

Identity Star Worksheet

1. The year is 1701 and many African Americans are being enslaved or working as indentured servants to provide labor for the colonies. White women and African Americans are unable to vote, and for the most part, only White men are able to own property or hold office.

If you have a **BLUE** star, you are a respected and privileged member of society. Your voice is heard and your rights as a citizen are protected. The revenue from your properties keeps you and your family quite comfortable. You even own a few slaves to help tend your estates. For you, life is fulfilling and you have many opportunities for success. (LEAVE YOUR STAR ALONE.)

If you have a **GREEN** star, you are a stay-at-home mother of three. In many aspects, notably intelligence, you are not seen as an equal counterpart to a man. It is believed that your gender's primary role is nurturing children and caregiving and because you are a woman, you cannot vote. You do not feel in total control of your life. Often, the men around make important decisions for you. (FOLD OVER A POINT OF YOUR STAR.)

If you have a **YELLOW** star, you are muscular and strong—an excellent piece of property to be sold at a high price and put to work in back-breaking conditions. You can't protect yourself or your family. Nobody cares about whether or not you want to do the work. You are rarely treated like a human being. (TEAR A POINT OFF YOUR STAR.)

If you have a **RED** star, you are nothing but an object. You are worked, beaten, and raped by an unforgiving owner. Your close family members have been sold to another plantation. Hope is a distant feeling. (TEAR A POINT OFF YOUR STAR.)

2. It is now 1790 and the U.S government passes the Naturalization Act. For the most part, only Whites are eligible to become naturalized citizens. For non-Whites, progress toward citizenship is often stalled.

If you have a **BLUE** star, your family has been in the United States for generations. Your father tells you that his great-great-grandparents were from Scandinavia. The Naturalization Act does not affect you. (LEAVE YOUR STAR ALONE.)

If you have a **GREEN** star, you are also a European-American and benefit from this legislation. (LEAVE YOUR STAR ALONE.)

If you have a **YELLOW** or **RED** star, you are considered "colored" in this country, so you will more than likely be denied citizenship. (TEAR A POINT OFF YOUR STAR.)



3. It is now 1865, the end of the Civil War. The Union triumphed over the Confederacy, slavery was abolished, and the United States is now in a period of Reconstruction. Although this is initially a period of promise, much of both the White South and the White North is deeply resentful of the changes Reconstruction has brought, causing the federal government to largely abandon Reconstruction after only a few years. Newly freed slaves now experience a wave of hostility, discrimination, and violence.

If you have a **BLUE** or **GREEN** star, you are anxious about what the end of slavery means for the nation's future, but you lose nothing besides a little sense of security. Although others believe this is a step in the right direction, you personally believe ending slavery is a debilitating mistake. (LEAVE YOUR STAR ALONE.)

If you have a **YELLOW** star, you are now a free man. You believed that the satisfaction of being released from your shackles would bring a lifetime of happiness. However, as is true for many others, you personally have no assets and nowhere to turn for work or shelter. You have little choice but to return to the plantation where you once were forced to work as a slave. You agree to work as a sharecropper and this perpetually keeps you owing debt to your employer. (TEAR A POINT OFF YOUR STAR.)

If you have a **RED** star, you are free, but as with many Black women, there are few opportunities for employment outside of domestic work. Slavery is over in the U.S., but prejudice and discrimination are powerful residual obstacles. You must battle both racial and gender discrimination on a daily basis. You are recurrently disrespected and undervalued by White men, White women, and sometimes even Black men. (TEAR A POINT OFF YOUR STAR.)

4. It is now 1896. Segregation has become the way of life across the U.S. South. In the case of *Plessey v. Ferguson* the Supreme Court ruled that "separate but equal" is constitutional. In other words, people of color are often forced to live separately from Whites as second class citizens. The public accommodations designated for Blacks are typically subpar at best, a reflection of how they are valued as people.

If you have a **BLUE** star, you are wealthy and have the privilege of enjoying the finest country clubs, restaurants, hotels, theaters, and schools. Because of segregation, you are never forced to think about the living conditions of minorities. (LEAVE YOUR STAR ALONE.)

If you have a **GREEN** star, you are poor and so have less access to the finer things in life, such as high quality restaurants and private schools. However, you still have social privileges that stem from your social group membership as a White American. (FOLD ONE CORNER OF YOUR STAR.)

If you have a **YELLOW** or **RED** star, your children are mandated to attend schools with fewer resources in dilapidated buildings in run-down neighborhoods. There is a shortage of textbooks and desks. The students must share school supplies and reading materials.

As a resident of a Southern state, when you return from a demanding day at work, you have to give up your seat to White patrons on the bus. If you dare enter a White restaurant, you risk being ridiculed, beaten, or arrested. You know your place and you stay there. (CRUMPLE UP YOUR STAR INTO A BALL.)



5. You are living during the 1960s and during this decade, a wave of citizen protests against social injustice is taking place, although different parts of the nation are evolving more quickly than others. The unwavering efforts of the African American population and Civil Rights Activists during the Civil Rights Movement are beginning to address the injustices embedded in United States society. African Americans win rights that were previously much out of reach. In the coming years, laws prohibiting interracial marriage will be ruled unconstitutional. The Voting Rights Act will be passed, allowing African Americans to register and to vote without fear of discrimination. Legislation will be passed to protect minorities from workplace discrimination. A necessary torrent of change is implemented.

If you have a **BLUE** or **GREEN** star, life is different than you could have ever imagined, and it is a frightful and intimidating experience. You are becoming aware that the privileges you have as a European American are not extended to many African Americans. You interact with significantly more minorities these days than in the past and this results in some very uncomfortable encounters. It is hard for you to adapt to the times and you sometimes feel guilty about your group's oppressive ways. (FOLD A CORNER OF YOUR STAR.)

If you have a **YELLOW** star, you are enveloped by a wave of pride. Your hope for the future of the United States has grown. You feel more empowered and valued and, as a Black male, you have more opportunities than in the past. However, you and your group still experience discrimination in many arenas, so you are determined to continue fighting for full equality and acceptance. (UNCRUMPLE YOUR STAR.)

If you have a **RED** star, you also are enveloped by feelings of pride and restored hope. These changes are invaluable when it comes to improving the condition of society for future generations within the African American community. Nevertheless, gender discrimination is still evident. As a Black woman, the challenge of overcoming your double minority status remains. (LEAVE YOUR STAR ALONE.)

