

Giving Voice to History

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Overview

I'm sure you remember those days well, sitting in an eighth grade classroom being forced to read a novel not of your choosing. It's a beautiful day outside, and you're daydreaming about the time when that final bell rings and you can bolt out those front doors, laughing with your friends. Just then the teacher calls out your name to answer a question you didn't even hear being asked. Who didn't live moments like this? You just can't expect every student to be interested in the same novel, it's not possible with all of the different personalities and interests in the room.

So what can be done? You can bring the story to life, give it validity, peak the interest of the students, and have them sitting on the edge of their seats! Adding oral history to any lesson that involves a novel can accomplish this, especially if that novel is a historic fiction like the many we read at our school. Pittsburgh Public Schools curriculum for eighth grade communications has in it “*Out of the Dust*” by Karen Hess. This novel, written in poetic form, is about the experience of a little girl growing up during the depression and dust bowl. We also read “*Chain of Fire*” by Beverly Naidoo, about students who decide that Apartheid laws are unfair and that they need to form a united front and fight for what is right. Finally, the non-fiction piece we read is the well known story of Anne Frank and her struggle to stay alive during the Holocaust of World War II.

To an adult, all of these stories are not only interesting, they are incomprehensible stories about human tragedy and the drive people find inside of themselves when their own survival or freedom are at risk. But to a student, they are just that....stories....with no reality to them. Students have not lived enough or experienced enough life to relate to what these characters are going through....”This couldn’t have possibly happened” is the thought most have. It’s up to us, the teacher, to make them believers, to bring the novel to life.

This is where oral history comes in. This unit can be used with any book, in any curriculum, in any grade level. I want to turn that light bulb on in the brain of students. I want them to not only enjoy the book, but to not be able to wait to read the next chapter. I believe this can be accomplished by giving a real live voice to the story. It happened to me right in my Oral History class here at the Teacher’s Institute with the playing of the oral history interviews regarding slavery. Of course I learned all about slavery in the United States in many history classes throughout the years, but it didn’t come to life for me until I heard the voice of a freed slave myself. It was as though my light bulb turned on, and I hung on every word. Emotions I never felt about the issue surfaced, and all of a sudden it was “real,” not some words on the page of a history book, or a movie made for the television screen. Students are the same way; they think these books are written just for schools to force them to read.

Before reading a historical fiction novel, a background on the subject has to be built. This can be done by doing research on the subject or time in history. Students will use a variety of resources, such as encyclopedias, websites, books, and of course, oral history interviews. I would start by finding interviews already completed, either online

or at the public library, with people who not only lived through these times in history, but with those that witnessed the events or had a loved one suffer through them.

Next, the novel is started. With the new knowledge the students have gained through research, an interest is already formed. As the chapters go by though, the teacher should be finding people in the area that would be willing to come in and let students interview them, or setting up online conferences with legitimate people that can be found on the internet. With the technology available today, students can interview people all over the world. As the pages turn, the teacher will prepare the students for the interviews by helping students come up with good open ended and follow-up questions that can be asked.

Because some students may be intimidated to speak to interviewees one on one, groups of two or three students per interviewee is a good idea. Once each group completes their interview, a summary can be put together and shared with the rest of the class. This will give them a pretty good rounded experience with all types of people who were affected by the events.

We, as teachers, have all studied Howard Gardner's *Multiple Intelligences*, and understand that not all students learn the same way. This unit will help teachers to vary instruction to include all types of learners, including those that have visual, audio, or kinesthetic needs. It is also great for those with interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences, since they will not only be reaching out to people, but also reflecting on the knowledge that they receive from the oral history process.

As you can see, this same process can be used for almost any book on any subject. If using a book like "*Out of the Dust*," find survivors of the depression or Dust Bowl. If using "*The Diary of Anne Frank*," find survivors of concentration camps, people that hid from Germans, or anyone else affected by the war. If using "*Chain of Fire*," find those that were affected by the unfair laws and protests of Apartheid. Even if fiction books are being read, you can interview anyone that has experience with the subject being told about. It isn't even necessary to go out and find people to come into the classroom. There are so many amazing resources on the Internet now, previously recorded interviews can be downloaded and listened to right in the classroom. The Library of Congress is a great resource for this (www.loc.gov).

