Name: _____Date:

Beyond the Zip Code - The Opportunity Challenge

How Does Life Change Over Time? - Life Map Worksheet

Learning Goals

Define and use three key terms: social position, mobility, and cascading.
Read two real-life stories and identify events that moved a person's life UP or DOWN.
Draw a Life Map showing how a person's experiences change over time.
Analyze what helps and what makes life harder, using the idea of economic mobility. Create a Life Map of your own life and reflect on what it shows you.

Big Idea - Read This First

A person's life can go UP and DOWN over time. Where someone starts does not always determine where they finish. Sometimes one difficult event causes more difficult events - this is called cascading. Other times, support from family, friends, or programs can help someone recover. In this lesson you will read stories, draw Life Maps of the ups and downs, and then draw a Life Map of your own.

Key Terms - Learn These Words

Word	Easy Meaning
Social position	Your place in society, including your money, opportunities, and support.
Mobility	Moving UP or DOWN in society over time.
Cascading	When one event causes more events to happen, one after another.
Life Map	A drawing that shows how a person's experiences change over time - peaks for good times, valleys for hard times.

Part 1 - Read Two Stories

Read one part at a time. After each part, read the quick note in brackets and notice what changes in the person's life. You will map ONE of these people in Part 2.

Story A - Jai (Short Version)

1. Growing up - Jai grew up in Alabama with his mom and four sisters. His mom worked many jobs. [START: Working hard, not much money]
2. Joining the military - At 18, Jai joined the military for 11 years and got a steady income. [UP: Steady job]
3. Building a family - He left the military, got a good job in Miami, married, and had a son. [UP: Good job, family]
4. Divorce - He got divorced. His wife and son moved to Atlanta. [DOWN: Family no longer lived with him]
5. Moving to Atlanta - Jai moved to be near his son, leaving his good job for lower-paying work. [DOWN: New city, less stable work]
6. Finding work — In Atlanta, Jai worked as a bartender while looking for work in his earlier field. The bartending job gave him income, but he worked long hours.
7. Housing crisis - His family got an eviction notice with 30 days to move. The family was given 30 days to leave their apartment. Jai searched for safe, affordable housing [DOWN: Housing crisis]
8. A blocked opportunity — Jai found an apartment but needed to pay a deposit quickly. At his bank, employees refused to release his money because of an identification problem. Jai believed he was treated unfairly because he is Black. The bank later acknowledged a mistake, but Jai had already lost the apartment.[DOWN: Perceived unfair treatment]
9. A cascade — After the bank incident, Jai experienced a serious crisis, was arrested, and was hospitalized. He then spent six months homeless.
10. Homelessness - He was homeless on the streets for six months. [LOWEST POINT]
11. Rebuilding - The Veterans Administration (VA) helped him. Now he has housing, studies logistics, and works at Amazon. [UP: Slowly rebuilding]

Jai says: "I've been a hard road back... and I'm not even halfway there."

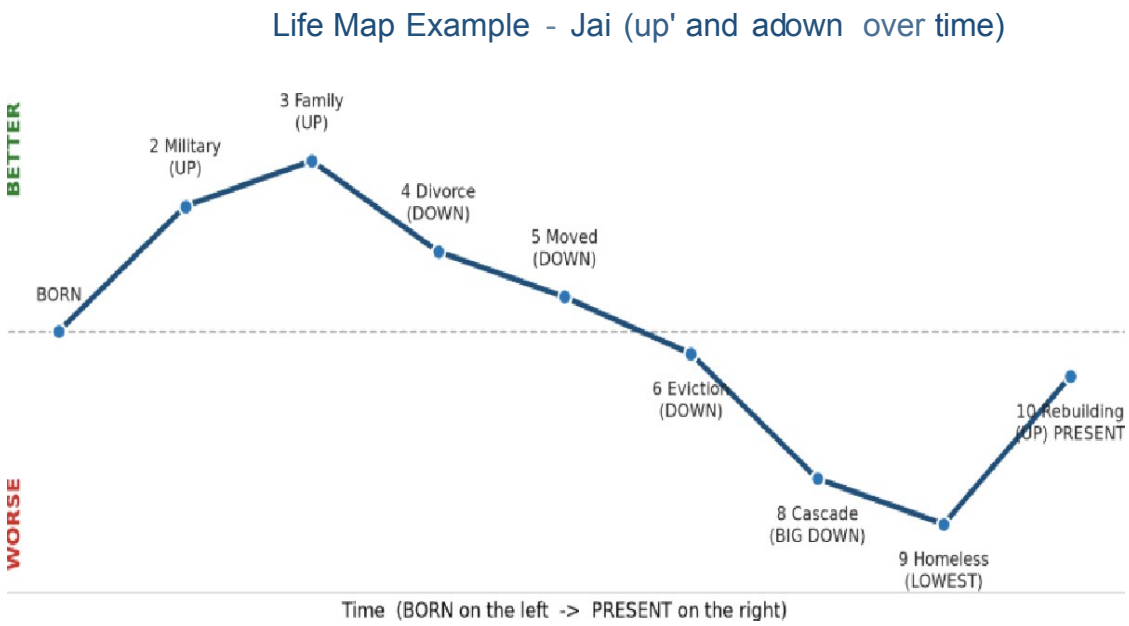
Story B - Francesca (Short Version)

