

Oral History How-To for Middle School

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Overview

I remember homemade elderberry jam, Piccalilli, and gizzard stew from my childhood. We had peach, apple, cherry and pear trees growing in our backyard. Along the hillside, we grew our grapes to make our homemade wine. To the side of the house was an outdoor oven where we baked our bread with an herb garden nearby. Just below our herb garden, we had a garden where we grew rhubarb, tomatoes, garden onions, cucumbers, radishes, lettuce, green peppers, and red hot peppers, cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, and spinach. Over the hill was our chicken coop where the ducks and chickens lived and we collected eggs. Much farther down over the hill, we had our main garden where we grew more tomatoes for canning and corn, potatoes, pumpkins, zucchini, carrots, green beans,

wax beans, strawberries, and watermelon. There was a natural stream where we carried water for the plants and made mock dams for swimming.

My family was blended with old world Italians (my father's parents) and a newly married German (my mother) descended from farmers. Outside we were busy all spring, summer, and fall getting ready for the cold winter season. We harvested our crops and canned tomatoes, beans, and anything else you could imagine. We strung our hot red peppers and hung them up to dry. We made jellies and preserves, and wine that would last us all winter. My grandfather had built the house and put in two-foot cement shelves where the wine barrels would rest and could be tapped with ease. The only thing we missed was having a cow and that problem was solved by visiting a farm. We took big gallon jugs and got delicious unpasteurized milk. The cream floated to the top and we scooped it off to make whipped cream to top our strawberry shortcakes. My grandmother carried a basket on top of her head and she piled in the vegetables, fruit, or clothing that she had gathered. She walked up and down the large hill each day. We had a brick oven where we baked our food outdoors. Our neighbors used the oven too so that their houses would not heat up with the evening meal. There was lots of cooking, sharing, and playing because three families lived in the same house but everyone had a different section. There was always a cousin to play with or a neighbor and someone to care for you if you were sad or hurt or just needed an extra hug. This is the life that I remember as a child and it was perfect!

My mother was born in 1916, and my father was born in 1917 and I remember talking with them about the Great Depression. Needless to say, the Great Depression had made an impression on my family but it made an indelible impression on my mother. My father's family did not experience the same want as my mother's family since they lived the way I described above. My mother had a different experience because by that time, her family was no longer farming and my mother was hungry a lot of the time. When she and my father married, she kept up the traditions of his parents and our cellar was always filled with canned goods that we "put up." My mother and father did not take advantage of extended credit and paid for everything in cash. Their theory was that if you could not afford it then you simply did not buy it. My mother hid money all over our house in books, in dresser drawers, and all sorts of strange places. My brother and I still laugh because he is still finding money and she has been dead for over twenty years. My parents were always saving for a rainy day. There were good times too. For instance, my mother learned to grow her own food and learned to can it in case of hard times. Life was much simpler then and we can learn a lot from this period in time and from our

elders. Hence, my memories of glorious food everywhere, with stories connected to each dish or a mini history lesson.

I teach middle school communications for the Pittsburgh Public Schools. Included in our curriculum this year were lessons dealing with the Great Depression era. We read a novel called *Out of the Dust* (8th grade) and *Bud, Not Buddy* (6th grade) *Roll of Thunder Hear My Cry* (7th grade) and students in the seventh grade were required to do a research report on the Great Depression. We reviewed copies of oral histories in the seventh grade and used them to begin our research. By chance, a man and his wife came into our classroom to ask a few questions for the state and some of the students got a chance to show them what we were researching and studying. Since it was the Great Depression and they had grown up during this time, the students got a chance to ask questions. The only questions the students seemed to know to ask were: “How much money did you make?” and “What kind of car did you drive?” Granted, this was not a planned event but it made me think about a time when I actually did an oral history with a neighbor about her job and how much I learned from her that she never revealed during our seventeen-year friendship.

There was a lack of what to do and what to ask and my focus will be on teaching students how to ask questions and specifically to the period of the Great Depression. I think a “how-to” for oral history will be helpful not only for specific time periods in history but for their personal histories. In order to develop questions that are specific to a time period, students will need to investigate the time period for facts and then create questions that are pertinent to the information desired. The students will need to use their researching and synthesizing skills.

