

Reading

Exploring the Concept of Identity (Adapted Version)


Directions for Reading Independently

Read the text by yourself. As you read, make annotations in the left margin to record your ideas about the relationship between identity and storytelling. **Use these annotation symbols:**

♥ = **Thought** (when the line or sentence contains something that you like or that gives you an idea)

? = **Question** (when you don't understand the line or sentence or you have a specific question about it)

! = **Epiphany** (when you just learned something important about yourself, people in general, or the world from this line or sentence)

Do NOT answer the questions in the gray boxes. Do NOT complete the TQE Time! chart or the connection questions.

Annotations	Introducing the Complexity of Identity	DEFINITIONS
♥ = Thought ? = Question ! = Epiphany	<p>As we grow up, it is important to ask ourselves the question, "Who am I?" It sounds like a simple question, but it is not. Identity is complex and fluid. How you answer the question "Who am I?" depends on many things: how you describe yourself, what groups you are a part of, and how other people see you. Some parts of your identity may stay the same during your life, and other parts of your identity will change as you move from childhood through adolescence to adulthood.</p> <p>Psychologist and educator Beverly Daniel Tatum explains how complex identity is by asking several questions:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">The idea of identity is a complex one. Your personal characteristics, your family relationships, where you were born, and when you were born all affect your identity. Who am I? The answer depends on what the people around me say I am. Who do my parents say I am? Who do my peers say I am? Who do the other people around me—teachers, neighbors, store clerks—say I am? What does the media say about people like me? How are people like me treated in images in society? Or am I missing from the picture?¹</p>	<p>fluid: can change easily.</p> <p>adolescence: the time period from age 10 to mid-20s.</p> <p>psychologist: a person who studies how people think.</p> <p>peers: people in your age group.</p> <p>media: TV, newspapers, movies, magazines, etc.</p>

¹ Adapted from Beverly Daniel Tatum, "The Complexity of Identity: 'Who Am I?'," in *Readings for Diversity and Social Justice: An Anthology on Racism, Sexism, Antisemitism, Heterosexism, Classism and Ableism*, ed. Adams et al. (New York: Routledge, 2000), 9–14.

REFLECTION QUESTION: Choose one (1) of Beverly Daniel Tatum’s questions below to answer yourself:

1. Who am I?
2. Who do my parents say I am?
3. Who do my peers say I am?
4. Who do other people around me (teachers, neighbors, etc.) say I am?
5. What does the media say about people like me?
6. How are people like me treated in images in society?

Question you are choosing to answer: # _____

Your answer:

♥ = Thought ? = Question ! = Epiphany

Annotations	Defining Identity	DEFINITIONS
	<p><i>Identity</i> means who we believe we are as individuals and as members of social groups.</p> <p>It also means what other people think of us. We develop ideas about our identities and the identities of others through our interactions with people close to us, like our family and friends, our schools and other institutions, the mass media, and our interactions with other individuals. Sometimes we don’t even realize we have these ideas because we don’t remember learning them.</p>	<p>interactions: having contact with someone, like in a conversation.</p>

Annotations	Defining Identity (continued)	DEFINITIONS
	<p>Social groups also influence our ideas about our identities. This idea is called <i>social identity</i>.</p> <p><i>Social identity</i> means your sense of who you are based on your membership in certain groups. While there are many different social groups, some of the main ones are ability, age, social class, ethnicity, gender, nationality, language, race, religion, and sexual orientation.</p> <p>We are all born into social groups, and as we grow up, these social identities can stay the same or change. Our membership in these social groups helps make our lives feel important to us. Sometimes we have a choice about our membership in a social group, and sometimes we don't have a choice. For example, someone might have to check a box (☑) on a form that says Asian, but they identify as Pacific Islander. Or teachers and peers might call someone female, but that person identifies as gender nonconforming.</p> <p>While our membership in social groups is an important part of who we are, we still have agency (<i>power or choice</i>) over how we define ourselves and what parts of our identities we want to emphasize over others. This idea is called <i>individual</i> or <i>personal identity</i>.</p> <p><i>Personal identity</i> means the unique (<i>special and individual</i>) ways you define yourself. One person might choose to emphasize their family, religion, and interests when they talk about their identity. A different person might emphasize their race, neighborhood, and job as important parts of who they are. Your personal identity is all of the things that you believe make you who you are.</p>	<p>membership: to be a member of a group; to belong.</p> <p>gender nonconforming: a person who does not identify with the sex (male or female) of their body. For example, a person is born male but identifies as female.</p> <p>emphasize: to give more attention to one thing/part than to another thing/part.</p>



Sketch to Stretch:

1. Reread the definitions of *personal identity* and *social identity* below and brainstorm what these mean to you.
2. Visualize (*make pictures in your mind*) what these identities might look like. Make a sketch (*drawing*) for each one.

