

Hometown Stories: Manitowoc-Two Rivers
Middle School Curriculum

Lesson Plan: Oral History

Wisconsin Model Academic Standards:

SOCIAL STUDIES

History

B.12.1

B.12.2

B.12.3

B.12.4

Political Science/Citizenship

C.12.1

LANGUAGE ARTS

Oral Language

C.12.2

C.12.3

Media & Technology

E.12.3

E.12.4

E.12.5

INFORMATION & TECHNOLOGY

LITERACY

Media & Technology

A.12.1

A.12.3

A.12.5

Information & Inquiry

B.12.6

B.12.7

Learning Community

D.12.1

D.12.2

Objectives:

After completing this lesson, students will be able to:

- Use oral history interview techniques to gather information about local history.
- Understand the impact of WWII on the community and its citizens.

Time Required: Long-term project requiring several weeks

Target Level Grades: 9-12

Grouping:

Small team options:

- Interviewers
- Camera crew
- Director(s)
- Video editors
- Audio editors
- Still photo editors

Procedures:

1. Analyze examples of oral histories:
 - <http://memory.loc.gov/learn/lessons/oralhist/ohdir.html>
 - <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/mse/oral/online.html>
2. Discuss purpose of interviews
 - http://dohistory.org/on_your_own/toolkit/oralHistory.html
 - <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/mse/oral/what.html>
3. Teach and practice interviewing skills
 - Handout (see below)
 - <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/mse/oral/try.html>
4. Find subjects to interview
5. Write specific questions for chosen subjects
 - <http://memory.loc.gov/learn/lessons/oralhist/ohguide.html>
6. Conduct interviews (see above link)

Extensions:

7. Edit footage:
 - To make the interviews usable beyond your classroom, have students listen to them again, searching for particularly valuable stories. Compile these in a user-friendly medium. It would be best to keep the final product to 30 minutes or less.
8. Create a documentary:
 - If you used video to record the interviews, you can add a soundtrack, still pictures, and visual effects, again aiming for 30 minutes or less.
9. Present:
 - When the work is done, celebrate! Invite local historians, city/school district officials, etc. to join you in a “world premier” of your documentary.

Oral History

Questions For Them

- 1) What are some key moments that you remember regarding 9/11? For example: where were you; what were you doing; who were you with?
- 2) Can you describe the scene in one word?
- 3) What are the most negative effects as a result of 9/11?

Questions For Each other

- 1) Take 5 minutes to write questions to ask a partner about how 9/11 specifically affected their lives. **Key events!**
- 2) Take 10 to 15 minutes to **interview each other** and share your experiences.
- 3) **Discuss** what you learned from your partner's experiences.
- 4) **Discuss.** What "types" of questions you asked?

How to do an Oral History

- 1) **Know your topic well!**
- 2) Know how your subject is related to the topic you have.
- 3) **The formula for a great interview is...**memory questions + explanation questions + judgment questions = a quality interview. (See handout)
- 4) Keep a natural flow when writing question, each question should follow the last.

Debrief (on a separate sheet of paper)

- 1) Why interview "regular people"? Isn't history about the rich and famous?
- 2) What role or impact could oral history have on your life?
- 3) What are some negative attributes of oral history?