Making the story “real” for students is important. Giving voice to history will do just that. Be careful though, this may cause students to want to read more! But isn’t that the point?

Rationale

Since it didn’t dawn on me at all why students showed such boredom reading novels in class until I took this Oral History class, I finally decided to do a little digging into adolescent psychology to find out more. What follows is the research I uncovered on why students have little empathy towards others, and how we as teachers can overcome that. After this will be the background information needed on the Dust Bowl, Apartheid, and the Holocaust, so that students will have a good, solid background before beginning the novels chosen.

Teenagers and the Inability to Show Empathy

Empathy is the identification of, and the understanding of another’s situation and feelings. There are many theories of why adolescents lack the ability to empathize; Piaget’s adolescent egocentrism, the study of brain development, and the lack of life experience are just a few.

First, adolescent egocentrism may play a part in the teenage empathy dilemma. We know from research done by great psychologists, such as Piaget, that people go through phases as they grow and develop. Small children, such as pre-k through the elementary years, seem to show empathy for others with no problem, but something changes when the teen years hit. All of a sudden adolescents believe that they are the center of attention, and that everyone is interested in what only they think and feel, as though they are being watched and evaluated at all times, especially by their peers. It is hard for them, then, to wonder about or feel what other people are feeling or going through.

Next is the science of brain development, which proves to show the difference between the adolescent and adult brain. According to a study presented at the BA Festival of Science at University College London, teenagers under use the region of the brain used when considering, not only their own, but other people's feelings as well. In this study, both adolescents and adults were asked how they would react in certain social situations while their brains were being monitored by MRI. What was interesting was that both gave similar answers, but different parts of the brain showed the activity. The adults used the pre-frontal cortex more, the part of the brain where empathy and guilt typically come from. And the teenagers showed more activity from the superior temporal sulcus, a part of the brain associated with predicting future actions based on past actions. "The fact that teenagers use a different area of the brain than adults when considering what to do suggests they may think less about the impact of their actions on other people and how they are likely to make other people feel," said Dr. Sarah-Jayne Blakemore of the UCL Institute of Cognitive Neuroscience.

Last, is the theory that teenagers just haven't had as much social or life experience that adults have had. Adults are better at "putting themselves into other people's shoes" simply because they have seen much more, not only in their own lives, but in the news as well. They have seen emotion in the images and have heard the voices of those that have been through difficult situations. Or they may have been through many difficulties of their own, so they know first hand what others are feeling, which leads to empathy.

The good news is that empathy, like the many other skills children learn, can be nurtured through practice, and adolescence is a great time to introduce this important character trait. Students at this age are sometimes considered "sissies" or "softies" if they show empathy towards classmates that are struggling. But those students who can't seem to identify with others seem to have fewer friends and often get into trouble because they end up hurting people either physically or emotionally. Teaching kids that people are not objects, and showing them how to see other points of view besides their own can lead to them understanding the feelings of others more effectively.

Oral history is a marvelous tool to use in teaching empathy. Having students hear the voices, or actually meet and interview people that have been through a struggle will help them to see the reality in the historical fiction novels that they will be reading. The characters and plot will have deeper meaning, and they will be able to compare the novel to those that they have met or listened to. This will lead to more interesting class

discussions, essays, or projects, as well as to the level of interest of the student. We want them to “*want*” to read, not just read because they feel they are being forced to.

The Dust Bowl

The first novel read in the eighth grade year is a historical fiction titled *Out of the Dust*, by Karen Hess. It is written, not only in a series of journal entries, but these entries are also in free verse poetic form. The story revolves around the life of a 14 year old girl living on a wheat farm during the Depression and also during the Dust Bowl, in the years 1935-1936.

