

The United States is home to hundreds of different groups, each with its own culture and traditions. It would be impossible to study each group's history in depth. But by focusing on the links between particular individuals and society, Chapter 1 reveals a number of universal principles. In doing so, it raises a number of questions:

- How is our identity formed? To what extent are we defined by our talents, tastes, and interests? By our membership in a particular ethnic group? Our religion? By the nation in which we live? Are we limited by the groups to which we belong or can we expand our horizons? What opportunities do individuals have in our society to expand their horizons? How does one make the most of those opportunities?
- How do our attitudes and beliefs influence our thinking? How does our thinking affect our actions?
- How can we keep our individuality and still be a part of a group?
- How does our tendency to see *us* as unique but *them* as members of groups affect our behavior as well as our attitudes? Do we welcome or fear *them*? When does fear turn to hate?

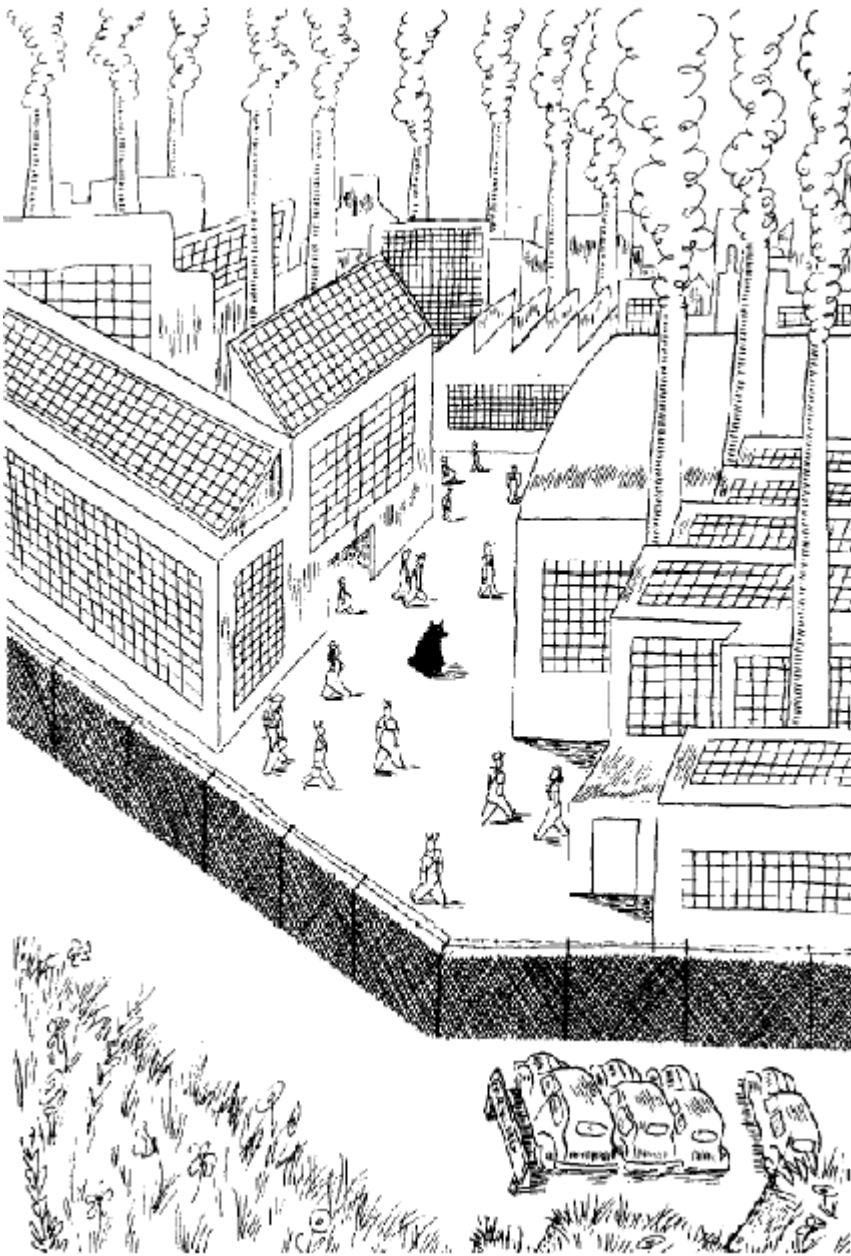
In exploring these and many of the other questions you will encounter in *Facing History and Ourselves*, it is useful to keep a journal. Unlike a finished work, a journal documents the process of thinking. Much like history itself, it always awaits further entries. A journal also allows a writer to witness his or her own history and consider the way ideas grow and change. For author Joan Didion and many others, writing is a way of examining ideas. She explains, "I write entirely to find out what I'm thinking, what I'm looking at, what I see and what it means."

