

YOUR STORY MATTERS: UNDERSTANDING AND COLLECTING ORAL HISTORY

A UNIT in Two Lessons for 2nd & 3rd Grade Classes

Unit Overview:

Understand what an Oral History is and why it is important to collect and save first person narrative recordings. Learn how to collect and oral history.

Unit Summary:

Oral Histories are primary-source first-person narrative recordings that help to round out the story of the past. At times, an interview may serve as the only source information available about a certain place, event or person. Oral history helps us understand how individuals and communities experienced life in a specific time and/or dealt with major historic events. This lesson will introduce students to what an Oral History is. They will have the opportunity to listen to a recorded oral history and learn how to collect an oral history from someone that they know.

Time Allotment:

Taught in two 30 to 40 minutes of teaching time. 60 additional minutes of home connection activity.

Grade Level: 2-3

Standards

History-Social Science Content Standards

Chronological and Spatial Thinking

1. Students place key events and people of the historical era they are studying in a chronological sequence and within a spatial context; they interpret timelines.
2. Students correctly apply terms related to time, including *past*, *present*, *future*, *decade*, *century*, and *generation*.
3. Students explain how the present is connected to the past, identifying both similarities and differences between the two, and how some things change over time and some things stay the same.

Research, Evidence, and Point of View

1. Students differentiate between primary and secondary sources.
2. Students pose relevant questions about events they encounter in historical documents, eyewitness accounts, oral histories, letters, diaries, artifacts, photographs, maps, artworks, and architecture.
3. Students distinguish fact from fiction by comparing documentary sources on historical figures and events with fictionalized characters and events.

Historical Interpretation

1. Students summarize the key events of the era they are studying and explain the historical contexts of those events.
2. Students identify the human and physical characteristics of the places they are studying and explain how those features form the unique character of those places.

3. Students identify and interpret the multiple causes and effects of historical events.
4. Students conduct cost-benefit analyses of historical and current events.

Reading: Informational Text 4th Grade

1. Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.
3. Explain events, procedures, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text, including what happened and why, based on specific information in the text.
7. Interpret information presented visually, orally, or quantitatively (e.g., in charts, graphs, diagrams, time lines, animations, or interactive elements on Web pages) and explain how the information contributes to an understanding of the text in which it appears.

Writing Standards 4th Grade

2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.
 - a. Introduce a topic clearly and group related information in paragraphs and sections; include formatting (e.g., headings), illustrations, and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.
 - b. Develop the topic with facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples related to the topic.
 - c. Link ideas within categories of information using words and phrases (e.g., *another*, *for example*, *also*, *because*).
 - d. Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.
- e. Provide a concluding statement or section related to the information or explanation presented.

Reading: Informational Text 5th Grade

1. Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.
3. Explain the relationships or interactions between two or more individuals, events, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text based on specific information in the text.
7. Draw on information from multiple print or digital sources, demonstrating the ability to locate an answer to a question quickly or to solve a problem efficiently.

Writing Standards 5th Grade

2. Write informative/explanatory texts in which they introduce a topic, use facts and definitions to develop points, and provide a concluding statement or section.
5. With guidance and support from adults and peers, focus on a topic and strengthen writing as needed by revising and editing.
6. With guidance and support from adults, use a variety of digital tools to produce and publish writing, including in collaboration with peers.
2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to:

Define what an Oral History is and **describe** what it is used for.

Express what they have learned from listening to a recorded oral history.

Collect an oral history from a family member on their own.

Consider how their personal experience today might be meaningful in the far future.

Materials

Recorded Oral Histories:

<https://storycorps.org/stories/why-do-you-like-space-so-much-a-nasa-engineer-talks-with-his-space-obsessed-nephew/>

<https://storycorps.org/stories/tubby-johnston-the-girl-who-changed-little-league-baseball/>

<https://storycorps.org/stories/from-internment-to-disney-a-japanese-american-artist-draws-strength-through-his-work/>)

<https://storycorps.org/stories/the-boy-from-troy-how-dr-king-inspired-a-young-john-lewis/>

Handout:

Interview Questions Placemat from Story Core

Introduction Activity:

Set-up: Begin the class with a discussion about storytelling. Ask students to share one of their favorite family stories with the class.

Remind students that we all have stories to tell. We organize the memories of our lives into stories. When recorded these stories are considered oral histories. Oral history gives voice to people, regular people, who often are not mentioned in written history.

So, what does an oral history do? It provides a way to collect people's testimony from their own lived experiences. Historians currently recognize that the everyday memories of everyday people, not just the rich and famous, have historical importance. If we do not collect and preserve those memories, those stories, then one day they will disappear forever.

Learning Activity #1:

Set-up: As a class listen/watch the *Tubby Johnston, the girl who Changed Little League Baseball* from the storycorp.org site (link in *Materials list*). With the class, discuss the following points:

- What did the girl do to play baseball?
She changed her name, cut off her braids, and pretended to be a boy.
- How was she treated by the team? By the other players and parents?
The team supported her, the players teased her and the other parents booed her.
- What rule was made during the meeting with the little league?
The little league created a rule that no girls were allowed on the team.
- What was Tubbie's impact on little league?
She was the first girl to play in little league and rules were written to keep her out of playing in the next season.
- What else can we learn about society and history from listening to this oral history?
There were very strict rules about what girls were allowed to do including playing certain sports.

Learning Activity #2:

Set-up: Explain to the class that they will be doing an interview with a family member to learn more about their family's personal history and record it for the future. Ask students to think of who in their family they wish to interview. Students may want to brainstorm with their parents or caregiver to determine someone they would be able to interview, such as a grandparent, neighbor, or family friend.

Interview preparation:

- Students will need to use a recording device for the interview (such as voice memo on a cell phone) and take notes.
- Remind students to ask for permission to conduct the interview.
- Have the students include the following information in their interview:
 - Date of recording (example: October 20, 2020)
 - Full name, age, date of birth
 - Occupation

Interview questions: Have students use the *Story Core Interview questions placemat* handout to record information on their family member's life.

Assessment

Use the following questions to guide a recap discussion, as a quiz, or a guideline for a quick drawing assignment.

Lesson Activity #1:

Think-pair-share: Have each student write for 3 minutes what they learned about Tubby Johnson's experience. Have each student write about a time when they overcame a challenge in life. Afterwards, have them pair up with a classmate and share out their responses (allow for 10 minutes to discuss).

Learning Activity #2:

Recap discussion: Have some of the student share their findings from the oral history that they collected from their family member. Have them answer the following questions:

- What were some of the important life moments that your family member experienced?
- What was something new that you learned from your family member's oral history?

Extension Activity

Learning Activity #1:

Quick write: Have students watch another video from the storycorp.org (links provided in *Materials* list) and complete a 5-minute write-up on what they learned from the oral history.

Distance Learning Options

- Hold discussions via video conferencing software like Zoom or Teams
- Each group share out to class to ensure all students comprehend the content.