

LESSON 1: Why Generosity Matters & How We Give



TOTAL TIME:
60 minutes

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Analyze generosity through both personal and community lenses, distinguishing between individual acts and systemic change.
- Articulate a personal giving philosophy grounded in their own values, identity, and vision for the world.
- Discuss the benefits and challenges of being a changemaker.
- Distinguish between direct service, advocacy, and systems-change approaches to generosity.
- Map their own 4 T's (Time, Talent, Treasure, Ties)

Guiding Questions

- What is the difference between a generous act and a generous culture?
- What does it mean to be a changemaker, and who gets to be one?
- Is it enough to help one person at a time, or do we have a responsibility to address the conditions that created the need?
- How do your specific T's connect to the kind of change you want to make?

Materials

- Personal Giving Philosophy worksheet
- 4 T's Inventory worksheet



Differentiation Strategies

For students who need more support:

- Provide a structured sentence-starter worksheet for the giving philosophy and T's inventory.
- Allow students to discuss in pairs before writing independently.

For advanced learners:

- Ask students to write a short op-ed: "Why generosity is a political act."
- Have students construct a critique of each approach to giving — not just the strengths, but where each one fails.

Extension

- Invite students to interview a family member or community elder about a time they gave back and what motivated them. They can bring one insight to the next class.
- Students map their family's 4 T's together and identify what their household has to give, and to whom.

Where could this fit?

- ELA: Argument and rhetorical analysis — what makes a call to generosity persuasive?
- Social Studies / Civics: Examine generosity as a civic value; connect approaches to theories of political change and civic participation.
- Economics: Explore philanthropic capital, the nonprofit sector, and the resource trade-offs in each approach.
- After-school / At home: Share the GivingTuesday origin story with a family member and ask: What would you have done with \$10 and a big idea in 2012?

Introduction

- Open by saying, “Think of the most generous person you know. What do they actually do? Now think bigger: what would it look like if an entire community were that generous?”
- Briefly introduce GivingTuesday: it launched in the U.S. in 2012 with the belief that technology and social media could make generosity go viral. It grew into a global movement spanning every continent. Ask: “What does Giving Tuesday tell us about the power of collective action?”
- Introduce GivingTuesday Spark as the youth-led expression of that movement — young people identifying causes they care about, rallying peers, and executing actions that spread the culture of generosity year-round.
- Say, “Today we’re building two things: a philosophy for how we want to live generosity, and a map of the specific assets we have to act on it.”



10
minutes

Direct Instruction

(15 minutes total)

PART 1: Three levels of generosity



8
minutes

- Review the differences between:
 - Individual acts: a single donation, a kind gesture, one volunteer shift.
 - Community culture: a school, neighborhood, or city where giving is the norm.
 - Systemic change: addressing the conditions that create need in the first place.
- Introduce the three approaches that operate across these levels:
 - Direct Service: Providing direct help to individuals in need. Immediate, tangible, relationship-based.
 - Advocacy: Raising awareness, shifting public opinion, influencing policy. Multiplies across systems.
 - Systems Change: Addressing root causes through policy, structural redesign, or culture change. Long timeline, highest leverage.
- Explain the complementary logic: direct service builds empathy; advocacy builds power; systems change builds lasting structures. The strongest changemakers move between all three.

PART 2: The 4 T's framework



7
minutes

- Review the 4T's and connect them to young people's giving: young people give through their Time, Talent, Treasure, and Ties, not just through money.
- Explain that your T's determine which approach you're best positioned to pursue right now and that they grow with practice.

DIRECT INSTRUCTIONS continued from pg 2

- Present a brief example: *A student who volunteers at a shelter (direct service) may document what they see and share it publicly (advocacy), and eventually push their school to create a formal partnership (systems change). Each step uses different T's. The same student, three different approaches.*

Guided Practice (20 minutes total)

PART 1: 4 T's Inventory

- Have students complete the 4 T's inventory worksheet:
 - Time: How many hours per week could I realistically commit? What time-based skills do I have?
 - Talent: What am I genuinely good at? (Writing, design, organizing, speaking, tech, art, research, connecting people)
 - Treasure: What financial or material resources can I access? (My own, family, community, school)
 - Ties: Who do I know? Who do they know? What doors can my relationships open?



10
minutes

PART 2: Sharing the 4 T's

- Invite students to share their inventory with a partner and discuss: given these T's, which approach is this person best positioned to pursue right now? What's one concrete thing they could do in the next 30 days?



10
minutes

Independent/ Group Practice

- Invite students to complete the Personal Giving Philosophy worksheet:
- Ask 2–3 students to share one response before moving to reflection.



10
minutes

Reflection

- Ask, "What's the difference between being inspired by generosity and actually living it? What gets in the way?"
- Ask, "GivingTuesday Spark started as a single day but was always meant to build something year-round. What would it look like for generosity to be a daily practice in your life?"
 - Say, "Your giving philosophy and your T's are both working documents. Today is the first draft. Everything you do in this unit will sharpen them."
 - **Optional closing:** Each student reads aloud one sentence from their worksheet.



5
minutes

Handouts

- Personal Giving Philosophy worksheet
- 4 T's Inventory worksheet



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



Personal Giving Philosophy

Articulate your personal giving philosophy by filling in the prompts below.

I give because _____

(Not what you think you should say — the real reason.)

The kind of change I most want to see in the world is _____

The approach I am best positioned to take right now is _____

because my strongest T is _____

One thing I am willing to commit to, starting now, is:



Personal T's Inventory

Reflect on how you can use your 4T's by answering the following questions, then create a theory of change.

My TIME	My TALENT
How many hours per week could I realistically commit? What time-based skills do I have?	What am I genuinely good at? (Writing, design, organizing, speaking, tech, art, research, connecting people)
My TREASURE	My TIES
What financial or material resources can I access? (My own, family, community, school):	Who do I know? Who do they know? What doors can my relationships open?