A complete lesson plan for using a journal with this course is available from the Facing History Resource Center, as are copies of journals kept by two teachers and their students.

READING 1

The Bear That Wasn't

No two people are exactly alike. Each is an individual with unique talents, interests, and values. At the same time, each also belongs to many different groups. Everywhere, to be human means to live with others. In groups, we meet our most basic needs. In groups, we learn a language, customs, and values. We also satisfy our yearning to belong, receive comfort in times of trouble, and find companions who share our dreams and beliefs. Even as we struggle to define our unique identity, those groups attach labels to us that may differ from those we would choose for ourselves. In the book, *the bear that wasn't*, Frank Tashlin uses words and pictures to describe that process.



the bear that wasn't introduces themes and concepts central not only to this chapter but also to subsequent chapters. The reading is abridged from a children's book with many more illustrations. Multiple copies of the book are available in English and French from the Facing History Resource Center.

Once upon a time, in fact it was on a Tuesday, the Bear saw that it was time to go into a cave and hibernate. And that was just what he did. Not long afterward, in fact it was on a Wednesday, lots of workers arrived near that cave. While the Bear slept, they built a great, huge factory.

As winter turned to spring, the Bear awoke and stepped out of his cave. His eyes popped.

Where was the forest?

Where was the grass?

Where were the trees?

Where were the flowers?

WHAT HAD HAPPENED?

“I must be dreaming,” he said. “Of course, I’m dreaming.” But it wasn’t a dream. It was real. Just then the Foreman came out of the factory. “Hey, you get back to work,” he said.

The Bear replied, “I don’t work here. I’m a Bear.”

The Foreman laughed, “That’s a fine excuse for a man to keep from doing any work. Saying he’s a Bear.”

The Bear said, “But, I am a Bear.”

The Foreman stopped laughing. He was very mad.

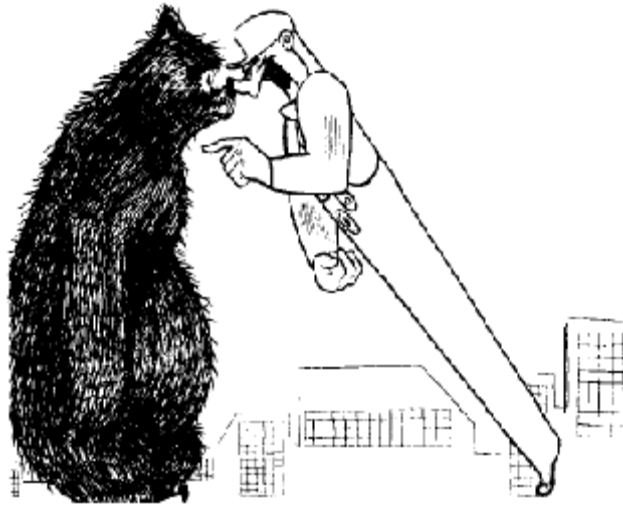
“Don’t try to fool me,” he said. “You’re not a Bear. You’re a silly man who needs a shave and wears a fur coat. I’m going to take you to the *General Manager*.”

The General Manager also insisted the Bear was a silly man who needs a shave and wears a fur coat.

The Bear said, “No, you’re mistaken. I am a Bear.”

The General Manager was very mad, too.

The Bear said, “I’m sorry to hear you say that. You see, I am a Bear.”



The Third Vice President was even madder.



