

Oral History in the Classroom





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I. Educator Information

Inventory

Borrower: _____ Booking Period: _____

The borrower is responsible for the safe use of the footlocker and all its contents during the designated booking period. Replacement and/or repair for any lost items and/or damage (other than normal wear and tear) to the footlocker and its contents while in the borrower's care will be charged to the borrower's school. **Please have an adult complete the footlocker inventory checklist below, both when you receive the footlocker and when you repack it for shipping, to ensure that all of the contents are intact.** After you inventory the footlocker for shipping to the next location, please mail or fax this completed form to the Education Office.

ITEM	BEFORE USE	AFTER USE	CONDITION OF ITEM	MHS USE
Eight Sony IC Audio Recorders				
Eight USB Cables				
Two EBL Battery Chargers				
Four Cases of Rechargeable AAA Batteries (16 Batteries Total)				
Mercier, Laurie, and Madeline Buckendorf. <i>Using Oral History in Community History Projects</i> . Oral History Association, 2007. (Booklet)				
Whitman, Glenn. <i>Dialogue with the Past: Engaging Students and Meeting Standards through Oral History</i> . AltaMira Press, 2004.				
Wood, Linda. <i>Oral History Projects in Your Classroom</i> . Oral History Association, 2001. (Booklet)				



Educator Introduction

Oral history is different from other types of interviews—those conducted by journalists, or those promoted by organizations such as Story Corps, for example. Oral historians follow a specific code of ethics while seeking interviews that provide historical depth to a time, place, or event. Not only do they gather information for their own use, they also preserve it—and make it accessible—for future researchers.

Journalists (and other researchers) sometimes interview people for specific projects, excerpting relevant quotations and discarding the rest. Oral historians gather interviews to create a public record. An interview only “becomes an oral history when it has been recorded, processed in some way” and made available to the public—in a library or archives or as a published transcript (Ritchie, 6).

There is more to conducting an oral history project than simply heading out with a recorder and pushing play. As oral historian Donald Ritchie explains: “The interviewer’s job is to do thorough research beforehand, then ask meaningful questions, suppressing the urge to talk and listening instead” (Ritchie, xi).

And what about that code of ethics? It requires that narrators (the person being interviewed) be treated with respect. It recognizes that the narrator is giving something of value by agreeing to be interviewed—and encourages interviewers to find ways to give back (minimally by writing thank you notes and providing copies of all recordings). It also recognizes that narrators own the stories they tell. That’s why institutions collecting oral histories require a signed consent form for all oral histories (Oral History Association, “Principles and Best Practices”).

Some people are skeptical of oral history. Certainly, interviewers don’t always remember things exactly as they happened. But no source is entirely accurate. Working to corroborate stories is important. To conduct and interpret

oral interviews, interviewers must complete background research and check facts. Oral histories fill a special gap in the historical record. As Ritchie says, “Other sources can usually provide the who, what, when, and where of history; interviews can offer better insights into the how and why” (Ritchie, 20). Oral histories are often the best way to learn how an experience felt, why people made the choices they did, and how they make sense of what happened to them.

Why Conduct an Oral History Project with Your Students?

Oral history projects have several benefits:

- They engage students in authentic research and empower students. The students become practicing historians and experts in their topic.
- They encourage intergenerational connections.
- They help students master speaking and listening standards as well as research and writing standards.
- They provide an opportunity to see how individual perspectives and experiences interact with larger historical narratives and trends.
- They help students understand that the past is complicated
- They offer the “emotional context” often lacking in textbooks.
- They help students learn that history is more than just the stories of the famous and that everyone is part of history—including their own families, and themselves.
- They are engaging—and make students want to learn more.

Oral History in the Classroom

Educator Introduction *(continued)*

Talk to any teacher who has conducted oral history projects and you'll hear testimonials like these highlighted in *Oral History Projects in Your Classroom*:

“Students are learning how to listen, communicate, write and spell, while learning about their own history and heritage.” – Sherry Spittler, Aleutian Region School District, Aleutian Islands, Alaska

“I have found that community history breaks down student indifference. It helps students understand their neighborhood and themselves and gives new meaning to the term ‘roots’.” – Howard Shorr, Theodore Roosevelt High School, Los Angeles, California

Designing a Project

Just like any other project, the first thing you need to do is decide what you want to accomplish. Make sure you aren't just duplicating what is already known—a good project will add to our collective understanding. It will fill in the gaps by gathering information not already available in the written record.

According to *Dialogue with the Past*: “Oral history projects generally fall into ... two categories: Biographical/life review projects” and thematic projects that “focus on a specific topic or event.” Both have benefits and challenges. Life review projects can seem simpler and can be incredibly engaging. But—to be successful, students must conduct broad research to gain background on all the different topics the narrator may touch on.

Thematic projects allow for more focused background research. They also provide the opportunity for students to compare narratives and thus to view the same event from different perspectives.

Ideally, the project should fit into your curriculum; thus, a project interviewing veterans and others affected by the Vietnam War would be conducted in tandem with the study of that war in your history or literature class.

Oral History Projects in Your Classroom recommends designing your project so it has a specific focus, noting: “The narrower the focus, the easier it is to adapt the project to the curriculum, and the easier it is for the students to complete the project successfully.” It also notes that thematic “oral history projects usually fall into the following categories, which may overlap:

- An event (for example, a strike, a political campaign, or a natural disaster)
- An issue (for example, racism, or a decision to build a power plant)
- A topic (for example, a local musical tradition, a hobby, a business, local houses of worship, a community organization, a neighborhood or park)
- An individual (for example, the life stories of individuals over a certain age, or the stories of multiple generations in a family)
- A historical era (for example, the Vietnam War years, the 1950s, or even a year like 1968) ...”

Here are a few other ideas for projects:

- Significant community institutions and community celebrations: powwows, schools
- Teen life or “what was fifth grade (or eighth grade or high school) like 50 years ago?”
- Events of importance to your community: for example, the 1964 flood, changes in agriculture
- Events/topics of national significance that community members participated in (military conflicts)

Oral History Projects in Your Classroom has other recommendations:

- A narrowly focused project is easier to

Oral History in the Classroom

Educator Introduction *(continued)*

conduct than a broader project. Choose a project that focuses on a single significant event (a natural disaster, for example).

