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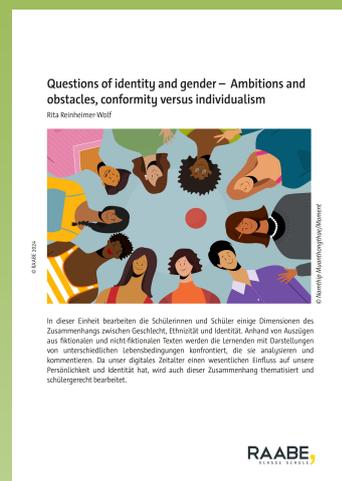
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**Auszug aus:**

*Questions of identity and gender*

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# Questions of identity and gender – Ambitions and obstacles, conformity versus individualism

Rita Reinheimer-Wolf



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In dieser Einheit bearbeiten die Schülerinnen und Schüler einige Dimensionen des Zusammenhangs zwischen Geschlecht, Ethnizität und Identität. Anhand von Auszügen aus fiktionalen und nicht-fiktionalen Texten werden die Lernenden mit Darstellungen von unterschiedlichen Lebensbedingungen konfrontiert, die sie analysieren und kommentieren. Da unser digitales Zeitalter einen wesentlichen Einfluss auf unsere Persönlichkeit und Identität hat, wird auch dieser Zusammenhang thematisiert und schülergerecht bearbeitet.

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## Competences and skills:

By engaging with the materials, students enhance their **reading skills**. Additionally, they improve their **speaking proficiency** through short presentations, speeches, and participating in discussions. Furthermore, students' **viewing skills** are trained as they watch two videos and answer corresponding questions. Lastly, their **writing competence** is strengthened by composing comments on presented topics within the context of the material.

**Overview:**

List of abbreviations:

**A** Analysis**C** Comment**D** Discussion/debate**G** Group work**LVC** Listening/Viewing comprehension**IN** Interview**PR** Presentation**RC** Reading comprehension**T** Working with a text**W** Writing

Topic	Material	Methods/Skills
1: Identity – What is it all about?	M1–M2	D, G, PR
2: Identity and gender	M3–M6	C, PR, RC, T, W
3: Identity and ethnicity	M7–M9	A, D, IN, LVC, RC, T
4: My digital identity	M10–M13	A, C, D, LVC, RC, T, W

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## Facts

The concept of identity may appear transparent, leading many individuals to believe they have a clear understanding of it. To begin, what connotations are associated with the term "identity"? Possible answers are personality, self-awareness, character traits, character, roots, individuality, uniqueness, gender, ethnicity, social class etc.

As far as psychology is concerned, scientific research has led to the conclusion that our identity is a combination of hereditary aspects and the reactions of our brain to external influences and experiences. As a consequence, social context plays a major role; what matters to our fellow citizens shapes our identity. People also define themselves in terms of what is relevant in their respective social environments. It goes without saying that the impact of the family plays a crucial role shaping one's identity. The importance of strong family ties for a young person's development is generally recognised. We all know that a solid, stable and supportive relationship between adolescents and their parents is vital. If this is lacking, young people may cultivate a fear of rejection, making it harder for them to form their own separate identity.

As a result, our identity is shaped and formed in the course of our lives. An individual's identity – be it personal or social – is derived from his/her collections of experiences. Therefore, the people one meets and the circumstances in which one lives play a major role in this context. Identity – if closely connected with personal development – can also be of a temporary nature. Life means being constantly confronted with new experiences and change. Consequently, during the ups and downs of life, the sense of identity or belonging will continue to develop and shift to a great extent. What is relevant now might be obsolete a few years later. Hence, individuals must be prepared to adapt their own identity. This applies even more to people who are faced with multi-ethnic and/or diverse cultural environments. They may have to fight major struggles and to overcome obstacles so that they can build and live their individual identity. Gender also has a considerable impact on a person's identity. This holds especially true for females, given

the entrenched biases and gender-based discrimination against women. This implies that an individual's understanding of identity influences his or her behaviour. This phenomenon has been the subject of research and appears to be of a rather complex nature.

### **Bernardine Evaristo: *Manifesto On Never Giving Up* (2022)**

Bernardine Evaristo, a British novelist, critic, poet, playwright, and academic, was born in 1959 in London to a British mother and a Nigerian father. She is currently Professor of Creative Writing at Brunel University London. Her novel *Manifesto On Never Giving Up* was first published in 2021. It is a memoir about her childhood, adolescence and young adulthood focusing on the experiences of a bi-ethnic female growing up in Great Britain amid the presence of laws against ethnic discrimination that were consistently disregarded by both institutions and individuals in society. In Bernardine Evaristo's novel, she narrates her development from a child with dark skin who identifies wholeheartedly as British but faces judgment solely based on her father's ethnic background, to emerging as a resilient, creative, and remarkably self-assured young artist. After countless obstacles and struggles, the author has ultimately forged her true identity – embracing her genuine self.

### **Notes on the material**

This unit offers abundant opportunities to analyse the diverse aspects of gender, ethnicity and identity. While the topics can be approached individually, delving into all the offered subjects is advisable for a more comprehensive understanding of this complex subject matter.

**Topic 1** prompts students to reflect a selection of statements regarding identity. After having discussed the dimensions of these statements, learners are asked to prepare a brief presentation. Then, they receive a list of thematic vocabulary on identity. Students practise their vocabulary skills by completing a fill-in-the-blanks exercise and prepare a short speech.

**Topic 2** revolves around identity and gender. Initially, a text addressing violence against women is introduced, followed by a reading comprehension exercise where students engage in a multiple-choice task. After this, they create paraphrases of sentences from the text. Students are given an opportunity to refine their writing skills by composing a comment on structural deep-rooted violence and the responsibilities of the state within this context.

**Topic 3** focusses on identity and ethnicity. Its initial task involves a video addressing ethnicity, gender and social class. Students engage in a pre-viewing task to get an overview of the topic. While-viewing tasks enhance the learners' viewing skills, whereas a post-viewing task entails conducting an interview with the two persons from the video. Following this, an extract from Bernardine Evaristo's novel *Manifesto On Never Giving Up* is introduced. Comprehension is ensured through questions for students to answer. As a final task for this topic, students write an analysis of how ethnicity influences the author's identity.

In **topic 4**, students explore the dimensions of a person's digital identity. They begin with an opinion sheet on their own digital selves. After responding to the sheet, students discuss their thoughts with their classmates. Subsequently, they formulate conclusions based on their responses. Following this, a grid with thematic vocabulary on the digital self is introduced. Learners receive the task to compose a text utilising fifteen of the provided expressions. As a next step, they work with a text discussing the impact of modern gadgets on children's development. The reading comprehension involves statements that need to be marked as right, wrong or not in the text. The learners then analyse the text by establishing connections between selected statements from the text and the concept of identity. Finally, a video focusing on the essence of digital identity is presented. Students will answer questions on the video's content. To conclude this topic, either a discussion or a written comment is required regarding whether possessing both a digital and an analogue self is a blessing or a curse.

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