

Instructions for completing first draft of identity paper:

Free-write about aspects of identity (age, gender, religion, race, ethnicity, social class, region, sexual orientation) for about 15 minutes. (Dedicate a short couple minutes to each aspect.) For the aspects of identity you think you might want to explore in your paper, think of two things: What were some moments when you were most aware of this identity? What objects could symbolize that identity? Make notes.

Gather artifacts which represent things which could be used to symbolize aspects of your identity.

Settle on one to use to complete this exercise.

Write to the following prompts about this artifact. Try to write for five minutes on each prompt.

1. Describe the artifact objectively so that someone who could not see it would get a good visual picture of it. Your aim is to be very objective in your description.
2. Present tense reflection—Imagine that you are using the artifact, or engaging in an activity associated with the artifact. Write from the world of the artifact itself. Speak as you would if you were there in the photograph or using the artifact. The aim here is to get directly into the world of the artifact. The way you do this will vary with the artifact itself.
3. Write about the significance of the artifact to you; try to explore all possible meanings. Try to go beyond pat statements to ways in which what this artifact represents colors your whole view of life. If we were to remove what this artifact represents from your life, how would your life be different? How would you be different?
4. Free associate, using the artifact as a base and coming back to it. You might return to describing the artifact if you run out of things to write until another idea occurs to you.

When you have completed all of these free writes, look at the material you have gathered. The form of this paper is open, as is the genre. The final paper should use the artifact, or the story of one of the moments you noted when you were particularly aware of your identity as a lens to enable the reader to see you and your culture in a different way. Take risks with this. Let it go where it will. The idea is to reveal a lot about yourself and your culture indirectly through the artifact or the story.

Questions for peer response to identity paper drafts:

Critical Questions to Ask of Drafts:

- What is powerful in the writing? Identify an image, line, metaphor, or representation of a person which is powerful.
- What is omitted? Who/what is absent and/or hinted at or overgeneralized?
- What doesn't fit? What contradictions emerge?
- What aspects of identity (gender, race, ability, social class, age, etc.) are constructed? Which are concealed?
- What other possible readings can be produced from this text?