- Pose a question or problem—that way “your students can more readily judge both what information is pertinent and how much information is enough.”
- “Define the scope of the project in a way that makes oral history central to your study. You may learn a great deal about the civil rights movement from newspapers or the minutes of school board meetings. Interviews, however, can tell you about how people now look back and assess the strategies ... of the movement.”
- “Oral history is more than asking questions. It’s asking the right questions. The only way to do that is to do research.”

This last recommendation is important. Students should never enter an interview without extensive preparation. Have them start with their school library—and the Internet. Then invite guest speakers knowledgeable about historical events or local history to provide background information. Finally, for community-based projects, have students check with area museums and archives for relevant exhibits and secondary sources.

Other Things to Consider Before You Begin

As with any project, you’ll need to decide on a final product before you begin interviews. Are the interviews themselves the final product? Or will students write a paper or a feature article for the school newspaper, create an exhibit, or produce a public program at which they present their research to the narrators and other community members?

You’ll also need to figure out where the interviews will be stored and made accessible to future researchers. This is a key part of any oral history project. You will need to allow students

time to create a summary and index of their interviews (otherwise, they will not be useful to future researchers). You’ll also need to find a place to preserve them—or at least the best of them. Will the interviews be deposited in your school library? Your local public library? At your local historical society?

Finally, you may want to try conducting an oral history interview yourself before embarking on a classroom project. *Oral History in the Classroom* recommends that teachers new to oral history design a small research project for themselves (maybe about your family history or the history of an interesting community member). Follow the steps of a successful oral history project below—or the guidelines outlined in Chapter 3 of *Oral History Projects in Your Classroom*—and “keep a journal of your research that includes both the data and your feelings about the experience” that you can share with your students (Wood, 13).

Finding Good Narrators

Good narrators are key to a successful project. Good narrators are willing and able to share firsthand information that is important to your project. Keep in mind that not everyone is good with young people or has the mental or physical capacity to participate in an interview. **Screen the potential narrators very carefully.**

Decide how you are going to find narrators and how involved your students will be in this process. If you are planning life history projects, you may want students to be entirely responsible for finding a narrator. For a veterans’ project, you may want to work with students to host a Veterans Day celebration and sign up potential narrators at the event. Or you may want to do the legwork yourself and choose the people your students will interview.

Regardless of who identifies the narrators, you will want students to formally request the interview. And, because the interviews will be preserved and shared for posterity, everyone who is interviewed will need to sign a release

Oral History in the Classroom

Educator Introduction *(continued)*

form. (See the Sample Release Form in Section IV of this user guide, p. 48.)

Precautions

There are special concerns when incorporating oral history into the classroom. The first, of course, is student safety—especially if you plan on putting students in contact with strangers. There are some things you can do to minimize risk. First, always have students work in pairs or groups of threes when conducting interviews. Secondly, consider having students conduct their interviews in a quiet space on school property or in other well-monitored spaces (a nursing home conference room, for example).

The second concern is for the narrator's experience. You'll want to make sure your students represent your school well by teaching them proper etiquette. Before any interviews take place, you'll want to discuss the topics of courtesy, respect, professionalism, and reciprocity.

After the Interview

A good oral history project doesn't end with the interview. In order to make the interviews accessible to future researchers, you must

- Make sure the narrator signed a release form.
- Create either a transcript or a summary and index of the interview to make it easier for future researchers to use your material.
- Thank your narrator and provide them with copies of the recording and summary/transcript.
- Store the interviews in a public repository (your school library, local public library, or local historical society).



Steps to an Oral History Project

- Create a clear, brief statement of purpose.
- Write a letter of introduction to the person you want to interview. (See Sample Letter in Section IV of this user guide, p. 46.)
- Collect background information: newspaper articles of related stories, articles, or books about the time period and events on which your project focuses.
- Read the sources. Make a list of things your interviews can potentially add to the information that already exists. (This can be information or emotion.) (See Lessons 1 and 4.)
- Gather biographical information about the narrators. Ideally, this should be done before the interview, but realistically, this isn't always possible. (See Lesson 4.)
- Craft open-ended interview questions/outlines. (See Lesson 2.)
- Practice interview techniques and working with the equipment. (See Lesson 3.)
- Set up and conduct interviews. Make sure to bring a release form to the interview and have your narrator sign it before you start recording! (See Sample Release Form in Section IV of this user guide, p. 48.)
- Write and send thank you notes—along with copies of the recordings.
- Create summaries and/or transcripts. If you transcribe the interviews, make sure to share the transcript with the narrator and provide him or her an opportunity to edit it.
- Create the final product. Make sure to share final products with the narrators and, as appropriate, with your local historical society or library.



Footlocker Evaluation Form

Evaluator's Name

School Name

Phone

Address

City

Zip Code

1. How did you use the material?

2. How would you describe the users? (choose all that apply)

Grade school - Grade _____

High school - Grade _____

College students Seniors Mixed groups Special interest Other

2a. How many people used the material in the footlocker? _____

3. Which of the user guide materials were most useful?

Narratives Lessons Resource Materials

5. How many class periods did you devote to using the footlocker?

1-3 4-6 More than 6 Other

6. What activities or materials would you like to see added to this footlocker?

Footlocker Evaluation Form *(continued)*

7. Would you request this footlocker again? If not, why?

8. What were the least useful aspects of the footlocker/user guide?

9. What subject areas do you think should be addressed in future footlockers?

10. Other comments



II. Lessons

Alignment to Montana Content and Common Core Standards

Lessons	1	2	3	4	5A	5B	6	7	8
Language									
CCRA.L.1 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.									
CCRA.L.2 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.			X						X
CCRA.L.3 Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.			X						X
CCRA.L.4 Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases by using context clues, analyzing meaningful word parts, and consulting general and specialized reference materials, as appropriate.					X				
CCRA.L.5 Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships and nuances in word meanings.									
CCRA.L.6 Acquire and use accurately a range of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when encountering an unknown term important to comprehension or expression.					X				
Reading									
CCRA.R.1 Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.									
CCRA.R.2 Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.									
CCRA.R.3 Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.									
CCRA.R.4 Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.									