I am developing this unit as a stand alone piece that can be associated with any curriculum that could incorporate oral history but in particular sixth grade in connection with the novel *Bud, Not Buddy*. The first thing that I think is important for students to learn is how to do an oral history, along with creating questions, interviewing techniques, and follow-up work. Along with researching and synthesizing skills, students will need to become historians in their own right. After they understand the time period, the creation of their project will include developing questions, interviewing techniques, writing or reporting information and creating a final project to share or to publish.

The subjects that I am interested in pursuing are what exactly happened to cause the Great Depression, what was the price of food, the price of gas, the price of housing and rent, job loss, hobos, music, Hooverville's, illegal train rides, banks, work programs created by government, orphanages, the size of families, what was listened to on the radio, games that were played, how television compares to how news was obtained during the Depression, what telephones were like, sayings, politics, and wages.

After creating their questions and conducting the interviews, students will use the data to create their report (oral history typed). In addition, I would like students to compare their life with that of a child of approximately the same age based on what they uncovered in their interviews (a compare and contrast writing with information they gathered).

In conclusion, my focus will be on teaching students how to conduct an oral history, specifically the period of time known as the Great Depression.

Rationale

I created this unit, Oral History How-To for Middle School with the intention of making oral history techniques accessible to my students, affording them the opportunity to meet people who have knowledge of the Great Depression, and enhancing their prior knowledge before engaging in the actual novel.

Oral history can be defined in several ways. Donald Ritchie defines oral history as a collection of “spoken memories and personal commentaries of historical significance through recorded interviews.” While oral history is defined by the archives of Oregon State as, “The audio recording or transcript which results from planned oral interviews with individuals. These created and preserved interviews are intended for you by researchers and historians.” Another view on oral history is from The Louisiana Voices website as “collecting interviews of ordinary people to get their stories about their participation in events, which fills gaps in written records and tells of those who are often absent from official histories.” For the purposes of this unit, Oral History How-To for Middle School, the definition of oral history is obtaining information from personal experiences and opinions of people to get their stories about a time in history by

interviewing, recording, transcribing, publishing or the review of existing literature either by any or all of these techniques to enhance understanding of a particular time period as it relates to a fictional novel.

Reading historical fiction novels introduces a timeframe that the student may or may not be familiar with and allows the opportunity to expand their knowledge base. When creating an oral history assignment, Lanman and Wendling state that the oral history interview is a learning experience for all involved and applies basic oral history technique; the art of listening while gaining knowledge. (Barry A. Lanman and Laura M. Wendling *Preparing the Next Generation of Oral Historians An Anthology of Oral History Education*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.) Students will have a chance to increase their knowledge of the Great Depression by not only learning the facts but by creating questions that they are curious about and then being able to questions someone who lived through that time period. This will bring history to life for students and enhance their interest in history in general and allow for a deeper richer understanding of novels like *Bud, Not Buddy*.

All classrooms, not just social studies classes, can embrace oral history as a tool to learn about a time period, a group of people, or a way to develop understanding of certain unforgettable tragedies. Oral history projects reap many benefits academically, socially, and emotionally for students. Developing an oral history is not limited to traditional English speaking students. There is an advantage for limited English-speaking students also. According to Irma M. Olmedo, in *Creating Contexts for Studying History with Students Learning English*, oral history is also valuable for limited English-speaking students for two reasons. The first reason is that the student can conduct the interview in their native language and secondly the stories they collect validate their culture's history and broadens everyone's educational experience. For students with English as their second language, interviewing their family in their native language and then sharing with English speaking classmates will do two things. Enhanced learning of their culture will occur for their classmates and they will practice the use of English by translating their tapes from their native language to English. Each culture is interesting in its own right and by sharing their culture; students may become more comfortable with their family's uniqueness while teaching others.

Oral history projects, Kathryn Walbert states in *Oral History Projects in the Elementary Social Studies Classroom*, can bring classrooms to life like no other assignments can. In simple form, oral history is storytelling but classroom oral history

projects can help elementary students learn historical content, learn related disciplines, feel a personal connection to the past, learn research skills, develop basic writing skills, develop critical thinking skills, feel included, and develop valuable interpersonal skills. The projects can be short activities or long depending on need. This paper defines oral history and guides students through steps to enhance curriculum academically, socially, and emotionally. Instead of being passive, students will be active in reviewing history, creating questions, planning and gathering equipment, interviewing subjects, and creating a document which will bring history to life.