<p>Personal Identity:</p> <p>The unique ways you define yourself.</p> <p>What does personal identity mean to you? List some ideas here.</p>	<p>Social Identity:</p> <p>Your identity, based on your membership in one or more social groups.</p> <p>What does social identity mean to you? List some ideas here.</p>
<p>Use your ideas above to make a sketch (drawing) representing personal identity.</p>	<p>Use your ideas above to make a sketch (drawing) representing social identity.</p>

♥ = Thought ? = Question ! = Epiphany

Annotations	Considering Why Identity Matters	DEFINITIONS
	<p>We all have many personal and social identities, some fixed and some fluid, that help us make sense of (<i>understand</i>) ourselves and our experiences in the world. Philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah explains why he believes these identities are important:</p> <p>An identity is a label we put on ourselves and others. For example, your gender (male or female) is a label. Your class (upper class, middle class, or lower class) is also a label. Your sexuality, region, nationality, ethnicity, religion . . . When we label ourselves, we accept that we have some qualifying trait: Latin or African ancestry, male or female sex organs, attractions to one gender or another, or maybe the right to a German passport.¹</p> <p>Society expects different things from each kind of label (like “Latinx” or “female”): how we should act, how we should think, how we should look, and more. Sometimes we accept those expectations, and other times we can challenge them.</p>	<p>fixed: does not change.</p> <p>label: a name, word, or phrase used to put a person or thing in a specific category.</p> <p>qualifying trait: a part of us that lets us belong to a group.</p> <p>challenge: do not accept.</p>

REFLECTION QUESTION: According to Kwame Anthony Appiah, when, if ever, are labels useful? When, if ever, are they dangerous? How do you feel when society, a group, or another person labels you (in a positive or negative way)?

Labels are useful when _____

Labels are dangerous when _____

When I am labeled _____ by society, a group, or another person, I feel _____ because _____

¹ Adapted from Kwame Anthony Appiah, “Can we choose our own identity?,” *The Guardian*, August 31, 2018.



Directions for Reading a Second Time with a Partner

1. Read the text again with a partner. Take turns reading out loud to one another.
2. If you have new thoughts, questions, or epiphanies, add these annotations to the ones you made during the first read.
3. Answer the **reflection questions** in the gray boxes at the end of each section together.
4. Do not discuss your annotations; wait until you get to **TQE Time!** below. Read the directions there for sharing your annotations with each other.
5. Answer the **connection questions** on page 7 together after TQE Time!

TQE Time!



Directions: Look back at your annotations. Choose two thoughts, two questions, and two epiphanies to record in the table below. Use the sentence frames to write out your thoughts, questions, and epiphanies.

♥ = Thoughts	? = Questions	! = Epiphanies
<p>Sample sentence frames:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The sentence _____ made me think . . . • I wonder about the line . . . <p>1.</p> <p>2.</p>	<p>Sample sentence frames:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I don't understand . . . • I am confused by . . . <p>1.</p> <p>2.</p>	<p>Sample sentence frames:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I learned that . . . • I was surprised to find out that . . . <p>1.</p> <p>2.</p>

1 Adapted from Marisa Thompson, "TQE: Thoughts, Questions, and Epiphanies," Unlimited Teacher, accessed October 23, 2023.



Directions: Take turns sharing your annotations with your partner:

1. Start by sharing your thoughts with one another.
2. Then share your questions and try to help one another answer them.
3. Record answers to the questions in the space below.
4. Finally, share your epiphanies with one another.

Answers to questions and other notes:



Connection Questions

Directions:

1. Read the connection questions below and try to answer them together.
2. Be prepared to share your answers with the whole class.

1. Review Beverly Daniel Tatum's list of questions in the first section of the text. Choose one or two of her questions to discuss together as a group.

A. Question to discuss: #____	B. Question to discuss: #____
<p>Ideas:</p>	<p>Ideas:</p>

2. Review the section of the text that defines personal identity and social identity. Then share your Sketch to Stretch ideas. What similarities and differences do you see between your sketches? Fill in the table below, starting with #1.

	Personal Identity Sketches	Social Identity Sketches
<p>SIMILARITIES</p> <p>Sample sentence frames:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I notice that all of our sketches . . .</i> • <i>We all included . . . in our sketches.</i> • <i>One similarity is that . . .</i> 	1.	3.
<p>DIFFERENCES</p> <p>Sample sentence frames:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Your sketch has . . . but mine/ours has/have . . .</i> • <i>Only one of us included . . . in our sketch.</i> • <i>One difference is that . . .</i> 	2.	4.

3. What questions do you have about personal identity and social identity that you want the class to help you answer?

- *A question we have about personal identity is . . .*

- *A question we have about social identity is . . .*

3. Agree or disagree with the following statement:

"To a certain extent, each one of us decides how to answer the question, 'Who am I?', but there are aspects of identity that may be defined by forces out of our control."

First, discuss with your partner how to rewrite this sentence in your own words:

Next, decide if you agree or disagree with the quote: (Check one) ___ **AGREE** ___ **DISAGREE**

Explain **why** you agree or disagree. Give evidence from the text and your own experiences to support your answer.

I agree/disagree because . . .

4. You and your partner will write a tweet of no more than 280 characters (including hashtags and emojis).

You have a choice of tweets to write:

- Choose a quote from the text that affected you in some way. Maybe you find it surprising, interesting, or troubling. Explain why the quote was meaningful for you.
- Tweet about your biggest "takeaway idea" (*the most important idea that you will remember*) from this text. What is the idea, and why is it important to remember?