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Alignment to Montana Content and Common Core Standards *(continued)*

	Lessons	1	2	3	4	5A	5B	6	7	8
CCRA.R.5 Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.										
CCRA.R.6 Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.										
CCRA.R.7 Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.						X	X			
CCRA.R.8 Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.										
CCRA.R.9 Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.						X	X			
CCRA.R.10 Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.						X	X			
Speaking & Listening										
CCRA.SL.1 Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.		X	X	X	X				X	
CCRA.SL.2 Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.		X		X						
CCRA.SL.3 Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric.										
CCRA.SL.4 Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.										
CCRA.SL.5 Make strategic use of digital media and visual displays of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentations.										
Writing										
CCRA.W.1 Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.										
CCRA.W.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.				X		X				

Oral History in the Classroom

Alignment to Montana Content and Common Core Standards *(continued)*

	Lessons	1	2	3	4	5A	5B	6	7	8
CCRA.W.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.										
CCRA.W.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.			X							
CCRA.W.5 Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.						X	X			
CCRA.W.6 Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others.						X				
CCRA.W.7 Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.						X	X		X	
CCRA.W.8 Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.						X				
CCRA.W.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.										
CCRA.W.10 Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.	X		X	X	X				X	X
Montana State Standards for Social Studies										
Note: We have noted only those standards that every class engaging in these lessons will meet. Your class may meet additional Social Studies standards depending on the topics your students investigate.										
Content Standard 1— Students access, synthesize, and evaluate information to communicate and apply social studies knowledge to real world situations.						X				
1.1 analyze and adapt an inquiry process (i.e., identify question or problem, locate and evaluate potential resources, gather and synthesize information, create a new product, and evaluate product and process).						X	X		X	X
1.2 apply criteria to evaluate information (e.g., origin, authority, accuracy, bias, and distortion of information and ideas).	X					X				
1.3 synthesize and apply information to formulate and support reasoned personal convictions within groups and participate in negotiations to arrive at solutions to differences (e.g., elections, judicial proceedings, economic choices, community service projects).										

Oral History in the Classroom

Alignment to Montana Content and Common Core Standards *(continued)*

	Lessons	1	2	3	4	5A	5B	6	7	8
Content Standard 2 — Students analyze how people create and change structures of power, authority, and governance to understand the operation of government and to demonstrate civic responsibility.										
2.6 analyze and evaluate conditions, actions, and motivations that contribute to conflict and cooperation within and among groups and nations (e.g., current events from newspapers, magazines, television).										
Content Standard 4 — Students demonstrate an understanding of the effects of time, continuity, and change on historical and future perspectives and relationships.										
4.6. investigate, interpret, and analyze the impact of multiple historical and contemporary viewpoints concerning events within and across cultures, major world religions, and political systems (e.g., assimilation, values, beliefs, conflicts).										
Content Standard 6 — Students demonstrate an understanding of the impact of human interaction and cultural diversity on societies.										



Lesson 1: Introducing Oral History

Essential Understanding

History is more than just the stories of famous people. Oral history is one tool for discovering more about the lives and attitudes of ordinary people.

Activity Description

Lecture/Discussion

Objectives

At the conclusion of the lesson students will understand

- The difference between primary and secondary sources
- How oral histories differ from other primary sources
- Oral history's value to collective knowledge
- Cautions and concerns about oral history
- The fact that most sources reflect a point of view or bias—not just oral histories

Time

One 50-minute class period

Materials

Footlocker/User Guide Materials

- Lesson Plan

Classroom Materials

- Pens/pencils and paper or laptop computers
- Whiteboard

Pre-Lesson Preparation

Prepare to lead conversation by reviewing the lesson plan and Educator Introduction.

Procedure

Step 1. Write Your Way In (5 minutes)

Tell students they are going to “write their way in” by writing nonstop for five minutes on an assigned prompt, once you say “go.” Tell them they must keep writing the entire time. If they are stuck for what to write next, encourage them to write, “I am thinking!” until they think of more to say.

Provide students with the following prompts: What is history? Whose stories are told in history books? Whose stories are left out? Why?

Tell them to start writing—and not to stop for five minutes!

Step 2. Discuss their answers. Poll the class to see how many students wrote down topics such as presidents, wars, explorers, government activities, famous people, or famous inventions. Find out how many students suggested topics such as family life, recreation, work, clothing, and school.

Point out that different kinds of historians look at different topics within history. “While many history textbooks deal with political and military history, historians also study the lives and activities of everyday people” (Library of Congress, “Oral History and Social History”).

The history of ordinary people is often called social history. It is as important as political or military history.

Step 3. Ask: What types of sources are there to understand history? Make a list. Define primary and secondary sources. Primary sources were created at the time of an event or later by someone who participated in the event. Secondary sources were written after an event by a non-participant.

Circle all of the primary sources on the list (for example, photographs, diaries, census data,

Oral History in the Classroom

Lesson 1: Introducing Oral History *(continued)*

letters, legal documents, newspaper articles from the time, artifacts, et cetera).

Underline all of the secondary sources on the list (history articles, textbooks, documentaries).

Step 4. Ask: Which is more accurate: a primary source or a secondary source?

After some discussion, tell them that it depends. Although many people reflexively think primary sources are more accurate, primary sources often give only a small piece of the story and one person's perspective.

Have students come up with an example from their own lives to illustrate this point. Prompt them if necessary. Consider, for example:

- A story your sister told to get you in trouble.
- A single Snapchat.

How might these primary sources distort a historian's understanding about a person or community?

To create secondary sources, historians typically look at many primary sources.

Ask: Does that mean that secondary sources are more accurate? Again, it depends. In both cases, we need to look for bias/point of view. For secondary sources, we also need to look at the extent and quality of the research. Did the historian only choose present facts that advanced her argument? How many sources did she examine? Does she have an ax to grind? Because she's writing so long after the event, how can she really know what happened? How much was lost in the mists of time?

Both primary and secondary sources can be extremely useful when trying to understand the past, but all sources—whether primary or secondary—need to be examined carefully.

Step 5. Look back over the list of sources.

Ask: Whose story is more likely to be preserved

in these sources, the rich or the poor? The famous or the ordinary?

Ask: How can we add the voices of everyday people back into history? And why might we want to?

One way is oral history.

What is oral history?

“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 History Association, “Oral History Defined).

Ask: What can we learn from oral history that we can't learn from other sources?

- How people experienced and make sense of their own lives. “Oral history accounts add the life to the facts. And they give voice to people, regular people, who often aren't involved in writing history” (Park City Museum. “Oral History-Lesson Plan).
- The emotions associated with particular events (most often conveyed through the narrator's voice, tone, and inflection.)

