

LIFE STORIES

Topic: Life stories

EFL CEFR Level: B2+

Main objectives:

- Students will be able to report life stories.
- Students will become aware of the use of metaphor in describing life events.

Method: Frame-inspired TBLT (pre-task, task cycle, language focus)

Metaphor: LIFE IS A JOURNEY

Materials: PC, Internet, texts, FrameNet

Skills involved: listening, speaking, reading, writing

🗨️ **How to cite:**

Dalpanagioti, Thomai (2024). *Metaphor Task Bank*. <https://www.new.enl.auth.gr/flt/metaphor-task-bank>

A) Pre-task

- “Life is a journey” is one of the most famous phrases that we hear in our life. Have a look at a website with quotes about “life is a journey”:
<https://yourstory.com/herstory/2020/09/inspirational-quotes-life-journey-treasure/amp>
Do you also think of your experiences as being different parts of a journey?
- Consider Paulo Coelho’s quotation. Does it refer to a literal path?

**It's one thing to feel that
you are on the right path,
but it's another to think
that yours is the only path.**

**~Paulo Coelho,
author of *The Alchemist***



B) Task cycle

1. Task

- Form groups of four and read your task.

You are going to organize an event called “The incredible life journey of a famous person”. Your task is to choose a candidate for the event, collect information about his/her life and present it to the class.

- Each group should choose a famous person and search information on the Internet about him/her. Decide which types of information (personal information, pictures and visuals) the different members of your group should look for. Take notes using the fact file below.

1. Full name
2. Place of birth
3. Childhood
4. Difficulties
5. Achievements
6. Extraordinary talent/ aptitudes/ features

2. Planning

- Work together to organize the information you have collected and prepare your presentation about the famous person that your group has chosen.

3. Report

- Choose a member of your group to present your work.
- Decide which group has presented the most interesting life story. Vote: Who will be the famous person of the event?



C) Language focus

1. Analysis

When we talk about our *life*, we often use words that have a connection with *motion*: our *life events* are like different parts of a *journey*. This is an example of thinking and speaking metaphorically.

➤ Read the text about Coelho's *life* and answer the following questions.

Paulo Coelho

During his lifetime, Coelho **went** through many obstacles; the most notable event was getting an electrical shock when he was in a mental institution and getting placed into prison. However, he managed to **move** past all the difficulties and become a healthy and faithful person.

While **navigating** through the "hippie" and "rock-and-roll" lifestyle of the '70s, Coelho experienced the first of his migrations, that of a writer, **moving** from playwriting to lyricism and finally becoming a novelist.

After **floating** from one job to another, Coelho changed his life's course while on a visit to Spain in 1986 at the age of 39. With the publication of his first books, *The Pilgrimage* (1987) and *The Alchemist* (1988) he **embarked** on a career that would establish him as Brazil's best known novelist. One of the messages that Paulo Coelho was trying to get across is that one must follow their dreams no matter what hurdles they have to **jump** over.

a) What do the highlighted words have in common?

b) Underline the prepositions that follow the highlighted words. Which of the following ideas do they express?

- SOURCE:
- GOAL:
- PATH:

Read the meaning of SOURCE, PATH, GOAL, and examples in [FrameNet](https://framenet2.icsi.berkeley.edu/fnReports/data/frame/Motion.xml) (<https://framenet2.icsi.berkeley.edu/fnReports/data/frame/Motion.xml>).

c) Find nouns in the text that have a connection with *motion* and are used to refer to

- changes in life:
- difficulties in life:

2. Practice

Activity 1

All the words in the table have a connection with *motion* and *journeys*. Look them up in [FrameNet](http://framenet.icsi.berkeley.edu) (<http://framenet.icsi.berkeley.edu>) and match them to the appropriate frame.

	<i>go</i> (v)	<i>get</i> (v)	<i>pass</i> (v)	<i>reach</i> (v)	<i>climb</i> (v)	<i>propel</i> (v)	<i>launch</i> (v)	<i>direction</i> (n)	<i>step</i> (n)	<i>journey</i> (n)	<i>pathway</i> (n)	<i>drive</i> (n)
[Motion]	X											
[Cause_motion]												
[Self_motion]												
[Arriving]												
[Traversing]												
[Direction]												
[Travel]												
[Roadways]												

Read the text about Rowling's *life* and complete the gaps with words that have a connection with *motion* and *journeys*. Use words from the above table in the correct form.

J.K. Rowling

Much like the main character in her Harry Potter fantasy series of books, J.K. Rowling took a steep **(0) pathway** to success. Within five years, she quickly became one of the richest women in Great Britain. But there have been many events in Joanne Rowling's life that have contributed to her **(1) _____** from rags to riches.

