

Reading

Authoring Identity (Adapted Version)


Directions for Reading Independently

Read the text by yourself. As you read, make annotations in the left margin to record your ideas about the relationship between identity and storytelling. **Use these annotation symbols:**

- ♥ = **Thought** (when the line or sentence contains something that you like or that gives you an idea)
- ? = **Question** (when you don't understand the line or sentence or you have a specific question about it)
- ! = **Epiphany** (when you just learned something important about yourself, people in general, or the world from this line or sentence)

Do NOT answer the questions in the gray boxes. Do NOT complete the TQE Time! chart or the connection questions.

Annotations	Connecting Identity and Storytelling	DEFINITIONS
♥ = Thought ? = Question ! = Epiphany	<p>As we grow up, it is important to ask ourselves the question, "Who am I?" It seems like a simple question, but it is not. Identity—who we are—is complex, multidimensional, and fluid. For all human beings, a key (<i>important</i>) part of developing our identity is <i>storytelling</i>. As we grow up, we meet new people and we experience new things. Our brains organize all of this information into stories. The way that we tell ourselves these stories helps us to create our identity. Author and journalist Emily Esfahani Smith explains it like this:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">We all tell ourselves stories. Most stories we have read or heard follow simple patterns. But our lives do not follow simple patterns. Our experiences and identities are constantly shifting, and so we have to create stories in our minds to make sense of (<i>understand</i>) all of it.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">We take all of the disparate (<i>different</i>) pieces of our lives and put them together into one big story. When we create this big story, we can see our lives as something coherent. Psychologists say that when we see our lives as a coherent story, it helps us make meaning of, or understand, who we are in the world.¹</p>	<p>multidimensional: has many different parts.</p> <p>fluid: can change easily.</p> <p>patterns: organized in a similar way.</p> <p>constantly shifting: always changing.</p> <p>coherent: has a clear, connected, and logical order.</p>

¹ Adapted from Emily Esfahani Smith, "The Two Kinds of Stories We Tell About Ourselves," TED website (IDEAS.TED.com), January 12, 2017.

REFLECTION QUESTION: Why might a coherent life feel more meaningful than a life that is incoherent (not coherent)?

A coherent life might feel more meaningful than a life that is incoherent because _____

♥ = Thought ? = Question ! = Epiphany

Annotations

Defining Narrative Identity

The stories we tell ourselves about what we see, hear, and experience help us to create our own **unique** (*special and individual*) identities. Through these stories, we communicate who we are to other people. **Psychologist** Daniel McAdams believes that these stories form a *narrative identity*. A *narrative identity* is another way of saying a person's life story. Our narrative identity has many parts: our memories from the past, our stories about the present, and our ideas about what might happen in the future.

McAdams describes *narrative identity* as the story you create about yourself—your own personal **myth**. Like myths, our narrative identity has different kinds of characters (heroes and villains), major events, challenges to **overcome**, and **emotional struggle**. When we want people to understand us, we tell them our story (or just parts of it); When we want to know who another person is, we ask them to share part of their story. ¹

DEFINITIONS

psychologist: a person who studies how people think.

myth: a story that tries to explain why something is the way it is.

overcome: to solve a problem.

emotional struggle: having a hard time with feelings like love, sadness, or anger.

REFLECTION QUESTION: Is Daniel McAdams suggesting that each person's narrative identity is true, false, or something in between? What makes you think that?

I think Daniel McAdams is suggesting that each person's narrative identity is _____

¹ Adapted from Emily Esfahani Smith, "The Two Kinds of Stories We Tell About Ourselves," TED website (IDEAS.TED.com), January 12, 2017.

Annotations	Authoring Identity – Part I	DEFINITIONS
	<p>Just like the books we read, the stories we tell about our lives have characters, settings, plots, and themes.¹ And just like an author, we make <i>narrative choices</i>. This means that we decide what parts of our identities or stories we want to share with other people and what parts we want to keep private. This is an <i>active process</i>. Our narrative choices are influenced by our relationships with other people, especially our family and friends. Our narrative choices are also influenced by our experiences in the world. Psychologist and adolescent development expert Michael J. Nakkula explains it like this:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">We do not create our life stories by ourselves. We are in a constant state of (always) creating who we are with the people closest to us and within those contexts that hold most meaning for our day-to-day lives.²</p>	<p>contexts: different parts of our lives (school or home, for example).</p>

REFLECTION QUESTION: In the text you just read, it says, “This means that we decide what parts of our identities or stories we want to share with other people and what parts we want to keep private.” What kinds of stories do you tell others about yourself?

The kinds of stories I tell others about myself include _____

What kinds of stories do you keep private? The kinds of stories I keep private include _____

¹ Adapted from Dan P. McAdams, “Identity and the Life Story,” *Autobiographical Memory and the Construction of a Narrative Self*, ed. Robyn Fivush and Catherine A. Haden (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 2003), 187.
² Michael J. Nakkula and Eric Toshalis, *Understanding Youth: Adolescent Development for Educators* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press, 2008), 6.

Authoring Identity – Part II

During **adolescence**, young people explore their identities by **engaging** with other teenagers, forming friendships, trying out new activities and interests, testing boundaries, and taking risks. They make sense of (understand) all these new experiences through storytelling. Psychologists Mike Nakkula and Eric Toshalis believe that young people learn to understand themselves by telling themselves these stories in their head. Atlantic editor Julie Beck summarizes this idea:

These stories become a form of identity. People make choices about what to include in the story and how to tell the story. These choices can influence who the person is and who they may become. A life story doesn't just say what happened to the person. The story explains how what happened in the past helped the person become who they are today and who they may become in the future.¹

DEFINITIONS

adolescence: the time period from age 10 to age 20.

engaging: having contact with; talking to, hanging out with, etc.