Students love to hear stories whether they are in elementary, middle, or high school. In the middle school curriculum of the Pittsburgh Public School Communications' Department, students are exposed to a number of stories. Novels and short stories of different genres and topics lend themselves to gathering information in and out of the classroom. Many times a student is familiar with a topic because of a discussion with a grandparent, neighbor, or teacher in a setting other than the classroom. Oral histories pair a student with an adult enabling them to ask questions which deepens understanding of a time period and creates a personal story seen through the adult's eyes.

Oral histories begin by requiring the student to do research of the time period so they are familiar with what history was recorded. To create an oral history, students compile questions they want answered. Next, finding someone to interview is key. Students will need to obtain a release form for tape recording or videotaping the session, and equipment for transcribing.

Students learn to create questions that will be meaningful to the time period they are interested in learning about. First, students have to do some reading so that they will be knowledgeable and ask the right questions to get the answers that they are interested in obtaining. Oral history experience also teaches students to listen carefully to what is being stated and reporting what was discovered. After the interview, students will need to transcribe what data was obtained during the interview and then edit their draft.

In the Pittsburgh Public middle school curricula the novels *Out of the Dust*, *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*, and *Bud, Not Buddy* are read through the course of the year. The setting of *Out of the Dust* is Oklahoma in 1934 where a family is struggling through tough financial times on their farm in the Dust Bowl. *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* is set in Mississippi at the height of the Great Depression between 1933 and 1934 and *Bud,*

Not Buddy is set in the United States during the Great Depression, especially the Midwest in 1936.

In the sixth grade, *Bud, Not Buddy* introduces us to the character Bud who experiences the Depression. Prior to reading the novel, it would be helpful to have an understanding of the Great Depression and conduct an oral history of someone who lived through that time period. Students will be exposed to the time period via a PowerPoint presentation and then will be able to surf the internet for more facts about the depression. A “how-to do oral history” class would be helpful to get the student started and then continue with the already existing curriculum. Students will learn the steps of doing an oral history and will have the chance to listen to oral histories so that they can get an idea of how history comes to life and examine how questions were used to obtain pertinent information. As their topic of research appears in the novel, they will make their presentation to the class. There is a culminating activity attached to the unit and as an additional piece throughout the reading of the novel students will present what they have learned in their oral history interviews. Resources for locating individuals might be family, neighbors, churches, senior citizen homes, or a review of existing interviews on the internet.

Some sample questions pertaining to the Great Depression might include: Can you tell me about the Depression? What was Pittsburgh like during the 1930s? What kind of wage was paid? What foods were scarce? What did people drink then? Were there food lines in Pittsburgh? Were there soup kitchens in Pittsburgh? Do you know of anyone who hopped freight and rode the rails? Were there cardboard jungles in Pittsburgh? Were there orphanages in Pittsburgh? What was the WPA? What kind of jobs did people have? Was there a CCC in the Pittsburgh area?

Students will conduct research and learn how to develop questions, how to record, transcribe (spelling, grammar, word usage, and listening skills) along with editing and analyzing, synthesizing information, and reading for context. Materials necessary include a tape recorder, tapes, access to computers, and transcription help.

Objectives

Integrated units are meaningful in terms of student learning. Having a working knowledge of the Great Depression is necessary to the understanding of the novel.

Oral History How-To for Middle School is an integrated unit incorporating research skills, interviewing skills, speaking skills, and writing for different purposes. Many standards can be met in an interesting way and will give students a chance to increase their knowledge of history, meet people who can fill in the holes that the history books have left out, and enjoy the novel *Bud, Not Buddy* or other similar works with prior knowledge.

Oral history makes history more interesting by interviewing people who have experienced life during a certain time period. Students become essentially reporters of the past and they can interview aspects that they are interested in instead of reading in a textbook. Students will get a chance to meet people of all ages and walks of life who can explain what life was like when they were the same age. Students can learn, make comparisons, and publish their facts to share with others. In this unit, students will need to learn how to do an oral history. They will develop questions pertinent to a specific time period and develop interviewing skills. Research skills will be used to understand time period and help them to create questions that they need more information about.

Strategies

This unit will be interesting to middle school students because they will research the history of the Great Depression, learn how to conduct an oral history, interview family members or a friend, have the opportunity to interview someone who lived during that time period, and offer insights learned as we read the novel, *Bud, Not Buddy*.