1. Growing up - Francesca grew up in Boston's North End ("Little Italy") with lots of family. Her family owned a restaurant. [START: Close family, own business]
2. The restaurant fails - When she was 14, the family restaurant failed and they lost their money. [DOWN: Business collapsed]
3. Changing schools and homes - She left her private school; the family moved to the suburbs. [DOWN: Changes to school and homes
4. Family changes - Her parents became stressed about money and divorced. Her grandparents moved close to help. [DOWN, but family support]
5. Feeling different - At her new school, wealthy students made her feel different and embarrassed. [DOWN: Felt left out]
6. College and work - She went to college, got a corporate job, and worked as a restaurant server. [UP: College and jobs]
7. Starting a family - She married a construction worker and had two children. [STEADY: Family]
8. Making a choice - She left her corporate job for restaurant hours so a parent could always be home. [CHOICE Balancing work and family]
9. The pandemic — In 2020, COVID-19 severely affected the restaurant industry. Francesca lost income, and the family had to delay plans to buy a home in a neighborhood with a school district they preferred. [DOWN: Pandemic period]
10. Looking ahead — Francesca hopes to open her own Italian café in the future. Family ties, work experience, and education remain important resources as she plans for that goal. [HOPE FOR THE FUTURE]

Think about it: Which events made Francesca's circumstances more difficult? What resources or choices helped her and her family respond?

Part 2 - Draw a Life Map

Here is the example Jai's Life Map to guide you:



Activity 1 - Your Turn: Map Francesca

The example above maps JAI's life. Now it is your turn: using that example as your guide, you will draw a Life Map for **FRANCESCA** (StoryB).

Activity 2 - Identify Important Events

Choose at least FIVE events from Francesca's story. Record what happened and how it affected her life. There can be more than one reasonable answer - be ready to explain your thinking.

Story #	What happened‘7	UP, DOWN, or STEADY†

Activity 3 - Draw Your Life Map

Follow the same steps as the example. Start at BORN on the left and move toward the PRESENT on the right. Move the line UP when Francesca's life improves, DOWN when things get harder, and LEVEL when they stay steady. Label at least five events with their story numbers and a short description. Now draw FRANCESCA's Life Map .

BETTER

BORN Age 5 Age 15 Age 20 Age 25

WORSE

Part 3 - **Analyze the Life Map**

Answer in complete sentences. One or two sentences per question is enough.

1. What was the biggest UP in the person's story‘? Why?

_____

_____

2. What was the biggest DOWN‘? Why?

3. Identify a cascading event. Which event started a chain of other difficulties?

_____

4. What might have stopped or reduced the cascade?

Check all you think could have helped, then choose one and explain.

- [ ] More savings or emergency money [ ] Fair treatment [ ] Help from family or friends
- [ ] Government or community support [ ] Safe, affordable housing [ ] Stable employment
- [ ] Other: _____

My choice and explanation: _____

5. What does this story teach us about opportunity?

_____

_____

Part 4 - **Explore Economic Mobility**

The American Dream: Is Hard Work Enough?

The American Dream often suggests anyone can move up the economic ladder through hard work. Hard work matters, but people also face different opportunities and barriers.

Open the interactive chart from The New York Times - "Income Mobility Charts for Girls, Asian-Americans and Other Groups." If you cannot open it, follow your teacher's demonstration.

Open the interactive mobility chart (click here)

Typed-out link (for printing):
https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/03/19/upshot/race-class-white-and-black-men.html

What to Look For?

20. Where do people START, based on their parents' income?
21. Where do they END UP as adults*
22. Do patterns differ across groups†
23. What patterns can you observe in the data?'

Activity 4 - What Do You Notice?

1. If a child grows up in a low-income household, must that child remain low-income as an adult† [ ] Yes [ ] No

Use one observation from the chart to explain: _____
_____

2. Which statement best describes economic mobility†

- [ ] Everyone moves up a lot.
- [ ] People experience different outcomes; many do not move far from where they started.
- [ ] Everyone stays in the same position.

3. Do the patterns look the same for every group?

[ ] Yes [ ] No Describe one difference you observed:

4. Compare two groups. Group 1: _____ Group 2: _____
What difference did you notice in their outcomes? _____
5. What can a mobility chart show that one Life Map cannot*

- A Life Map shows: _____
- A mobility chart helps us see:

Part 5 - Connect the Stories to Opportunity

1. Jai experienced changes in employment, housing, and family. Choose one factor and explain how it affected his economic position.

Factor: _____ Explanation: _____

_____

2. Francesca's family lost its restaurant, and later the pandemic affected her income. Identify one difficult event and one source of support or hope.

Difficult event: _____ Support or hope: _____

3. What factors can influence a person's opportunities? Check all that you think can matter.

- [ ] Education [ ] Stable employment [ ] Family and community support
- [ ] Safe, affordable housing [ ] Discrimination or unfair treatment
- [ ] Health care and support programs [ ] Other: _____

4. Choose one factor that could help more people move up the economic ladder. Explain why?

- One factor that could improve economic mobility is _____
  It could help because

Part 6 - Exit Ticket

Complete each sentence:

1. Economic mobility means...

_____

2. One pattern I noticed in the chart was...

_____

3. The stories show that economic mobility...

_____

4. One question I still have about opportunity is...

_____

Key Takeaways

- A life - and a whole society - moves UP and DOWN over time; where you start does not decide where you finish.
- Cascading explains how one hard event can trigger many more; support (family, community, programs) can break the chain.