

Somali Ethnic Studies, Lesson 4, Unit 2

Generosity and Honor in Somali Culture

Grade Level: 9-12

Subject: Ethnic Studies

Duration: 55 minutes

Essential Question:

How do the values of generosity and honor shape individual behavior and community dynamics in Somali culture? What is the interplay between honor and generosity? Are they different in Somali-American culture?

Learning Objectives:

1. Students will be able to explain the core value of generosity in Somali culture and its significance in community relationships.
 2. Students will be able to explain the characteristics of honor (Sharaf) in Somali culture and its impact on personal and family reputation.
 3. Students will be able to discuss the expectations of men and women in Somali culture and how they relate to concepts of both honor and generosity.
-

Standards

- **Ethnic Studies**

Identity: Analyze the ways power and language construct the social identities of race, religion, geography, ethnicity, and gender. Apply these understandings to one's own social identities and other groups living in Minnesota, centering those whose stories and histories have been marginalized, erased, or ignored.

Benchmark: Analyze how the definitions, identifications, and understanding of racial and ethnic groups have changed over time as a result of politics. **(9.5.23.1)**

Materials Needed:

- Projector and screen for [Google slides](#)
- Whiteboard, markers, large sheets of paper
- Handouts (e.g. [vocabulary](#))
- Exit ticket slips for student reflections
- [Somali Generosity and Honor Crossword Puzzle](#)

Note: “DOK” throughout refers to Dept of Knowledge questions (Level 1: recall; Level 2: skills and concepts; Level 3: strategic thinking; Level 4: extended thinking)

Estimated Time	Content	Materials
5 mins. DOK 1 DOK 2	<p>Warm-Up/Turn and Talk: (“Ignite”)</p> <p>In pairs, have students turn and talk re:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Has anyone ever done something generous for you that surprised you — a stranger, or someone who didn't have to help? What did that feel like, and what do you think motivated them?" This connects to the spontaneous generosity idea in Somali culture. ● What are typical expressions of generosity among your family and friends?’ <p>Ask students to share what they heard with the larger group.</p>	Slide #1
10 mins.	<p>Share the essential question(s): How do the values of generosity and honor shape individual behavior and community dynamics in Somali culture? What might be the relationship between honor and generosity?</p> <p>Have a student read the learning targets for the lesson:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I can explain the core value of generosity in Somali culture and its significance in community relationships. ● I can describe the characteristics of honor (“sharaf”) in Somali culture and its impact on personal and family reputation. ● I can discuss the expectations of men and women in Somali culture and how they relate 	Slide #2 Slide #3

	<p>to concepts of honor and generosity.</p> <p>Note that honor means very different things in different contexts. It is a word that we may use casually, but don't think about what it really means, and how that meaning changes from culture to culture. It can be a source of dignity and protection, but also a mechanism of social control.</p>	
<p>10 mins.</p> <p>DOK 3</p>	<p>Generosity in Somali Culture (“Chunk”)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss the core value of generosity, highlighting aspects such as hospitality, charity, and expressions of generosity (financial support, food sharing, time investment). • Use slides to present key points and encourage students to share examples from their own experiences or cultures. • Facilitate a discussion on how generosity fosters community support and collective responsibility. 	<p>Slide #4 (with 1-min. reel embedded. The bit on generosity is the second point made @ 30 sec.)</p> <p>Slide #5</p> <p>Slide #6</p>
<p>15 mins.</p> <p>DOK 2</p>	<p>Partner Definitions of “HONOR” (“Chew”)</p> <p>Have students turn and talk with a different partner than they did for the first activity. Ask them to discuss how they would DEFINE honor.</p> <p>Have them share their definitions, and discuss honor’s cultural significance, including its significance to personal and family reputations.</p>	<p>Slide #7</p> <p>Markers & large sheets of paper to record their definitions.</p>
<p>10 mins.</p>	<p>Somali Honor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlight key Somali traits associated with honor: honesty, modesty (“Xishood”), personal demeanor, and treatment of others. • Discuss the expectations placed on men and women in Somali culture regarding honor and behavior. 	<p>Slide #8 & #9</p> <p>Slide #10</p> <p>Slides #11, #12</p>

DOK 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage students in a reflection on their own cultural understanding of honor and how it influences social dynamics. Ask students to look back at their original definition. How does that definition compare to what Somali culture emphasizes?" 	
5 mins. DOK 4	<p>Closing and Exit Ticket (“Review”)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask students to take a moment to think about the Somali traditions of dress and values of honor and generosity are expressed. Ask if they see any issues with the expectations of Somali men and women in their lives in America. Is it different in America or the same for Somali-American families? Have them write down their thoughts and share tickets with you as they leave. 	

Assessment:

- Participation in class discussions and group activities, using [“Do Your Part”](#) rubric.
- Completion of the exit ticket reflection.

Differentiation Options/Extensions:

- Basic:** Provide additional examples or support for students who may struggle with understanding cultural concepts.
- Basic:** As an optional homework assignment or extension activity, have students complete the [Crossword puzzle](#) that is built out of [the vocabulary list](#).
- More Challenging:** They might also interview a family member on their notions of generosity and honor and the relationship between the two concepts. These may naturally be from other cultures.
- More Challenging:** Somali poetry deeply emphasizes honor (*sharaf*), bravery, and moral integrity as central pillars of identity, often using verse to navigate communal duties, pride, and ethical conduct. They could analyze this Somali poem by Sayyid called “The Weight of Honor” (below) – looking at how honor plays out in the poem compared to the definitions and discussion in class.

The Weight of Honor

A name untarnished is the ultimate prize,

More lasting than silver, and brighter than skies.

A coward may live, but his story will die,

While the brave bear the standard, and on honor rely.

Guard the weak, and keep your word with care,

For in the land of the poet, your honor is rare.