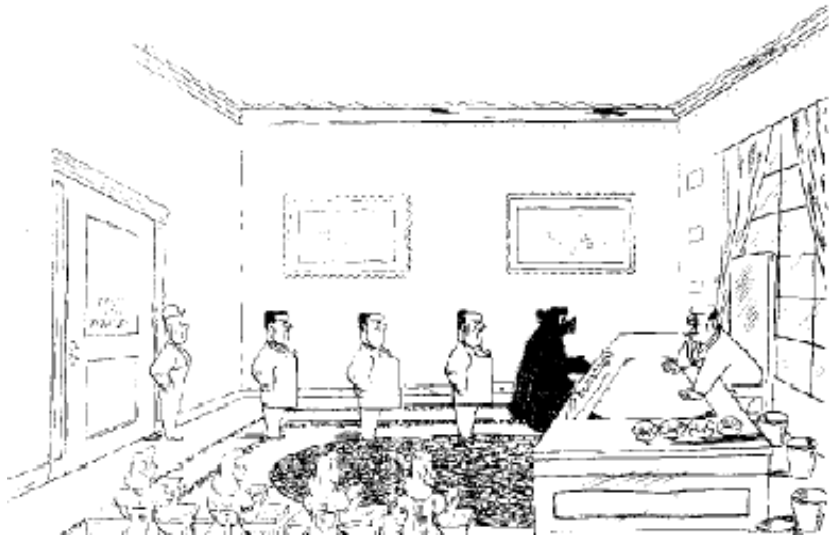
The Second Vice President was more than mad or madder. He was furious.

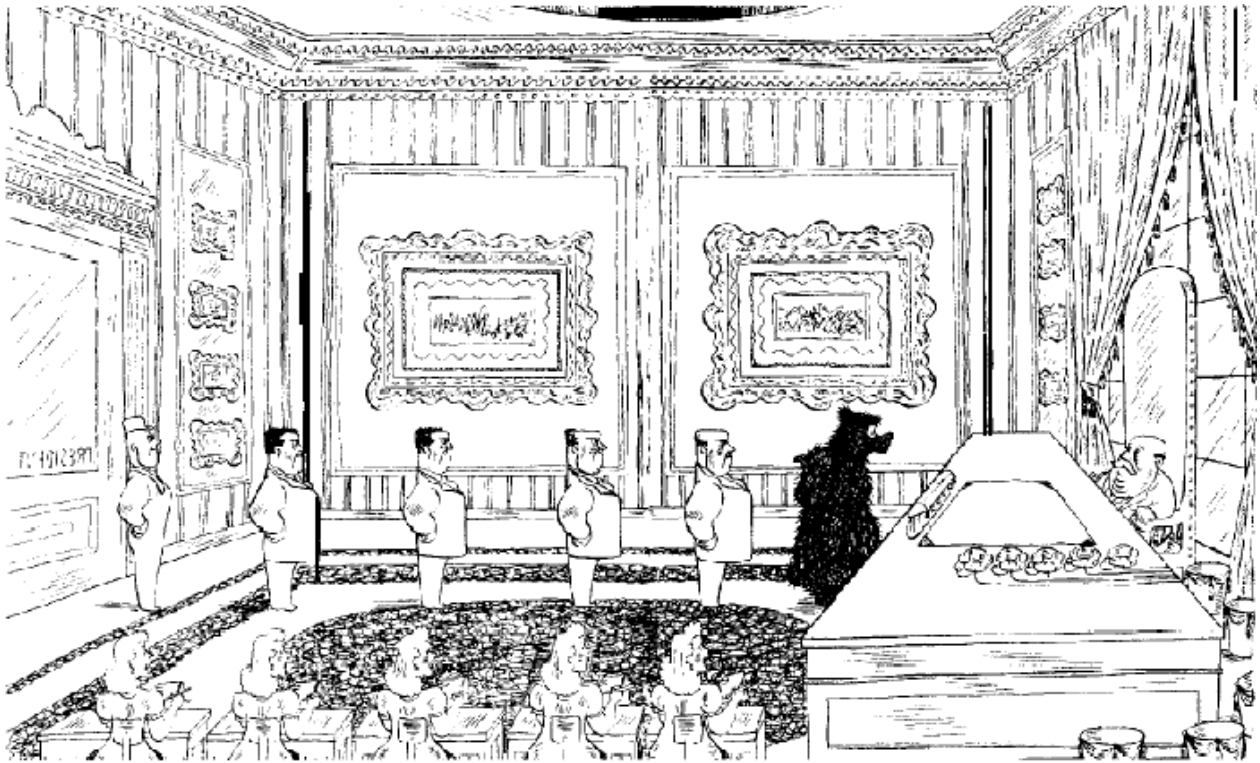


The First Vice President yelled in rage.

He said, "You're not a Bear. You're a silly man who needs a shave and wears a fur coat. I'm going to take you to the *President*."

The Bear pleaded, "This is a dreadful error, you know, because ever since I can remember, I've always been a Bear."





And that is exactly what the Bear told the President.

“Thank you for telling me,” the President said. “You can’t be a Bear. Bears are only in a zoo or a circus. They’re never inside a factory and that’s where you are; inside a factory. So how can you be a Bear?”

