
Who Am I?

Dana Antayá-Moore
Ken Badley
Amy Kostelyk



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INTRODUCING

Who Am I?

Who Am I? follows 12 intermediate-level young people who have come to a ten-month-long camp in Newfoundland and Labrador, and three of their counsellors. But these are not just any campers. They come from all over the world and from different parts of Canada, and represent different races, religions, and belief systems. And Island Pond International Camp (I-PIC) is not just any camp. It offers intermediate academic classes and study times and provides the campers with ample opportunities to develop their sense of identity—to learn more about who they are. In the process, the camp also offers opportunities for wide-ranging discussions about religious and spiritual beliefs and practices.

In some ways, I-PIC is like your Religious Education classroom. Everyone in your class believes something about the meaning of life and the world. But not everyone believes exactly the same thing. Your challenge is to understand your classmates and to get along in spite of your differences, while at the same time you struggle to determine your own sense of identity—to find out what makes you “you.” The campers you are about to meet in *Who Am I?* model that approach to differences and the search for identity.

Of course, *Who Am I?* is not just a story about some campers. It is also a resource

that will lead you to a deeper understanding of the same questions the campers deal with.

How *Who Am I?* Works

A number of features in *Who Am I?* will help you complete your journey through this resource successfully.

We begin each chapter with an opening page that contains the title of the chapter; the major headings within the chapter; a photograph(s) or illustration(s) representative of the content of the chapter; and a list of the major concepts you will have had an opportunity to consider by the end of the chapter.

As you read through *Who Am I?* you will find related figures and captions, notes on pronunciation, and helpful definitions of challenging words and concepts. The first time that a hard-to-say word appears you will find the pronunciation in parentheses right after the word. Similarly, the first time that a challenging word or concept is used, it appears in **boldface** type in the text and is defined in the margin. In case you later need to remind yourself how to pronounce a word or what a word means, check the Pronunciation Guide or Glossary at the end of this resource. An Index, which will help you find information within the

Pronunciation Key

ay as in day

a as in cat

ah as in far

e as in met

ee as in feet

g as in golf

i or ih as in fit

(e)ye or _i_e or igh as

in bite

o as in hot

oh as in slow

ow as in cow

u or uh as in shut

oo as in boot

resource quickly, also appears at the end of the resource.

The Pronunciation Key used in *Who Am I?* appears above. When you see the pronunciation of a challenging word in a chapter, the syllable to be emphasized is given in capitals (e.g., TOHR-ah).

Questions and activities appear throughout each chapter.



Checkpoints help you confirm your grasp of key facts and ideas.

Reflections

Reflections are individual activities, while Activities may involve several people. Both Activities and Reflections require that you go into more depth than the Checkpoints do. A few will send you back into parts of the chapter for detail. Others can be answered only by doing research and thinking beyond the content of the chapter.

Activities



Brain Freezes are designed to make you stop and pause for a moment to consider a question or a perspective that you might not have encountered before.

There are also questions or activities in a number of captions that accompany the photographs or illustrations.



For your interest, we have provided a few Quick Bytes throughout the resource. In these sections, we sometimes direct you to the Nelson Web site—www.whoami.nelson.com—where we have provided links that you can follow to find additional information on the subject you are considering. At other times, we suggest you use a search engine to find more information about a person or a topic.

What You Will Explore in *Who Am I?*

Who Am I? is divided into a prologue, five chapters, and an epilogue.

In the Prologue, you are introduced to the camp itself and to the 12 students and three counsellors with whom you will be spending the year.

Chapter 1, “The Search for Identity,” introduces you to the concept of identity and some of the challenges young people face in answering their particular questions of identity. The chapter will help you understand better why answering the question of identity is sometimes a struggle, sometimes a joy.

In chapter 2, “Cultures, Spiritual Beliefs, and Traditions,” the campers explore how our cultural and religious roots help shape us and how they influence our answers to the question of identity. The campers in our story come from cultures all over the world and from different backgrounds in Canada, and with a variety of quite different beliefs about God and human existence. They are very interested in how the other campers understand religious faith or spiritual beliefs, and what they believe about God or a Supreme Being or Creator.

Chapter 3, “Sacred Texts,” looks at the writings and teachings of several of the world’s major living religions and spiritual traditions. Some of the campers hold certain books to be special. For them, these books contain the words of God, given

through human writers. For others, the books of their faith simply contain wisdom. Some use no books at all, but consider nature their book, from which they draw conclusions about the meaning of life. In this chapter, our campers create and study posters about various faiths and approaches to spirituality, which leads to an appreciation of the similarities and differences between the various beliefs.

