

# ME, MYSELF AND I

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[Assignment: Consider an abstract word which does not have a set referent (like Becker's work on "democracy"). Explain how you would define this word in a way different from most other people. Use specific narratives to develop your definition.]

Who am I? Who are you? This is an inquiry that is most often posed to us either by ourselves or by others. The answer is not a constant, as in mathematics, but more like a variable factor this is entered into many different formulas and equations and changes from time to time. Unfortunately, perhaps for the better, this question does not become any easier to answer with years.

At first glance the question of "Who am I?" seems as simple as writing my name on the top left corner of an exam. Really it is more like the exam; something that takes a little bit of thought after some studying. Maybe it would be better to start from the beginning.

Before I even began kindergarten or preschool, I developed a liking to certain colors, foods, songs, people and places. My favorite color, as a little girl, was probably pink, I liked to eat tomato soup and grilled cheese, and my favorite songs were anything that Strawberry Shortcake sang. I loved my next door neighbor, Alice, who always had a dish full of candy corn and a box full of old toys for me to play with. My dad always seemed so big, comfortable and warm to me; it was so easy to fall asleep, thumb in mouth, while he read books to me at night. When a little bit older, I liked to walk to the library across the street and read the shiny new children's books that came in. The sound of the stamp that hit the ink pad and then the book card always interested me, so much, in fact, that I started my own library with my dad's books and some Strawberry Shortcake stamps. I remember walking to the cool library on a hot summer's day and watching *Star Wars* trilogy with a roomful of other summer-kissed children; then going out afterward and playing Princess Leah. In writing a pen pal for the first time, those would have been the things mentioned in my letter at that age.

Those years of learning how to read, add, subtract, and play hopscotch are probably as close to the mathematical constant as I will ever become. I knew everything about myself that I needed to know and I was happy. If someone asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up, I would think: "Well, I like playing school with my friends." Then "teacher" would come out of my Kool-Aid stained mouth. If you wanted to know how I would save the world, I'd say, "Have everyone listen to my dad read this book called *The Giving Tree*."

After elementary school, the next formula was junior high school. I would describe myself as a blonde-haired girl with glasses, thirteen years old, the one with the big plastic mouth piece to correct her overbite. Those years are only a blur to me, but it was then that I became aware of things. I was how I looked. Unless it was the same boy, my friends were those who liked the same things as me. They were the people who ran track with me. Algebra was defiantly not my favorite subject. If you asked me what I wanted to become when I grew older I would have said, "My friends and I, well, we like animals." Then "veterinarian" would have come out of my plastic and metal mouth. I was less sure how to save the world; maybe if algebra were banned . . .

In high school I described myself as runner, member of student council, the Varsity Club, National Honor Society, and the yearbook staff. At least that is what I would say if I were trying to impress you. If you were my best friend I would tell you that I really have a crush on this guy, even though I know he only wants me as a friend. You would hear me say that I wish my hair were not so thick, that I really do not like selling ads to fund the yearbook, that some of the people in the Honor Society are snooty.

Perhaps the question I asked in high school was "I am who?--as if I were waiting for someone to answer the question for me. I tried to fit in with different groups of people, thinking that everyone could be my friend. Then I found out I could not afford to fit in with them financially or spiritually, nor did I want to; then came the realization that I had to just be myself.

But what is "myself?" Look back through this paper and count all the I's. Then look at the different words that come between them. There must be many things about myself that can be included after that simple word. As each moment passes I am something different in some way. My emotions and thoughts change as each breath is taken. When people tell me to be myself, which one of me should I be? If only the answer were as simple as when I were younger. Now, if you ask me what I want to be when I graduate from college, I will say that I am not sure, nor do I have the answers to saving the world. In a way life is backwards; if only I possessed the trust and security that I had for the world as a child right now.

Do we have to know exactly who we are? You, me, he and she have all questioned ourselves about who we are. If one of us thinks we know exactly who we are it is sure to change someday. It is relaxing to look back on the years when defining "me" was easier than doing multiplication tables, and when all we had to know about ourselves was our name and favorite food. However, not knowing what tomorrow brings puts more life into life. If you were the answer to a riddle, what would be the words to describe you? A simple riddle may be easier on the brain, but a challenging riddle is more rewarding when solved.

Who are you? In order to come as close to the answer as possible, look at a time when you were the most happy with yourself. During my childhood, for instance, I did what I did because it made me happy. Grilled cheese made me happy, Strawberry Shortcake and pink made me

smile. I think that the more content a person is with him/herself, the less he/she is apt to change. Everyone has a feel for what happiness is. Though it is more complex as life progresses, we can at least come close. Happiness can be the constant that we put through the many equations that we face in life.