

Who am I? language, belonging and national identity

AP French Language and Culture · Lesson

This AP French lesson explains **AP French personal and public identities** step by step, with examples in French and English. Then practise with the worksheet on AP French personal and public identities and check yourself with the quiz.

Quick answer: The AP French theme Personal and Public Identities explores how language, beliefs, origins and nationality shape who people are. Students discuss bilingualism, belonging, alienation and national identity in francophone countries, using precise vocabulary, the subjunctive after bien que, and nuanced connectors to defend a point of view.

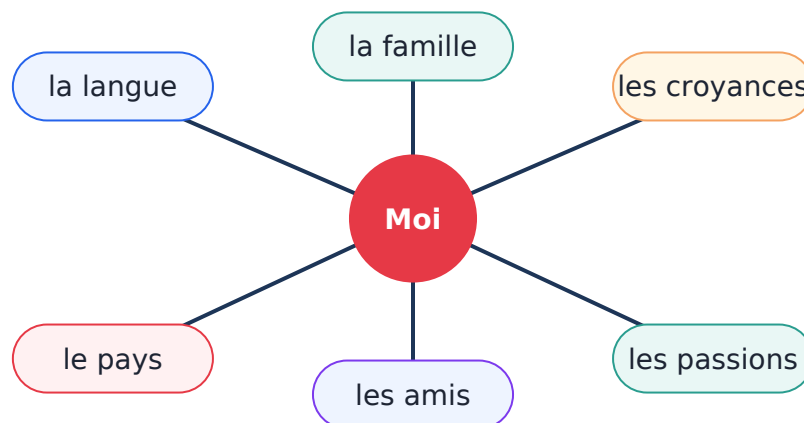
Level: AP French Language and Culture · **Standards:** AP French Language and Culture (College Board CED), Theme: Personal and Public Identities

AP French personal and public identities: the lesson

What does the AP theme Personal and Public Identities explore?

Theme definition

On the AP exam, *Personal and Public Identities* covers how individuals define themselves and are seen by others: self-image, language and identity, beliefs, alienation and assimilation, and national or regional identity. Texts often show someone caught between two worlds.



Identity has many layers, not just one nationality.

How do languages shape identity in the francophone world?

Place	Languages in daily life
Québec	French is the official language since the 1977 Charter; English and Indigenous languages are also present.
Belgique	Three official languages: French, Dutch and German.
Suisse	Four national languages: German, French, Italian and Romansh.
Sénégal	French is official; Wolof is spoken by a large majority.
Haïti	Haitian Creole and French are both official.

Pour Léon, parler créole à la maison, c'est garder un lien avec Port-au-Prince. — For Léon, speaking Creole at home keeps a link with Port-au-Prince.

Which words express belonging and feeling different?

Identity rarely has one answer. A student may be franco-ontarienne at school, libanaise at the family table and simply a teammate on the football pitch. AP texts reward writers who show these layers and who name both the pride and the tension that come with them.

- l'appartenance — belonging; le déracinement — uprooting
- l'intégration — integration; le sentiment d'exclusion — feeling excluded
- le plurilinguisme — speaking several languages; le mal du pays — homesickness

Nuance with concession

Bien que Fatou **soit** née à Lyon, elle se sent parfois étrangère. — Although Fatou was born in Lyon, she sometimes feels foreign. *Bien que* needs the subjunctive; *même si* needs the indicative; *pourtant* and *cependant* open a contrasting sentence.



Debates on identity often place integration between two extremes.

Watch out: nationality and language

French writes nationalities and languages in lowercase and drops the article after être: Elle est canadienne. Say Je m'identifie au Québec or Je me sens québécois, not a word-for-word copy of the English.

Culture note

The French law of 1905 separated the churches and the State, and la laïcité still shapes public debate about religious symbols at school. Good AP answers explain both views fairly.

Zoé's tip

Give an identity essay a three-part skeleton: how the person sees themselves, how society sees them, and what the two have in common. It keeps the argument balanced and easy to follow!

Key points to remember

- The theme covers self-image, language and identity, beliefs, alienation and national identity.
- Many francophone countries are multilingual: Belgium, Switzerland, Senegal, Haiti and Québec.
- Bien que takes the subjunctive; même si takes the indicative.
- Nationality adjectives are lowercase and agree: elle est sénégalaise.
- Strong answers compare perspectives instead of giving one opinion.

Who Am I? Language, Belonging and National Identity: frequently asked questions

What does the AP theme Personal and Public Identities cover?

It covers self-image, language and identity, beliefs, alienation, assimilation and national identity. Tasks ask students to explain how culture shapes the way people see themselves.

How do bilingualism and identity connect in francophone countries?

Language often signals belonging. In Belgium, Switzerland, Haiti and Senegal, speakers move between languages depending on family, school and work, which creates layered identities.

Which grammar helps express nuance about identity?

Use bien que with the subjunctive, même si with the indicative, and connectors such as pourtant and cependant. Accurate use lifts a presentational essay.

How are nationalities written in French?

Nationality adjectives are lowercase and agree with the subject: elle est sénégalaise, ils sont belges. Names of languages are lowercase too: le français.

What is the difference between integration and assimilation?

Integration means joining a society while keeping one's culture. Assimilation means adopting the dominant culture and often giving up the original one.