

# Collect and Connect

## Oral History Activity

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### GRADES:

K through 12<sup>th</sup> (refer to suggested modifications at the end of this document)

### DURATION:

Varies depending on how many interviews your children will do. Although this can be easily a whole week project (or more), it can be simplified to be completed in a couple of days. It is your choice.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Children will understand how to collect and preserve Oral History;
- Children will reflect on the importance of eyewitness or firsthand accounts as historical sources;
- Children will broaden their view on what means to be a part of history;
- Children will connect and collaborate with family members or caretakers;
- Children will develop their interview, communication and writing skills.

### MATERIALS:

- Phone or other device to connect with family members or other people for interview;
- Interview log (attached) or other materials for note-taking, and possibly a recording device to collect information during interview

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

#### For children:

*Oral histories are audio or video recordings of people about past and their lives now. We make them so that people in the future will be able to hear the stories of today in the voices of the people that lived them. Oral histories help us understand how individuals and communities experienced the events in history.*

*For example, consider an event in recent history that you remember. If your experience is recorded through an interview, article, memoir, etc. that will be considered a primary source that historians from the future can use to learn about the past. They will watch, listen to or read your account, then using many other sources, piece together what happened during this specific event.*

*So how do you do an oral history? It is as simple as having a conversation. You can ask any question that you are interested in. When collecting an oral history, we have a "central question" we want answered. For example, "What did you want to be when you grew up?" Then we want to build a story around that question. Getting basic information like where your subject was born and what their parents did provide background for the story.*



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*Once you have the background information, you can think about other questions that help you learn more about them. For example, you could ask, “Why did you want to be that?” and “Did you know anyone who had that job?” These questions add to what we know about the central question.*

### **For adults:**

If you want to know more about oral history, check this document from the [Baylor University Institute for Oral History](#). The Smithsonian also has a great [Oral History Interviewing Guideline](#) that can help you assist children in the creation of their interview. [The American Association of University Women](#) (AAUW) also has a quick guideline with sample questions and tips for what to do after the interview.

### **ACTIVITY OUTLINE:**

1. Talk to your child about oral history (refer to the Background Information above). If you have online access at home, we highly encourage you to allow your children to research about it instead of simply providing the information we gave you. (You might also watch [Andrew Aquino’s oral history](#) from the our Oral History Collection. We suggest the section “Early Life and Childhood.”) If online access is not possible, consider making printed copies of the Background Information above.
2. After the initial research or instruction, ask some questions to assess if the main concepts were understood.
3. Now it is time to work on the topic of the interview. Is there anything in particular that your child would like to learn from your family members? Consider current events, local history, family history, major events or life experiences. Children can explore a variety of topics, and the project will be more engaging if you let them choose it according to their personal interests.
4. Have children create their interview, listing all the questions they will be asking to family friends, family members or caretakers. It’s always good to start with some basic questions like name, date of birth, where they live, etc. Then focus on the topic of the interview.
5. The next step is to choose who is going to be interviewed. Let children chose among your family members and friends. Adapt the interview questions to each interviewee if necessary.
6. Schedule times for the interviews if needed. Make sure children have access to a phone or video chat device. Encourage them to record the conversation (if possible) and take notes.
7. Once all the interviews are completed, it’s time for the children to review all the information collected and summarize what was learned.
8. To finalize and assess the project, children can an essay (with or without images) or prepare an oral presentation. The essay can be shared with family members in your home, and the oral presentations can be recorded to be shared digitally.

### **ADAPTATION FOR EACH GRADE:**

- The depth of the instruction and research can be intensified according to the grade level. Similarly, the length and depth of the interview should also be defined accordingly. Kindergarten through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade should use the preselected questions on the Interview Log sheet. Fourth and 5<sup>th</sup> graders can develop more basic and short interviews, but their complexity should increase for other grades.



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- Additional research can be performed about historical sources. Fourth and 5<sup>th</sup> graders can research about primary and secondary sources. Sixth, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders can analyze what other sources historians would need to have access to in order to better understand their topic.
- For older children, transcribing a full recorded interview might be a good exercise.
- For the final essay or presentation, all children should be encouraged to learn more about their topic, but the level of detail and research should be adapted by grade.

### ONE MORE THING:

Let us know how it went! Tag us on social media or email us at [education@ohiohistory.org](mailto:education@ohiohistory.org).



# Oral History Interview Log

## (Kindergarten – 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade)

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### CENTRAL QUESTION:

What was life like when you were a kid?

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Interviewee Last Name:

Interviewee First Name:

Date of Interview:

Interviewer (that's you!):

### PREPARED QUESTIONS:

1. Where were you born? When were you born?
2. What was your home like?
3. Where did you go to school? Did you like school?
4. Who was your best friend, and what did you do together?
5. Did you ever get in trouble? What for?



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6. Are there funny stories of things you did when you were young?

7. What was your favorite part about being a kid?

8. Who was the most important adult in your life?

### ADDITIONAL NOTES:

Jot down any follow up questions and additional information you want to remember.



# Oral History Interview Log

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## CENTRAL QUESTION:

*What is the Central Question you want to answer through this oral history?*

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

*Good oral history starts with some basic information.*

Interviewee Last Name:

Interviewee First Name:

Date:

Interviewer (that's you!):

## PREPARED QUESTIONS:

*What questions can you ask your interviewee to help you get to your Central Question?*

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.



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### ADDITIONAL NOTES:

*Jot down any follow up questions and additional information you want to remember.*

