

# Learning Scenario

Does appearance prevail over authenticity?

BASIC EDUCATION

15-20 PARTICIPANTS

20-30 MINUTES

BASIC EDUCATION LEARNERS

INFORMAL SETTING

## OBJECTIVES:

- To express one's feelings through the Hodja figure
- To read cultural codes and habits
- To recognize and name cultural differences
- To think about belonging to a particular culture, country, community

## PURPOSE

Belongingness



## LOCATION

Inside or outside,  
participants are seated in a  
circle and feel comfortable

## STORY

Hodja's fine coat

## MATERIAL

None

## DESCRIPTION

- Introduction: the teachers asks the learners if they've ever felt not unwelcome, out of place. The learners will not tell this episode right now but later, after having heard the story.
- The teachers tells the story of Hodja, no props needed
- The teachers asks some questions about the content of the story, such as: why did Hodja wear his work clothes in the first place? Why didn't he go home? What happened during the party? At some point Hodja goes home to change. Why? What happens next?

# Learning Scenario

## Does appearance prevail over authenticity?

### DESCRIPTION (CONTINUED)

- The teacher then asks: what is the most important moment in this story? Possible answers: when Hodja returns to the party and is welcomed with all due respect, when he feeds his coat, when he explains why his coat is so important.
- Learners work in teams to find an answer to the question: What do you think is the moral of the story?
- So what did Hodja have to do to belong to the party?
- Learners talk about what it means to (not) belong to something. They work in pairs and tell their own anecdote.

### TIPS & TRICKS FOR THE TEACHERS

The teacher has to emphasize the moral of the story: Hodja plays along and changes clothes, but he makes it clear that the people at the party think his coat is more important than himself. Appearance prevails over authenticity on many occasions. It's good to know what you have to do to belong, but on the other hand it says a lot about the people themselves.

### ALTERNATIVE IMPLEMENTATIONS / POSSIBLE ADAPTATIONS

This story can be compared to The Emperor's New Clothes. You can put the two stories side by side to discover the differences and similarities. There are also language-specific sayings, such as the clothes make the man (De kleren maken de man in Dutch, l'abito non fa il monaco in Italian, ...)

### YOUR COMMENTS & ADDITIONS

# Hodja's fine coat



Turkey

Purpose(s)



Belonging-  
ness



Identity &  
Recognition

**Once upon the time**, Nasreddin Hodja, the famous preacher, was beloved by everyone in Turkey, especially the people of Akshehir. Everyone spoke of his wisdom and kindness. Whenever the people held a feast or festival, they invited Hodja.

One day the muhtar, the most important man in Akshehir, invited Hodja to a banquet. Hodja looked forward to the marvelous food he would feast upon and the good conversation he would have at the muhtar's home.

On the morning of the feast, he set out to work in his vineyard. It was a fine summer day, and Hodja enjoyed his work. Alas, he misjudged the time. As the sun sank lower in the sky, Hodja realized he would have no time to change his clothes.

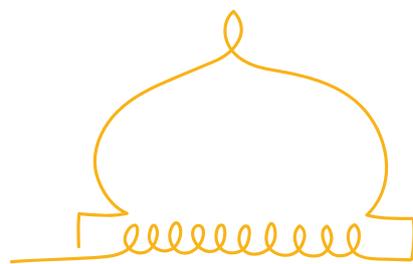


“What shall I do?” he asked himself. “If I take the time to wash and dress, I will be late for the feast.” Hodja did not like to keep people waiting, and so he hurried off to the muhtar’s home dressed in his working clothes, his hands and face still soiled from the day’s labors.

When he arrived, the servants turned away from him. Hodja made his own way into the house. The other guests were gathered, and he saw them laughing and talking enthusiastically with each other. But when Hodja walked into the room, the others ignored him. Whenever Hodja approached and spoke, they looked away, ignoring his words. Usually, people came to Hodja to ask his advice and opinions, but this evening no one spoke to him at all. Even the muhtar ignored his guest.

When the time came for the guests to be seated for supper, the muhtar placed Hodja in the farthest corner of the room, as far from him as possible.

After several minutes, Hodja excused himself and hurried out of the house. He walked as quickly as he could back home.



Once at home, he took off his work clothes and soaped and scrubbed himself until he seemed to shine. Then he dressed in the finest clothes he owned. He wore his flowing trousers and his most elegant silk shirt and wrapped his most exquisite turban around his head. Then he wrapped his new fur coat around his shoulders, for though it was a warm evening, he knew the coat was dazzling and would be the talk of the town.

He looked down at himself and smiled, for he knew he looked handsome than all the other men in Akshehir.

Now he walked calmly and with an air of importance back down the road to the muhtar's door. When he walked inside, the servants bowed and led him to his host.

When the muhtar saw Hodja, he rose at once and greeted his guest. He led him straight to the place of honor at the table, right beside his own place. Throughout the meal, the muhtar asked one question after another of the learned Hodja.

"You are the wisest man I know," the muhtar said, and all the others agreed and began to ask Hodja's advice and opinions on every subject under the sun. The servants rushed to bring Hodja the finest foods.

And then, to everyone's astonishment, Hodja began to stuff his pockets with food. Each time he tucked a piece of fruit or bread into his pocket, he would look down at the coat, rub his hand along its sleeve and say, "Eat, eat, my fine coat."

The muhtar stared. Everyone else stared. At last, the muhtar could not contain his curiosity. "Hodja, tell us," he said, "what are you doing?"

Hodja leaned back in his seat and smiled. "Ahh, that should be obvious," he said to the muhtar. "When I came earlier this evening, dressed in my work clothes, no one noticed me at all, but when I returned, you treated me as an honored guest. I have not changed. I am and always have been Nasreddin Hodja. And so I know it is my coat that you honor and adore. Since my coat is your guest of honor, I thought it only fair that it receives the largest portion of your feast."

Source/Link:

<https://www.assignmentpoint.com/arts/literature/hodjas-fine-coat.html>