Share the following fact:

- Between 1919 and 1924 drought and agricultural depression devastated Montana farmers. Nearly half of Montana's farmers lost their land.

Share the following quotes:

- “You didn't have any rain for, Christ, very little for years. A big cloud would come up, I can remember, big clouds come up and you'd think, boy this is gonna be a good one. All it was [was] dust.” – Wallace Lockie
- “The thirties I don't want to remember at all. That was bad all the way through ...

Oral History in the Classroom

Lesson 1: Introducing Oral History *(continued)*

Nobody had any money ... You could buy a set of overalls for 25 cents but nobody had 25 cents.” – Wallace Lockie

(Both quotes came from an oral interview of Wallace Lockie, by Rom Bushnell, Sunday Creek, MT, July 25, 1993, Real West OH, Western Heritage Center.)

Discuss: What’s the difference between the firsthand quotations and the statement of fact?

- Oral history helps us understand what it felt like to live in past times. Firsthand accounts bring history alive.

Extension: Have students read or listen to one or more oral histories from the Library of Congress’s collections. Ask them to find a quote that illustrates a larger theme while providing emotional insight into what a historical era or event was like for someone who lived through it.



Lesson 2: Introducing the Project

Essential Understanding

Large projects require planning.

Activity Description

Teacher will provide an overview of the project.

Objective

At the conclusion of the lesson students will have:

- Learned the steps involved in a successful oral history project.

Time

30 minutes

Materials

Footlocker/User Guide Materials:

Copies of Rubric (See Section IV, p. 44, or click here for the rubric in a [Word document](https://mhs.mt.gov/education/Footlocker/Oralhistoryrubric.docx) so you can easily modify it.)
<https://mhs.mt.gov/education/Footlocker/Oralhistoryrubric.docx>

Copies of Student Introduction
(See Section III. Student Materials, p. 40.)

Pre-Lesson Preparation

Read the Educator Introduction and pages 25-30 of *Oral History Projects in Your Classroom* and decide what type of project you want to embark on. Decide how much you want to involve your students in defining the project's parameters. (Wood recommends working with students to select the topic or narrow the focus.)

Decide how you are going to find narrators and how involved your students will be in this process. (See Educator Introduction, "Finding Good Narrators," p. 6.)

Decide how much of the project is going to be individual and how much is going to be group work. (We recommend students conduct interviews in groups of two—both for safety and because it typically results in better interviews.)

Think about what you will do with the research your students collect. Talk to your local historical society to see if they are interested in preserving the recordings and what their requirements are. Or talk to your school librarian and see if the recordings can reside there.

Decide whether you are going to have students create summaries or transcripts of their interviews. In order to make the interviews useful for future historians, it is important to create either summaries or word-by-word transcripts (typed copies) of the full interview. Obviously, transcripts are ideal, but interviews take a long time to transcribe. For professional transcribers, an hour of audio can take four to nine hours to transcribe. For students, it will take longer. Summaries are generally a more realistic choice for a class project.

Decide on final products. Is the final product the interview and the summary? Is it an exhibit that can be shared with the community, including the narrators and their families? Is it a paper or oral report?

Create a project rubric by modifying the one provided as part of this lesson as a Word document.

Print copies of your modified project rubric for the class and copies of the Student Introduction.

Procedure

Introduce the project to your students and build enthusiasm and buy-in. Let them know that they will be conducting original research, discovering information that no one has ever collected.

To the extent possible, engage your students in the process of selecting the topic and/or narrowing the focus as well as recruiting narrators.

Have students brainstorm the steps involved in a successful oral history project. Work together

Oral History in the Classroom

Lesson 2: Introducing the Project *(continued)*

to create a list that includes the following:

1. Finding potential narrators.
2. Conducting background research.
3. Developing interview questions.
4. Practicing interviewing techniques and working with the equipment.
5. Inviting narrators to participate in the project and scheduling a time and place to meet.
6. Conducting the interviews.

Discuss the ideas of courtesy and reciprocity. Note that narrators who agree to participate in the project are giving a tremendous gift of their knowledge and time. Brainstorm ways to respect this. What can you do for your narrators in return? (Being on time to interviews, listening respectfully, behaving courteously, dressing appropriately, writing thank you notes, providing narrators copies of the recordings, possibly offering small gifts.)

Add to your master list of tasks:

7. Write and send thank you notes—along with copies of the recordings.

Talk about the value of this project to the larger community. Students are creating new historical resources, just like the ones collected in the Library of Congress and the Montana Historical Society. They are preserving history that would otherwise be lost. In order to make this history accessible to the public, students need to do more than just conduct interviews.

Note that narrators own their stories. This is another reason that sharing them is a gift. The interviews can only be shared with the larger public if the narrators give permission.

Add to master list of tasks:

8. Have narrators sign release forms.

Talk about how students will share the information they have collected.

Will the recordings be preserved? Where? Explain that listening to oral interviews takes a long time. Responsible interviewers create either summaries (so researchers interested in particular topics can find the information valuable to their research without having to listen to the entire tape) or transcripts.

Add to master list of tasks:

9. Create summaries and/or transcripts. If you transcribe the interviews, make sure to share the transcript with the narrator and provide him or her an opportunity to edit it.

How else will the students share their information? Discuss final projects. Make sure to share final products with the narrators and, as appropriate, with your local historical society or library.

Add to master list of tasks:

10. Create and share final products.

Distribute and have students read the Student Introduction. (This is a summary—almost a cheat sheet—of what was covered in Lessons I and II.) See if there are any questions.

Distribute Rubrics.

Develop a plan, as necessary, for finding potential narrators. (See Lesson 4. pp. 25-26.)



Lesson 3: Becoming a Good Interviewer

Essential Understanding

Interviewing is harder than it looks. Becoming a good interviewer is a skill you can learn.

Activity Description

After a class discussion on what makes a good interviewer, students will model good and poor interviewing techniques while their classmates identify what they are doing right—or wrong. Students will critique “invented transcripts” in order to identify successful and unsuccessful interview strategies. Then they will conduct a short practice interview on a family member.

Objectives

At the conclusion of the lesson students will have

- Learned the difference between open and closed questions.
- Practiced writing open questions.
- Learned and practiced techniques for conducting good interviews.

Time

Two 50-minute class periods plus homework and a 10-minute review after assignment is completed

Materials

Footlocker/User Guide Materials:

Wood, Linda. *Oral History Projects in Your Classroom*. Oral History Association, 2001.