Right away you can see the distance in experience that modern day city school students have with this type of novel. It is very important to first educate the students on this era before even opening the novel so that a good background of knowledge is built. There can be no empathy for this character if students do not understand what is going on in this period of history.

The following is a brief overview of events, in case the teacher needs a little brushing up on this time period before beginning. I strongly recommend digging deeper into the subject since students will have lots of questions once the story begins.

According to Donald Worster, author of *Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s*, the thirties began in an economic depression. This event seemed to steal the headlines at the time, but if you ask the farmers and those that lived in the Great Plains, drought was a much bigger problem at the time. Much of the farmland in mid America looked like a desert with its scorched, cracked earth. As if drought wasn't bad enough, this was also a time of extreme heat. Temperatures were reaching over 100° F in states such as Nebraska, Iowa, and Illinois.

With little or no rain for months upon months, along with the extreme heat, farming soil was hard to come by. Millions of acres were affected. Farmers were no longer able to plant crops in the dry earth. Since the soil had turned to dust, even if they tried to plant seeds, they were blown away by the wind, or never grew for lack of water. Farm animals

were also dying at large rates since there was no food for them to graze on. Residents not only did not have wheat and corn, but had no source of meat either. Farmers in the affected areas had lost their source of income, which also led to poverty, starvation, disease, and homelessness due to loss of the land to the banks.

As if this was not devastating enough, more was yet to come: dust storms. These storms, caused by acres and acres of dust and high winds, were so violent that they made the drought itself a secondary problem. People were now living in fear for their lives when the dust storms hit. Dust, as fine as powder, consumed them and their houses. Dust turned the sky black, rattled against the windows and entered through the smallest of cracks, covering the inside of their houses. The dust also filled every crevice of vehicles, causing them not to work and stranding people who were miles and miles away from their neighbors. These storms weren't occasional happenings, they occurred often, sometimes for days in a row. Families were breathing in dust with every inhale. Thousands of people died from "dust pneumonia," where dust literally fills the lungs.

Avis Carlson, a survivor of the Dust Bowl, told what it was like at night:

"A trip for water to rinse the grit from our lips. And then back to bed with washcloths over our noses. We try to lie still, because every turn stirs the dust on the blankets. After a while, if we are good sleepers, we forget."

Millions of people had no choice but to flee their homes, taking little with them. Surrounding states bore the financial burden of taking in the migrants, some set up resettlement camps, which again, were bleak places to live. It would be a long road to recovery for the survivors.

Finally, in the early 1940's, rain returned to the region. This time, though, farming was done differently. Poor agricultural practices had destroyed the land and added to the devastation of the Dust Bowl. Scientists helped farmers set up their land in new and different ways. They learned how to prevent erosion, with the planting of trees, dams were built, and crop rotation was studied.

Many images of the Dust Bowl may be found in books and online to help students understand the significance of the time period in which they will be reading about. Websites with these images as well as audio recording of survivors can be found at the end of the unit. Preparing students fully before beginning *Out of the Dust* will make for a smoother unit, not only for them, but for you as well. Two great websites are www.weru.ksu.edu and www.usd.edu/anth/epa/dust.html.

Apartheid

Chain of Fire, by Beverley Naidoo, is the second novel that students read in the eighth grade curriculum in Pittsburgh Public Schools. This historical fiction is set in a tiny black village of South Africa during the Apartheid era of the 1960s. The residents resist the white government's attempts to relocate them, with teenagers as the main characters.

I noticed that this novel peaked a little more interest with students, since the school I teach in has a completely African American population. Even though they could relate more with the thought of dealing with racism, it was still difficult for them to totally empathize with the characters since they have never suffered through such extreme unfair laws, protests, and a ruthless government. It was clear to see that they saw this as pure fiction, not something that actually happened to real people.

