

Build Classroom
Community

SHIP OF LIFE

IDENTITY PROJECT

Ship of Life Identity Project

SEL Writing Activity

The image displays the 'Ship of Life Identity Project' materials. On the left, a worksheet titled 'Ship of Life Dock Talk' includes a 'Partner Share' section with prompts for students to discuss their 'ships'. In the center, a digital tablet shows a 'Get Started on Your Ship of Life' guide, which outlines four sections for the ship: Water (support system), Hull (strengths and accomplishments), Sails (fears and challenges), and Clouds (goals, hopes, and dreams). On the right, another worksheet titled 'Ship of Life Illustration' provides instructions for drawing and labeling the ship, with prompts for each section. A circular logo for 'Annotated ELA' is visible in the bottom right corner of the worksheet area.

Ship of Life Dock Talk

Before We Set Sail... Every ship has a story.
Take time to learn about the people sailing beside you this year.

Name: _____ Partner: _____ Date: _____

Partner Share

Find a partner and take turns sharing your ship. As you explain, discuss the four prompts below. When your partner shares, listen actively — then ask one follow-up question.

Get Started on Your Ship of Life

Your ship tells your story. Before you draw, think:

1	2	3	4
Water	Hull	Sails	Clouds
What keeps you afloat?	What are you made of?	What do you face?	Where are you headed?
Draw and label the water with your support system - people, places, or things that hold you up.	Fill the boat with your strengths and accomplishments - the foundation that carries you forward.	Label the sails with your fears and challenges - the things that push against you (and sometimes push you to grow).	Fill the clouds with your goals, hopes, and dreams - the horizon of your future.

Ship of Life Illustration

Name: _____ Date: _____

Your ship tells your story. Read each section below. On a separate sheet of paper illustrate and label your Ship of Life. Be creative!

1 Water
Who keeps you afloat?

Draw and label the water surrounding your ship with the people, places, and things that support you — your support system.

Fill the hull of your boat with your strengths and accomplishments — the qualities and achievements that form your foundation.

Label your sails with your fears and challenges — the things that push against you. (Remember: sails use wind to move forward. So do you.)

Fill the clouds above your ship with your goals, hopes, and dreams — the horizon of your future.

When creating your ship, choose one element from each section and use it to write an essay or paragraph explaining your choices. What does it mean to you?

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SCROLL
to take a look inside!

SEL WRITING ACTIVITY • GRADES 6–8

- ★ Lesson Plan
- ★ Student Handouts
- ★ Writing Organizer
- ★ Reflection Rubric
- ★ Dock Talk Activity
- ★ Reflection Cards
- ★ Teacher Example

What's Included

- ★ Google Slides
- ★ Printable PDF
- ★ Ready to Teach

The image shows three overlapping worksheets from the 'Ship of Life' unit. The top worksheet is titled 'Ship of Life Illustration' and includes a 'Name:' and 'Date:' field, followed by instructions: 'Your ship tells your story. Read each section below. On a separate sheet of paper illustrate and label your Ship of Life. Be creative!'. The middle worksheet is titled 'Ship of Life Writing Organizer' and includes a 'Name:' and 'Date:' field, followed by instructions: 'Use the NEC framework to plan your writing before you draft.' and a list of prompts: 'N Name it — What did you include in this section?', 'E Explain it — Why does it represent you?', and 'C Connect it — What does it reveal about who you are?'. The bottom worksheet is titled 'Ship of Life Dock Talk' and includes a 'Name:' and 'Date:' field, followed by instructions: 'Before We Set Sail... Every ship has a story. Take time to learn about the people sailing beside you this year.' and a 'Partner Share' section with four prompts: 'One Strength', 'One Support System', 'One Challenge', and 'One Goal'.

