

LESSON 1: Why We Give



TOTAL TIME:
60 minutes

Objectives



Students will be able to:

- Define generosity and explain why human beings give.
- Distinguish between intrinsic and extrinsic motivations for giving.
- Reflect on personal motivations and begin to develop a giving philosophy grounded in their own values.

Guiding Questions

- Why do people give, and does it matter why?
- What is the difference between giving out of obligation and giving out of genuine care?
- How does generosity connect individuals to something larger than themselves?

Differentiation Strategies

For students who need more support:

- Provide a sentence-starter bank:
 - “I give because...”
 - “I think people give because...”
 - “My personal value around giving is...”
 - Offer the motivation sort as a partner activity rather than independently

For advanced learners:

- Introduce philosophical frameworks: altruism, reciprocity, and social contract theory.
- Ask students to find a real-world example (news article, biography) that illustrates intrinsic vs. extrinsic motivation in giving.
- Challenge students to write a one-page giving philosophy statement.

Extension

- Have students interview a family member or community member about why they give and compare motivations across generations or cultures.
- Assign a short reading: an excerpt from a speech or essay by a philanthropist (e.g., Andrew Carnegie’s “The Gospel of Wealth,” a Maya Angelou essay, or a contemporary giving pledge) and ask students to identify the motivation.

Materials



- Whiteboard or chart paper and markers
- **Optional:** sticky notes for the motivation sort activity

Where could this fit?

- ELA: Analyze an author's purpose or argument in a nonfiction text about giving or service.
- Social Studies / Civics: Explore philanthropy's role in a democratic society and community governance.
- Advisory / SEL: Use the personal giving philosophy as a values clarification exercise.
- After-school / At home: Reflect on family and cultural traditions of giving and generosity.



Introduction

- Pose a question: "If you gave \$100 to a food bank because your teacher told you to, is that the same as giving \$100 because you personally wanted to help? Does the motivation matter?"
- Invite students to share their responses.
- Tell students: "Today we're going to dig into one of the most fundamental questions about generosity: not just what people give, but why."
- Quick poll: Ask students to place themselves on a spectrum. "On a scale from 1-5: 1 = I give because I'm expected to; 5 = I give because I want to." No judgment — just honest reflection.



10
minutes

Direct Instruction

- Define the two categories:
 - Intrinsic motivation: giving that comes from within
 - Intrinsic motivation is associated with personal values, empathy, meaning.
 - Extrinsic motivation: giving driven by external pressure

- Extrinsic motivation is associated with praise, obligation, social expectation, or reward.

- Note that both exist, and most people's giving involves a mix.
- Share this framework for understanding giving motivations. Discuss each row as a class:



15
minutes

More Extrinsic	More Intrinsic
Donating because your school ran a competition	Donating because you read about the issue and it affected you
Volunteering to build your college application	Volunteering because you feel connected to the people being served
Giving publicly so others see and admire you	Giving anonymously because you believe in the cause
Participating because your friend pressured you	Participating because it aligns with your values

- Ask: "Is extrinsic giving less valuable than intrinsic giving? Or does the impact still matter regardless of the motive?" Encourage students to share their responses.

Guided Practice

- Invite students to work in small groups. Each group should come up with a scenario to describe to the class.
- Suggest that groups can act out small skits of their scenario if time permits.
- In their scenario, groups can exemplify

intrinsic or external giving motivation.

- Ask each group to share their scenario. Invite the other students to share if the scenario shows intrinsic or extrinsic motivation.



Independent/ Group Practice

- Introduce the idea of a personal giving philosophy: a set of values and principles that guide how and why you give. Ask: "What would yours look like?"
- Ask students to respond to the prompt below in writing.



Independent Reflection Prompt

1. Describe one time you gave something to someone or something. What was your motivation?
 2. Do you think motivation matters when it comes to giving? Why or why not? Use at least one example to support your answer.
 3. Draft two or three sentences that describe your personal giving philosophy: what you believe about why people should give and what you personally value when it comes to generosity.
- Invite 2–3 students to share their responses.

Reflection

- Ask: "Can extrinsic motivations eventually become intrinsic? Can you 'practice' your way into genuinely caring about something?"
- Ask: "How might understanding your own giving motivation help you give more effectively?"
- Reinforce the core idea: "The most sustainable, meaningful generosity tends to come from within. When giving is tied to who you are and what you value, it lasts."



Icons: SBTS; Flowicon; Gendis Studio; ARIPATUT DASUKI, Selot Lo from the Noun Project