Here is the perfect opportunity to use oral history. There are great numbers of people that can be found that were either directly affected by the laws of Apartheid, as well as those that helped to bring it to its demise. When students are able to speak to people that actually suffered through the same things as the characters in the novel, they will be more excited about analyzing the story.

Already embedded in this unit, is a research paper on Apartheid so that students will have a solid background of knowledge on the subject. The use of encyclopedias, books, and websites can only be enhanced with research done by talking to those who lived it. A great website to view and listen to already recorded interviews with those who lived it is: www.overcomingapartheid.msu.edu/interview.php.

Again, here is a brief history of Apartheid so that you will be better prepared for the unit. Of course, you will also learn new things from the students as they do their research as well.

In an effort to take control of the economic and social systems of South Africa, the white majority National Party mandated Apartheid, a system of laws meant to control the ever growing black population and to protect profits made by the many natural resources available.

In an effort to ensure white domination, the National Party enacted numerous extreme and unfair laws. It was enforced racism and segregation. First, all people in South Africa were put into categories and labeled white, black (African), or colored (mixed decent). The marriage of whites to non-whites was prohibited, and “white only” jobs were formed. Blacks were required to carry “pass books” with them at all times, or face the chance of being beaten and/or imprisoned. These pass books contained fingerprints, a photo, and a list of black only areas the person was allowed to be in. Wikipedia reports the following: “The Separate Amenities Act was passed in 1953. Under this Act, municipal grounds could be reserved for a particular race. It created, among other things, separate beaches, buses, hospitals, schools and universities. Signboards such as “whites only” applied to public areas, even including park benches.” They even had curfews and couldn’t be in “white” areas after dark.

The worst of it came when the forced removals began. This is when blacks were forced from their homes and told into which community they would live, segregating them further. Where they lived was based on which part of Africa they were originally from. The purpose of this was to make them citizens of their homelands, and strip them of any voting rights or participation in the government.

As you can imagine, unrest was building. Protests became illegal, those arrested were whipped and imprisoned. They were held in jail for months at a time, tortured. Many died while incarcerated. One of the first protests was when a group of blacks in Sharpeville took their pass books to the police station and told them they were no longer going to carry them. Violence broke out, police opened fire on the crowd. Sixty-nine people were killed in what now is known as the “Sharpeville Massacre.”

Word was getting out; South Africa could no longer hide what they were doing from the rest of the world. The United Nations spoke out by dismissing South Africa from the organization.

Economic sanctions were put into place, trade with the free world ceased. Little things such as international sporting events and transportation were also affected. The mounting pressure from the rest of the world, as well as the growing resistance movement inside of South Africa, eventually led to the repeal of Apartheid law. Nelson Mandela eventually became the first freely elected black African to become President of South Africa.

Students will get a lot of understanding by looking at the images available online, and by listening to oral history interviews done by survivors of the movement. In the curriculum put out by Pittsburgh Public Schools, is a link to a radio show with Nelson Mandela as well at www.npr.org.

The Holocaust

The Diary of Anne Frank, in play form, is the last unit of the year for the eighth grade. This play is formed from the actual diary of a Jewish girl, and her family, hiding in an attic in Nazi controlled Amsterdam during World War II.

When students in my eighth grade class were asked if they had ever heard of the Holocaust, the answer was a unanimous, “No.” They also had never heard of Anne Frank and only a few knew who Adolf Hitler was. I had my work cut out for me when we made it to this unit. Students will not at all understand the importance of this piece if they do not know what events led up to it.

Empathy is paramount if the students are to feel the full impact of the Holocaust. It is the teacher’s job to make sure the seriousness is understood before reading begins. Again, this is a perfect opportunity to introduce oral history to the students. Even though this is Communications class, it will be important to be more like a history teacher for a few days before the play is started.

Here, again, is a brief history of the Holocaust. Be ready for lots of questions, once the students see images and hear stories, they will immediately become curious.