Students will achieve objectives in a variety of disciplines through the classroom activities designed for this unit. Communications Standards for the middle school that are met include: Research skills used in researching family life, job status, education, toys, games, and the economy. (Communications Standards 1.1,1.8), interviewing skills

used in taking oral histories of interviewees, their own families, and neighbors who may provide additional information for this project (Communications Standards 1.6), writing for the purpose to inform (Communications Standards 1.4, 1.5), the internet as a research tool (Communications 1.2, 1.3), and giving a speech on their research and to report on how their interview went as far as successes and things that they would do differently (Communications 1.6).

It is important that the students understand the idea of creating an oral history. Oral history projects transfer information or knowledge to the student who is conducting the oral history. The big idea of our project will be to gather information about the Great Depression and transfer our knowledge to the understanding of the time period of our novel.

The idea of oral history will be presented to students so that they can see the value in hearing the words of people who “lived it” not just by reading a history book or watching a movie. Hopefully, students will get excited by the concept of oral history. Students will be introduced to the time period of the Great Depression by whole class instruction, watching a PowerPoint presentation, whole group discussion, and by doing research. Students will have a chance to investigate the Great Depression on their own using the internet and then report their findings back to their classmates. Students will play an interviewing game during class, and then interview a friend or a relative as a homework assignment. We will discuss closed questions and open questions so that they can understand the value of each and how they can be used during the interview process. Also, students will have a release form signed and be able to put the interviewee at ease by explaining that if there is anything that they do not want to discuss or have recorded that they do not have to discuss it.

In small groups, students will compose questions that can be used to gain information of interest from interviews. Students will be responsible for scheduling the interview, compiling the list of questions, taking pen and paper, props such as photos, songs, tapes, and a recording device. Students will have a chance to watch the movie *Grapes of Wrath* to gain an understanding of the struggle that families endured during this time period and will also have an opportunity to review the script online if they so desire. The movie will give a fictional account based on an historical time period just as the book, *Bud, Not Buddy* does for the reader.

Students may be interested in the music of the era, cars, jobs, food, games, or what children did to pass the time. Whatever their interest, they will get a chance to create questions to ask someone who actually lived during the time period.

Classroom Activities

This unit will enable sixth graders to research the Great Depression, view photographs, watch the movie, *The Grapes of Wrath*, (movie and screenplay via internet), learn how to conduct an oral history, and give a speech with information on the Great Depression and a review of their interview. Students will present information learned to the class to enhance our reading of the fictional novel, *Bud, Not Buddy*. They will also have a chance to interview a family member or a friend. Students may also wish to compare the cardboard jungles of the Great Depression with the tent communities in California during the recession. Oral histories are a powerful tool to help students understand an era but they are also a way to have students become recorders of history. Students will gain skills in researching, interviewing, listening and speaking, and writing.

Bud, Not Buddy by Christopher Paul Curtis provides connections to music - the song - **Royal Garden Blues** by Clarence Williams and Spencer Williams, to the depression in Detroit (p.247) and we will take this opportunity to listen to some music of that time period, to Detroit in an article - **How the Depression Changed Detroit** by Jenny Nolan (p. 254) and we will look at the past Detroit and the Detroit of today, to the novel - *Black Boy* by Richard Wright (p. 260), to the article - **The Life of Philip Randolph** by Kate Tuttle (p. 264), and to a short story - **An Hour with Abuelo** by Judith Ortiz Cofer (p. 268). Students with a wide variety of interests can connect with these topics and provide an oral history presentation to enhance the classroom work. *Bud, Not Buddy* also looks at racism during the depression.

Oral history can be supplemented with the music of the time period being studied. For instance, in 1932, a young New York City lyricist named E.Y. "Yip" Harburg, together with composer Jay Gorney, penned what is considered the anthem of the Great Depression, "Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?" Other songs like "We're in the Money" by Harry Warren and "Life is Just a Bowl of Cherries" by Ray Henderson are considered other Depression hits. Students can mention these songs to interviewees to see if they remember them or if they trigger memories.

