

# Is individuality a term of the past?

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What makes a true individual? Is it someone that opposes everything that society agrees with just to make a point? Or is it someone who won't stop at anything to prove that his or her ideology is correct?

Unfortunately, I have truly admitted that I have no idea what the word, "individual" means. This is because it seems like in society today, there really aren't any individuals left. Everyone is influenced by another's thoughts, whether they want to believe it or not. All people these days are influenced by one major driving force: the media. The media influences every step that one takes and every action or decision that one makes. Sadly, the media's main target is today's teenager. Teenagers make the most attractive prey for media personnel because they are "virgins of thought." They are still developing their own ideas and are slowly allowing those thoughts to help steer their lives in the direction of their choice.

Moreover, it is not just one aspect of the media that influences teens greater than others. All the different segments of the media each do their part to corrupt a teenager's original pure mind. The first major aspect of the media is "having the right look". Being the fact that I am a girl who notices the trends of the "popular" girls around me, this happens to be a topic extremely close to my heart. It seems like every girl in school has a new purse to wear everyday that must strictly be Louis Vuitton, COACH, or Gucci. And it's not just the girls who get caught up in the whole media trend. Even boys are boggled down with the idea of the having the richest brand name shirt from Banana Republic and Ralph Lauren, to Abercrombie and Aero. Anything besides these stores is merely "Wal-Mart Trash"! Shoes have to be the latest Nike that Shaq wore on the cool commercial or the hot Reeboks that Michael Jordan modeled for. Popularity is no longer based on having a great

personality that everyone adores but on buying the most expensive and pricey purchase.

Teens are also influenced by music. If the latest pop sensation wears super-low jeans and belly-showing shirt, then you can bet that girls everywhere are getting rid of their belts and grabbing a pair of scissors to shorten up their tops. If the hot new male hip-hop artists gets "all the ladies" by wearing tons of *bling*, then it is without a doubt that teenage boys around the nation are loading up on silver and gold chains around their necks to impress their female peers.

But besides all the materialistic aspects of the media, like fashion and accessories, teens are even being influenced by the news. While few teens were anxiously waiting to make an informed vote based on facts for the previous Bush-Kerry election, so many teens made up their minds based upon whom their favorite movie star liked, or who seemed 'cooler', rather than who seemed fit for the job. In addition, the news media puts so much emphasis on a specific topic by saying that it is *bad*, teens don't even think about it-they just figure since everyone else says it wrong, then it must be. A perfect example of this would be the Clinton-Scandal. So many teens automatically assumed that his doings were wrong. The majority of teens seemed to "forget" that so many men in the United States these days have affairs. Just because he was the President, the media wished to pry their noses in his business.

Sadly, teens these days aren't given the chance to voice their opinions. They are so maliciously brainwashed by the media, that they think anything against the majority is wrong. Even if one person was to make up his or her own mind without the influence of others in any way, then I could say that he or she is truly an individual. There cannot be the better vision of an

individual than what Robert Frost portrayed in his poem *The Road Not Taken*:

*Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,  
And sorry I could not travel both  
And be one traveler, long I stood  
And looked down one as far as I could  
To where it bent in the undergrowth;*

*Then took the other, as just as fair,  
And having perhaps the better claim,  
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;  
Though as for that the passing there  
Had worn them really about the same,*

*And both that morning equally lay  
In leaves no step had trodden black.  
Oh, I kept the first for another day!  
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,  
I doubted if I should ever come back.*

*I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I--  
I took the one less traveled by,  
**And that has made all the difference.***

Perhaps one day, I can say that I now know the definition of an individual. Or even say that I know a teenager who has never been influenced by the media. As for now, I'm still searching!