According to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM), the Holocaust was “the systematic, bureaucratic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of approximately six million Jews by the Nazi regime and its collaborators.” The Nazi party, led by Adolf Hitler, came to power in Germany in 1933. They believed that pure

Germans were racially superior, and that Jews were so inferior that they threatened to pollute the German race.

To the Nazi's, the only way to solve the problem was to eliminate these substandard people. Their "final solution" was to murder all the Jews of Europe. Concentration camps were set up, disguised as settlements for prisoners of war and displacement camps for Jews until the war was over. What they really were were extermination camps, where millions of Jews were euthanized by being gassed and then incinerated.

Again, according to the USHMM, "The Nazis constructed gas chambers (rooms that filled with poison gas to kill those inside) to increase killing efficiency and to make the process more impersonal for the perpetrators. At the Auschwitz camp complex, the Birkenau extermination camp had four gas chambers. During the height of deportations to the camp, up to 6,000 Jews were gassed there each day."

Millions of Jews were able to escape into surrounding countries, and many others went into hiding, such as the family of Anne Frank. There were plenty of German citizens who did not agree with the Nazi government, and decided to risk their own lives to help hide and care for these people.

With Adolf Hitler's death, and the end of World War II, concentration camps were liberated and the search for family members commenced. Millions were disappointed to find that their loved ones had not survived. They were either murdered in the gas chambers, or died of starvation or disease. Those that did make it out of the camps alive live with the mental scars of what they went through and what they witnessed.

Objectives

The main objective of this unit is to get teenagers to empathize with the characters in historical fiction and also nonfiction novels, which in turn will increase their interest and participation. Students will be exposed to reading, writing, speaking, listening and social studies standards. Obviously reading standards apply since the unit is based on novels and speaking and listening skills will be required when doing oral history interviews or listening to prior recordings. Writing comes in when interviews will be transcribed, or reflections written. Social studies also plays a crucial role, since students will have to have a solid background on the history of the time period in which the novels are written.

At the end of this curriculum unit, the students will be able to read and understand essential content of informational texts and documents. Students will have to do a little research on the person being interviewed and the time period involved before the interview.

Students will use and understand a variety of media and evaluate the quality of material produced. Depending on the culminating project assigned, students will be using books on oral history and the subject they are interviewing the person about, the internet, and possibly videos and audio tapes.

Students will write multi-paragraph informational pieces. Again, depending on what the final product is, students should write a reflection on the entire process used.

Students will listen to others, ask probing questions, analyze information given, and take notes when necessary. This is essential to the interviewing process. Students will study how to create meaningful questions, how to record the answers, and how to ask follow-up questions if necessary.

Students will listen to selections of literature, relate them to previous knowledge, summarize events, and analyze key points. Students will be exposed to oral history interviews already completed in order to get them ready to conduct their own.

Students will speak using skills appropriate to formal speech situations: using complete sentences, pronouncing words correctly, and adjust pace to convey meaning. Students will have to be able to speak properly when interacting with the interviewee.

Student will analyze and interpret historical research. Students will use the information gathered through the interview(s), and process it into a final project.

Strategies

Oral History, according to Judith Moyer's website, is defined as the systematic collection of living people's testimony about their own experiences. She also tells us that, "Oral historians attempt to verify their findings, analyze them, and place them in an accurate historical context. Oral historians are also concerned with storage of their findings for use by later scholars."

Although it may sound like doing an oral history project is simple, it's much more complicated than it seems. Until students have to do one, they have no idea how much is involved before, during, and after the interview. There are many resources available to teachers that will give them all of the necessary information needed to conduct an oral history project. Some of those resources will be listed at the end of this until.

Before an interview with a prospective interviewee can be done, there is research to do. If interviewing someone on one of the topics previously explained, the Dust Bowl, Apartheid, or the Holocaust, students must know something about the time period involved. The best way to do this is to not only give lectures, but also to show pictures of the event, give student time to search the subject on the internet, or have them complete a research paper.