BUILD A STRONG CLASSROOM COMMUNITY FROM DAY ONE

Teachers will:

- > Learn what motivates each student
- > Build meaningful classroom relationships
- > Start the year with authentic conversations
- > Gather valuable writing samples
- > Introduce reflective writing in an engaging way

Ship of Life Reflection Rubric

Name: _____ Date: _____

Category	Points Possible	Criteria	Score
Reflection & Writing	15	Writing elaborates on each ship element with specific, thoughtful detail. The response is clear, organized, and connects meaningfully to the student's identity.	____
		creativity, and written nature of the	____
		n,	____

Ship of Life: A Student Identity & Reflection Project

UbD Lesson Plan | Grades 6-8

Ship of Life

A Student Identity & Reflection Project

Understanding by Design (UbD) Lesson Plan • Grades 6-8 • ELA

At a Glance	
Subject	English Language Arts (ELA)
Grade Band	Grades 6-8
Time	3-4 class periods (45-60 min each); adaptable for block schedules
Unit Context	Beginning of year / Back to school; can also anchor an SEL or identity unit
Materials	Ship of Life student handout, NEC Writing Organizer, Dock Talk handout, rubric, drawing supplies or digital tools

Stage 1 — Desired Results

Enduring Understandings	- Self-awareness is the foundation of strong writing — understanding who you are enables you to write with authenticity and specificity. - Our identities are shaped by our strengths, support systems, challenges, and aspirations. - Effective writers plan and reflect before they draft. - A classroom community is built through intentional sharing and active listening.
Essential Questions	- Who am I, and what makes me who I am? - What shapes our identities — our strengths, our fears, our people, our goals? - How does honest reflection lead to stronger, more meaningful writing? - What can we learn about each other when we share our stories?
CCR Standards	Writing W.CCR.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences. W.CCR.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, style, purpose, and audience.

BUILD A STRONG CLASSROOM COMMUNITY FROM DAY ONE

Students will:

- Reflect on their identity
- Share their strengths and goals
- Practice meaningful writing
- Connect with classmates

The image displays three overlapping worksheets for a 'Ship of Life' activity. The top worksheet, 'Ship of Life Writing Organizer', includes a title, a date field, and instructions to use the NEC framework. It features three sections: 'Water — Who keeps you afloat?', 'Boat Hull — What are you made of?', and 'Sails — What do you face?'. Each section has a 'Name it', 'Explain it', and 'Connect it' prompt. The middle worksheet, 'Ship of Life Dock Talk', has a title, a date field, and a 'Partner Share' section with instructions to find a partner and share. The bottom worksheet, 'Ship of Life Illustration', has a title, a date field, and instructions to draw and label the ship. It features four sections: '1 Water', '2 Boat Hull', '3 Sails', and '4 Clouds', each with a specific drawing and labeling prompt. A small blue box on the right side of the bottom worksheet says 'One Goal or dream you are working toward this year'.

Ship of Life Writing Organizer

Name: _____ Date: _____

Use the NEC framework to plan your writing before you draft.

N Name it — What did you include in this section?
E Explain it — Why does it represent you?
C Connect it — What does it reveal about who you are?

Water — Who keeps you afloat?

N Name it: What did you write or draw here?
E Explain it: Why did you choose this?
C Connect it: What does this say about who you are?

Boat Hull — What are you made of?

N Name it: What did you write or draw here?
E Explain it: Why did you choose this?
C Connect it: What does this say about who you are?

Ship of Life Dock Talk

Before We Set Sail... Every ship has a story.
Take time to learn about the people sailing beside you this year.

Name: _____ Partner: _____ Date: _____

Partner Share

Find a partner and take turns sharing your ship. As you explain, discuss the four prompts below. When your partner shares, listen actively — then share your own.

Ship of Life Illustration

Name: _____ Date: _____

Your ship tells your story. Read each section below. On a separate sheet of paper illustrate and label your Ship of Life. Be creative!

1 Water
Who keeps you afloat?
Draw and label the water surrounding your ship with the people, places, and things that support you — your support system.

2 Boat Hull
What are you made of?
Fill the hull of your boat with your strengths and accomplishments — the qualities and achievements that form your foundation.

3 Sails
What do you face?
Label your sails with your fears and challenges — the things that push against you. (Remember: sails use wind to move forward. So do you.)

4 Clouds
Where are you headed?
Fill the clouds above your ship with your goals, hopes, and dreams — the horizon of your future.

One Goal
or dream you are working toward this year

Students create their "Ship of Life"

Students
complete
four
parts of
their ship

Ship

Name: _____

Your ship tells your story. Read each section, draw, and label your Ship of Life.

