

## LESSON PLAN

# Stories of Identity and Belonging

**Essential Question:** What makes me, me? What story do I want to tell about who I am and what matters to me?

**Guiding Questions:**

- Which aspects of my identity, if any, are fixed, and which ones are more fluid?
- What factors can make it challenging for me to be who I want to be in the world? How can I navigate or rise above these challenges?

## Overview

In the previous lessons, students explored the interplay between personal and social identity and the ways in which identity development is an ongoing narrative process that we engage in more deeply as we move through adolescence and into adulthood. Next, students will apply these concepts to a collection of narrative essays, written by four young people who share their personal stories of becoming and belonging in their families, peer groups, schools, and communities. While the factors that influence identity are too numerous to capture in four readings, the following texts include some of these influences, such as race, gender, ability, and social class. In them, the young authors reflect on the ways in which their identities have been shaped by their beliefs about themselves, others' perceptions of them, and messages they receive from society at large.

Making time and space for your students to read and reflect on someone else's story can help them feel validated when they recognize aspects of their own identities and experiences reflected in the text, and it can invite opportunities to develop empathy for others who may seem quite different from them. Taken together, these personal stories, along with the other texts in this text set, help students understand that identity development is a complex, ongoing process, and while it can be difficult and requires courage, there is power and agency in knowing and sharing their stories with others.

## Texts and Materials

- Handout: [Storytelling Sketch to Stretch](#)
- Reading: [AJ from Washington, DC](#)
- Reading: [Lauren from Providence, RI](#)
- Reading: [My Dell Hid My Privilege and My Mac Hid My Financial Need](#)

- Reading: [How Assimilation Changed My Identification with My Culture](#)
- Handout: [Personal Narrative Connection Questions](#)

## Teaching Strategies

- [Sketch to Stretch](#)
- [Pick a Number](#)
- [Jigsaw](#)

## Pacing

Unless students read for homework, plan to spend two class periods working with these personal narrative essays. On the first day, do the Sketch to Stretch and the first part of the Jigsaw activity. Then discuss the stories in teaching groups and as a whole class on the second day.

## Activities

### 1. Warm Up with a Sketch to Stretch

Distribute the [Storytelling Sketch to Stretch](#) handout. Read the quotations together and invite students to choose one that resonates with them for a [Sketch to Stretch](#) reflection. Model the activity with your own sketch, emphasizing that a sketch is a quick visual representation and not a work of art. Alternatively, students can discuss the quotations using the [Pick a Number](#) teaching strategy or reflect on one in writing in a journal response that they debrief with a partner or in small groups.

**Remote Learning Note:** Have students complete the Sketch to Stretch handout ahead of time, and adapt the [Notable Quotable](#) routine, using the quotations on the handout, for a warm-up during a synchronous session.

### 2. Read and Discuss Young-Adult Personal Narratives

Familiarize yourself with the [Jigsaw](#) teaching strategy and then decide if you will assign students specific readings, create random groupings, or preview each reading with the class and let students choose the one that interests them. The four readings vary in length and text complexity, which may impact your decision for creating groups. Then explain the activity and move students into their “expert” groups of four. Pass out the readings and discussion handout ([Personal Narrative Connection Questions](#)) for this activity:

Reading: [AJ from Washington, DC](#)

Reading: [Lauren from Providence, RI](#)

Reading: [My Dell Hid My Privilege and My Mac Hid My Financial Need](#)

Reading: [How Assimilation Changed My Identification with My Culture](#)

Handout: [Personal Narrative Connection Questions](#)

Also, prompt students take out their copies of the readings [Authoring Identity](#) and [Exploring the Concept of Identity](#) from previous lessons to refer to during the group discussions. Encourage students to support their ideas with evidence from the personal narratives, text set readings, journals, handouts, and their own experiences.

**Remote Learning Note:** Students can read their personal narrative in advance or out loud in “expert” breakout groups during synchronous class time. Create new breakout rooms for “teaching groups” during synchronous class time. If the “teaching groups” record notes in a shared Google Doc or platform like Padlet, the class can review each other’s key ideas before the debrief activity.

### 3. Debrief as a Class

After students have finished both parts of the Jigsaw activity, have each group share highlights or key takeaways with the class. Then discuss the final question together: *Who or what can make it challenging for young people to be who they really want to be in the world? How can you navigate or rise above these challenges?*

Record students’ ideas on a T-chart that captures the challenges in one column and their ideas for navigating or rising above them in the other column. Then invite students to come up with creative ways to navigate or rise above the challenges they face as they author their identities in private and public spaces.