Coming up with good, substantial open-ended questions is next. Simple yes or no questions will not do. Students will not get the kind of answers that will open their eyes to the tragedies these people encountered. Remember, we want to help them form empathy, so that reading the novel will have a more profound impact on them. This

process is harder than it seems. Students will have to have enough prior knowledge of the events to be able to come up with follow-up questions once the interviewee answers the original question. It's like thinking on your feet, since you never know what answers you will encounter.

There are plenty of games that can be played in class among students to get them thinking about forming meaningful questions. Write down the name of a fairy tale character. Break the students into two groups. Each group is only allowed to ask three questions before guessing who it is. One group can only ask closed questions, and one group can only ask open ended questions. See which group has formed the best questions before they guess.

Next, students must practice, practice, and practice again before actually sitting down with an interviewee. Making sure the tone of voice and mood is right, not stumbling over words or laughing, and being able to come up with those follow-up questions without thinking for too long is important. Having peers practice with each other a few times, and then with the teacher is a good idea. It is also recommended that students listen to already recorded oral history interviews to understand how it will go. This is called "passive oral history." Teachers can find interviews on video or audio tape, in books, and on websites. "Active oral history" is when students will carry out their own interviews.

Finding people to interview is much easier than you think. The best way to accomplish this is to contact local community and civic organizations and libraries. Historical and genealogical societies, as well as art groups will do most of the leg work, if you just ask. Usually they can provide you with the names of people who would love to share their stories with young people. Contacting retirement or assisted living facilities is also a great idea. They are always looking for ways to keep residents active. It's best to have the interviewee come to the school to be interviewed by the students. That way the students will feel more comfortable in their surroundings, and the safety issue is resolved. Also, this is the best way for the teacher to assess how the interview goes.

There will also need to be video or audio recording equipment available to record the interview. Using pencil and paper will disrupt the flow of the interview, not to mention mistakes made by students trying to write down answers quickly. Check with your audio-visual department to see what is available.

The process is not over once the interview is completed. Now comes time for some sort of project. Transcription, for one, involves documenting on paper the exact words of both the interviewer and the interviewee so that an accurate record is available. This process is time consuming. You may want students to only transcribe a small section, maybe five minutes or so, of the interview, just to give them the experience. They can then listen to the rest of the recording in chunks and summarize the content. Transcription can provide some great listening and comprehension practice. Some great tips and an example of a transcribed piece can be found at: www.wwhp.org.

Some ways for students to display a final product from their interview is to give a speech or power point presentation, writing a formal research paper, or preparing a portfolio of all of the work done. Teachers should come up with a way to assess that fits the final project. Rubrics are a great way to do this. Students can be graded on each step of the process as it goes on so it doesn't get overwhelming for, not only them, but the teacher as well. A sample rubric and a list of possible portfolio items that can be graded at the discretion of the teacher are available in the appendix.

Storing the final projects is a very important part of the process. Archiving is done so that this information is never lost and long forgotten, but is passed on to, not only future students, but to others that share an interest in the time period, or are conducting research themselves. It is also a nice gesture to give a copy of the final project to the interviewee to keep for their own families.

By the time a student is done with a project, many higher level skills have been learned and used. Students learn to analyze, interpret, synthesize, and evaluate. They use interpersonal and listening skills, as well as research methods and acquire content knowledge. It is a very rewarding experience for the student, the teacher, and the interviewee as well.

Classroom Activities

Although the entire process to do an oral history project may take weeks, below are just a few classroom activities that can be used to introduce oral history to the students. Oral history can be introduced by using not only people, but by using objects and places as well.

Lesson Using Objects:

Objects would be a great way to introduce oral history into the novel *Out of the Dust*, by Karen Hess. Not only can you find household objects from that time period that no longer exist, photographs can be used and are highly effective.

Show students the object or photograph and ask for reactions. If using household items students have never seen before, such as cooking utensils, farming equipment, clothing, or other antiques, ask students what they think it was used for. Have students break into groups and make up a use and persuade the class that their use is correct. If using photographs, have students write a paragraph or two on what they think is going on in the photo, and share with the class.

