

Identity Charts

This teaching strategy was originally designed for use in a face-to-face setting. For tips and guidance on how to use this teaching strategy in a remote or hybrid learning environment, view our [Identity Charts \(Remote Learning\)](#) teaching strategy.

Rationale

Identity charts are a graphic tool that can help students consider the many factors that shape who we are as individuals and as communities. Use identity charts to deepen students' understanding of themselves, groups, nations, and historical and literary figures. Sharing their own identity charts with peers can help students build relationships and break down stereotypes. In this way, identity charts can be used as an effective classroom community-building tool.

Procedure

1. Brainstorm or Create Personal Identity Charts

Before creating identity charts, you might have the class brainstorm categories we each consider when thinking about the question, “Who am I?”—categories such as our role in a family (e.g., daughter, sister, mother), our hobbies and interests (e.g., guitar player, football fan), our background (e.g., religion, race, nationality, hometown, place of birth), and our physical characteristics. If it doesn't come up in discussion as you generate your group list of categories, prompt students with questions that help them think about the following ideas:

- Some aspects of our identities are consistent over our lives; others change as we gain skills and have different roles in life.
- Some aspects of our identities feel very central to who we are no matter where we are; others might feel more like background or depend on the situation.
- Some identities are labels that others put on us, While others see us as having that identity, we don't.

It is often helpful to show students a completed identity chart before they create one of their own (see example section below).

Alternatively, you could begin this activity by having students create identity charts for themselves. If you plan to have them share their identity charts with a partner or in groups, it is important that they know in advance. Any students who don't feel comfortable sharing their identity charts can elaborate on one or two facets of their identity but keep their charts private. After discussing their charts, students can create a list of the categories they have used to describe themselves and then apply this same list of categories as a guide when creating identity charts for other people or groups.

2. **Create Identity Charts for an Individual, Group, or Nation**

First, ask students to write the name of the character, figure, group, or nation in the center of a piece of paper. Then students can look through text(s) for evidence that helps them answer the question, "Who is this person/group?" Encourage students to include quotations from the text(s) on their identity charts, as well as their own interpretations of the character or figure based on their reading. Students can complete identity charts individually or in small groups. Alternatively, students could contribute ideas to a class version of an identity chart that you keep on the classroom wall.

3. **Use Identity Charts to Track New Learning**

Reviewing and revising identity charts throughout a unit is one way to help students keep track of their learning.

Variations

- **Starburst Identity Chart:** Use a [Starburst Identity Chart](#) to help students visualize the difference between factors that they feel make up their identities (arrows pointing out from the center) versus labels that others place on them (arrows pointing into the center). Because we may agree with some ways that the outside world views us and disagree with others, there may be some overlapping ideas between the two sets of arrows. Students can also use examples from texts to create Starburst Identity Charts for characters and historical figures to help express the complexity of their identities.
- **Prioritizing Factors on Identity Charts:** After students create an identity chart, you can ask them to select the five items they think are most significant in shaping this person or group's identity. As students compare their lists, this often deepens their understanding of the person being studied.
- **Identity and Context:** Individual and group identities are comprised of multiple factors, some having more significance in particular

contexts. To help students appreciate this concept, you might ask them to think about the five factors that are most significant to shaping their identity in one context, such as school, and then in another context, such as home or with friends.

- **Remote Learning Note:** If you are using identity charts in a remote learning setting, view our [editable student-facing handout](#).

Example

Related Content

<https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/teaching-strategies/identity-charts>

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Our headquarters are located at:
16 Hurd Road, Brookline, MA 02445
[Accessibility Feedback](#)