

Who Am I?

A routine to explore the complexity of identity.

Think about who you are and then about someone else. Consider how you have become who you are, where you belong and what that can mean in our changing world.

Explore

Who am I? How has my identity developed?

Connect

I am connected to my parents, their parents and my brother and sister and I'm in the basketball team. Who else and what else am I connected to?

Identify

If I wanted others to know who I am, what would identify me? Do we have more than one identity?

Belong

Where do I think I belong? Do I have a sense of belonging to more than one group, more than one place?

PURPOSE

What kind of thinking does this routine encourage?

It is not unusual for people, systems, objects or ideas to be judged or given labels without others really knowing much about them. This routine encourages students to reserve judgment, take time to find out more about what they see and/or hear, and explore more deeply and broadly other people, and develop greater understanding of similarities and differences.

APPLICATION

When and where can I use it?

Identity can be a sensitive matter in some contexts. As a teacher, you make decisions all the time about what will serve your students and your context well. If in your judgment, this routine will not serve your context well, don't use it! Or maybe parts of it would serve well, or some adaptation. This does not mean we should never take up sensitive matters in our classes; arguably we should from time to time. But it's always a judgment call. Other questions that can foster further understanding of the ways an individual's identity is developed include: Does where you, or where your parents were born influence your identity? Does the place you live, your school, your friends shape your identity in certain ways? What about your religion and/or skin color? What do you think has shaped your identity?

LAUNCH

What are some tips for starting and using this routine?

The routine can be introduced and incorporated in one lesson, or in one or more steps over time. The process can be planned or shaped in response to discussions it elicits, and depending on the purpose and context in which it is being utilized. It can be broken into steps in whichever order is most relevant and time frame that is effective, sometimes involving revisiting steps over time.

- How can similarities, not only differences, be brought into discussions about identity? Students in the same school can wear different clothes, eat different foods and celebrate different festivals. Often their identities are shaped by their differences, and generalizations are often made that group them with others sharing those attributes. Invite students to find similarities they share. Invite them to look for similarities among students who learn differently to others, among those who come from different family structures, or those who make very different choices in how they spend time away from school, e.g. playing sport, going shopping, playing the saxophone, studying, meeting friends, painting, making things, spending time in hospital, staying alone or with family. Often the many similarities they discover they share are unexpected.
- What are some tips for the “identify” step? You could invite students to role play, introducing themselves to each other as if meeting for the first time, and ask each other questions that would help them get to know each other better. Discuss the multiplicity of identity. Who do people think you are? Can the same person be a sister, a daughter, a student, a swimmer, a friend? Where do you think you belong? Is a sense of belonging important?

This thinking routine was developed by Project Zero at the Harvard Graduate School of Education as part of the PZ Connect project with generous support from Independent Schools Victoria (AU). Explore the full PZ Thinking Routine Toolbox at pz.harvard.edu/thinking-routines.