Next, tell students the real uses of the objects or the real subjects of the photographs and begin a discussion with this information. Have students come up with

questions that they could ask people from that time period on how the object was used, or how they were feeling when the photo was taken. Have them next take roles of interviewer and interviewee and practice these interviews.

Then, if possible, try to find oral histories online that may answer some of the student's questions, and see how close they came to the real answers. A sample worksheet for this activity can be found in the appendix.

Lesson Using People:

Apartheid is a great subject where people can be used to help introduce oral history, and the novel *Chain of Fire*, by Beverly Naidoo. As you build the background knowledge that the students need before reading, let students know about the many unfair laws, previously mentioned, that were mandated. Ask students to write about or explain how they would feel if they were forced from their homes, required to obey a curfew, or told what jobs they could have. This should lead to a very meaningful discussion.

Once you have the emotions of the students where you want them, find an oral history online or on video or audio for students to listen to. See if what they felt was the same as the people who actually lived the events. Websites and documentaries are listed in teacher resources at the end of this unit. A sample worksheet can be found in the appendix.

Lesson Using Places:

What other subject would “places” be the most appropriate introduction method then the Holocaust? Showing photos of the concentration camps used during World War II in Germany will spark the interest of the students before reading *The Diary of Anne Frank*, and make it so much more meaningful for the students.

This is something that I have already done in my classroom, and let me tell you, it will be the quietest your classroom will ever be. Students are mesmerized by the images of Auschwitz and other camps.

Once they have learned the causes of the Holocaust, and have seen the images, have students break into groups and act out a scene. This can be when a family of Jews are being forced from their homes or going through the steps of being processed into a camp: having their heads shaved, belongings taken away, tattooed with a prison number, or being forced to work.

Showing a documentary on the Holocaust would be great way to end this lesson and prepare them for the novel.

Annotated Bibliography

Books

Egan, Timothy, *The Worst Hard Time: The Untold Story of Those who Survived the Great American Dust Bowl*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2006. This book provides pictures and actual accounts from people who lived during the Dust Bowl. A great way to show the kind of information one can get from doing oral history.

Frisch-Ripley, Karen, *Unlocking the Secrets in Old Photographs*. Salt Lake City, Utah: Ancestry, 1991. Shows how to carefully examine old photographs by looking at clothing, hair styles and backgrounds.

Gaines, Ann, *Nelson Mandela and Apartheid World History*. Berkely Heights, NJ: Enslow Publisher, 2001. Provides background information on Apartheid in South Africa.

Holocaust Memorial Museum, *The World Must Know: The History of the Holocaust as Told in the US Holocaust Memorial Museum*. Washington DC: The John Hopkins University Press, 2006. Great background information needed to teach the Holocaust.

Martin, Meredith, *Coming to Terms: South Africa's Search for Truth*. New York: Public Affairs, 1999. Provides background information on Apartheid needed before student interview those who lived through it.

Ritchie, Donald A., *Doing Oral History: A Practical Guide: Using Interviews to Uncover the Past and Preserve it for the Future*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003. A great question and answer book that provides information on carrying out an oral history interview.

Stokes-Brown, Cynthia, *Like it Was: A Complete guide to Writing Oral History*. New York: Teachers and Writers Collaborative, 1988. A great step by step guide for both teacher and student use. Shows everything from tape recording and transcribing, to writing short pieces or full biographies.

Worster, Donald, *Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930's*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004. This book provides pictures and information needed to be able to teach The Dust Bowl era.

Videos

New Yorker Video, *Shoah*. Released June 27, 2000, 563 minutes. The Holocaust is remembered through the use of haunting landscapes and the voices of survivors without the use of the usual archival footage of corpses and gas chambers.

PBS, *Peoples Century 1960: Skin Deep*, Recalls the struggle of black South Africans and parallels Apartheid with the Civil Rights Movement in the United States of America. A great comparison to use with students.

