Lesson Title: Gifts

Lesson Age Group: High School

Lesson Audience: Educators

1. **Imagined Scenario: Strings attached?**

Imagine you move to a new country. This country is different from the United States in a few ways. One of the big ways is that this country’s government not have enough money to provide aid to poor families. It doesn’t cost money to go to school, but you have to buy your own uniform and school supplies, and the cost prevents a lot of families from sending their kids to school. You notice that the family who lives down the street from you has a son who is around eight years old, but during the day he does not go to school. Instead, he stays home and helps his mother with her small business sewing and repairing people’s clothing. You introduce yourself to your neighbors and offer to pay for the child’s school uniform. You aren’t rich, but you don’t have kids or a lot of expenses, and you have enough money to afford the uniform and school supplies. The child’s mother agrees, and you go to the store and buy a white collared short sleeved shirt, dark blue pants, a backpack, notebooks, pens and pencils. You bring back the supplies to the child and his mother and they’re excited. You feel like you did a good thing.

A month later, you go to a party at your friend’s house. Your friend is a teacher at the elementary school, so you ask her about the boy who lives down the street. She seems a little confused, so you start explaining the story, and when she starts looking even more confused, you realize that the boy must never have started school in the first place. You go back and talk to the boy’s mom. She tells you that she got sick and was unable to work, and had to sell the school supplies in order to buy food.

When you give the family the uniform and supplies, do they then have the right to do whatever they want with them? Or should the mother have used the gift for its intended purpose?

**2)**  (For Educator) Read: The Tyranny of the Gift by Nancy Scheper-Hughes

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/j.1600-6143.2006.01679.x>

Your brother needs a kidney. Would a donation to him be a gift? Is it a gift if you feel pressured to do it? Is it a gift if your brother feels indebted to you for the rest of his life?

Questions to complicate the discussion:

* Is it more of a gift if you decide to donate your organ to a stranger in need?
* If you give your brother a kidney (as a gift, supposedly), and he decides to sell it instead of use it, is this different from the first example?

**3)** Ask students to come up with a collective list of different types of government aid.

Are these gifts? If not, what are they?

Example: The book Maid: Hard Work, Low Pay, and a Mother's Will to Survive (2019) illustrates the various forms of strings-attached government aid that, as a single mother, survivor of domestic abuse, and woman living in poverty in the American northwest, author Stephanie Land was forced to accept. She talks about how she could only get money she desperately needed from the government if she met certain requirements, like meetings with her social worker, making under a certain amount of money, only being able to spend EBT money on certain food, only being able to live in certain housing.

What are the possible implications of strings-attached aid programs?