace and balance in the community.

Odaa (Represents Unity and Peace)

The Odaa is a very important place in Oromo culture and history. It represents unity and peace among the people. The Odaa is where leaders, known as the Abba Gadaa, gather to make decisions, solve problems, and keep peace.

The Odaa tree is also symbolic. Its leaves do not dry out in summer or winter, and its wide branches provide shade. This represents protection, stability, and the strength of the community. The Odaa is a place where the community gathers for shared peaceful decision-making. The Oromo culture uses multiple sacred gathering places where people talk things through, solve problems, and keep the peace. The Odaa is preserved through oral tradition and community knowledge.

Oromo Justice and Reconciliation Systems

The Oromo people have developed different ways to solve conflicts and restore peace. These include systems such as Gumaa and Jaarsummaa. These practices focus on understanding, accountability, and healing rather than punishment. The ultimate goal is Araara, which is when peace is restored.

Jaarsummaa is a system where respected elders in the community help resolve conflicts. They listen carefully to both sides, examine the situation thoroughly, and help people tell the truth. Their goal is not just to decide who is right or wrong, but to help restore peace and heal relationships within the community.

Gumaa is used when harm occurs. In this system, the offender or their family takes responsibility and provides support, resources, or compensation to the affected family. This process involves elders, Gadaa leaders, and spiritual leaders. The purpose is to restore balance between the people who were in conflict and to prevent further harm or conflict.

Araara is what happens when peace is restored. Apologies are made, wrongs are forgiven, and the community witnesses the resolution. The parties involved can heal and move forward together.

Conflict is seen as a natural part of life, so there must be ways to resolve it. In Oromo culture, justice focuses on repairing harm rather than punishing individuals. The goal is understanding, accountability, and restoring relationships.

Conclusion of Oromo Culture

Oromo culture is deeply rooted in the community and serves as a system for organizing daily life. It is built on strong values of mutual responsibility and support. People help one another not just occasionally, but as an expected part of life.

In Oromo culture, individuals do not face challenges alone. The community is always there to support, guide, resolve conflicts together, and restore balance. This strong sense of connection and responsibility helps maintain peace and strengthens the community as a whole.