

Story of My Name

DBP Website: [Story of My Name](#)

Space	Materials	Age Group
Limited Space	➤ None	➤ Upper Elementary/Primary ➤ Middle School/High School/Secondary

What is it and Why Use It?:

Story of My Name asks students to share the meaning or story behind their first, middle, last/surname or a nickname. This strategy requires active listening skills and verbal communication; it is often used as an ice-breaker or introductory activity or to explore themes from literature.

Directions:

Invite students to sit in a circle or in desks/tables. Introduce the activity: *Today we will share a brief story with a partner about some aspect of our name.* Explain that students can choose to tell the story of their first, middle, last name, or a nickname. Depending on the context or class, students can also invent a story about their name if they prefer. (This takes the pressure off people who do not have a story to tell.) Model the process by sharing the story of your name as an example. Next, give the students a moment to think about the story they wish to share with the larger group. Then, divide the group in pairs and ask each pair to choose one person to share their story first. All students share their stories at the same time. After two minutes ask the pairs to switch and the second person shares their story. After each person in the pair has shared, the full group comes back together to reflect on the activity. Depending on the level of comfort and time, once back in the full group each pair member can introduce their partner and share a brief description of the story they heard, or the group can move directly to reflection on the larger activity without additional sharing.

Reflection:

- *What did you notice about yourself as you participated in this activity?*
- *Where do our names come from? Did we see any common themes?*
- *If you've had the chance to name (or help someone to name) a new sibling, a pet, a doll, etc. what informed the choice you made?*
- *What do names tell us? Are they important? Why or why not?*

***The House on Mango Street* Adaptation:**

- Review “My Name” from *The House on Mango Street*. Reading this chapter, what do we know about the main character’s name? What does the story of her name tell us about her?
 - “In English my name means hope. In Spanish it means too many letters. It means sadness, it means waiting. It is like the number nine. A muddy color. It is the Mexican records my father plays on Sunday mornings when he is shaving, songs like sobbing. It was my great-grandmother’s name and now it is mine.” pg. 10
 - “At school they say my name funny as if the syllables were made out of tin and hurt the roof of your mouth. But in Spanish my name is made out of a softer something, like silver, not quite as thick as sister’s name—Magdalena—which is uglier than mine. Magdalena who at least can come home and become Nenny. But I am always Esperanza.” pg. 11