List of Bloopers and Kudos (below) cut into strips

Copies of Open versus Closed Questions worksheet (below)

Copies of Family Story Assignment (below)

Pre-Lesson Preparation

Review the following sections from *Oral History Projects in Your Classroom*: “Types of Questions to Ask,” p. 75; Handout 9, “Tips on How to Interview,” p. 77; and Handout 10, “‘Invented’ Interviews for Practice,” pp. 79-80.

Cut the list of Bloopers and Kudos into strips, so that each student pair has one instruction to act out.

Print copies of the Open versus Closed Questions worksheet for the class.

Print copies of the Family Story Assignment for the class.

Procedure

Day 1. Discuss with students the difference between closed questions (questions that can be answered with just a word or two) and open questions (questions that require more than one or two words to answer). Point out that both types of questions are important. If you are writing a survey, for example, you need to use closed questions, so you can tabulate your data. But for interviewing, open questions elicit better responses.

Have students complete the Open versus Closed Questions worksheet individually or in pairs.

Discuss good interview techniques using information from Handout 9, “Tips on How to Interview,” in Wood. Talk about what it means to be a good listener and to use “active listening” skills. Ask “How do you know when someone is listening?” “How do you know when they are NOT listening?” “How do you feel when someone interrupts you or isn’t seeming to pay attention to what you are saying?”

Hand out the Bloopers and Kudos. Call students up in pairs to perform their “blooper” or “kudo” in a mock interview. Have the students observing the mock interview offer critiques.

Oral History in the Classroom

Lesson 3: Becoming a Good Interviewer *(continued)*

What did the interviewer do correctly (a kudo)?
What did he or she do incorrectly (a blooper)?

Day 2. Complete “blooper” and “kudo” mock interviews. Distribute copies of the “invented transcripts” to pairs of students. Have students read them aloud to each other, taking on the role of interviewer and narrator. Have them discuss what interview tips were not followed and what tips were followed successfully in each situation. Switch roles between examples.

Debrief as a class. Note, particularly, where follow-up questions would have been helpful. Brainstorm follow-up questions (e.g., “What was that like?” or “Can you give me an example?”).

Distribute and discuss the Family Story Assignment. Have students complete it prior to Day 3 of this lesson.

Day 3. In small groups, have students share the stories of their interviews. Have them share the information they gained and also the process of interviewing. What went well? What didn't? How did the responses vary depending on the type of question they asked (open versus closed)?

Have groups share highlights from their discussion with the entire class.

Student Name(s) _____

Open versus Closed Questions

Directions: For each of the following, put an O next to the open questions (questions that require more than one or two words to answer). Put a C next to the closed questions (questions that can be answered in one to two words).

- _____ 1. Is that your favorite book?
- _____ 2. What is your favorite subject in school?
- _____ 3. Do you always go to the Sweet Pea Festival?
- _____ 4. Which extra-curricular activities did you participate in?
- _____ 5. Is choir a fun class?
- _____ 6. Why do you think volunteering to work with older people is a good thing?
- _____ 7. What is the best thing about going on a field trip?
- _____ 8. Who is the person dressed in white in this photograph?
- _____ 9. Where does Mrs. Johnson live?
- _____ 10. What do you do during your lunch hour?

Rewriting Closed Questions

Directions: Each of the following is an example of a closed question. (A closed question is one that can be answered in one or two words.) For interviews, you want to develop open questions. (An open question is one that encourages an answer of more than one or two words.) For each of the following, rework the question into an open question. **DO NOT ANSWER THE QUESTIONS.**

- 1. Do you know how to interview?

- 2. Were you nervous about interviewing Mr. Foley?

- 3. Have you learned anything about life in Montana during World War II?

- 4. Did you prepare for doing that interview?

- 5. Was it more difficult to interview your friend or a family member?

Bloopers and Kudos

1. Read the next question when your narrator is still thinking.
2. Interrupt the narrator with your next question.
3. Show the narrator you are listening (*hint: non-verbally*).
4. Act bored by what the narrator is telling you.
5. Ask a series of good follow-up questions.
6. Have problems with your recorder, fix it quickly, and return to interviewing.
7. Have problems with your equipment and freak out. (*Hint: "Oh my gosh, this stupid machine isn't working ... I'm going to flunk for sure."*)
8. Clearly explain the purpose of your interview.
9. Describe an object that the person is showing you during an interview.
10. The narrator shows you a picture during the interview, but you do not let the audience know what it is.
11. Ask only closed (yes/no) questions.
12. Be rude (*hint: don't listen, interrupt, look bored, contradict the narrator, send a text message, answer your cell phone*).
13. Deal appropriately with a narrator who is emotional.
14. Get upset and embarrassed at the narrator's emotions.



Family Story Assignment

Assignment: Talk to a parent or other adult tonight about their favorite family tradition (holidays, birthday, or community celebration). Practice good interview techniques, and ask follow-up questions to be sure to get details!

Try to find out the following:

- How old were they?
- Where did they live?
- What was their role in the event?
- Who participated in the event with them?
- How did they feel about the event then?
- How do they feel about the event now?

Take notes during the interview. After the interview, reflect on the process. In a paragraph, answer the following questions:

- How did the setting affect your interview?
- How did the responses differ based on whether the question was open or closed?
- How did asking follow-up questions improve the interview?
- What opportunities were there to ask follow-up questions that you missed?
- What do you think you did well as an interviewer?
- What would you do differently next time?
- Be prepared to share the family story and your experience of the interview process in class.



Lesson 4: Recruiting Narrators

Essential Understanding

The best way to complete a big project is to break it into smaller steps.

Activity Description

Students will work to recruit narrators for the oral history project.

Objectives

At the conclusion of the lesson students will have

- Developed a strong list of potential narrators.
- Contacted potential narrators.
- Chosen a narrator to interview and solicited (and received) a Biographical Questionnaire or Narrative Information Form.

Time

Varies

Materials

Footlocker/User Guide Materials:

Wood, Linda. *Oral History Projects in Your Classroom*. Oral History Association, 2001.

