

Life Story Cartography: Mapping the Meaning of Your Journey

Kathryn Skrabo

What Is Life Story Cartography?

Just as cartography maps the land, this reflective method uses the life story to chart the inner landscapes of memory, story, and meaning. It is a creative process of *mapping meaning* — revealing how events, choices, relationships, and turning points weave together into a coherent story.

It blends narrative exploration with the metaphor of map-making to help you see the deeper shape of your lived experience. Rooted in life review and story work, it invites you to chart the thresholds you've crossed, the landscapes you've traversed, and the patterns that return like rivers and spirals

Why Someone Would Want to Do Life Story Cartography

- **To make sense of their journey** – Many people carry fragmented memories and experiences; mapping helps weave them into a coherent story.
- **To recognize patterns** – Seeing how challenges, choices, and turning points connect to reveal themes that may have been invisible before.
- **To honor both joy and sorrow** – The process validates the fullness of life, not just the highlight reel.
- **To discover meaning** – Mapping transforms life events from “things that happened” into a deeper narrative of growth, resilience, and purpose.
- **To share legacy** – A visual life story can be shared with loved ones, offering connection across generations.
- **To integrate in later life** – For elders, it can be a profound practice of life review, acceptance, and preparing for legacy.
- **To spark creativity** – Using symbols, images, and maps invites play and imagination, making reflection more engaging than simply journaling.

Benefits of Engaging in the Process

- A clearer sense of identity and belonging in one's own story.
- Healing through seeing challenges as thresholds rather than failures.

- Gratitude for nourishing relationships and sustaining moments.
- Renewed perspective on how the past continues to shape the present.
- A tangible, visual artifact of one's story to revisit and share.
- A felt sense of wholeness — *"I see how all the pieces fit together."*

Connecting the Journey using Symbols

Just as a map uses symbols to represent mountains, rivers, and roads, your map will use symbols for the memories and experiences that shaped you. For example:

- **Mountains** — defining moments
- **Rivers** — emotions that carried you
- **Deserts** — times of emptiness
- **Pastures** — relationships that nourished you

The landmarks you add are not always the grand events the world remembers, but the inner crossings — the thresholds where something in you shifted forever.

Symbols for **roads and bridges** connect moments.. Roads, bridges, and waterways reveal your life patterns — how experiences led into one another, how challenges became passageways, and how joy and sorrow intertwined to form your unique terrain.

Some roads were wide and well-traveled, Others were narrow and winding, requiring courage and careful navigation. Bridges appeared where obstacles might have blocked your way, spanning gaps of loss, change, or uncertainty, and offering passage to new understanding

An Invitation

When you step back, your map will show more than events. It will reveal the deeper story of who you have become.

If you'd like to explore Life Story Cartography more deeply, please visit my website and add your name to the list — you'll receive updates, resources, and future opportunities to work with this practice.