PBS, *The American Experience: Surviving the Dust Bowl*, Released April 28, 1998, 60 minutes. Featuring interviews with those who survived the Dust Bowl's terrible toll, it is a tribute to those who endured its traumatic consequences.

Schlessinger Media, *The Short Life of Anne Frank*. Wynnewood, PA: 2005. 29 Minutes. A documentary that provides background information on the life of Anne Frank.

Websites

Kansas State University, www.weru.ksu.edu. Contains images of the Dust Bowl.

National Public Radio, www.npr.org, Contains an audio interview with Nelson Mandela, as he discusses Apartheid in South Africa.

Michigan State University, www.overcomingapartheid.msu.edu, Contains audio and video interviews, images, and background information on Apartheid.

The Library of Congress, www.loc.gov, A great resource that contains archives of all of the subjects listed in this unit. Interviews, photos, and background information that can be used by the teacher and student as well.

University of South Dakota, www.usd.edu, Contains images of the Dust Bowl.

Worcester Women's History Project, www.wwhp.org, This website gives great tips on how to do transcription, and examples of them.

Appendix:

Sample Rubric for Oral History Project Assessment

(Can be modified for your use)

Student Name: _____

Interviewee Name: _____

I. Were at least ten effective questions prepared? _____/10 pts

II. Proper dress and appearance on day of interview _____/10 pts

II. Interviewing Skills:

Key: Always-5, Almost Always-4, Usually-3, Almost Never-2, Never-1

A. Does interviewer speak properly and clearly? 1 2 3 4 5

B. Does the interviewer use proper pacing? 1 2 3 4 5

C. Does the interviewer give the interviewee
plenty of time to answer the questions? 1 2 3 4 5

D. Does the interviewer ask follow-up questions? 1 2 3 4 5

- E. Does the interviewer seem prepared on the subject matter? 1 2 3 4 5
- F. Is the cassette tape properly labeled with interviewer name, interviewee name, date, and subject? 1 2 3 4 5
- G. Is the transcription free of grammatical and spelling errors? 1 2 3 4 5
- H. Is the transcript an accurate reflection of the interview? 1 2 3 4 5
- I. Did the interviewer write a thank-you note and provide a copy of the transcription to the interviewee? 1 2 3 4 5

Possible Items to be Included in an Oral History Portfolio

- Not all need to be used. Pick and choose the items based on the age of your students or what time permits.
 - Portfolio should include a title page and table of contents, and maybe a creative cover reflecting the specific research.
- I. Part 1 – Introduction
- a. Research Questions
 - b. Background information on interviewee
 - c. Background information on the subject

II. Part 2 – Oral History Interview Documents and Analysis of the Interview Process

- a. An interview abstract
- b. A timed index (a summary of every 5 minutes of the interview)
- c. Transcript of interview (just a chunk or the whole thing)
- d. Assessment of building the rapport with the interviewee
- e. Assessment of the reliability of the interviewee
- f. Assessment of the validity of the factual content of the interview
- g. Assessment of the quality of the sound/audio recording

III. Part 3 – Personal Analysis

- a. A personal journal describing your feelings about the research and interview process before, during, and after the oral history interview.
- b. Explain what you liked about the project.
- c. What would you change or do differently?
- d. From a historical viewpoint, what were the three most important things you learned? Explain.
- e. If you were talking with a student about how to begin an oral history experience, what advice would you give them?

IV. Part 4 – Appendices

- a. A photograph of the interviewee
- b. Graphs or maps
- c. Legal agreement
- d. Research documents
- e. Supporting photographs

V. Part 5 – Recordings

- a. Audio recording
- b. Videotapes
- c. DVDs and/or CDs

Classroom Activity #1 – Using Objects to Introduce Oral History

1. Draw a picture of the object your group has been assigned:



2. What do you think is the purpose for using this object?

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2. After viewing an interview of survivors of Apartheid in South Africa, compare your answer to number one with how the people who actually lived it felt. Were there similarities? Were there differences?