

# YOUR STORY MATTERS: UNDERSTANDING AND COLLECTING ORAL HISTORY

## A UNIT in Two Lessons for Kindergarten & 1st 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: K-1

### Standards

#### *History-Social Science Content Standards*

#### **Chronological and Spatial Thinking**

1. Students explain how major events are related to one another in time.

#### **Research, Evidence, and Point of View**

1. Students frame questions that can be answered by historical study and research.
2. Students distinguish fact from opinion in historical narratives and stories.
3. Students detect the different historical points of view on historical events and determine the context in which the historical statements were made (the questions asked, sources used, author's perspectives).

#### **Historical Interpretation**

1. Students explain the central issues and problems from the past, placing people and events in a matrix of time and place.
2. Students understand and distinguish cause, effect, sequence, and correlation in historical events, including the long-and short-term causal relations.
3. Students explain the sources of historical continuity and how the combination of ideas and events explains the emergence of new patterns.
4. Students recognize the role of chance, oversight, and error in history.
5. Students recognize that interpretations of history are subject to change as new information is uncovered.

## Writing Standards K-5

1. Write informative/explanatory texts in which they name a topic, supply some facts about the topic, and provide some sense of closure.
5. With guidance and support from adults, focus on a topic, respond to questions and suggestions from peers, and add details to strengthen writing as needed
6. With guidance and support from adults, use a variety of digital tools to produce and publish writing, including in collaboration with peers.

## 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 (Web Resources):

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

Handout:

*Questions for at-home Oral History Interview*

## Introduction Activity:

**Set-up:** Tell the students that we all have stories to tell. Ask them, what is their favorite family story? Then explain that family stories can be organized through the memories of our lives. These stories are considered oral histories. Oral history gives voice to regular people, who may not be written into history.

So, what does an oral history do? It provides a way to collect people's stories from their life experiences. Historians use the memories of everyday people, not just the rich and famous. 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 watch the *Why Do You Like Space So Much* video from storycorps.org (Link in *Materials* list). Afterwards, discuss the highlights of the video and ask the class the following questions:

- What did you learn about Jerry?
- What is Jerry's uncle's job?  
*Mission Operations Engineer for NASA*
- What do Jerry and his Uncle Joey have in common?  
*They both like space.*

- What does Jerry want to do in the future?  
*Live on another planet.*
- Does this recording teach us about something other than just Jerry and Joey?  
*We learn about space and exoplanets.*

### Learning Activity #2:

**Set-up:** Explain to the class that they will be interviewing their parent or guardian to learn more about their family's oral history.

Interview preparation:

- Students will need the assistance of an adult to use a recording device for the interview (such as voice memo on a cell phone).
- Have the students include the following information in their interview:
  - Date of recording (example: October 20, 2020)
  - Parent or Guardian's full name, age, date of birth
  - Parent or Guardian's Occupation

Interview questions: With assistance from their parent or guardian have each student record and ask the questions on the *Interview questions placemat* handout to record their family member's oral history.

### Assessment

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

#### Lesson Activity #1:

**Quick Draw:** Have each student think about what they would like to be when they grow up or a special hobby that they are interested in learning more about. Then have them draw an image of him/herself doing that activity and write 1-3 short sentences describing the image.

#### Learning Activity #2:

**Listen and Draw:** Have the students each listen to the oral history recording that they collected and draw a picture of something that their parent or guardian shared in their story and write 1-3 sentences describing the image.

### Extension Activity

#### Learning Activity #1:

**Recap discussion:** Talk to the class about their experience interviewing their parents/guardians. What information did they learn that was new about their family?