- Copies of Sample Letter (See Sample Letter in Section IV of this user guide, p. 46, also provided as a [Word document](https://mhs.mt.gov/education/Footlocker/SampleLetter.docx) for you to download and modify.) <https://mhs.mt.gov/education/Footlocker/SampleLetter.docx>
- Copies of Biographical Questionnaire (See Section IV of this user guide, p. 47, also provided as a [Word document](https://mhs.mt.gov//education/Footlocker/SampleBiographicalQuestionnaire.docx) for you to download and modify.) <https://mhs.mt.gov//education/Footlocker/SampleBiographicalQuestionnaire.docx>

Pre-Lesson Preparation/Teacher Notes

Before beginning this lesson, you should have already defined your project focus. (See Suggestions for Project Topics in Section IV, p. 45.)

Tailor the Sample Letter and Biographical Questionnaire to your project's focus. (Alternatively, work with students to do this.)

Review Wood, pages 33-35, "Identifying Narrators."

Print copies of your modified Sample Letter for the class.

Print copies of the Biographical Questionnaire for the class.

Note on Technology: You may wish to have students work in a shared document using a web-based word processing program like GoogleDocs.

Procedure

Discuss with students the qualities of good narrators and help them brainstorm possible narrators that fit your project focus among their in-town family members, neighbors, or members of community organizations in which they are active or in which family members are active (scouts, church, VFW, etc.).

Discuss other ways to recruit narrators (through the newspaper, at a school event) and decide which to pursue. (Note: Students working on veterans' oral history projects have had good luck recruiting narrators by organizing Veterans Day celebrations at which they collect contact information from veterans interested in participating.) Pursue these ideas as necessary.

Once you have a strong list of potential narrators, as a class, send them a letter describing the project.

Oral History in the Classroom

Lesson 4: Recruiting Narrators *(continued)*

Teaching notes: At some point in the process, you will want your narrators to complete biographical questionnaires. (See Section IV, p. 47.) Ideally this takes place before the interview, so the student can use the information to help formulate questions. For a topical project, have potential narrators complete a shorter questionnaire. The one that Wood developed (Wood, Handout 3, “Narrator Information Form,” p. 65) is a good alternative. For life story projects, students will want to gather more detailed biographical information before the interview, so you will need to schedule accordingly.

If your students are conducting life history projects, and particularly if they are interviewing family members, you may want your students to write their own letters requesting interviews. Make sure their letters discuss the need for a signed release form—and let their potential narrator know what the interview will be used for and how it will be preserved.



Lesson 5A: Preparing for an Interview—Conducting Background Research for a Topical Project

Essential Understanding

Preparation is the key to a good interview.

Activity Description

After a brief introduction, students will conduct background research. They will craft a timeline based on their research to provide context for their interview and draft interview questions.

Objectives

At the conclusion of the lesson, students will have

- Conducted background research on their topics.
- Created a timeline that can be used to contextualize their interview.
- Written a paragraph summary of what they now know about the time period or event that will be the focus of their interview.
- Drafted and organized interview questions.

Time

Two or three 50-minute class periods

Materials

Footlocker/User Guide Materials:

Wood, Linda. *Oral History Projects in Your Classroom*. Oral History Association, 2001.

Copies of Wood, Handout 6, “Receipts for Borrowed Documents,” p. 71

Copies of Wood, Handout 8, “Types of Questions to Ask,” p. 75

Classroom Materials:

Whiteboard/large sheet of paper

Pencil and paper/laptops for writing

Research materials, which will vary depending on the project.

Pre-Lesson Preparation/Teacher Notes

This particular lesson is written for a topical oral history project rather than a life review project. **If you are doing a life history project, see Lesson 5B.**

It may seem as if life histories/biographical projects are the easiest projects to conduct. Certainly, they are the easiest to find people to interview. However, many teachers have found that their students are more successful with projects that have a more specific focus—even if that focus is simply life during a particular decade. This is because it is easier to prepare for an interview if the project focuses on a specific topic, event, or era. A secondary benefit of having a project focus (as opposed to asking students to conduct biographical/life history interviews) is that it allows students to compare responses and lets them hear multiple viewpoints.

Before beginning this lesson, you should have already defined your project focus. (See Suggestions for Project Topics in Section IV, p. 45.) Either before or at the same time as this lesson, you should have worked to create a list of potential narrators, who have been informed about the project, can contribute information regarding the chosen topic, and have agreed, in theory, to participate in it. (See Lesson 4.)

Print out copies of Wood, Handout 6, “Receipts for Borrowed Documents,” p. 71 for the class.

Print out copies of Wood, Handout 8, “Types of Questions to Ask,” p. 75 for the class.

Note on Technology: In this lesson, students work together to gather background information and develop an interview outline. You may wish to have students create shared

Oral History in the Classroom

Preparing for an Interview *(continued)*

documents using a web-based word processing program like GoogleDocs, or, for the timeline, one of the many free online timeline programs that exist.

Procedure

Create a K/W/L chart for the general topic your class is studying. ([Click here](#) for model.)

Have students gather resources.

- Discuss with your librarian sources for background research.
- In addition to secondary literature, students may wish to look at newspapers from the era they are studying. Montana Newspapers (<http://montananewspapers.org/>) is a good source for digitized newspapers (and easy to search using keywords). Your local historical society or newspaper office may have hard copies of your town's newspaper as well as other records.
- County and community history books are another good source for background information. Some of these have been digitized as part of the [Montana Memory Project](https://mtmemory.recollectcms.com/nodes/view/12882). <https://mtmemory.recollectcms.com/nodes/view/12882>.
- The people you plan to interview may also have written material that would be good to review before the actual interview. If your students do borrow any material from individuals (either before or after the interview), make sure they create a receipt for borrowed documents. (See Wood, Handout 6, "Receipts for Borrowed Documents," p. 71.)

As a class, have students create a timeline of important events relating to the larger topic.

On your whiteboard or a large sheet of paper, have students create a running list of topic-specific vocabulary (words/concepts they didn't know before).

Individually, have students write one to two paragraphs summarizing the historical context into which their interview will fit. (Let them know this doesn't have to be polished writing. The goal is simply to pull together background information in preparation for conducting the interview.)

As a class, have students create lists of subtopics based on their preliminary research. (Note: You may want to bring someone with expertise on the topic to help students brainstorm issues that should be covered.)

Using the list of subtopics, have students write potential interview questions.