Day 1

Introduce the unit by explaining that the time period known as the Great Depression will be the setting of the novel *Bud, Not Buddy* that we are about to read. Students will make a KWL chart to determine how much knowledge we have and what we are interested in learning. Before reading the novel, we will need to research the time period to have a better understanding of the history of the time period on which the novel is based. We also need to learn how to do an oral history. Oral history will be introduced by giving a definition and letting students hear oral histories. The WPA Slave Narratives tie into the book, *I Thought My Soul Would Rise and Fly* that students will have read before *Bud, Not Buddy*. Student reaction to the oral history will be discussed. Next, a PowerPoint presentation regarding the Great Depression will be viewed and students will have time for questions. Students will be able to turn and talk with a partner to discuss information and complete an exit ticket responded to, “What is an oral history?”

Day 2

After checking for understanding of the definition of oral history, students will use the Computer Lab to browse websites to gain knowledge of the Great Depression and to find an area of interest they want to pursue. Copies of an annotated bibliography will be distributed for students to start their research. Students will be responsible for compiling notes so that they can be shared with the class. Interesting websites should be recorded to share with classmates. Exit Ticket: list the websites where you found the most interesting information. Homework: compose notes and prepare a three minute speech outlining what information you found and how you think that it might be useful to our study of the Great Depression.

Day 3

Students will present their findings to the class. Students will speak for three minutes explaining what they found to be of interest to them. Then we will play interviewing games. The class will be divided into two groups. Each group will be assigned questions. The closed-question group will be assigned three questions while the open-ended question group will be assigned one question. After each group has completed the questioning, we will compare what was learned. Emphasis will be placed on the differences between the types of questions asked and the responses received. Students will see the value in both types of questions in an interview. Students will have learned

that the open-ended questions allow the interviewee to talk about a subject from their viewpoint. The oral historian will get a response and be able to ask follow-up questions. Students will also have learned that the closed questions bring forth short answers that are more to the point of the question. Questions bring forth short answers that are factual in nature. For instance, how old are you? How old were you during the Great Depression? These will elicit short answers. However if the questions were: What is your first memory of your childhood? or Did you get enough to eat during the Great Depression? Chances are that the interviewee will be able to be more forthcoming and discuss things that occurred.

Day 4

To learn about follow-up questions we will play the Mystery Person Game. A figure in a fairy tale or figure in history will be used so groups can ask questions to interview the person to enable them to guess their identity. Each follow-up question will give more information. The value of asking questions after a response is given to get more information will be experienced. Students will have to formulate follow-up questions. For instance, if the person interviewed is Cinderella students will formulate questions about her family life as a small child: What was the biggest change that occurred during your childhood? What was your happiest childhood memory? What was your saddest childhood memory? If the responses that they receive do not have enough information, then follow-up questions will be formulated until they are able to uncover the character's identity.

Day 5

Students will play the Throw a Loop in It game. A predictable story such as The Three Little Pigs will be used with one change to the story. The first little pig uses straw to build his house, while the second little pig uses twigs. Instead of the third little pig using brick, they will be told that the third little pig uses aluminum siding. Students will identify where the story goes off and formulate questions to ask so that they can learn more about the story. This will be useful when doing an interview and will identify emphasized listening and identify in the moment follow-up questions. Another game that will be played for homework is "Then" and "Now." To play this game, students will have to interact with their families by asking questions about how their grandparents lived and comparing their own lives now. Questions will be formulated about how it was in "the old days" and then compare it to how it is nowadays.

Day 6

Students will develop questions to interview a family member or a family friend. Students will be encouraged to develop a list of topics rather than specific questions for their family member or friend. Families are the people that the students live with and they may use scrapbooks, family artifacts, or some kind of treasure or memorabilia to begin the questioning. Older women often times have a jewelry box filled with pieces each with a story. There is pin that I received from my Nonna (grandmother) that she brought with her from Italy. The pin is beautiful but no one in my family understands the design. My plan is to research the design and take it with me on a trip to Italy to have it explained or as a way to meet the remaining family in Calabria, Italy by mentioning my Nonna's name and showing the piece. I have been told that the thing to do would be to go sit in the town square and wait for someone to come by and tell you who you are related to and wearing the piece of jewelry might be helpful. I also have a cameo necklace with a story attached to it. My mother received it as a gift and there was a ring but my great grandmother lost the ring when she wore it. On my last trip to Italy, I took the cameo to see if there was an existing ring that was similar. I had fun going into the cameo shops and discussing with the artists the origin of the creation. There are many such pieces in jewelry boxes and students may find out more information about a time in history when someone traveled from another country or received a gift for a special occasion.