Chapter 4, “Morality and Ethics,” raises questions about what is right and wrong and explores the ways we try to answer those questions. As you can imagine, a dozen young people from Canada and around the world will not approach ethical questions in the same way. Their discussions and disagreements about ethics will open up discussion for your own Religious Education class. And their thinking will force you to do some thinking of your own.

In chapter 5, “Creation,” our campers consider how the physical world—the creation—came about. They explore different religious and spiritual teachings on how the world came to be, and ask what role they should play in creation. They also consider the relationship between science and technology and creation.

In the Epilogue, the campers recall highlights of their ten months together and discuss some of the ways they—and their knowledge of their own identity—have changed. They also discuss some of the new ways of looking at life that they are taking away with them.

Ideas to Keep in Mind as You Explore *Who Am I?*

You will find it helpful to keep the following ideas in mind as you work with this resource.

1. Whether you are part of a family that has strong religious or spiritual beliefs or not, you are influenced by religious and spiritual teachings and traditions. Religions and spiritual beliefs affect the cultures of the countries in which they are practised. In Canada, for example, many of our laws and customs have grown out of the teachings and traditions of the Jewish and Christian faiths. As well, religious and spiritual thought and belief have always had a huge impact on art, music, and literature—whether religious, classical, or popular—around the world.
2. When you read about the beliefs and teachings of the living faiths featured in this resource, you may think that all people of the same faith agree on all teachings and follow all traditions in the same way. That is not the case. No matter what their religion or spiritual tradition, people vary in the way that they understand and express their faith. Indeed, on occasion, differences of interpretation and practice within a religion or set of spiritual beliefs can almost seem greater than differences between religions or spiritual beliefs. The beliefs and traditions of Aboriginal peoples, for example, are often different. Many of these beliefs and traditions are based on specific geography of an Aboriginal group, which is reflected in a dependence on the animal life key to their existence. The Caribou Spirit is more important for a migratory hunting band than it is for a band that depends largely upon the sea and its life. Given the reality of differences of belief within a single faith or spiritual tradition, when you read something like “Christians believe,” “Hindus believe,” or “Aboriginal peoples believe,” remember that some Christians, and some Hindus, and some Aboriginal peoples may understand their faith or spiritual traditions differently.
3. The living faiths featured in *Who Am I?* are generally presented in terms of how they ought to be followed, not as they are necessarily actually practised by believers. You probably know without being told that human behaviour often falls short of the ideal. For example, it is easier to hear that you should love your neighbour than to do it. Followers of any faith or set of spiritual beliefs may behave in ways that do not live up to the standards set by their faith teachings.

4. In *Who Am I?* you will be introduced to writings of special importance and power to various living faiths. Bear in mind that all the sacred writings presented here were written first in languages other than English. The Bible, for example, was written originally in Hebrew (Hebrew Bible and Christian Old Testament) and Greek (Christian New Testament; some people believe that portions of the New Testament may have been written in Aramaic). The original languages cannot be translated exactly into any other language. When you read passages from sacred writings in English, remember that different translators may interpret the same passages in slightly different ways. Sometimes these differences depend, in part, on when the translation was written. For example, the King James Version of the Christian Bible is hard for many people to understand. First published in 1611, in much the same period as William Shakespeare's work, it is partly a product of its time. In *Who Am I?* all biblical excerpts are taken from the New Revised Standard Version. All sacred writings are taken from respected translations.
5. *Who Am I?* uses a more neutral dating system than that based on recognizing Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ, or promised saviour. Instead of B.C., which means "before Christ," and A.D., which means *anno Domini*—"in the year of our Lord"—you will see B.C.E. and C.E. B.C.E. means "Before the Common Era" and C.E. means the "Common Era." B.C.E. is equivalent to B.C., and C.E. is equivalent to A.D.
6. Depending on the translator, names and words translated from other languages into English may differ in spelling. Also, spellings sometimes change as people try to make the sound of the name or word match more closely that of the original. In *Who Am I?* you will see these spellings: the Prophet Muhammad, Makkah (not Mecca), Qur'an (not Koran), Hanukah (not Hanukkah or Chanukah), Ka'ba, and Tanakh. We have used a capital letter when we refer to a specific god (God). We use a lower-cased "g" in general or plural references to gods, for example, gods and goddesses.

These "Ideas to Keep in Mind" are largely derived from *Worldviews: The Challenge of Choice* by Ken Badley (©1996 by Irwin Publishing Ltd.). Used with permission.

Now it's time for you to join the 12 students and their three counsellors as they come together at I-PIC. We hope their discussions will be useful to you as you answer the important question, "Who am I?"