**Subject:** English Language

**Title:** Etymology of Names

**Duration:**1.30

**Grade level:** 16-17 years old

**Teacher**: Carouzou Vivi

Overview

What's in a name?  More than we often realize. Everyone's name has a surprisingly interesting origin. This lesson explores the etymology[[1]](#footnote-1)1 of first names. It is an interesting, novel way for people to introduce themselves to others, especially in ethnically diverse groups. It features an introduction to etymology and sources of first names in different cultures. Students investigate the origins of their own first and last name. Greek names are first analyzed and then names of foreign students (immigrants) in our school in an attempt to share our roots.

It also looks through the ways in which identity is conveyed through the use of names.

how your name may have had a positive or negative influence in your life or in the life of someone closely related.

1. Understanding the meaning of Greek first names and their significance.
2. Students learn about the meanings of their classmates’ names who are not Greek through which they can be introduced to various aspects of history and their faith.
3. Understanding about how names reveal our identities. Fostering respect for individual worth and human dignity.
4. Through analyzing primary source documents students discuss what it means to be renamed when immigrating to another country.
5. Discussing the difference between cultural assimilation vs multiculturalism.

**Objectives:**

* To increase an appreciation for diversity and provide strategies for living in a multicultural society.
* To help build intercultural respect and understanding or to more generally help develop self-identity and open respect and sharing.
* To explore personal identities through names and articulate personal connections to time, place, and social/cultural systems.
* To develop cultural pride
* How we see ourselves versus how we are seen by others.
* Cultural identity; pride in home language and culture.

**Methods and approaches**

* + Active learning
  + Research
  + Comparison
  + Discussion
  + Group and pair work

**Activities:**

Activity 1: Learning About Your Own Name

Activity 2: What’s In a Name – Foreign names: their sources and meanings

Activity 3: Losing a Name, Choosing Another

Activity 4: Discuss the difference between cultural assimilation vs. multiculturalism

**Material:**

online etymological dictionaries

Worksheet

## Process

## Activity 1: Learning About Your Own Name

**Directions:**

#### a. Ask students the following questions to elicit what they know.

* + Why names are important?
  + Personal names reflect the history and values of a society. Do you agree?
  + What do you think when you hear a person’s name? Do you make assumptions about their

-nationality

-racial background

-religion

-the way they dress

* How do different cultures name their children?

#### Student Handout 1

How You Got Your Name

#### b. Distribute Handout 1 and ask students to interview each other about their own names.

**c. Debriefing Discussion:**

After students have completed the survey, ask them what they learned about their name that they did not know before. Give them some extra information[[2]](#footnote-2)2.

Post the results on a bulletin board. You may also wish to tabulate the results into categories such as:

* How many and which nationalities are represented by classmates whose family names originated in a different country?
* Who/how many in the class were named after someone the family admired, after a relative, after someone in a religious text, for the sound or meaning of the name?
* How many last names are patrilineal (descended from the father), matrilineal (descended from the mother) or a combination of both?

## Activity 2: What’s In a Name?

#### Student Handout 2

#### What’s in a Name?

**Directions:**

**a.** Give studentsa list of names for boys and girls that appear both the Koran and the Bible. Ask students to match them to their equivalents in English.

**b.** Tell students some things about Muslim and Slavic names**.** See below[[3]](#footnote-3)3.

**c.** Give students a list of Muslim andSlavicnames and their meaning.

**d.** Give students a photocopy with the names and the photos of some well-known people with Slavic and Muslim names, either from show-biz, sports or politics. Ask them to find what their first names mean.

**e.** Ask students to interview classmates who come from another country and find what their first names mean.

**Activity 3: Losing a Name, Choosing Another**

###### Student Handout 3 (Listening)

**Directions:**

Ask students to listen to two people talking about their names and keep notes so as to answer the following questions.

**Questions:**

* Have you ever thought of changing your name?
* Who do you think should be empowered to name a person and why?
* Why do you value your name?
* Does Artan change his name willingly?
* Does Artan fight to retain his name? Why not?
* Is Artan deprived of his identity when he is renamed?
* Why do you think Artan accepts tochange his name –twice?
* Why did Adelina attempt to find a Greek equivalent of her name, while retaining some of its meaning?
* Compare and contrast the experience of Artan and Adelina.
* Why should anyone have to change their names to fit a societal standard?
* Was it easier to make friends with other people in the country after changing names?
* When you know that there are stereotypes attached to a group to which you belong are you more or less likely to reveal your true identity Why/ Why not?
* Being in the minority make it hard to stick to who you are? Why is it easier to be a member of the majority than a minority in any given context?
* In what other circumstances does someone change their name? Look at **Table 1** in Handout 3

#### Activity 4: Discuss

###### Student Handout 4

**Cultural assimilation vs. multiculturalism.**

**Directions:**

a. Ask students to read the text in Handout 4 and underline some of the reasons given for changing names.

b. Discuss the difference between cultural assimilation **vs**. multiculturalism.

c. Reconvene the class and evaluate their experiences with the lesson. Some reflection questions you might pose are:

1. What aspect(s) of the lesson did they find most fascinating?
2. What aspect(s) did they find most surprising?

HOMEWORK

For homework ask students in groups to make PPPs with the etymology and history of their names and present it to class.