Rowling's humble beginnings can be traced back seven years after graduating from university. This is the time when she saw herself as a failure. Her mother had **(2) _____** away, she had a failed marriage, she had no permanent work, and she had a young daughter to take care of. This seemingly hopeless situation was the same source of inspiration that **(3) _____** Rowling into becoming a huge success. How did this single mother **(4) _____** out of poverty and failure to become world's richest author? With relentless persistence and sheer hard work! Writing became a way for Rowling to cope with her depression. She **(5) _____** a turning point in her struggle with depression only after the vision of her Harry Potter storyline became clearer.

The Harry Potter series became a bestseller all over the world, and it was adapted into a hugely successful film series that **(6) _____** many young actors into their careers. That amount of success —and obviously, millions of dollars into Rowling's pocket— would be enough to send many in the wrong **(7) _____**. At the very least, most people would retire and live a life of luxury. But Rowling didn't stop. Despite achieving the highest acclaim one can possibly achieve in her field, she **(8) _____** on writing. Rowling possessed a fierce determination to **(9) _____** where she is, and she's continuing to work diligently toward new goals.

Hopefully the zero to hero story of J.K. Rowling will encourage you to never give up on your biggest dreams. Doing what you really like is one of the most important first **(10) _____**

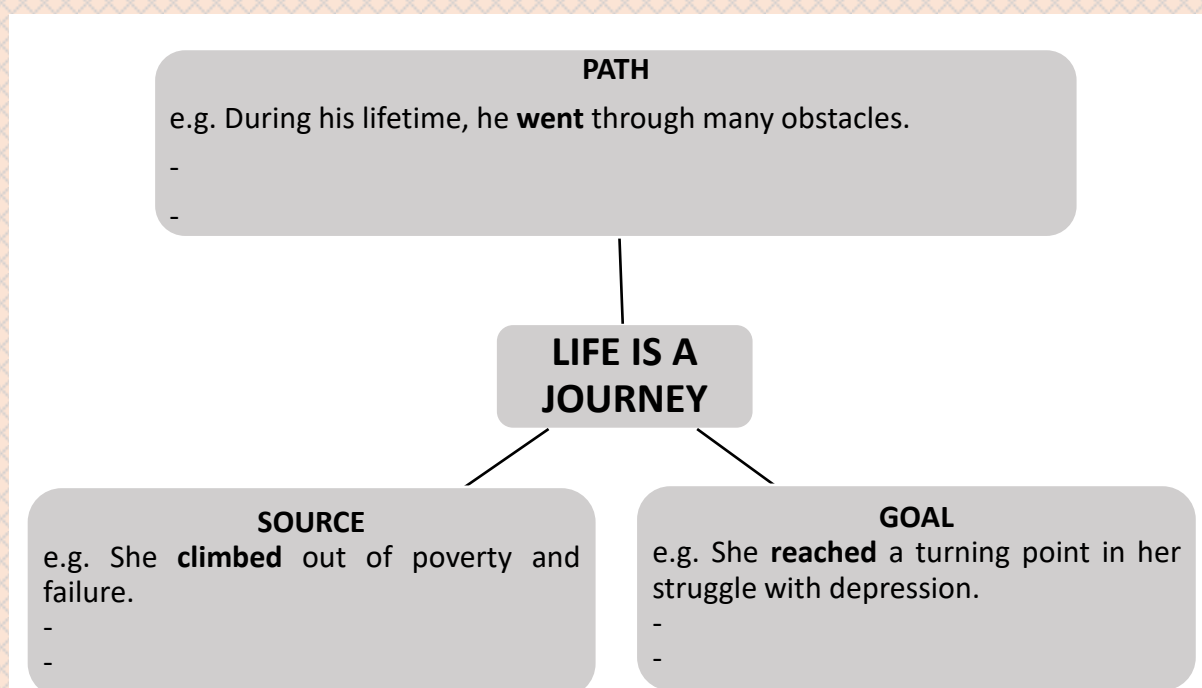
towards realizing your goals. Whether it be on writing or in any other fields, keeping the passion alive provides enough fuel to continue the **(11)** _____.

Activity 2

Writing: Work in pairs and complete the word map around the metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY.

First collect sentences from the previous activities.

Then visit [FrameNet](https://framenet2.icsi.berkeley.edu/fnReports/data/frame/Motion.xml) (<https://framenet2.icsi.berkeley.edu/fnReports/data/frame/Motion.xml>), have a look at the list of motion verbs and use them to write sentences to describe someone's (personal and professional) life.



Activity 3

Speaking: Reconsider the report you presented in class. Discuss in your group the positive and negative points of your work. Make a list of suggestions for improving your description.

D) Assignment

Describe a person who is important to you. Talk about this person's life: major events, difficulties, accomplishments.