

DOCTRINE OF DISCOVERY

MODULE 1

LOOKING AT THE LAND

STUDY B: A MAP OF MY LIFE

Explorations into your personal geography

INTRODUCTION

In this exercise we ask you to think about your life as a journey you have been making for as long as you've been alive. We'll invite you to make a map that describes that journey. The map will contain real geographic places where you have lived or visited, but it also will contain "imaginary landscapes" that help to describe what different chapters or episodes have meant to you. By making the map, you will be invited to think about how real landscapes and places have shaped the story of your life.

INSTRUCTIONS

Here are some materials you are going to need:

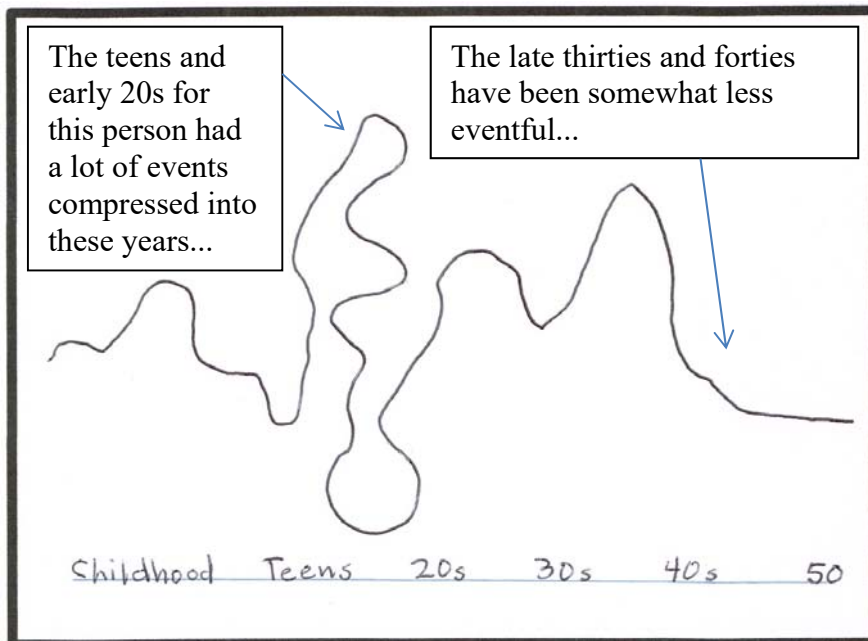
- A large sheet of newsprint—the bigger the better, but it would help for it to be at least 18" x 24"
- Blank letter-sized sheets of paper for sketching (optional)
- A pencil with eraser
- Some felt tip pens of various colors and perhaps various widths

Before you begin, you should think about how "public" or "private" your project should be. If you are doing this by yourself, feel free to include whatever episodes and stories are meaningful and important to you.

However, if this is part of a class or group project and you plan to show your maps to each other, you'll want to start with episodes you feel like sharing; you can always add more personal and private data to the map after you finish the class.

There's no *one correct way* to do this project. The steps below are suggestions, but you should feel free to alter them as you go. You may decide, after you've made your first map, that there is a better pattern you could use in a "second edition." It may be helpful to read through this entire section of *Instructions* before you begin. That way, you'll know where you are headed and how to provide for all the things you'll want to include. It may be helpful to sketch out several ideas on blank pieces of letter-sized paper before you begin work on the large newsprint.

1. Along the bottom edge of your paper, create a timeline. Put the year you were born an inch or two from the left edge, and today's year an inch or two in from the right edge. Try to divide the line into equal segments by years; decades by years or ages are a good way to organize the timeline.
2. Now you can begin to draw the path-line of your life. You can use the vertical dimensions of the paper to help express what certain chapters of your life felt like. For example, the upper half of the sheet could be used for those episodes that were happy or joyful, while the bottom half of the sheet is for chapters of your life that were more sad or challenging. Or, you might use "up" on the page to indicate those parts of your life where you seemed to know where you were going, while the "down" direction indicates places where you had greater uncertainty or internal conflict. Also, because you have the full vertical dimension of the paper, you are able to "contract" or "expand" time. If there was a decade of life that had lots and lots of things jammed into it, take full advantage of as much of



the vertical dimension as you can—wander back and forth. Less eventful parts of your life, then, could be portrayed by a more straight line. Don't be too technical with the time scale—it doesn't always have to be strictly left-to-right. An example is shown on the left.

Once you have decided on your organizing principle, try tracing a path. It might be a good idea to sketch it first with pencil and then revise it as needed. As the path develops, consider whether the left-to-right timeline is the best way to tell your life story. Consider other ways the path might be drawn. For example, consider whether episodes in your life seem to “come back” to places or situations you had previously experienced? If so, it might be helpful to create a path that curves around and brings those two episodes close to each other on the map. If you see an alternative way to draw the path, take a fresh sheet of newsprint and try making a new sketch.

3. After you have settled on which path you will use for the project, use that sheet to begin to add key events in the story. For this initial exercise use short words for items: *high school*, *Seattle* (for when you moved there), *Tom* (when you first met your partner), *accident* (for the car wreck you experienced). As you add key events, you may want to change the path-line to better accommodate them. When you think you have the essential details added, you can ink in the path with a felt tip.
4. Next, begin to think about the line as a path that takes you through different kinds of geographies that can serve as symbols for what that time in life felt like. Do some of the segments take you through rugged mountains? Or beside a calm lake? What parts are “urban” or “rural”? Are there important places along the path where you could have gone a different direction? If so, you might want to add a spur off the path that indicates how the path might have gone somewhere else. Begin to sketch in (literally!) the real and imaginary geographies that surround the path and that helped to define your story. You don’t have to be a great artist to do this. Feel free to doodle! Use your colors as another key to group or define the different episodes of your life.
5. Add to your map any other scenes of the real places where your story took place. It’s OK to have a “real” city skyline set among rugged “imaginary” mountains, even if mountains were nowhere near the city.
6. Last of all, you may want to use colors, scribbles, or doodles to indicate what you were feeling along different parts of the path.

DISCUSSION/REFLECTION

After your map is finished, you will either want to share it with others in your group or do some personal reflection/meditation on it. These questions may help guide you:

1. If you are working with a group, how is your map similar to other maps in your group? How is it different? Do you think the similarities mean you have shared similar experiences with another person? Do different maps represent different experiences, or do they represent different ways of viewing the world? Do you share some "real" geographical places with others in the group? If so, how are your experiences of these places similar or different?
2. How did the "real" experience of "real" geographies and places shape your experience of your story?
3. How did the "imaginary" landscapes of your story influence your experience of "real" geographies?
4. How does land shape our stories?
5. How do stories shape the land?
6. Think about what would happen if you joined other maps to your own map: your parents and ancestors, siblings, children. What might that larger map tell you and teach you?
7. How do these insights help to shape your understanding of The Doctrine of Discovery and its repudiation?