##### Evaluation

#### Rubric for Participation in Class Discussion

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Participation:** | **Comments on Student’s Participation:** | **1→5:** |
| Participated often in discussion. |  |  |
| Listened well to others. |  |  |
| Comments demonstrate reflection and understanding about how names reveal our identities. |  |  |
| Comments reflect that student has new appreciation of names and their meanings. |  |  |

#### Rubric for Completion of

#### ‘How You Got Your Name Questionnaire’

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Written Work** | **Comments on Student’s Work** | **1→5:** |
| Student made effort to interview appropriate persons. |  |  |
| Student filled in all or most categories depending upon available information. |  |  |
| Student’s answers were clear. |  |  |
| Student wrote a self-reflective and insightful concluding answer. |  |  |
| Students used appropriate sources and conducted effective research to make the PPPs. |  |  |

#### Resources

1. Iordannis Psimmenos, *Migration from the Balkans: Social Exclusion in Athens (*Athens: Papazisis, 1995), pp. 185-86 [in Greek].

2. Przecha, Donna. "They Changed Our Name at Ellis Island." <http://www.genealogy.com/88_donna.html>

Online etymological dictionaries and sites students can use for Greek and Christian names:

<http://wapedia.mobi/en/Greek_name>

<http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?search>

<http://www.behindthename.com/>

<http://www.krysstal.com/display_nameslang.php?lang=Greek>

<http://www.lgpn.ox.ac.uk/names/introduction.html> (lexicon of Greek personal names)

Online etymological dictionaries and sites students can use for arabic and slavic names:

<http://www.muslimnames.info//>

<http://www.etymonline.com/>

<http://wapedia.mobi/en/Arabic_name>

<http://wapedia.mobi/en/Turkish_name>

<http://wapedia.mobi/en/Slavic_name#1>.

1. 1 **Etymology** The study of word origins, which is a "branch of linguistics that investigates the history, development, and origin of words" (Columbia Encyclopedia, n.d.).

   For example, the word *etymology* comes from the Ancient Greek language. It is composed of two parts: the Greek word *etymon*, which means "the true sense of a word", combined with the Greek element *logia*, which means "doctrine, study". Combining these two parts gives us "the study of the true sense of words", which can be said to be the 'meaning' of the word *etymology*.

   The etymology of names is the study of the origin and literal meaning of names. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. 2 Personal names in ancient Greece reflected features of the landscape, and the values of the religious, cultural and political life. The main themeswere: military powers (v. - alexo- defend’=**Alex**andros), political institutions, parts of the body, plants, animals **(** -ippos ‘horse’, Fil-**ippos**, etc.), ‘theophoric’ names, names based on the names of gods (from the god Zeus, root **Dio**-:Dio-genes), the word for god, ‘theos’, **Theo**-doros, worship in Greece of the Egyptian goddess Isis gave rise to names such as **Isi-**doros, localised names, e.g. the river Asopos in Viotia gave rise to names such as **Asop**-ios, which are found almost exclusively in Viotia and Athens.

   In the 4th c AD parents were urged to name their children after saints and martyrs and not after ancestors. At that time, names were a mixture of Roman names such as Marcus, Ioulianus, old Greek names such as Alexandros, Dionysios, and a certain number of distinctly Christian names such as Eustathios, Euphemios. In the Byzantine Empire names of new rulers, such as Basileios, Leon, Alexios, were in use. By the 13c, however, the personal names Ioannes, Georgios, Demetrios and Maria had established their lasting ascendancy.

   The two main influences in modern Greek personal names are Christianity and Antiquity. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. 3 **Muslim names**: Most names come from the Arabic language, although there is some borrowing from Persian and Turkish (especially in Iran and Turkey). The majority of the names are derived from vocabulary words. Most names are originally Arabic words with a meaning, usually signalling the good character of the person.

   Islam is of course a major influence on naming practices. The multiple forms of Muhammad are extremely popular, as are the names of his family and descendents, such as Omar, Ali, Bakr and Fatima. Military leaders, names of prophets are often honored as well; e.g. Tariq and Amir. The Koran is another source of names. Ibrahim and Mariam are two examples of names from the Koran that have English biblical equivalents (Abraham and Mary). Some are prefixed with *Abd al* meaning "servant of the…

   **Slavic origin names** - are most popular in Slavic countries such as: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Poland, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Ukraine, etc. Slavic names are either peaceful or warlike in character and usually built of two parts (**prefix/sufix**). They have often Pre-Christian or medieval origin and describe wish. Note that feminine equivalents end in the vowel -a (e.g. Bogusław - Bogusława). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)