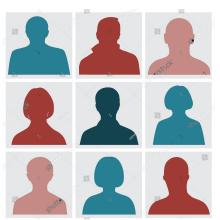# Who Are You?

Your Identities Lesson

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This lesson can be used with middle grade or high school participants to introduce identity as a theme in literature and social studies or as enrichment to help young people relate to the idea of multiple or conflicting identities.

Participants will:
- Be able to identify what is meant by identity and how identities can be conflicting
- Understand how their own identity has multiple facets
- Understand that people have both public and private identities
- Understand that identity is both self-determined and determined by others
- Gain empathy/understanding that nobody is just one of their traits or identities and that almost any two people can connect with each other based on an identity they have in common

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Who Are You? Lesson Guide

The Who Are You? worksheet can introduce identity as a theme in literature and social studies or as enrichment to help young people relate to the idea of multiple or conflicting identities.

Severus Snape in *Harry Potter* is an example of a character with multiple and often conflicting identities. He is known as a follower of Voldemort and as a teacher at Hogwarts that Dumbledore trusts completely. He is both cruel and protective towards Harry. Snape acts as a traitor and a loyal hero. His is driven by hate and jealousy sometimes and by love other times. He has a public and private identity that appear to conflict.

Use Snape, or another figure that participants are familiar with, to model making an identities list using the traits on the worksheet before participants do it individually (for Snape, you may not be able to fill in all the identity traits listed). *Let participants know ahead of time if their lists will remain private or will be shared with others.*

Once participants complete the activity, you can take it in many directions.
Choose the one(s) most appropriate to the goals, readings, films and/or outings you are using in conjunction with the worksheet:

- Ask participants to discuss identity traits in figures or characters they encounter in the material they are reading or watching.
- Have participants make a similar identity page for a (favorite) character, figure in history, or family member.
- Ask participants to count their identities and reflect (write, discuss, draw, etc.): what is it like to see all your identities in one place? How does it make you feel?
- Have participants highlight the 5 identities on their worksheet that are most important to them and explain why.
- Ask participants to categorize the identities on their worksheet into groups like, My Choices/Choices Made for Me; Identities in My Family/Outside of My Family; Identities that Might Change/Identities that Will Never Change and reflect on one or

more of the categories: how does it make you feel about yourself? How does it make you feel about other people that you like and don't like?

- Ask participants to reflect on an identity on their list that they *don't* agree that they have: why might others see this as your identity? How do you see yourself and what category would be truer to you?
- Ask participants to divide their identities into public and private categories. If participants don't recognize private identities, lead a discussion on examples of private identities and give participants time to reflect privately on any identities they may have that they don't share publicly.

Your Name:

Who Are You?
Your Identities

Identity definition: the character traits or personality of an individual
Origin: from Latin, *idem et idem* — same and same

Merriam Webster Dictionary

Your identity is made up of the categories you (and others) see you in. Here are ten examples:

1. Your positions in your family (youngest, sister, step son, only child, orphan, grandchild, etc.)
2. Your home (American, Oregonian, Canadian, Nigerian, New Yorker, etc.)
3. Your activities (student, basketball player, gamer, Girl Scout, pianist, etc.)
4. Your personality (funny, shy, creative, trouble maker, smart, sensitive, etc.)
5. Your likes (pizza lover, Gameboy fan, rock music listener, etc.)
6. Your dislikes (broccoli hater, anti-guns, etc.)
7. Your culture (Caribbean, nerd, military, etc.)
8. Your religion (Methodist, Atheist, Jewish, etc.)
9. Your ancestry (Irish, Russian, Indian, etc.)
10. Your beliefs (environmentalist, Democrat, patriot, etc.)

Your Turn

A) Write down all your identities that you can think of (start with the 10 categories in the examples and think up other categories if you can).

B) Include all the ways you see yourself and the ways others see you.

C) When you're done, put a box around any identities that are how others see you but *not* how you see yourself.