

# Brazos Valley African American Museum



**Curriculum Learning Trunk  
Lesson Plans for High School- 10th Grade**

**Kwanzaa  
10<sup>th</sup> Grade**

**Kwanzaa: Elementary 10<sup>th</sup> Grade Lesson Plan**  
**BVAAM**  
**Curriculum Learning Trunk - Lesson Plan**

**OBJECTIVE:** Students will learn about African American culture and traditions.  
Students will discuss similarities and differences between Kwanzaa and their personal winter holidays.  
Students will reflect on Kwanzaa values in class.  
Students will work in teams to gather information about Kwanzaa celebrations in their own community.  
Students will develop a persuasive letter about incorporating Kwanzaa celebrations into their community.

**TEKS:** **Knowledge and Skills**  
**English Language Arts and Reading**  
10.16 Students will write persuasive texts to influence the attitudes or actions of a specific audience on specific issues.  
10.21 Students determine, locate, and explore the full range of relevant sources addressing a research question and systematically record the information they gather.  
10.23 Students organize and present their ideas and information according to the purpose of the research and their audience.  
10.26 Students work productively with others in teams. Students will continue to apply earlier standards with greater complexity.

**BACKGROUND INFO:** Kwanzaa is a holiday celebrated in the United States to honor the African heritage and culture. It is a seven-day long festival that surrounds the lighting of one candle each day on the *kinara* (a candle holder). Each of the seven days of Kwanzaa is specifically dedicated to a principle of the African American culture: (1) unity, (2) self-determination, (3) collective work and responsibility, (4) cooperative economics, (5) purpose, (6) creativity, and (7) faith.

**TIME ESTIMATION:** 45 minutes for 7 days

**MATERIALS NEEDED:** 7 toilet cardboard toilet paper rolls  
1 painted black  
3 painted red  
3 painted green  
Yellow, Red, and/or Orange tissue paper  
Internet access for students

**ENGAGE:** Before starting the lesson, gauge the students' understanding of what Kwanzaa is. Are there any students in class whose family celebrates Kwanzaa? (If so, allow them to share as they are comfortable.) What holidays do other students in class celebrate during the winter months? What are some important pieces of those holidays? Family? Gifts? Etc.

**EXPLORE:** **Step 1:** Answer the questions asked by the teacher and engage in small class discussion as students begin to unpack their understanding of

family and cultural holidays that they celebrate. It is important for the teacher to foster an open dialogue that is respectful of holidays that may be in the minority of other holidays celebrated in your classroom (i.e. Hanukah vs Christmas).

**Step 2:** Take time to stop and discuss each of the seven principles of Kwanzaa. Ask students how these principles might look in their own life? In the classroom? On the playground?

**Step 3:** Explain to students that each day of Kwanzaa one of the candles is lit and time of reflection is given for the principle of that day. “Light” (use the tissue paper) the black “candle” (toilet paper roll) on the Kinara at the front of the class. Today, explain that the black candle is lit as a day of togetherness and unity: Umoja (oo-MO-jah).

**Step 4:** Have students repeat the word “Umoja” as a class and then have them discuss with their table why they are thankful for their classroom, their teacher, and their peers. Why is it important that we all get along together? What does this look like (or not look like) in your community? In your state? In your country? Discuss some current events that pertain to today’s word and do the same each day as you discuss each principle.

**Step 5:** Ask students if they are aware of the types of celebrations that occur in their local community surrounding the Kwanzaa holiday. Divide student into groups of 3-5 people and assign them different local civic and government leaders to contact. Throughout the next 6 days, provide time during class for students to work together to call, email, or write letters to these leaders in order to gather information about how Kwanzaa is celebrated. On the last day, have students report to their class what they found (or didn’t find) about Kwanzaa celebrations in their community.

**\*\*Repeat steps 3-5 each day for the next six days as a warm up focusing on the principle of that day. Then continue to foster a classroom environment for groups to work on their research:**

**Day 2: A red candle is lit. (Kujichagulia– self-determination)**

What is a talent that each student has?

**Day 3: A green candle is lit. (Ujima– collective work/responsibility)**

What is something that the entire class can do together? Perhaps volunteer to help with some piece of the beautification of the school?

**Day 4: A red candle is lit. (Ujamma– cooperative economics/sharing)**

Bring a “gift” that the entire class can enjoy together. Show how the whole class gets to enjoy this gift together instead of only having individual gifts that they don’t share. This can be anything from a new pencil sharpener to a class pet, but it must be something that everyone benefits equally from having in the classroom.

**Day 5: A green candle is lit. (Nia– purpose/goal setting)**

Today, share a hope or dream that you (the teacher) have. Ask

students to share a hope or dream they have as well.

**Day 6: A red candle is lit. (Kuumba– creativity)**

Have each student create a short poem that incorporates at least two of the Kwanzaa principles that have been learned about so far.

**Day 7: A green candle is lit. (Imani– faith)**

On the last day of Kwanzaa, all the candles have been lit and a celebration feast is shared to reflect on ourselves, our friends and family, and our future. Have students bring in food to share or, as the teacher, bring in a few snacks for the students to celebrate.

**EXPLAIN:**

The mission of Kwanzaa is to put each of the seven principles into practice in our daily lives. Each day of Kwanzaa, a candle on the *Kinara* is lit. Each principle of Kwanzaa is typically spoken in Swahili. Go over each word on their respective days and explain what they mean in English:

Umoja (oo-MO-ja) means Unity: being joined together.

Kujichagulia (koo-jee-cha-goo-LEE-ah) means Self-determination: being yourself.

Ujima (oo-JEE-mah) means Collective work and responsibility: helping one another.

Ujamaa (oo-jah-MAH) means Cooperative economics: sharing.

Nia (NEE-ah) means Purpose: having a goal.

Kuumba (koo-UH-mbah) means Creativity: using our hands and minds to make things.

Imani (ee-MAH-nee) means Faith: believing in ourselves, our ancestors, and our future.

**ELABORATE:**

If students find that there are no celebrations of Kwanzaa in their community, have them work as a class to plan one and/or write a persuasive letter to the community leaders explaining why there should be community Kwanzaa celebrations. This is inclusive of

**EVALUATE:**

Assess the students' knowledge each day as they discuss the different principles of Kwanzaa. Praise and encourage students to continue to apply these principles even when they are outside of the class (playground, cafeteria, etc.).

**ACCOMODATIONS:**

Encouraging all students to participate is important, but allow students who are shy to write their discussion points down instead of speaking. Students who are ELL may benefit from having the toilet paper roll candles labeled with both the Swahili and English words so that they can visually see them.