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Title of article: Teraanga: The word that defines Senegal

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Characterised by generosity, hospitality and warmth, teraanga is everywhere in Senegal, and has helped shape the nation's identity.

As I waited to board a flight to Dakar from New York, a woman draped in colourful fabric and a bright headwrap asked if she could use my mobile phone. Hesitating with a perplexed smile, I wondered about the odd familiarity to ask that of a stranger. While I wavered, a similarly dressed traveller presented her phone to the woman without a second thought. Experiences like this continued throughout my journey to Senegal, and I quickly realised that they weren't bold requests from strangers. They were my introduction to *teraanga*.

Senegal is known as the "Land of Teraanga". Travel guides often define this Wolof word (also written as "teranga") as meaning hospitality, but that's "a loose way of translating it," said Pierre Thiam, the Senegalese chef and co-founder of Teranga restaurant in New York City. "It's really much more complex than that. It's a way of life."

As a visitor, I quickly noticed that this value permeates many aspects of daily life in Senegal. Teraanga emphasises generosity of spirit and sharing of material possessions in all encounters – even with strangers. This builds a culture in which there is no "other". By being so giving to all, regardless of nationality, religion or class, a feeling grows that everyone is safe and welcome.

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During the summer I spent volunteering at an educational centre in Yoff, a dry and dusty 90,000-person beachside community north of downtown Dakar, teraanga helped me learn about and embrace Senegalese culture. I was invited to stay with a local family and accepted daily offers to visit neighbours' homes and drink tea. As I immersed myself in this Senegalese



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way of being, my Western walls melted away. Openness, generosity, warmth and familiarity – the key components of teraanga – took their place. I constantly felt like the 16-million-person family of Senegal was welcoming me home.

During lunch at work, seven of us would sit on the floor around a huge communal plate covered in rice, fresh fish and vegetables. Knowing I was vegetarian, my Senegalese lunchmates would push veggies my way, and I'd slide fish theirs. When we went on trips to the beach, children who barely knew me would jump into my arms to escape the unpredictable waves. I was shocked by their ease with me, until I remembered that they were raised to believe that community members – even relative strangers – will always lift each other up.

Four-year-olds walked home alone from the centre where I worked, and no-one worried. I often saw adults taking the time to educate and guide neighbourhood children, much as a parent would. According to Dr Ibra Sene, a Senegalese historian who teaches at The College of Wooster in the US state of Ohio, this is part of teraanga, where, “you would be willing to look at people and counsel them as the members of your own family.”

Its origins remain something of a mystery.

Despite how ubiquitous teraanga is in Senegal today, its origins remain something of a mystery. But historians agree that it has been an integral part of the region's culture for centuries, existing long before the 300 years of Dutch, British and French colonial rule that lasted from 1659 to 1960.

“That mindset of interaction, exchange and openness to the other could probably be traced back to the time of the big empires of West Africa,” Sene said, referring to the great Mali, Ghana and Songhai Empires that once flourished in the region. Sene explained that for more than 1,000 years this region based its economy on trade, and that the exchange of goods and ideas on which these empires were built flourished because of this spirit of generosity and openness. “Even if it [was] not called teraanga, you see it in different shapes and forms throughout the history of West Africa.”



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Assignment: Understanding *Teraanga* - The Spirit of Senegal

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Here are 10 multiple-choice questions based on the text. Put your answer on the line.

1. _____ What is the meaning of *teraanga* according to the passage?
 - A) Simple hospitality
 - B) A way of life emphasizing generosity and warmth
 - C) Religious devotion
 - D) A form of economic exchange
2. _____ How did the author first encounter *teraanga*?
 - A) During a meal with a family
 - B) While waiting for a flight
 - C) Volunteering at a local school
 - D) In a historical museum
3. _____ In Senegal, *teraanga* is viewed as a concept that promotes:
 - A) Social classes
 - B) Competition
 - C) Generosity toward everyone
 - D) Exclusivity among family members
4. _____ Which group of people is *teraanga* extended to, according to the article?
 - A) Only Senegalese nationals
 - B) People of the same religion
 - C) All people, regardless of nationality, religion, or class
 - D) Only family members
5. _____ According to Dr. Ibra Sene, what role does *teraanga* play in the community?
 - A) It promotes strict family boundaries
 - B) It encourages treating others like family
 - C) It discourages interaction with strangers
 - D) It focuses on economic success



