



Life Chapters

A Personal History Exercise

Personal Development Series • Exercise 2

Every life is a story — rich with turning points, unexpected characters, and chapters that shape who we become. This exercise invites you to step back and see your life not as a continuous blur of events, but as a series of distinct chapters, each with its own tone, cast, and meaning.

Working through these chapters can bring remarkable clarity: you may notice recurring themes, surprising strengths, or patterns you've never named before. There are no right or wrong answers — only your story, told in your own words.

HOW TO USE THIS EXERCISE

1. **Give each chapter a title** — something evocative, not just a date range. What would you call this season of your life?
2. **Take your time** — some chapters may surprise you. Let memories surface naturally rather than forcing a logical sequence.
3. **Use the prompts as starters** — you don't need to answer every question. Let them spark whatever feels most alive.
4. **Continue on extra sheets** if your story has more than six chapters.

If you completed the Letter to Your Younger Self exercise, revisit that letter as you work through these chapters — notice which chapter your younger self was living in, and what they couldn't yet see.

CHAPTER 1

Title: _____

FRO
M

TO

SETTING THE SCENE

Set the scene — where were you living, what was your daily life like? What defined the atmosphere of this chapter?

THEMES

What were the central themes or preoccupations? (e.g. belonging, survival, ambition, freedom, loss, discovery)

KEY EVENTS



What key events happened — milestones, decisions, surprises, setbacks? Which one changed the trajectory of your story?

SIGNIFICANT CHARACTERS

Who were the most significant people? What role did they play — mentor, mirror, challenger, companion?

EMOTIONS & INNER WORLD

What emotions were most present? What were you longing for? What were you afraid of?

LESSONS LEARNED

Looking back, what did this chapter teach you? What did you gain — and what did you lose?

WHY THIS CHAPTER ENDS HERE

Was there a specific moment that marked the end of this chapter? What shifted — externally, or inside you?

CHAPTER 2

Title: _____

FRO
M

TO

SETTING THE SCENE

Set the scene — where were you living, what was your daily life like? What defined the atmosphere of this chapter?

THEMES

What were the central themes or preoccupations? (e.g. belonging, survival, ambition, freedom, loss, discovery)

KEY EVENTS

What key events happened — milestones, decisions, surprises, setbacks? Which one changed the trajectory of your story?

SIGNIFICANT CHARACTERS

Who were the most significant people? What role did they play — mentor, mirror, challenger, companion?

EMOTIONS & INNER WORLD

What emotions were most present? What were you longing for? What were you afraid of?

LESSONS LEARNED

Looking back, what did this chapter teach you? What did you gain — and what did you lose?

WHY THIS CHAPTER ENDS HERE

Was there a specific moment that marked the end of this chapter? What shifted — externally, or inside you?



CHAPTER 3

Title: _____

FRO
M

TO

SETTING THE SCENE

Set the scene — where were you living, what was your daily life like? What defined the atmosphere of this chapter?

THEMES

What were the central themes or preoccupations? (e.g. belonging, survival, ambition, freedom, loss, discovery)

KEY EVENTS

What key events happened — milestones, decisions, surprises, setbacks? Which one changed the trajectory of your story?

SIGNIFICANT CHARACTERS

Who were the most significant people? What role did they play — mentor, mirror, challenger, companion?

EMOTIONS & INNER WORLD

What emotions were most present? What were you longing for? What were you afraid of?

LESSONS LEARNED

Looking back, what did this chapter teach you? What did you gain — and what did you lose?

WHY THIS CHAPTER ENDS HERE

Was there a specific moment that marked the end of this chapter? What shifted — externally, or inside you?

CHAPTER 4

Title: _____

FRO
M

TO

SETTING THE SCENE

Set the scene — where were you living, what was your daily life like? What defined the atmosphere of this chapter?

THEMES

What were the central themes or preoccupations? (e.g. belonging, survival, ambition, freedom, loss, discovery)



KEY EVENTS

What key events happened — milestones, decisions, surprises, setbacks? Which one changed the trajectory of your story?

SIGNIFICANT CHARACTERS

Who were the most significant people? What role did they play — mentor, mirror, challenger, companion?

EMOTIONS & INNER WORLD

What emotions were most present? What were you longing for? What were you afraid of?

LESSONS LEARNED

Looking back, what did this chapter teach you? What did you gain — and what did you lose?

WHY THIS CHAPTER ENDS HERE

Was there a specific moment that marked the end of this chapter? What shifted — externally, or inside you?

CHAPTER 5

Title: _____

FRO
M

_____ **TO** _____

SETTING THE SCENE

Set the scene — where were you living, what was your daily life like? What defined the atmosphere of this chapter?

THEMES

What were the central themes or preoccupations? (e.g. belonging, survival, ambition, freedom, loss, discovery)

KEY EVENTS

What key events happened — milestones, decisions, surprises, setbacks? Which one changed the trajectory of your story?

SIGNIFICANT CHARACTERS

Who were the most significant people? What role did they play — mentor, mirror, challenger, companion?

EMOTIONS & INNER WORLD

What emotions were most present? What were you longing for? What were you afraid of?

LESSONS LEARNED

Looking back, what did this chapter teach you? What did you gain — and what did you lose?

WHY THIS CHAPTER ENDS HERE



Was there a specific moment that marked the end of this chapter? What shifted — externally, or inside you?

CHAPTER 6

Title: _____

FRO
M

TO

SETTING THE SCENE

Set the scene — where were you living, what was your daily life like? What defined the atmosphere of this chapter?

THEMES

What were the central themes or preoccupations? (e.g. belonging, survival, ambition, freedom, loss, discovery)

KEY EVENTS

What key events happened — milestones, decisions, surprises, setbacks? Which one changed the trajectory of your story?

SIGNIFICANT CHARACTERS

Who were the most significant people? What role did they play — mentor, mirror, challenger, companion?

EMOTIONS & INNER WORLD

What emotions were most present? What were you longing for? What were you afraid of?

LESSONS LEARNED

Looking back, what did this chapter teach you? What did you gain — and what did you lose?

WHY THIS CHAPTER ENDS HERE

Was there a specific moment that marked the end of this chapter? What shifted — externally, or inside you?

Continue on extra sheets if your story has more than six chapters. Adapted from Hudson, F. & McLean, P. (2000) *Life Launch*. Hudson Institute Press.