



# YALE NATIONAL INITIATIVE

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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative  
2017 Volume II: Literature, Life-Writing, and Identity

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## **Identity of Persons with Disabilities: Looking at People and Characters in Novels and Media**

Guide for Curriculum Unit 17.02.01, published September 2017  
by Toni Aliskowitz

How we see ourselves versus how others see us can have a positive or negative impact on our identity. For the disabled student, showing themselves to others in a way that's free of judgment can be a difficult, if not impossible task. This unit will examine the way persons with disabilities can have their identities supported or dismantled by their interactions in the world. Through readings of novels with disabled main characters, students will get a close look at how persons with disabilities experience the same sense of longing to belong that we all do. We will come to a new understanding of persons with disabilities, and learn how to more effectively communicate to change the negative stereotypes that come along with surface judgement. We are creating a new narrative about "disabled persons" through the recognition that persons in the mainstream may themselves be only temporarily "abled."

(Developed for English/Language Arts, grades 4-5)

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