



Written Comprehension Text

ARE NAMES MORE THAN JUST LABELS?

1. You are unique. You may not be like any other person in the world, yet you're not wholly self-made. Your identity not only includes specific characteristics that distinguish you from others, but it can also include your self-esteem and self-awareness. Identity is not just about who you are currently, but who you are called to be. Your identity is given through a name which helps to differentiate you from others. This name connects you to your family, your language, your traditions and your ancestors.
2. "A man's name is not like a mantle which merely hangs about him, and which one perchance may safely twitch and pull," wrote the poet, Goethe, "but a perfectly fitting garment, which, like the skin, has grown over him, and which one cannot rake and scrape without injuring the man himself."
3. Names can be considered significant in 3 ways:
 - their etymological meaning
 - the label associated with the name
 - their symbolism acquired from their historical meaning.
4. While every culture's naming methods differ significantly, the impact of a name on identity is intercultural. Stephen Mansfield notes in Mansfield's Book of Mannerly Men that apparently '*Arabs consider fatherhood so important that once a man becomes a father to a son, he is honoured for the rest of his life with a combination of Abu, which means father, and the name of his son*'. In traditional Chinese culture, a boy is provided multiple names to signify his growth into manhood while village women sometimes stayed nameless.
5. A name change can signify a new identity. In a biblical reference, Jacob, which meant 'deceiver' was given the new name 'Israel' which meant 'power in God'. This gave him a new identity and a new future for a nation.



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6. Researchers from a Hebrew University in Jerusalem conducted eight studies in two different countries, to determine if the name - the earliest label a person is given—impacts later physicality. These studies suggested that there were common perceptions of how a person with a certain name would look. This suggests that our name influences what we later come to look like.
7. It could be that the relationship between the name and physicality serve as a type of self-fulfilling prophecy relating to our shared ideas of what names represent about a person. People with certain names may develop a specific appearance by adapting what they believe to be expected behaviour, facial expressions, looks, stance, posture, walk, etc. These relationships between our own name, related expectations and the messages we receive from others continue to affect us throughout our lifetime. These commonalities in our expectations affect us based on how we perceive our name. The way others treat us based on their expectations regarding our name also affect us, as we will unconsciously try to live up to these expectations in a type of self-fulfilling prophecy.
8. While there are trends in names at different times in history, there are common ideas of what aspects of a person each name represents. This suggests that we can quickly develop shared conceptualizations of what newly trending names represent in terms of physical appearance, personality and behaviour.
9. The link between name and identity is important. In the book *A Child Called It*, the young boy is abused and humiliated to the extent that he is no longer referred to by name. Prisoners give up their names for prison numbers.
- 10 To be nameless is to be degraded. To not have a name means you are not differentiated and do not deserve privileges, as it is believed that a person's name signifies the person's worth, character and reputation.

Adapted from: <http://goodguyswag.com/your-identity-through-your-name/>

<https://www.facinghistory.org/stolen-lives-indigenous-peoples-canada-and-indian-residential-schools/chapter-1/language-names-and-individual-identity>

<https://qz.com/1050340/the-name-youre-given-as-a-child-can-shape-your-face-as-an-adult/>