- Share and review Wood, Handout 8, "Types of Questions to Ask," p. 75. Review what types of questions best elicit detailed responses.
- Divide the class into groups and give each group two or three issues on which to prepare questions.
- Have each group write five to ten questions on each issue and discuss which questions would work best. Have them aim for an 80/20 split between open and closed questions. Remind them that they should focus on what the narrator knows firsthand, or has witnessed personally, as well as his/her own interpretation of those events. Oral history is NOT retelling information learned secondhand. (Question-generating activity modeled after Wood, p. 38.)
- Have students share the questions they generated with one another in electronic form, so all students have access to all the questions.



Lesson 5B: Preparing for an Interview—Conducting Background Research for a Life History Project

Essential Understanding

Preparation is the key to a good interview.

Activity Description

After a brief introduction, students will conduct background research. They will craft a timeline to provide context for their interview and draft interview questions.

Objectives

At the conclusion of the lesson students will have

- Collected a biographical questionnaire.
- Conducted background research on major events and eras their narrator lived through.
- Created a timeline that can be used to contextualize their interview.
- Drafted and organized interview questions.

Time

Two or three 50-minute class periods

Materials

Footlocker/User Guide Materials:

Wood, Linda. *Oral History Projects in Your Classroom*. Oral History Association, 2001.

Copies of Wood, Handout 6, “Receipts for Borrowed Documents,” p. 71

Copies of Wood, Handout 8, “Types of Questions to Ask,” p. 75

Copies of Life History General Outlines I and II (below)

Classroom Materials:

Whiteboard/large sheet of paper

Pencil and paper/laptops for writing

Research materials, which will vary depending on the project

Students’ completed biographical questionnaires

Pre-Lesson Preparation/Teacher Notes

This particular lesson is written for a biographical oral history project rather than a topical project. **If you are doing a topical project, see Lesson Plan 5A.**

Print out copies of Wood, Handout 6, “Receipts for Borrowed Documents,” p. 71 for the class.

Print out copies of Wood, Handout 8, “Types of Questions to Ask,” p. 75 for the class.

Either before or at the same time as this lesson, students should have identified a narrator. Students should also have collected a biographical questionnaire. (See Lesson 4.)

Procedure

If they have not already had their narrator complete a biographical questionnaire, have students do so now.

Using the narrator’s biographical questionnaire, have each student create a timeline of major historical events and periods that their narrator lived through using sources like online American history timelines and their U.S. and/or Montana history textbooks.

The people students plan to interview may also have written material that would be good to review before the actual interview. If your students do borrow any material from individuals (either before or after the interview),

Oral History in the Classroom

Preparing for an Interview *(continued)*

make sure they create a receipt for borrowed documents. (See Wood, Handout 6, “Receipts for Borrowed Documents,” p. 71.)

Share and review Wood, Handout 8, “Types of Questions to Ask, p. 75. Review what types of questions best elicit detailed responses.

Distribute and discuss the Life History General Outline I and II.

Using Life History General Outline and Life History General Outline II and the timelines they created, have students work in small groups to come up with questions for each section of the Life History General Outline. While students can work together to generate questions, each student should keep their own list and tailor the questions on that list to his or her particular narrator. Have them aim for an 80/20 split between open and closed questions. Remind them that they should focus on what the narrator knows firsthand, or has witnessed personally, as well as his/her own interpretation of those events. Oral history is NOT retelling information learned secondhand. (Question-generating activity modeled after Wood, p. 38.)

Have students share the questions they generated with one another in electronic form, so all students have access to all the questions.

Student Name(s) _____

Life History General Outline

List five questions for each section. Try to make them open questions. (Open questions require more than two words to answer.) Use a completed Biographical Questionnaire and the Life History General Outline II to help you think of questions. Each group will be assigned one section. Be prepared to share your answers with the class.

I. Background (Ask questions about their family – mom and dad, brothers and sisters, and themselves!)

- A.
- B.
- C.
- D.
- E.

II. Childhood (Ask questions about things they did as a child: favorite toys, friends, social activities.)

- A.
- B.
- C.
- D.
- E.

III. Work History (Ask questions about the jobs they had.)

- A.
- B.
- C.
- D.
- E.

Life History General Outline *(continued)*

IV. Military History (Ask questions about where and when they were in the Army, Air Force, Navy, or Marines.)

- A.
- B.
- C.
- D.
- E.

V. Children and Family (Ask questions about spouse and children.)

- A.
- B.
- C.
- D.
- E.

VI. Groups or Organizations (Ask questions about church groups, fraternal organizations, women's organizations, or service groups they belong or belonged to.)

- A.
- B.
- C.
- D.
- E.



Life History General Outline II

I. Background

- A. Grandparents
- B. Parents
- C. Self and siblings

II. Childhood

- A. Playtime
 - 1. What games did you play?
 - 2. Who were your playmates?
 - 3. How did these change over time?
- B. School time
 - 1. Teachers
 - 2. Best and worst subjects
 - 3. Extracurricular activities
- C. Chores
 - 1. Who did which chores in your family?
 - 2. How did those change over time?
- D. Recollections of community or family celebrations
 - 1. Winter holidays
 - 2. Festivals
 - 3. Fourth of July
 - 4. Birthdays

III. Occupational history

- A. First job
 - 1. Duties
 - 2. Training

B. Career

- 1. How did you learn about this occupation?
- 2. What training did you have to have, and where did you get it?

C. Changes in how the job was done

- 1. What were the most important tools of your trade?
- 2. How did they change over time?
- 3. How is the job done now?

(Repeat for each occupation)

IV. Military history

- A. Service dates, locations, branch of service
- B. Training
- C. Experiences
- D. Discharge

V. Building a home

- A. Marriage
 - 1. Age of marriage(s)
 - 2. Spouse name(s)
 - 3. How you met?
 - 4. Spouse's occupation
- B. Birth of your children?
 - 1. Where and when
 - 2. In a hospital? If not, who helped?
- C. Cooking and cleaning
 - 1. Changes over time?

Life History General Outline II (continued)

VI. Volunteer work

A. Fraternal organizations

1. Who introduced you to this organization and how were you initiated?
2. Why did you decide to join?
3. Why do you think it is important?
4. What role did you play?

B. Political or civic organizations

1. Why did you decide to join?
2. Why do you think it is important?
3. What role did you play?

C. Church

1. Why did you decide to join?
2. Why do you think it is important?
3. What role did you play?



Lesson 6: Equipment Practice

Essential Understanding

Breaking down a project into small steps and practicing those steps leads to success.

Activity Description

Students will practice using digital recorders.

