



Theme: Who do you think you are? - Identity

In order to explore the theme of identity, we have created three distinct sections of work. Each section investigates a particular aspect of the theme offering different insights and challenges. The class and group activities provided take inspiration from the permanent exhibition at the House of European History.

- Section 1** What's my identity?
Section 2 How are identities formed and maintained?
Section 3 We and the others; how identity includes and excludes

Each section consists of:

- Teachers' Guidance Notes
- Activities
- Supporting visual and textual resources
- Suggested online resources

Activities may include teacher-led discussions, group work, self-directed learning and use of primary and secondary source historical materials. Teachers can decide which classroom and group activities are carried out.

Overview of theme

Teaching identity is a complex and sensitive subject. We all come from different backgrounds, have different life experiences and have grown up in cultural and ethnic contexts that may be far removed from the people around us. How we describe and define ourselves may have long established roots as with family or neighbourhood connections. However, people also create identities and a sense of who they are from more immediate social aspects around them such as jobs, pastimes or the types of friends and groups they identify with or spend time with. Key markers of identity include ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation and physical appearance, and all deserve respect. Who we think we are can change under different circumstances and over periods of time. Who we think we are might also not be the same as how other people actually see us! In this theme, we explore how it is possible to teach ideas around identity that open up the subject through the use of historical examples. The following sections demonstrate that something such as identity, including national and historical identities, is never truly set in stone but is, rather, more kaleidoscopic in nature – always in flux.

Definitions

Identity

'Identities are never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic discourses, practices and positions. They ... are constantly in the process of change and transformation.'

Source: Stuart Hall, Questions of Cultural Identity, 1996





Ethnic identity

'An ethnic group is a type of cultural collectivity, one that emphasises the role of myths of descent and historical memory, and that is recognised by one or more cultural differences like religion, customs, language or institutions'

Source: Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity*, 1991

Nation

'A named community possessing an historic territory, shared myths and memories, a common public culture and common laws and customs'

Source: Anthony D Smith, *When is a Nation*, 2002

Nationalism

'An ideological movement for attaining and maintaining autonomy, unity and identity on behalf of a population deemed by some of its members to constitute an actual or potential "nation"'

Source: Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity*, 1991

State

'Can be defined as a set of autonomous institutions exercising a monopoly of coercion and extraction in a given territory'

Source: Anthony D Smith, *Ethno-Symbolism and Nationalism*, 2009

Nations without states

'Territorial communities with their own identity and a desire for self-determination included within the boundaries of one or more states, with which, by and large, they do not identify. In nations without states, the feeling of identity is generally based on their own common culture and history'

Source: Montserrat Guibernau, *Nations and Nationalism*, 2004

Culture

'[Culture] is that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by [a human] as a member of society.'

Source: UNESCO

Cultural Heritage

The term cultural heritage encompasses several main categories of heritage:

- *Tangible cultural heritage*
 - movable cultural heritage (paintings, sculptures, coins, manuscripts)
 - immovable cultural heritage (monuments, archaeological sites, etc)
 - underwater cultural heritage (wrecks, underwater ruins and cities)
- *Intangible cultural heritage*: oral traditions, performing arts, rituals