



Yale-New Haven
Teachers Institute®

Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
2021 Volume III: How to Do Things with Maps

A Cartography of the Self: Making Meaning of the World through Life Maps

Guide for Curriculum Unit 21.03.01
by William Wagoner

This unit introduces the concept of a cartography of the self. That is, by using the techniques and tools of mapmaking applied to our personal lives and literary texts, we can develop a much more clear and relevant sense of both our own history, experiences, values, relationships, hopes, and fears, and those of characters we read about. The aim of this practice is to give teachers and students, through the creation of a series of Life-Maps, a deeper understanding of who they are, what they value, where they wish to go, and who they wish to become. Using "personal cartography" as a learning strategy gives teachers a rigorous, adaptable, visual and interdisciplinary tool that brings critical thinking engagement to literature and social - emotional growth and culminates in a yearlong "Atlas of Experience," a portfolio project visually mapping student goals, learning, and growth throughout the year.

(Developed for ELA, grades 7-8; recommended for ELA, Advisory, and Creative Writing, grades 7-12)

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