



Over the course of your English Language Arts experience and hopefully, your life, we hope that you will ask yourself and others some essential life questions.

What are essential questions?

Essential questions are questions that:

- are *open-ended*; there is no one single, correct, and final answer
- often spark discussion and debate
- call for you to analyze and evaluate ideas and information
- call for you make inferences and predictions
- allow you to make connections
- may create more questions related to the idea
- requires you to support and justify your ideas
- can be revisited again and again

Examples of essential questions:

Question	Is this an essential question?	Commentary
What does it mean to regret?	No	It doesn't open up worthy inquiry. At best, it could lead to a definition.
How are prejudice and bias created?	Yes	This is a rich question for exploring the many aspects of what influences people, including historical, social, parental, peer, and media impacts.
What are examples of racism?	No	This would result in a list of examples, rather than an exploration of an idea.
How does where you live influence how you live?	Yes	This would require further exploration of how location, climate, natural resources, economy and lifestyle influence people.

The essential question and inquiry focus that we will often revisit in ELA 12, is:

How do our experiences shape our identities?

So, it's time you start thinking about this question. Record your answers on a separate sheet of paper in any way you choose. You will not be required to hand this in, but you may wish to use it in your final portfolio as evidence later in the semester, so make sure you complete this.

Make sure you look up anything or any word you do not know.

You do not need to share anything that makes you feel unsafe. Remember, all learning should make you feel safe; however, real learning will require you to step out of your comfort zone.

So, if you really do not wish to write or talk about one of these aspects, that is completely fine.

- First off, what are your initial thoughts and reactions to this question? Write down anything that comes to mind (more questions, connections, stories you've heard, movies you watched, your own experiences, something you heard on the news... anything you thought of). Brainstorm some ideas.
- What factors contribute to someone's identity?
- What are some life experiences you've had so far that have shaped who you are?
- Is identity fixed or is it always evolving and changing? Would you describe yourself in the same way now that you would have five years ago?
- Are there experiences that can suddenly change someone's identity?
- What was the hardest thing you've ever encountered? How did you deal with it?
- We all feel like giving up at some point in our lives. What drives your motivation to keep going when things get tough?
- What is your most powerful memory? Why is this moment so important? How does it connect to how you see yourself?