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# Identity Crisis

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## Introduction

This activity reinforces what has already been learned about people or figures that the students are studying. In this simulation, students are given a mystery identity. By asking questions of their fellow students, they try to determine the mystery person from among the many important people or figures unique to the historical period being studied.

## Materials

- general background information on the people of the time period
- one page information card of eight people or figures that you are studying
- copies of *Identity Crisis Assessment Chart* (page 144 or filename: identity.doc)
- string
- hole puncher
- different colored copy paper

## Teacher Preparation

1. Distribute a study guide overview of the people or figures (gods, goddesses, mythological heroes or heroines, etc.) that are being studied to each student in the class. This sheet should have brief information about people or figures, including the eight that you will be using in the activity. Be sure you have included some information about people other than the eight that you chose. If you only have the eight, it will be too easy for students to figure out who they are. As a reference, see the *Sample Identity Crisis Card* (page 143) taken from the *Exploring History—Ancient Egypt* unit.
2. Review the personality profiles with the students and tell them to become well acquainted with the material for homework. Let them know that they will be involved in an exercise in class the next day and they will need to know the information.
3. You can ask the students to draw a stick figure or an action figure of the person, representing some of the information on the study guide. For other students you may want to suggest that they write the top five achievements or notable characteristics of each individual. This will help move information from short-term to long-term memory.
4. Create the eight cards that will be used during the activity. On each card, type a description of the person or figure and his or her accomplishments as well as a photograph or line drawing of that individual.
5. Create cooperative groups that have eight students each. This will determine the amount of sets you will need to photocopy. Each set constitutes one information card of each individual.
6. Photocopy each set onto different colored paper for management purposes. For example, all students with blue photocopied cards will only talk to other people with blue photocopies. You do not want a student to meet another person who has been assigned the same individual.
7. If a laminating machine is available, laminate each card so that you won't have to re-create the cards for future years.
8. Punch two holes at either end of the top of the sheet. Tie a string through the holes, but allow enough room for the card to go over a student's head.

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# Identity Crisis

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## **Activity: Who Am I?**

1. Explain the activity to the class. Students will form groups and each person will be given an identity (which he or she will wear on his or her upper back). Moving around the classroom, each student will ask other members of his or her group three yes or no questions. It is each student's responsibility, by using deductive reasoning, to determine his or her mystery identity, based on last night's reading.
2. Now that the strategy has been explained to the class, begin the negotiable contracting of criteria for assessment. Ask students to place themselves in your position as the teacher. What criteria do they think should be used for assessing one another's ability to speak and behave properly during the simulation? Students should first jot down their ideas privately. Then they can share their ideas with their cooperative group and consolidate their lists.
3. Next, call on a spokesperson from each group to submit one idea, which you write on large chart paper. Continue with this process, rotating from group to group. Once an idea is listed, it may not be stated again by another group. This skill is called active listening. It is important for students to be aware that if another group offered an idea similar to or the same as theirs, it means that it is an important idea. The fact that two or more groups thought of the same idea gives it relevance and importance. They may want to put a star or check next to that idea on their own papers. If the students have not thought of a certain criterion that you think is important and meaningful, add the item to the list and explain your reasoning to the class. Then, negotiate with the students to agree on 4 or 5 of the criteria to use for assessment.
4. Samples of the criteria of assessment could include:
  - Student asks logical questions.
  - Student works with all members of the group.
  - Student listens to the question and responds succinctly and to the point.
  - Student offers answers that will help the individual who is trying to determine his or her identity.
5. Form cooperative groups of eight students each.
6. Explain that they are not permitted to talk to students outside their own group. You may want to separate them into the corners of the classroom.
7. Place one set of cards face down in the middle of each group.
8. Assign one person in the group to place the cards over the other students' heads, without allowing anyone to see the faces of the cards. The cards will hang similar to necklaces, but instead of lying on the students' chests, they will hang down on their backs. This will allow other people in the group to look at the picture and read the card on someone else's back, without the wearer knowing his or her identity.
9. Tell the wearers of the cards that it is their task to determine "their" own, new identity.

## Identity Crisis

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### Activity: Who Am I? (cont.)

10. They are allowed to walk up to a member of their group and ask three questions. At first, insist that the questions asked may only be answered with a yes or no response. When they have exhausted the three questions, they must move on to someone else and ask the next set of yes/no questions. This activity requires students to use deductive reasoning.
11. Here are some sample yes/no questions from *Exploring History: Ancient Egypt*:
  - Am I female?
  - Am I male?
  - Am I a parent?
  - Do I have the body of a hawk?
  - Do I guard the land of the dead?
  - Do I bring the sun and daylight to Egypt?
12. Moving from one person to the next encourages all members of the group to talk to each other. Once a student has talked with everyone and hasn't guessed who he or she is, the process may be repeated.
13. For groups that are having a hard time with this process, you may decide to open up the line of questioning to open-ended questions (e.g., If I have the head of an animal, describe it to me).
14. You can use the *Identity Crisis Assessment Chart* (page 144) to evaluate and record student work. There is a *Microsoft Word* version of this sheet on the CD-ROM (filename: identity.doc). If necessary, you can edit this file to better match the criteria that you and your students determined.
15. Once the exercise is completed, pull the class together and ask them what they liked or disliked about this activity. Remind students that their critique should be based on evaluating an activity that is meant to reinforce information learned from the historical period they are studying. Record the students' observations on the board.
16. Have the students reflect upon the experience in their journals. Ask them to pose an open-ended question that reflects their experience of participating in the Identity Crisis activity and to answer it in depth. Tell students that they will be graded on the quality of the question as well as a detailed and meaningful answer. The following day, allow some time for students to share their responses with the other members of their cooperative groups.