

# African American Voices Lesson Plans

**Lesson Plan:** Ujamaa: Applying Cooperative Economics in our Neighborhoods

**Subject:** Economics

**Grade level:** 12

**NGSSS-SS:** **SS.912.E.1.1-** Understand the fundamental concepts relevant to the development of a market economy.



**Description/  
Abstract of Lesson:** The students will study the manner in which local/neighborhood economies become strong using the Garvey model of economic development (cooperative economics). The students will compose a list of small business in their neighborhoods that they could regularly patronize to meet their everyday needs.

**Objective(s):** The students will

- Understand how localized economies become strong.
- Develop comprehension on how to aid in one's own neighborhood's development.

**Materials:** Internet Resources/Hand Outs

**Duration:** 1 class period

**Lesson Lead In/  
Opening:**

1. The teacher will read the African folklore *The Feast* from <http://www.folktales.net/ujamaa.html>.
2. The teacher will prompt discussion using higher order thinking questions:
  - What is the moral of this story?
  - If everyone would have complied with the King and took a gourd of wine, how would have the outcome been different?
  - Do you see people treat each other this way in real life? How so?
  - What is a possible solution to this problem?

**Activity:** 1. Read to the students the definition of the Kwanzaa principle and Swahili word *Ujamaa*:

Ujamaa: Cooperative economics; to come together and support each others' businesses and profit from them together.

2. Explain that this was a principle practiced by leaders such as Marcus Garvey and Malcolm X. The term itself was coined by Dr. Maulana Karenga, the inventor of Kwanzaa.

3. Have the students read about how Ujamaa would work in a neighborhood setting using the article listed on <http://ujamaacollective.org/>

4. After reading the article, have the students create individualized plans on how they can assist their neighborhoods become stronger by purchasing everyday (and irregular) needs from small businesses located in their neighborhoods.

5. Have students share individualized plans with the rest of the class.

**Extended Lesson:**

Have groups of students develop plans of supporting 2 to 3 new small businesses in their community for the duration of three months. Have them write about the experience (i.e. how successful they were in making the business successful).

**Assessment:**

- Evaluate plans according to accuracy, grammar and neatness.
- Consider creativity grades for plan development.

**Suggested Books  
In Lesson:**

Pinkney, A. D. (1993) Seven Candles for Kwanzaa, Dial.

Wilson, A. (1996) Blueprint for Black Power: A Moral, Political, and Economic Imperative for the Twenty-First Century, Afrikan World Infosystems

# UJAMAA - Cooperative Economics

## *The Feast*

There was a once chief who decided that he wanted to give a party for his entire kingdom. Everyone was invited. He would provide all the food and entertainment. The only thing he asked was that each family brings a gourd of wine. This would be poured into a huge pot from which all would be served. All the villages were buzzing with excitement. People were deciding what to wear and wondering what dances and stories would be performed. It promised to be a fabulous party.

One farmer was talking with his wife as they were getting ready on the day of the party and said, "Why should we spend good money on a gourd full of wine for the king's party? Isn't this party supposed to be free?"

"But dear," said his wife, "All the king is asking for is one gourd of wine. Is that really asking so much?"

But the stingy farmer, thinking himself very clever replied, "Who will notice one gourd of water in a big pot full of wine?"

So the farmer filled his gourd with water instead of wine. When the people were all gathered waiting for the party to begin, the king called everyone together for a toast.

"Let every cup be filled," he shouted, "That we may drink to the future of our land! May this party be as fine as the wine we are about to drink!"

Everyone raised their cups in a cheer before they drank. The farmer then took a sip of his wine. But when he tasted it, he threw his cup down and shouted, "This is only water!"

All the others had the same complaint. It seems that the farmer was not the only one who had the idea to put water instead of wine into his gourd. They had all done it. So it was that all they had to drink at the party was water. The king was so disappointed, that he ended the party early.