

## Hearsay: Oral History Project | 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade

### Project Summary

*HearSay* is an exhibition featuring projects that seek to revise or expand upon traditional notions about identity and place through oral histories, personal memoirs, and independent narratives. In that spirit, this project plan guides students through investigating the past of someone close to them. Students, then, reinterpret that story into a creative re-telling of a personal history by creating an artist's book.

The lesson has three primary parts. The student will:

- Choose a relative or adult, and conduct interview(s) with them about a particular event or memory from their life.
- Create an artist's book about the story.
- Add written elements to relay the story as told by the interviewer.

**Objective:** Students will use aural and oral communication skills to ask questions, listen, and collect the stories. Students will be introduced to the book and bookmaking process as an art form. Students will relay a narrative using visual imagery.

### Background: What is Oral History? (Courtesy of Dr. Julia Brock)

According to the Oral History Association, "Oral history is a field of study and a method of gathering, preserving and interpreting the voices and memories of people, communities, and participants in past events." Oral historians often seek answers to their personal research questions; but good oral historians also ask questions of broader interest. Frequently, they turn their interviews over to a library or archive, or place them on a website where the information can be made available to other researchers.

Oral history follows in the pathways constructed by oral tradition—stories are told through the spoken word before they are written down. However, the two are quite different. Oral tradition typically involves storytellers passing on tribal history, legends, and folklore. They impart tales heard from earlier storytellers, or occasionally events witnessed firsthand. In contrast, oral history involves an exchange between a trained interviewer who asks questions and elicits answers from people who lived through the events described. While oral history is communicated through the spoken word, most professional oral historians produce written transcripts as the primary means of preservation.

### **Part 1: Project Introduction and Interview Process. (1 day + homework)**

#### Materials

Smartboard/video projector or TV

Video of oral history interview

Chart paper and marker.

**Hook:** Introduce the students to the oral history interview process. Show a video of an oral history interview to give students a framework while practicing.

**Differentiation:** Students with a speech impairment could use flash cards to present questions to the interview subject one at a time.

**Procedure**

1. Introduce students to oral histories and the interviewing people to collect a story.
  - a. **Sample videos:** <http://youtu.be/CdE-CHEWaTQ> ; <http://youtu.be/A0uwVYKOSPw>; <http://youtu.be/6cdR49Own3A>
  - b. **Questions for discussion:** How did the interviewer act in this video? What sort of questions did the interviewer ask? On the chart paper, generate a list to be posted in the room for later reference.
2. Provide a worksheet that relays sample interview questions.
3. Have students practice collecting stories in class from each other using an interview process.
4. Once collected, guide the students through retelling each other's stories by quizzing them to gauge understanding of the interview process.
5. Provide students with another copy of the interview questions and assign them the homework to choose one adult from their household (example: parent or guardian) to interview.

**Part 2: Bookmaking, basic process. (1-3 days)**

**Materials**

Samples of book arts

Decorative papers, fabric, or other material to serve as a book cover (measuring approximately 11" x 15")

9" x 12" drawing paper, 80-lb (5 sheets per student)

12" ruler (one per student)

Light duty 3-hole punch

Graphite pencils, drawing material, collage material

18" binding thread per student (examples: embroidery thread, yarn, nylon cord, butcher thread)

**Hook:** Introduce the students to book arts by showing examples of artists' books to give a full perspective of the project. Show examples of book arts that have been produced to record/commemorate a subject.

**Differentiation:** Prepare books in advance for students or acquire ready-made journals for manipulation, particularly for those with dysgraphia or in need of visual-motor accommodations. As needed, provide written instructions that students can refer to during this process.

**Procedure (continued)**

6. Fold five sheets of 9" x 12" drawing paper in half to 6" x 9" to create the book's pages. (Dimensions may vary depending on materials used.)
7. Trim material for the cover to 10" x 14" and fold in half to 7" x 10". (Dimensions may vary depending on materials used.)
8. Using the folded edge, measure for the three holes on both the internal pages and cover material.
  - a. The cover's holes should be 2-1/2" from the top and bottom edges and in the middle at 5".
  - b. Internal pages should have holes 2" from the top and bottom edges and in the middle at 4-1/2".
  - c. Use a paper punch to create holes where measured directly on the fold.
9. Bind the book. Line the internal pages and cover material up using the punched holes. Holding the book open, stitch the pages together.

- a. Run thread through the center hole from the book's outside leaving extra.
- b. On the inside of the book, thread through the upper hole.
- c. On the outside of the book, thread through the lower hole.
- d. Thread back through the center hole from the inside.
- e. Tie off the thread at the bottom of the book.

**Part 3: Book decoration.**

10. Students retell the story from their interview process in the book using images, drawings, cut paper, and/or collage.
11. Have students include age-appropriate writing to narrate their stories.
12. (Optional) Ask students to present the final project in class, describing the story and their creative choices.

**Common Core Standards**

**Language Arts, Literacy in History/ Social Sciences**

- SL.3.5, SL.3.1
- W. 3.8, W.3.3

**Georgia Performance Standards**

**Visual Arts**

- VA3MC.1, VA3MC.3, VA3PR.1, VA3PR.2, VA3PR.4a, VA3C.1a, VA3C.2

**Sample Interview Questions**

When you were my age...

1. Where did you live?
2. What was your neighborhood like?
3. What did your house look like?
4. What was your favorite color?
5. What was your favorite toy?
6. What was your favorite food?
7. What was your favorite hobby?
8. Who was your hero?

**Key Vocabulary**

**Visual Arts:**

*Composition*- the arrangement of visual elements in an artwork

*Book arts*- using the book form as a mode of artistic expression

*Spine*- the end of the book where the pages are attached (bound) and folded

*Pages*- the internal sheets in a book where written or visual content is printed

**Social Sciences:**

*Oral history*- recorded information about the past acquired from interviewing people about their personal past, family, point of view, and experiences

*Community*- a group of people living in the same place or having a particular characteristic in common

*Culture*- the ways of living built up by a group of human beings transmitted from one generation to another

**Language Arts:**

*Context*- the circumstances that form the setting for an event, statement, or idea, and in terms of which it can be fully understood and assessed

*Narrative*- an account of connected events; a story