REFLECTION QUESTION: Think about two important people in your life (for example, a friend and a family member). How are the stories you tell them about yourself different?

The stories I tell these two people about myself are different because _____



Directions for Reading a Second Time with a Partner

1. Read the text again with a partner. Take turns reading out loud to one another.
2. If you have new thoughts, questions, or epiphanies, add these annotations to the ones you made during the first read.
3. Answer the **reflection questions** in the gray boxes at the end of each section together.
4. Do not discuss your annotations; wait until you get to **TQE Time!** on the next page. Read the directions there for sharing your annotations with each other.
5. Answer the **connection questions** on page 6 together after TQE Time!

¹ Adapted from Julie Bleck, "Life's Stories," *The Atlantic*, August 10, 2015.

TQE Time!¹



Directions: Look back at your annotations. Choose two thoughts, two questions, and two epiphanies to record in the table below. Use the sentence frames to write out your thoughts, questions, and epiphanies.

♥ = Thoughts	? = Questions	! = Epiphanies
<p>Sample sentence frames:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The sentence _____ made me think . . . • I wonder about the line . . . <p>1.</p> <p>2.</p>	<p>Sample sentence frames:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I don't understand . . . • I am confused by . . . <p>1.</p> <p>2.</p>	<p>Sample sentence frames:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I learned that . . . • I was surprised to find out that . . . <p>1.</p> <p>2.</p>



Directions: Take turns sharing your annotations with your partner:

1. Start by sharing your thoughts with one another.
2. Then share your questions and try to help one another answer them.
3. Record answers to the questions in the space below.
4. Finally, share your epiphanies with one another.

Answers to questions and other notes:

¹ Adapted from Marisa Thompson, "TQE: Thoughts, Questions, and Epiphanies," *Unlimited Teacher*, accessed October 23, 2023.



Connection Questions

Directions:

1. Read the connection questions below and try to answer them together.
2. Be prepared to share your answers with the whole class.

1. What are the **risks** (*dangers*) and the **rewards** (*advantages*) of sharing your stories in person or on social media? What makes you say that?

The risks of sharing my stories in person or on social media include . . .

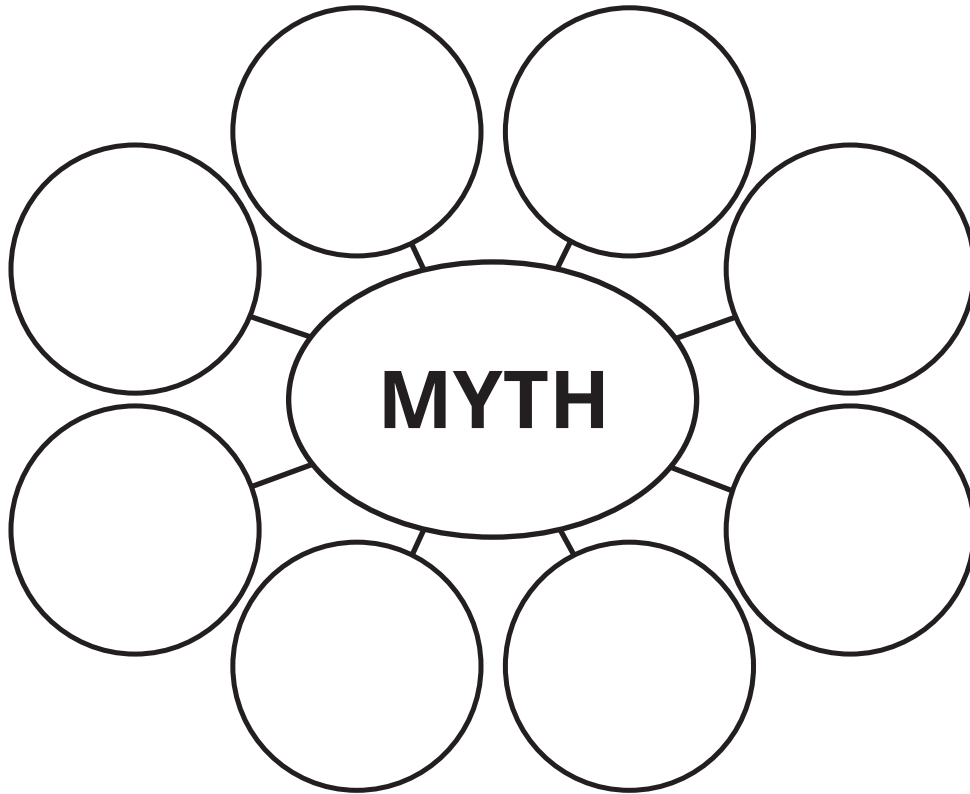
The rewards of sharing my stories in person or on social media include . . .

2. How can sharing personal stories help someone feel heard and recognized?

Sharing personal stories can help someone feel heard and recognized . . .

3. To explain the concept of narrative identity, McAdams describes it as “a story you create about yourself—your own personal myth.”

a. What words/ideas do you associate with “myths”?



b. Why do you think McAdams chooses the word “myth” to describe narrative identity instead of just “story”?

McAdams chooses the word “myth” instead of “story” to describe narrative identity because . . .

- c. How can thinking about narrative identity as a “personal myth” help us understand the relationship between identity (who we are) and storytelling (the real and imagined stories we tell about ourselves, other people, and our experiences in the world)?

Thinking about narrative identity as a “personal myth” can help us understand the relationship between identity and storytelling by . . .

- d. How can these stories influence who we are now and who we become in the future?

These stories can influence who we are now/who we become in the future by . . .