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6. _____ Where did the author spend time volunteering?
- A) Downtown Dakar
 - B) Yoff, a community near Dakar
 - C) A beach resort
 - D) A cultural center in New York
7. _____ Which of the following is a traditional way of sharing a meal in Senegal, as mentioned in the article?
- A) Eating alone at separate tables
 - B) Each person has their own dish
 - C) Sharing a communal plate on the floor
 - D) Using individual packed lunches
8. _____ What did historians suggest about the origins of *teraanga*?
- A) It originated during the colonial period
 - B) It has mysterious origins that may predate colonialism
 - C) It was introduced by European settlers
 - D) It started as a religious practice
9. _____ How does the *teraanga* concept relate to children's independence in Senegal?
- A) It discourages independence
 - B) It fosters a safe environment, allowing children to walk home alone
 - C) It requires children to stay with parents at all times
 - D) It is unrelated to child-rearing practices
10. _____ Which ancient empires are mentioned as potentially influencing the spirit of *teraanga*?
- A) Roman and Egyptian Empires
 - B) Mali, Ghana, and Songhai Empires
 - C) Greek and Byzantine Empires
 - D) Ottoman and Persian Empires



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Instructions: Read the passage carefully and answer the following questions in complete sentences. Provide examples from the text where relevant.

Comprehension Questions:

1. **Defining *Teraanga*:** In your own words, explain what *teraanga* means and how it is more than just "hospitality."
2. **Real-life Example:** Describe a moment in the text where the author experiences *teraanga* firsthand. How did this experience impact their understanding of Senegalese culture?
3. **The Role of *Teraanga* in Community:** According to the passage, how does *teraanga* influence interactions among Senegalese people, including children and neighbors?



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4. **Historical Roots:** Summarize what historians suggest about the origins of *teraanga*. Why do they believe this cultural value is so deep-rooted in Senegalese society?
5. **Personal Reflection:** How do you think *teraanga* could benefit communities outside of Senegal? Give examples of how this spirit of openness could change interactions in your own community or school.



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Comprendre le *Teraanga* – L'Esprit du Sénégal

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Instructions : Lisez attentivement le passage et répondez aux questions suivantes en phrases complètes. Donnez/citez des exemples du texte.

Questions de Compréhension :

1. **Définir le *Teraanga*** : Expliquez avec vos propres mots ce que signifie *teraanga* et pourquoi ce concept dépasse la simple notion d'« hospitalité ».
2. **Exemple concret** : Décrivez un moment dans le texte où l'auteur ressent le *teraanga* pour la première fois. Quel impact cela a-t-il eu sur sa compréhension de la culture sénégalaise ?
3. **Le rôle du *Teraanga* dans la communauté** : Selon le passage, comment le *teraanga* influence-t-il les interactions entre les Sénégalais, y compris les enfants et les voisins ?



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4. **Les origines historiques** : Résumez ce que les historiens suggèrent à propos des origines du *teraanga*. Pourquoi croient-ils que cette valeur culturelle est si profondément ancrée dans la société sénégalaise ?
5. **Réflexion personnelle** : À votre avis, comment le *teraanga* pourrait-il bénéficier à des communautés en dehors du Sénégal ? Donnez des exemples de la manière dont cet esprit d'ouverture pourrait transformer les interactions dans votre propre communauté ou école.



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Activité d'Extension :

Rédigez /écrivez 1 à 2 paragraphes décrivant un moment où vous avez ressenti ou été témoin d'un acte de générosité ou d'ouverture. Comment cela vous a-t-il fait sentir, et quel impact cela a-t-il eu sur votre vision de la communauté ?

[illegible]

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