

Define Yourself

Thus far, we've tried to raise your awareness of worlds within worlds, the ways in which situations, circumstances, environments, and cultural factors can combine to influence human actions, choices, and plans.

In the fourth quarter, prior to reading ...*And the Earth Did Not Devour Him*, I want you to gain this same degree of self-awareness by "characterizing" yourself, just as you would if you were a character in someone's novel. Which traits would an author highlight? Which strengths would he mention, and which weaknesses would he reveal? Which moments and memories would he use to flesh out your personality? What should people know if they're analyzing you in an effort to understand you? What do you reveal – your "tells" – and what do you hide?

All of you wear different hats, and attempting to call you only one thing – son, daughter, student, athlete, believer – ultimately reduces you. ("Person," of course, doesn't so much reduce you as become meaningless – it doesn't differentiate you from anyone else, so we don't gain any sort of understanding about you.)

It's time to better understand how we view people – ourselves, people in our entertainment, and people in our lives. What do our roles and relationships tell about us, and what do they obscure? Does physical appearance shape the way we see others? Can it, in turn, reveal aspects of someone's personality, or are the two entirely separate? When we talk about "characterization," how completely do you paint pictures of these people inside your head? How well do you know your family?

This project will require you to describe yourself in personal terms (physical/psychological) and in terms of your roles and attachments. What kind of a picture will I get of you if I only know you in terms of who raised you and who employs you? What kind of a picture will I get if I only know who your friends are? **What kind of a picture will I get of you if I ask your friend – versus if I ask your grandmother?**

Obviously, different people will understand you in different ways. We don't grant access to everyone, and we show different aspects of ourselves even to the people who are closest to us. But I'm interested in seeing how aware you are of how you're perceived – by others, and even by yourself.

To that end, you'll answer the questions you select from the back of this sheet. You'll also talk to three other people this week – a family member, a close friend, and an acquaintance – and see how their perceptions square with your own (as well as with how you thought they perceived you). You'll lay out your findings on a poster, and the layout decisions are up to you (as long as they're vertically-oriented and school-appropriate). The only requirement is that you **must** use material from all sources (yourself, others, and what you thought others would say). You can use additional sources if you like.