- 1 Water**
Who keeps you afloat?
Draw and label the water surrounding your ship with the people, places, and things that support you — your support system.
- 2 Boat Hull**
What are you made of?
Fill the hull of your boat with your strengths, accomplishments — the qualities and achievements that form your foundation.
- 3 Sails**
What do you face?
Label your sails with your fears and challenges — the things that push against you. (Remember, sails use wind to move forward. So do you.)
- 4 Clouds**
Where are you headed?
Fill the clouds above your ship with your hopes, dreams, and goals — the horizon of your future.

Writing Extension: After completing your ship, choose one element from each section of the graphic organizer to write an essay or paragraph explaining your choice. How do each section reveal about who you are?



Water

Who keeps me afloat?



Hull

What are my strengths?



Sails

What challenges do I face?



Clouds

What are my goals?

Then they turn their thinking into writing

Students use the included
Name • Explain • Connect (NEC)
organizer to expand their
thinking before writing a
reflective paragraph or essay.

This supports:

- Reflection
- Organization
- Elaboration
- Writing stamina

Ship of Life Writing Organizer

Name: _____ Date: _____

Use the NEC framework to plan your writing before you draft.

N Name it — What did you include in this section?
E Explain it — Why does it represent you?
C Connect it — What does it reveal about who you are?

Water — Who keeps you afloat?

N Name it: What did you write or draw here?

E Explain it: Why did you choose this?

C Connect it: What does this say about who you are?

Boat Hull — What are you made of?

N Name it: What did you write or draw here?

E Explain it: Why did you choose this?

C Connect it: What does this say about who you are?

Build Classroom Connections

Students

- Share their ships
- Practice active listening
- Ask follow-up questions
- Discover common interests
- Build classroom community

Ship of Life Dock Talk

*Before We Set Sail... Every ship has a story.
Take time to learn about the people sailing beside you this year.*

Name: _____ Partner: _____ Date: _____

Partner Share

Find a partner and take turns sharing your ship. As you explain, discuss the four prompts below. When your partner shares, listen actively — then ask one follow-up question.

 One Strength <i>that helps keep you moving forward</i>	 One Support System <i>that helps you stay afloat</i>	 One Challenge <i>a fear or obstacle you are currently navigating</i>	 One Goal <i>or dream you are working toward this year</i>
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Reflection Card

Something I learned about my partner:

One thing we have in common:

One goal I will continue working toward this year:

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Perfect For

- Back to School
- Classroom Community
- Homeroom
- First Week Activities
- Writing Workshop
- SEL
- Advisory
- Grades 6–8
- ELA

The image displays four overlapping worksheets from the 'Ship of Life' curriculum. The 'Ship of Life Illustration' worksheet on the left includes instructions to draw the water, hull, and sails of a ship, representing support systems, strengths, and challenges. The 'Ship of Life Writing Organizer' (top and middle) is a form for planning writing using the NEC framework (Name it, Explain it, Connect it) with prompts for 'Water', 'Sails', and 'Clouds'. The 'Ship of Life Reflection Rubric' (center) is a table for evaluating student work. The 'Ship of Life Partner Share' worksheet (right) is for students to share their ship designs and reflections with a partner.

Category	Points Possible	Criteria	Score
Reflection & Writing	15	Writing elaborates on each ship element with specific, thoughtful detail. The response is clear, organized, and connects meaningfully to the student's identity.	
Design & Craft	10	Ship design shows attention to neatness, creativity, and clearly labeled elements. The visual and written components work together to paint a picture of the student.	
Conventions	5	Writing has few to no errors in punctuation, capitalization, spelling, or grammar.	
TOTAL	30		

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Community

SHIP OF LIFE

IDENTITY PROJECT

Ship of Life Dock Talk

Before We Set Sail... Every ship has a story.
Take time to learn about the people sailing beside you this year.

Name: _____ Date: _____
Partner: _____

Partner Share
Find a partner and take turns sharing your ship. As you explain, discuss the four prompts below. When your partner shares, listen actively — then ask one follow-up question.

Let Started on Your Ship of Life

Your ship tells your story. Before you draw, think:

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Ship of Life Illustration

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Label your sails with your fears and challenges — the things that push against you. (Remember: sails use wind to move forward. So do you.)

Fill the clouds above your ship with your goals, hopes, and dreams — the horizon of your future.

Using your ship, choose one element from each section and use an essay or paragraph explaining your choices. What does it mean to you?

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SEL WRITING ACTIVITY • GRADES 6–8

thank you
for checking out
this resource

