



## Lesson Plan: Exploring Identity

### OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students will explore how factors such as race, religion and family shape a person's personal identity. They will then create self-portraits made up of objects, symbols and/or imagery that represent various parts of their identities.

POV documentaries can be recorded off-the-air and used for educational purposes for up to one year from their initial broadcast. In addition, POV offers a lending library of DVDs and VHS tapes that you can borrow anytime during the school year — FOR FREE! Get started by joining our [Community Network](#).

### OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Identify facets of their personal identities.
- Observe and analyze how race, religion, family and other factors influence the identity of a high school student seen in a series of video clips.
- Create self-portraits made up of objects, symbols and/or imagery that represent key elements of their identity.
- Explain what objects they included in their self-portraits and how they relate to their personal identities.

### GRADE LEVELS

9-12

### SUBJECT AREAS

Psychology, Sociology, Social Studies, Art

### MATERIALS

- Internet access and equipment to show the class online video clips
- Handout: [Viewing Guide](#) (PDF file)

### ESTIMATED TIME NEEDED

One 50-minute class period, plus homework time

### FILM

Clip 1: "I Sent a Letter to My Birth Parents" (length: 2:39)

The clip begins at 4:28 with the family at the table. It ends at 7:07 with the words ". . . kind of obvious for why they don't see that."

Clip 2: "Letter From Avery's Birth Mother" (length: 1:30)

The clip begins at 10:30 with a shot of Avery's gold track shoes. It ends at 12:00 with the words "Love always, Kay."



Clip 3: “Jewish Elementary School Reunion” (length: 3:11)

The clip begins at 14:24 with the on-screen text JEWISH ELEMENTARY SCHOOL REUNION. It ends at 17:45, when Avery says, “It’s not any different.”

Clip 4: “I Can Create Who I Want to Be” (length 1:03)

The clip begins at 50:57 with Rafi climbing some stairs. It ends at 52:00, when Rafi says, “I can create who I want to be.”

### **ACTIVITY**

1. As a warm-up, ask students to respond for a few minutes in writing to the question “Who am I?”
2. Ask volunteers to share what they have written. Point out the factors of their identities that seem to have played a key role in shaping how they see themselves, such as race, gender, nationality, activities (e.g., sports or music), religion, socio-economic status, culture, key life experiences and so forth.
3. Explain that the class will examine issues related to identity in greater depth by watching a series of video clips from the film **Off and Running**. Pass out the Viewing Guide and have students respond to the questions on the handout as they watch the video clips.
4. For homework, ask each student to create a self-portrait made up of objects, symbols and/or imagery that represent key elements of his or her identity. Students can create these self-portraits using whatever medium they choose, including graphic software on the computer, magazine cut-outs, drawing, 3-D sculpture, modeling clay and so forth. For inspiration, students may look at the following self-portraits:
  - <http://tinyurl.com/2ahtz28>
  - <http://www.abcgallery.com/A/arciboldo/arciboldo9.html>
  - <http://emilykiel.files.wordpress.com/2009/01/typeportraitex.jpg>
  - <http://www.princetonol.com/groups/iad/lessons/high/images/Nerina-Arciboldo3.jpg>

Have each student write analysis that explains the objects he or she included in the self-portrait and how they relate to his or her personal identity.

5. Assign an appropriate due date and then create a display or school exhibit (possibly in the media center) of the self-portraits.

### **ASSESSMENT SUGGESTIONS**

Students can be assessed on:

- Thoughtful and complete responses on the Viewing Guide.
- Completing self-portraits and written analyses.



## EXTENSIONS AND ADAPTATIONS

- Explore POV's other documentary stories of intercultural adoption, including **In the Matter of Cha Jung Hee**, **First Person Plural**, **Discovering Dominga** and **Wo Ai Ni (I Love You) Mommy**. Each film has website resources and lesson plans to facilitate classroom use.
- Dig deeper into how students have developed their racial and ethnic senses of self. Have small student groups read and discuss chapters of Beverly Daniel Tatum's book *"Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?": A Psychologist Explains the Development of Racial Identity*. Ask students from all the groups to reflect on the ideas shared in written journal entries.
- Determine which factors have shaped the identities of people from history, literature or current events. Have students choose a figure the class has studied previously or someone who is currently in the news and ask them to list factors that have likely contributed to that person's identity, such as race, nationality, education, hobbies, culture, key life experiences and so forth. Ask students to prioritize their lists, placing the factors they believe have been most influential at the top. Then, ask them to write essays that analyze and provide evidence for how the top three factors on their lists have shaped the identity of the person in question and affected his or her activities.

## RELATED RESOURCE

### POV. "Facts About Adoption."

[http://www.pbs.org/pov/woainimommy/adoption\\_fact\\_sheet.php](http://www.pbs.org/pov/woainimommy/adoption_fact_sheet.php)

This POV resource provides statistics and describes historical and current adoption trends.

## STANDARDS

These standards are drawn from "Content Knowledge," a compilation of content standards and benchmarks for K-12 curriculum by McRel (Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning) at <http://www.mcrel.org/standards-benchmarks/>.

Art Connections, Standard 1: Understands connections among the various art forms and other disciplines.

Behavioral Studies, Standard 1: Understands that group and cultural influences contribute to human development, identity and behavior.

Behavioral Studies, Standard 3: Understands that interactions among learning, inheritance and physical development affect human behavior.



Family/Consumer Sciences, Standard 1: Understand the family as the basic unit of society.

Family/Consumer Sciences, Standard 2: Understands the impact of the family on the well-being of individuals and society.

Family/Consumer Sciences, Standard 10: Understands how knowledge and skills related to child development affect the well-being of individuals, families and society.

Language Arts, Standard 9: Uses viewing skills and strategies to understand and interpret visual media.

Visual Arts, Standard 1: Understands and applies media, techniques and processes related to the visual arts.

Visual Arts, Standard 3: Knows a range of subject matter, symbols and potential ideas in the visual arts.

### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Cari Ladd, M.Ed., is an educational writer with a background in secondary education and media development. Previously, she served as PBS Interactive's director of education, overseeing the development of curricular resources tied to PBS programs, the PBS TeacherSource website (now PBS Teachers) and online teacher professional development services. She has also taught in Maryland and Northern Virginia.