

Circle Map

Objective: To create a visual biography of the writer's life. You map out your life in words and pictures, which will serve as springboards to write essays, poems, raps and stories about your personal experiences.

Preparation

Pass out a circle map to each student. A circle map is composed of two concentric circles enclosed within a rectangle (see attached).

Pre-writing

1. **(1 minute)** Write your name or how you identify yourself inside the doughnut hole (the little circle). For example, if your name is Juanita and you go by 'Nita, then write 'Nita inside the little circle. If your name is Julius, but you go by Dr. J., write Dr. J. inside the little circle.
2. **(5 – 15 minutes)** Inside the doughnut, but outside the doughnut hole, write or draw the significant people, events, ideas, interests and activities that have shaped your life. A combination of words and illustrations work best. (Think in terms of people you care about, how you spend your free time, places you've visited or lived, aspects of your culture.)
3. **(5 – 10 minutes)** Inside the rectangle, but outside the doughnut, write or draw the people, events, ideas, interests and activities that shaped you, but were less important than those inside the doughnut. (For example, these people, events and ideas may have played an important part of your life when you were younger, but do not seem as significant now.)
4. **(in your free time)** Go back and look at your work and fill in whatever else comes to mind. The more often you return to the circle map and add words and pictures, the fuller this portrait of your life becomes. This is a one-page biography of your life. Add to it over time. Pull out elements that could become a story, a poem, a piece of art.

Writing Exercises

Exercise 1 – Your Name: (3 minutes) Write about your name. Whatever comes to mind.

Exercise 2: (3 – 5 minutes) Choose a word or illustration inside the doughnut and write whatever comes to mind about that person, event, idea or activity.

Exercise 3: (3 – 5 minutes) Choose a word or illustration inside the rectangle, but outside the doughnut and write whatever comes to mind about that person, event, idea or activity.

Why This One Sheet of Paper Matters

When you have filled in the circle map to your satisfaction, step back and study it. What you have created is a miniature version of your life story. This is a one-page story of your life.

Whenever you feel like writing, you can take out this circle map, focus on one work or drawing and write whatever comes to mind. These writing exercises are opportunities for you to think about your life and figure out what made you the person you are today.

Click [here](#) for a Circle Map template.