

Wandering Map Exercise

Approximate time to complete: 45 minutes: approximately 15 minutes to draw the map (unless students want to be artistic!) and about 20-30 minutes to analyze it.

To do the Wandering Map as a group project:

1. Give every student a blank piece of paper (preferably legal size at least) and pencils, pens, and/or colored markers. (A pen and a piece of blank paper is really all that's needed, but you can get as fancy as you want. I have used newsprint sheets and crayons in some classes.)
2. Ask the students to start thinking about all the interesting, significant things they've done or have happened to them. Tell them to think way back to pre-school days through the present and note any highlights from those years.
 - a. Did you take interesting classes?
 - b. Did you have a memorable summer experience?
 - c. What are some things you're most proud of?
 - d. Did you face a tough challenge?
 - e. Did you have interesting hobbies?
 - f. How did you spend your free time?
 - g. What was your favorite time in school?
3. Ask the students to start writing down their thoughts. Keep them short—one or two words. Don't try to write an essay or paragraph. "If you worked at a summer camp, just write 'summer camp.'"
4. Tell students to draw a rectangle or circle around every entry they write down to keep them separate from one another. Encourage them to fill the page with as much information as they can.
5. Remind them not to try to organize it in any way and do not censor what they're writing. Anything that comes to mind should go on the paper—even if it seems trivial or silly.
6. While they are doing this you can show them the list of "Wandering Map Prompts." You can also add to or create your own prompt list if you think of additional ideas.
7. Now it's time to analyze their maps. Start by asking them to connect (by drawing lines) the obvious links. For instance, if they have a lot of different sports they played, encourage them to connect all the different sports. If they have a lot of summer jobs or other work/internship experiences, ask them to draw lines to connect them.
8. Ask them to think about what the meaning is, or the commonalities between, the different things they have done. For instance, if they played a lot of sports, what does "sports" mean to them? Were they leaders on their teams? Were they into the competition—win at all costs? Were they more interested in being part of a team? Did they mostly pursue individual sports and push themselves to be the best?
9. Tell them that now we want to "connect the dots"—just like in those old coloring books where you would connect the numbered dots and suddenly see a picture of a horse (or whatever).
 - a. What are the connecting themes or threads that run through their lives?
 - b. Do they seem to use certain skills over and over again?

Wandering Map Prompts

Objects you use and/or enjoy.

- Computers
- Musical instruments
- Books
- Binoculars
- Skateboards
- Telescopes or Microscopes
- Sailboats
- Paintbrushes
- Journals

Events in your life, positive or negative, lasting a moment in time or for years.

- Working in a fast food restaurant or law firm
- Helping your neighbors move in
- Taking a fantastic class
- Tutoring a child
- Baking cookies for the holidays
- Designing a website or your Facebook page
- Acting in a school play
- Reading an amazing poem
- Running for school election
- Winning a basketball game
- Parents' divorce
- Family illness or challenge

People who have affected you in a significant way.

- Parents
- Relatives
- Mentor
- Favorite teacher
- Hard teacher

- Coach
- Scout leader
- Minister

Other Ideas:

- Academic major/minor
- Achievements
- Adventures/risks
- Assignments, papers or projects
- Classes
- Creative works
- College experiences
- Elementary or junior high school
- Family heritage/culture
- Favorite memories
- Favorite quotes or song lyrics
- Fun & leisure
- High school years: 9th grade, 10th grade, etc.
- Hobbies
- Honors
- Ideas
- Interests
- Internships
- Jobs
- Pets
- Places you've lived or traveled
- Reading
- Sports and games
- Summer activities
- Theories
- Vacations
- Volunteer activities
- Writing

Wandering Map Themes and Threads

- Achievements/ Awards
- Alone or with others
- Animals
- Art
- Classes
- Computers
- Creative ideas
- “Doing” or “Thinking”
- Drama
- Family
- Fun
- Hobbies
- Indoors or outdoors
- Internally or Externally rewarded
- Knowledge I’ve acquired
- Learning
- Locations
- Music
- Physically active or deskbound
- Reading
- Research
- Risky or safe
- Roles I’ve played in family or elsewhere
- Solving Problems
- Subjects- topics of interests
- Things I want to change
- Tools
- Types of people
- What comes naturally to me
- Writing
- **Skills & Talents**
- Analytical
- Artistic
- Communication
- Computer
- Counseling
- Creative thinking
- Detail/Follow-through
- Interpersonal “People”
- Research/Investigative
- Leadership/Management
- Manual
- Negotiating
- Numerical/Financial
- Organizational
- Outdoor/Athletic
- Presentation/Performing
- Problem Solving
- Serving/Helping
- Teaching/Instruction
- Thinking Strategically

What’s Important to me:

Adventure
Creativity
Family
Harmony
Justice
Leisure
Prestige
Security
Spirituality

Challenge
Diversity
Friendship
Health
Leadership
Physical Work
Productivity
Self-Expression
Variety

Contribution
Expertise
Fun
Independence
Learning/Knowledge
Power
Recognition
Service
Wealth