
The State Historical Society of Missouri

1020 Lowry Street
Columbia, Missouri 65201

Telephone: (573) 882-7083
E-mail: shsofmo@umsystem.edu
Web site: <http://shs.umsystem.edu>

*The Curriculum
Standards for
Missouri and
Illinois are
listed at the end
of each lesson
plan.*

Lesson Three: Oral Histories

Rationale:

It is important for students to understand that people who witnessed history have an abundant amount of information on it including facts, figures, attitudes, and perceptions.

Grade/Subject:

This lesson could be used for any Social Studies class grades 6-12, just be sure to apply this lesson to material the students have been or will be learning.

Duration:

This lesson could take between 3-5 class periods depending on amount of time given to discuss.

Objectives:

1. Students will be able to value the importance of oral histories.
2. Students will be able to recognize and deliver meaningful questions to those they interview.
3. Students will be able to utilize oral histories in their research.



It's not just a day...it's an experience

National History Day in Missouri is an educational outreach program of The State Historical Society of Missouri and the University of Missouri Western Historical Manuscript-Columbia.

Assessing Prior Knowledge:

1. Have a discussion about what oral histories are and why they are important.
2. Ask the students to work with 3-4 classmates to brainstorm what they think are good interview questions.
3. Have someone write these interview questions on the board, and discuss the use of different question types i.e. open ended questions, yes/no questions, leading questions, etc.
4. Give each student a handout with 4 interview questions already written on it. Ask them to pick 4 more from the list the class just created (they have to be different from the ones on the handout). Make sure the handout has a place for the interviewee to put their name, age, and age at the time of the event.
5. Explain that each student will be conducting their own Oral History interview. They will be interviewing anyone who was alive during the event including, grandparents, parents, neighbors or family friends. Ask the students to chose an event in history and interview someone who lived through it. Choose six topics for the students to choose from. Possible topics include:
 - a. Berlin Wall Falling
 - b. Assassinations of MLK, JFK, RFK
 - c. Gulf War
 - d. Vietnam War
6. The students will then interview the person, being sure to record their interview questions.
7. Then take the students to the computer lab to type up the Oral History.
8. Put the students into groups by which topic they chose to interview about. Have the students create a presentation based on the different information given by each interviewee.
9. The students will present their findings to the class.

Instructional Activities:

1. Give the students a copy of the transcript from the Missouri Ex-POWs Oral History Project Records from the Western Historical Manuscript Collection. <http://whmc.umsystem.edu/teachpacket/ww2/exercise2.pdf>
2. Spilt them into groups and have them read the transcript and answer the questions.
3. Discuss the answers in a class discussion.

Assessment:

1. Have the students write a reaction to the following prompt:
 - a. What do you think are pros and cons of using oral histories? Use examples from the class discussions.

Missouri Show-Me Standards addressed:

Performance Goal 1:

#2: Conduct research to answer questions and evaluate information and ideas.

#7: Evaluate the accuracy of information and the reliability of sources.

Illinois State Learning Standards addressed:

16.A.4a (Early High School): Analyze and report historical events to determine cause-and-effect relationships.

16.A.5a (Late High School): Analyze historical and contemporary developments using methods of historical inquiry.

16.A.2c (Late Elementary): Ask questions and seek answers by collecting and analyzing data from historic documents, images and other literary and non-literary sources.

16.B.3d (US) (Middle/Junior High School): Describe the ways in which the United States developed as a world political power.

16.B.5b (W) (Late High School): Describe how tensions in the modern world are affected by different political ideologies including democracy and totalitarianism.

16.D.5 (US) (Late High School): Analyze the relationship between an issue in United States social history and the related aspects of political, economic and environmental history.