



Objectives:

Students will:

- Describe naming practices
- Investigate why they were given a certain name.
- Create a short story or drawing about their names.

Materials Needed

- *Welcome Dede* by Ifeoma Onyefulu
- A map of Africa
- Chart paper
- Paper and pencils

Ages 5-8

Time: 2 days

Preparation

Read the introduction to *Welcome Dede* before reading the story to the children. The introduction provides important information about names and naming ceremonies in African cultures.

Activating Prior Knowledge

- Ask children one or more of the following: How do babies get their names? How did you get your name? Who named you? Is your name a family name? Was your name created just for you?
- Show the map of Africa. Ask if anyone can find the country of Ghana where the story is set and Nigeria, the home of the author.

Procedure

1. Show the picture on the cover and read the title. Ask the children to predict what will happen in the story. If children ask why the baby has painted eyebrows, explain that her relatives are dressing her up for her naming ceremony.
2. Read the story.

Follow-up Questions

- How long must the baby wait to get a name? (eight days)
- Who gave Dede her name? (her grandfather)
- Who decides if the name is the right one? (the chief, because he is the head of the extended family.)
- Why is a name so important? (You carry it your whole life and it may tell something about you)
- What kinds of presents does Dede receive? (money, fabrics for baby clothes, baby powder, necklace for the mother)

Thinking Question:

Why do you think Dede's parents are not at the naming ceremony?

Explanation: Children in Africa belong to the community, not just the mother and father. The naming ceremony provides an opportunity for the relatives to bond with the child and introduce the baby to the community. In many African cultures the relatives will take care of most of the babies needs in the first weeks of life. The mother's primary tasks are feeding the baby and resting. The father's primary responsibility is to provide the resources needed to take care of the family.

Writing and Presentation Activity

1. Children should ask their parents or guardians about their names. (How their names were selected and/or the meaning of their names.) As they collect the information, they can take notes, ask an adult to write the information or use a tape recorder.
2. In class, students will create a short story about their names. They may want to add an illustration or photograph of themselves.
3. As students share their stories, the teacher can record the information on chart paper.
4. The class can create a book or web page of their naming stories.

Extended Activity: Who is the person behind the name?

- Share words that describe who you are inside.