

Use your name to learn more about yourself, others, and the world!

Discussion Guide for use with Huda Essa's Talk, "Your Name is the Key!" on YouTube or the TED website: https://www.ted.com/talks/huda_essa_your_name_is_the_key

Our names are symbols of our exceptional human diversity. Sharing the stories of our names helps us to gain a better understanding of who we are and what we have to offer the world. Learning from others' name stories allow us to build relationships, empathy, and knowledge about the people and places in our shared world.

The answers to these questions may involve asking guardians, family members, and other sources. The outcomes could include learning more about one's social identities, cultures, family history, national origin, bias, language, and so much more. If your family history is unavailable (adoption, family loss, no accessible accounts of history, lack of human resources, or other necessary resources), the focus should be primarily on the questions that can be answered. Whether you know a lot about their history or not, you have a name and you have a story. What you have to share is priceless. The more you share your story, the more you will encounter others who have a similar story. This is an opportunity for you to build more knowledge and connections. It is also an excellent opportunity for others to learn from your identities, experiences, and thoughts!

Use your name to become more worldly as you learn more about yourself and better connect with all others! After watching the video, consider how you would answer the following questions and prompts. Be sure to share your answers with others and learn from other peoples' answers, as well!

1. Huda talks about how she used to hate her name. How do you feel about your name? Why do you feel that way?
2. How does the way you feel about your name relate to the place you live, the people around you, and the cultures you live within? Might your feelings about your name be different if your answers changed? ie. If your name is a common one in the place you live, people may not have much of a reaction to your name so you don't think about it too much. You may not see the topic as a big deal. But if you were living in a place where your name was uncommon, you may face different reactions which could cause your feelings to change.
3. Do you know of any of your ancestors' names? Why or why not? If you do know any of their names, would any be considered "uncommon" ones today?
4. Do you know if any of your ancestors forced or pressured to change their names? If so, what was the reason? Who forced or pressured them to make that change?
5. Like Huda did, many people decide that they must change their names in order to feel more accepted. Some people were forced to do so. What would happen if everyone had similar names? What knowledge and skills would we risk losing?

6. Consider any of the ideas from Huda's TED Talk or the prompts to share ideas about your name. Some could be...

- Reason you were given your name
- Literal meaning of your name
- What your name means to you, personally
- Any changes to your family name or any family members
- History of your family name
- Origin of name (language, national origin, etc.)
- Feelings about your name
- Reactions to your name
- Your responses to others' reactions to your name
- Social identities your name represents
- Cultural norms your name represents