

LESSON: Cross Cultural Game (Lesson 2 in the series)

TIME: 100 minutes

SUMMARY

Students read an article on tensions between students at Valley High School. They examine what might cause this and how cultural issues could contribute through a journal entry. They then play a card game that simulates cultural differences and reflect on the challenges and experiences they had in the game.

OBJECTIVES

Social Studies

- **SS.9-12.BS.6** Understand the process of how humans develop, learn, adapt to their environment, and internalize their culture.
- **SS.9-12.BS.5** Understand how social status, social groups, social change, and social institutions influence individual and group behaviors.
- **SS.9-12.BS.7** Understand how personality and agents of socialization impact the individual.

Literacy

- **CCRA.L.9-12.6** Acquire and use accurately general and academic and domain-specific words and phrases, sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level.

MATERIALS & RESOURCES

- One deck of playing cards for every 4-6 people
- Copies of Rules 1, 2, 3 and 4; a **unique** copy of “Barnga” directions/rule sheets for each small group
- Copies of articles of this story:
<http://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/news/education/2015/02/23/valley-high-hosts-open-forum-fights/23895823/>

PRESENTATION

Remind students that last time we learned about culture using GRAPES (Geography, Religion, Achievements, Political structure, Economy, Social structure). Explain that culture is almost like the air we breathe:

It’s essential to human communities (we create it everywhere we go) and it’s also very hard to see. But different from air, it’s something we create.

DIRECTIONS

1. Provide examples or have students generate examples of cultural practices that they partake in that someone from outside that culture would not know.
2. Read the DMRegister article on recent incidents at Valley High (link above) or have them read it in pairs.
3. After students are finished reading, give them 5-10 minutes to journal from these prompts:
 - a. What factors do they think are at the root of incidents like this?
 - b. What tensions are present in their own school and/or community?
 - c. What can be done to help students know each other better?
 - d. Could fights like these be attributed to not knowing each other's culture well enough?
4. Give students a few minutes to discuss their responses with a partner and then share with the class. What are the different perspectives that come up around these questions?
5. Explain that they're about to play a game and that they should pay attention to the game to see what they can learn.
6. Divide the class into small groups of 4-6 students each.
7. Explain that each group will get directions for the game. Have them read the directions aloud in their small groups. Make sure everyone understands how to play.
8. Once play begins **all groups must play silently.**
 - Note to Educators: The game is called 'Barnga'. In it, students learn how to play a simple card game in small groups. The catch is that each group has slightly different rules, but don't know it. After students learn how to play the game they started with (were 'born' into) they are told that the card tournament is silent.
 - Begin mixing the original groups up, changing one person at a time. When a new person rotates to a different group, they will soon realize that they are playing similar games, but not the same game.
 - Without an easy way to talk about this, confusion and frustration can build. There is lots of symbolism in the game that is ripe for cultural critique: social norms, code-switching, communication barriers, mainstream culture, and stratification, i.e. this lesson's vocabulary/concept words.

9. After students play the game for a few rounds facilitate an oral debriefing. Resist your desire to provide the answers, and use questions to help interpret the simulation. Expect every student to contribute at least once. Make sure these questions come up in the discussion:

- What happened?
- What do you think the card game symbolizes about the way we interact in society?
- Think back to the beginning of class and the idea that cultural norms are often invisible to us...until we are in situations out of our culture. How did it feel to be out of your 'culture,' or the rules you knew?
- What are some social norms you take for granted in your culture that not everyone would know?
- What different forms can social norms take? (some possibilities include language, manners, interpersonal norms, volume of voice, demeanor, attitude towards authority figures)
- How did you learn these social norms?
- What are examples of social capital that are valued in your society?
- Does mainstream culture value certain behaviors more than others?
- What is deviance?
- What would 'deviance' look like in the Barnaga game?
- What do you think the outcome would be if there were deviance (positive and negative)?
- What forms does deviance take in our culture (positive and negative)?

REFLECTION/JOURNAL PROMPT

As an exit card/check for understanding, have students respond to at least two of the following individually:

- Revise or add to your initial journal entry any new perspectives you have from the Barnaga game and discussion.
- Write or discuss one example of social capital that you have, and one example of social capital you do not have.
- Write about one question you have or would like to discuss.
- Discuss one action step you can take when it comes to facilitating cultural awareness or cross-cultural communication.