The Bear said, “But I am a Bear.”

The President said, “Not only are you a silly man who needs a shave and wears a fur coat, but you are also very stubborn. So I’m going to prove it to you, once and for all, that you are *not* a Bear.”

The Bear said, “But I *am* a Bear.”

The President packed his vice presidents and the Bear into a car and drove to the zoo. The Bears in the zoo said the Bear was not a Bear, because if he were a Bear, he would be inside a cage.

The Bear said, “But I am a Bear.”

So they all left the zoo and drove to the nearest circus.

“Is he a Bear?” the President asked the circus Bears.

The Bears said no. If he were a Bear he would be wearing a little hat with a striped ribbon holding onto a balloon and riding a bicycle.

The Bear said, “But I am a Bear.”

When the President and his vice presidents returned to the factory, they put the Bear to work on a big machine with a lot of other men. The Bear worked on the big machine for many, many months.

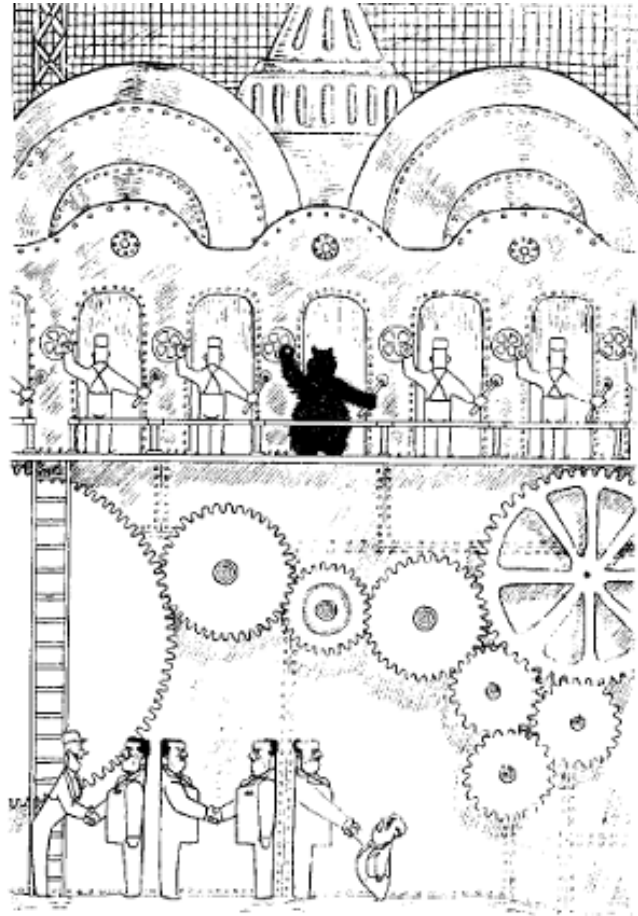
After a long, long time, the factory closed and all the workers went away. The Bear was the last one left. As he left the shut-down factory, he saw geese flying south and the leaves falling from the trees. Winter was coming, he thought. It was time to hibernate.

He found a cave and was about to enter when he stopped. "I can't go in a cave. I'm NOT a Bear. I'm a silly man who needs a shave and wears a fur coat."

As the days grew colder and the snow fell, the Bear sat shivering with cold. "I wish I were a Bear," he thought.

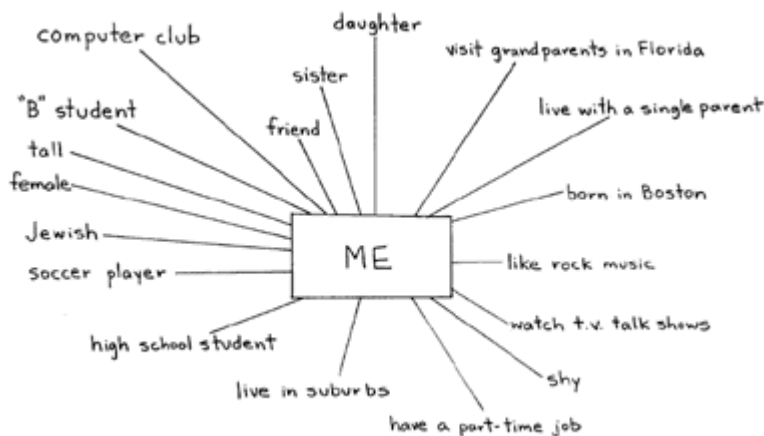
Then suddenly he got up and walked through the deep snow toward the cave. Inside it was cozy and snug. The icy wind and cold, cold snow couldn't reach him here. He felt warm all over.