Other questions can also bring interesting and informative responses. For instance, what was your house like? Did you have indoor plumbing? Lights? What kinds of games did you play when you were growing up? What was school like for you? What was the best thing you learned from your mother/father? Students will include follow-up questions like; can you say more about that? Is there anything that we have not discussed that you would like to discuss? Why is that brooch so important to you? We will also learn how to use tape recording equipment, practice interviewing another student, and get feedback. We will review the release letter and the thank you letter. Students will then interview a family member or a neighbor for homework and have them sign the release letter. They will also be responsible for giving the thank you letter to the person they interviewed.

Day 7

Students will share their interview with the class and then comment on what went well and what needs to be improved. Students will then work diligently on composing questions to ask a visitor from the Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society, Incorporated, Pittsburgh Chapter. (<http://pittsburgh.aahgs.org>) We will be interviewing people who have lived during the Great Depression. Visitors will come to our classroom to enable students to ask questions that they have composed. Students will introduce themselves and explain the reason they are conducting an oral history. Next, they will obtain a signed release form from the interviewee. The recording session will begin and the student will inform the interviewee that any question that makes them uncomfortable or they choose not to answer is fine. The questioning will begin and while it is recording, the student will also take notes and refer to their notes with the questions. Students should feel comfortable enough with the questioning

Day 8

We will review questions specifically looking for open-ended questions as well as closed questions and then review the procedures for doing an oral history. One of the things that will be stressed is that learning and doing are two separate entities. You must experience an oral history interview to totally understand. Students will review to know what equipment they will need to have in place and be comfortable with the use of it. They will also have to get their copies of the release letter so that they can get it signed prior to conducting the interview. Then they will conduct the interview. Students will be responsible for sending a thank you letter to the participant and compiling the oral history. Lastly, students will give an oral report to the class with their findings and how things went before, during, and after the interview.

After everyone has completed the interviews we will have a sharing time to share our successes and our thoughts on what we can improve on in our future interviews. Students will have a chance to think about projects where oral history interviews would be very helpful especially in their personal lives. Many times older relatives die before we actually have a chance to get to really know them, so designing a personal oral history project for personal use could be an offshoot of this oral history how-to.

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Annotated Student Bibliography

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This site has an additional definition of oral history and links oral history preservation, folklore, myths, songs that you may be interested in exploring.

<http://Osulibrary.oregonstate.edu/archives/handbook/definitions/>

This site gives another definition of oral history and some links that you may want to explore.

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Information about the Depression in the United States Defines oral history, guidelines and suggestions, paperwork, issues in oral history research, bibliography, and links.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oral_history_preservation

Provides information of past oral histories and current ways to save oral histories with list of readings.

<http://www.u-s-history.com/pages/h1586.html>

Provides information about the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), 1933-1941.

<http://www.u-s-history.com/pages/h3905.html>

*John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939) has account of the Dust Bowl.*

<http://www.u-s-history.com/pages/h1583.html>

This site provides Information about the Dust Bowl.

<http://www.u-s-history.com/pages/h1532.html>

This site provides Information on wholesale wheat prices.

<http://www.u-s-history.com/pages/h1527.html>

This site provides Information about the stock market crash.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dorothea_Lange

This site provides Information about Dorothea Lange's life and her work.

www.loc.gov/rr/print/list/128_migm.html

This site provides migrant mother photographs taken by Dorothea Lange.

<http://www.u-s-history.com/pages/h1642.html>

This site provides information on Hooverilles and the people who lived there.

<http://www.u-s-history.com/pages/h1599.html>

This site provides Information on Works Progress Administration (WPA).

<http://www.u-s-history.com/pages/h1569.html>

This site discusses the social issues, 1929-1942.

http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761584403/great_depression_in_the_united_states.html

This site provides the history of Great Depression.

http://www.historynow.org/03_2009/print/historian.html

This site provides information on The Great Depression: An Overview by David M. Kennedy.

http://www.historynow.org/03_2009/print/historian3.html

This site provides information on The Hundred Days and Beyond: What did the New Deal Accomplish? By Anthony Badger.

http://www.historynow.org/03_2009/print/historian4.html

This site provides information on Women and the Great Depression by Susan Ware.

http://www.todaysteacher.com/TheGreat_DepressionWebQuest/BriefOverview.html

This site provides a brief overview of the Great Depression

<http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/recordDetail?accno=EJ548192>

This website gives information from a recipe for a middle school oral history project.

