

Prompt for the 2024 Achievement Awards in Writing contest

“If you don’t get out there and define yourself, you’ll be quickly and inaccurately defined by others.”

—Michelle Obama, *Becoming*

As a teenager, you may feel constant judgment from those around you. Your parents tell their friends about what you’ve been up to. Your teachers discuss your work or behavior with your parent(s) or guardian(s). Your peers post about you on social media. But how accurate are any of these views when compared to your own perceptions of yourself?

Reflect on the many facets of your identity. Compose a personal piece that defines who you are and how you show it. Below are some ideas to help you get started; however, you aren’t limited to the options in this list:

1. How do you define yourself and why? How do you see your identity? What has made you the person you are today? If you’re still exploring exactly who you are, then imagine the person you’ll become. How will you get there?
2. Evaluate different perspectives people have of you and compare those to how you see yourself. You might describe a time when someone else’s ideas about you impacted or surprised you. What did you learn from the experience? Did it change how you see yourself today or how you communicate with others about your identity?
3. Rally against the need to define yourself at all. Consider the limitations of definitions, especially given the changes that happen during adolescence.

Convey your ideas through a format that best represents you (e.g., a traditional essay, personal narrative, photo or graphic essay, spoken word poem, video essay, etc.).