He sank down on a bed of pine boughs and soon he was happily asleep and dreaming sweet dreams, just like all bears do, when they hibernate. So even though the FOREMAN and the GENERAL MANAGER and the THIRD VICE-PRESIDENT and the SECOND VICE-PRESIDENT and the FIRST VICE PRESIDENT and the ZOO BEARS and the CIRCUS BEARS had said, he was a silly man who needed a shave and wore a fur coat, I don't think he really believed it. Do you? No indeed, he knew he wasn't a silly man, and he wasn't a silly Bear either.²



CONNECTIONS

“Who am I?” is a question that each of us asks at some time in our life. In answering, we define ourselves. The word *define* means “to separate one thing from all of the others.” What distinguishes the Bear from all other bears? From all other workers at the Factory? Create an identity chart for the Bear. The diagram below is an example of an identity chart. Individuals fill it in with the words they call themselves as well as the labels society gives them. What phrases does the Bear use to define himself? What words did others use to define him? Include both on the diagram.



Create an identity chart for yourself. Begin with the words or phrases that describe the way you see yourself. Add those words and phrases to your chart. Most people define themselves by using categories important to their culture. They include not only gender, age, and physical characteristics but also ties to a particular religion, class, neighborhood, school, and nation.

Compare your charts with those of your classmates. Which categories were included on every chart? Which appeared on only a few charts? As you look at other charts your perspective may change. You may wish to add new categories to the one you created. This activity allows you to see the world through multiple perspectives. What labels would others attach to you? Do they see you as a leader or a follower? A conformist or a rebel? Are you a peacemaker, a bully, or a bystander? How do society’s labels influence the way you see yourself? The kinds of choices you and others make each day? For example, if a person is known as a bully, how likely is he or she to live up to that label?

Throughout this course, you will encounter words that you know but have difficulty explaining. Instead of relying only on a dictionary to define these words, develop your own working definitions. Doing so will help you can make those words an integral part of your vocabulary. The following is an example of a working definition that builds to encompass more and more information:

Bureaucracy:

- like a tree or an organization
- a structure that organizes the work of business or government

- the system set up in the factory described in *the bear that wasn't* (foreman – general manager – 3rd vice-president – and so on.)

→ indicates key videos, books, and other resources. The use of these materials is highly recommended.

You may want to include pictures in your working definition. Often they reveal more about a complex idea than a definition that relies only on words. Draw a picture of a bureaucracy and add it to your working definition. Then create a working definition for the word identity. A useful reference is *Visual Thinking* by Rudolf Arnheim (University of California Press, 1969). It suggests new ways of looking at ideas.

What does the title *the bear that wasn't* mean? Why didn't the Factory officials recognize the Bear for what he was? Why did it become harder and harder for him to maintain his identity as he moved through the bureaucracy of the Factory? What is Tashlin suggesting about the relationship between an individual and society? About the way a person's identity is defined? About the way powerful individuals and groups shape the identity of those with less power and authority?

How does our need to be a part of a group affect our actions? Why is it so difficult for a person to go against the group? Have you ever experienced a similar problem to that of the Bear? How did you deal with it? Were you able to maintain your independence? How difficult was it to do so?

~~→ The film, *After the First*, tells of a 12-year-old boy's first hunting trip and the way he and other members of his family responded to the event. It is available from the Facing History Resource Center. The film explores the way Steve and each of his parents viewed the trip. This film is the first of many included in the course. Each was chosen to prompt discussion of sophisticated and complex moral issues. As you watch this film and others like it, try not to take sides until you have looked at the issue from each character's perspective. The following questions can be used to guide class discussion or journal writing.~~

- ~~What does the scene in the kitchen reveal about Steve's personality? His parents' values? How does the viewer know what Steve thinks?~~
- ~~What is Steve's mood at the beginning of the film? At the end? At what point does his attitude begin to change?~~
- ~~The relationship between Steve and his father is essential to the film. How is that relationship revealed in these scenes: in the truck on the way to the woods, when Steve learns to use a rifle, when he decides whether to shoot the rabbit, and when the film ends?~~
- ~~What dilemma did Steve face? What options did he have? What values were associated with each option? How did Steve resolve his dilemma? What motivated his decision? What part did cultural values play in his decision? What other factors influenced it? How hard is it to go against the group? To stand up for the things you believe in?~~