Standards

1.1 Learning to Read Independently

1.2 Reading Critically in Content Areas

1.3 Reading, Analyzing, and Interpreting Literature

1.4 Types of Writing

1.5 Quality of Writing

1.6 Speaking and Listening

1.7 Characteristics and Functions of the English Language

1.8 Research

Appendices

APPENDIX 1

RELEASE FORM FOR INTERVIEW

The oral history interview, I _____ (name of interviewee) have granted knowingly and voluntarily to _____ (name of student) of the _____ (name of class and school) may become part of the classroom project for educational purposes. The oral history may be used this year and in future years as an educational tool.

Signature _____

(signature of interviewee)

Date _____

Before an interview can take place, students will be required to have the release form filled out by the person they will interview and this document will be kept on file. The reason this is done is to allow the project to be shared as an educational tool.

APPENDIX 2

Possible Interview Questions

What was the Great Depression?

What effect did it have on the people?

What can you research to help our understanding of the novel?

What were the personalities of other members of your family?

What was your house like?

Did you have indoor plumbing? Lights?

What kinds of games did you play growing up?

What was school like for you?

Who were your heroes when you were young in your family and why?

What were your favorite songs/music?

Did you have any pets? What kinds were they?

What is your religion?

What was that like for you?

Describe a typical family dinner?

How were your holidays?

Where there any special items that you associate with your childhood?

What is your earliest childhood memory?

What were things like before, during, after the Depression? World War II?

What do you know about your family's surname?

Is there some kind of tradition around names?

Are there any stories about famous or infamous relatives?

Are there any special heirlooms and stories behind them?

How did you choose your children's names?

Why did you live where you did after you married?

What was your profession and why?

What was the best thing you learned from your mother/father?

Would you rather be born now or when you were born?

Follow-up questions:

Can you say more about that?

Is there anything that we have not discussed that you would like to discuss?

APPENDIX 3

Oral History Techniques

Students will be asked to learn about the oral history concept

Students will then research their assigned or designed topic and provide information

Students will then develop questions

Students will then try to find eligible candidate to interview

Students will then record interview

Students will then transcribe interview

Students will then share findings

Students will then publish findings

Students will be asked to use standards

APPENDIX 4

How to Become an Historian

A person who studies history and writes about it and who becomes an authority on the subject studied is considered an historian. After you read, interview, and write about your subject you will become an historian. You will uncover facts from your interviewee that may not have been reported anywhere else. The expansion of history through the eyes of an actual person who lived through the event is important. You will be able to share what you learned with the class. The way that you will obtain your information will be via questions. The questions will be important to you because you want certain knowledge and important to the interviewee because they will let them know what you are interested in learning. You should research the time period that you are interested in so that you can develop the questions and during the interview be knowledgeable. You can look at videotapes of oral history interviews to learn how someone else has handled an interview. After deciding on your topic you should develop focus questions to ask your subject and record their personal reaction. This process will allow you to gain in-depth insight and personal and societal attitudes of the time period you are studying.

Here are some questions that you will need to think about to make your interview successful:

How do I come up with questions?

How do I interview someone?

How much time will it take?

What do I do after that?

How do I thank them?

How do I report my findings?

APPENDIX 5

Thank You Letter

Inside Address

Date

Dear _____,

Thank you very much for granting me an interview with you to discuss the Great Depression era. I learned a lot from talking to you and it was a very enjoyable experience. You have given me an opportunity to share your experiences with my classmates and my teacher. You also gave me the chance to learn about oral history and how important it is to understand from someone who experienced it.

Sincerely,

Your name

APPENDIX 6

Interviewing Games

Divide class into groups

Assign questions – 3 closed questions to one group and 1 open-ended question to one group. Have students interview each other and examine results of closed questions vs. open-ended questions.

Mystery Person Game – involves follow-up questions. Could pretend to be a figure in a fairy tale or history – groups can get together to figure out questions to interview the figure and then guess at identity.

Throw a Loop in It - Take a standard character where the story is predictable such as The Three Little Pigs and then change one thing (throw a loop in it). Identify where it goes off and what kind of question you could ask to learn more about the story. Look for facts that throw off the story. For instance: House of Straw, House of Twigs, House of Aluminum Siding (not bricks)

APPENDIX 7

Contact Information

Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society, Inc., Pittsburgh Chapter –

<http://Pittsburgh.aahgs.org>