Objective

At the conclusion of the lesson students will have

- Learned how to use digital recorders.

Time

30-50 minutes

Materials

Footlocker/User Guide Materials:

Digital Recorders

Copies of Equipment Information handout
(See Section IV, pp. 52-53.)

Copies of Testing Your Equipment handout
(below)

Pre-Lesson Preparation

Review the Equipment Information handout and/or the Sony IC Recorder's instruction manual.

Check to make sure each recorder has sufficient battery charge.

Print copies of the Equipment Information handout for the class.

Print copies of the Testing Your Equipment handout for each group.

Procedure

Divide students into groups of three to five. (Combine roles as necessary. For groups of three, make the interviewers responsible for equipment setup.)

Distribute recorders as well as Equipment Information and Testing Your Equipment handouts.

Circulate among student groups as they practice using the equipment.



Testing Your Equipment

Choose one of the four jobs listed below (1 each per group):

- Recorder setup
- Interviewer 1
- Interviewer 2
- Narrator

Read and perform the duties listed under your assigned job:

1. RECORDER SETUP PERSON

- Take recorder out of box and set it up properly (see the Equipment Information handout for specific directions).
- Set volume control.
- Test recording level by conducting an audio test.
- Play the recording to test recording level.

2. INTERVIEWER 1

- Record an introduction: “This is _____ (your name) in _____ (teacher’s name’s) class conducting an interview with _____ (narrator’s name) for our class project. The date is _____. We will be discussing _____ (narrator’s name’s) experiences as a _____ (grade) grader in _____ (teacher’s name’s) class.”

3. INTERVIEWER 2

- Set the chairs up in a good position to conduct the interview.
- Show the narrator where to sit.
- Ask if the narrator is ready to start.
- If they say “yes,” ask the following question: “Can you describe your first day in _____ (teacher’s name’s) class?”

4. NARRATOR

- Answer the question in a few short sentences.

5. EVERYONE: Listen and critique the recording quality. You want to make sure that you can clearly hear both interviewers and the narrator. Erase the recording. SWITCH roles and repeat as time permits.

6. EVERYONE: Help place the chairs back out of the way. Turn the volume down on the recorder. Make certain that the recorder is powered off. Place the recorder and microphone back in the box.



Lesson 7: Conducting the Interview

Essential Understanding

We can learn from the people around us.

Activity Description

Students will contact potential interview subjects and conduct the oral history interview.

Objectives

At the conclusion of the lesson students will have

- Scheduled their oral history interview
- Conducted their oral history interview
- Had narrator sign a release form
- Written a thank you note

Time

50 minutes spread over several class periods, plus an hour for the interview

Materials

Footlocker/User Guide Materials:

Digital Recorders

Wood, Linda. *Oral History Projects in Your Classroom*. Carlisle, PA: Oral History Association, 2001.

Copies of Wood, Handout 5: “Contacting the Narrator,” p. 69

Copies of Wood, Handout 11: “Information Kit,” p. 81

Copies of release forms (See Sample Release Form in Section IV of this user guide, or [click here](#) for a Word document so you can easily modify it.) <https://mhs.mt.gov/education/Footlocker/SampleReleaseForm.docx>

Copies of the Student Checklist (See Section III., Student Materials, p. 42.)

Student-provided Materials:

Camera/cell phone

Pre-Lesson Preparation and Teacher Notes

Create a release form for your project, and print copies for the class.

Print copies of Wood, Handout 5, “Contacting the Narrator,” p. 69 and Wood, Handout 11, “Information Kit,” p. 81 for the class.

Print copies of the Student Checklist.

Create a master schedule for the classroom, to schedule interviews and access equipment.

Note: By this stage in the project, you will need to have a good list of narrators, have made decisions about where the interviews will take place, and assigned student groups. Students should conduct interviews in groups of two. (See Educator Introduction.)

You (or your students) should also have made preliminary contact with the narrators and gathered basic biographical information (see Lesson 4). They should also have conducted background research and developed a list of questions (see Lesson 5), have practiced interviewing techniques (see Lesson 3), and learned how to use the recorders (see Lesson 6).

Procedure

1. Revisit the topics of courtesy, respect, professionalism, and reciprocity.
2. Distribute the Student Checklist.
3. Have students follow up with potential narrators by phone to confirm participation, arrange for narrators to complete the biographical questionnaires, and to schedule a meeting time, using Wood, Handout 5, “Contacting the Narrator” as a template.

Oral History in the Classroom

Conducting the Interview *(continued)*

4. Working in pairs, have students meet their narrator at the assigned time and place and conduct an interview. Each student should have an assigned role: equipment operator and primary interviewer. The equipment operator can also listen closely to the interview and slip notes to the interviewer suggesting possible follow-up questions. The equipment operator should also be responsible for getting the release form signed. If you haven't already received a biographical questionnaire, students may wish to collect that information at the beginning of the interview. (See Section IV, p. 47.) If so, that should also be the responsibility of the equipment operator.
5. With the narrator's permission, the equipment operator will make sure to take a picture of the narrator.
6. Depending on the type of project, students may want, with the narrator's permission, to take pictures of other material (for example, military medals or other relevant artifacts).
7. Immediately upon their return to the classroom, students will write gracious thank you notes to their narrator and, ideally, provide narrators with copies of the interview for their own records.



Lesson 8: Sharing Your Research

Essential Understanding

We have a responsibility to share our research.

Activity Description

Students either create interview summaries or full transcripts and produce a final product that other researchers can use.

Objectives

At the conclusion of the lesson students will have

- Produced either a summary or transcript of their interview.
- Created a final product.
- Made their interview available to other researchers.

Note: Creating a transcript is incredibly time consuming. It takes even well-trained, experienced transcribers four hours to transcribe every hour of tape, and it will take your students much longer. It is a frustrating process and doesn't typically provide many opportunities for learning, unless you are teaching keyboarding. Therefore, most teachers choose to have students create summaries and indexes instead, and this lesson is written assuming that your class will produce detailed summaries.

Time

Varies

Materials

Footlocker/User Guide Materials:

Copies of Completed Summary/Index (See Section IV, p. 49.)

Copies of Interview Summary Worksheet (See Section IV, p. 51, or click here to download a version of the Interview [Summary Worksheet](https://mhs.mt.gov/education/Footlocker/InterviewSummaryWorksheet.docx) in Word.) <https://mhs.mt.gov/education/Footlocker/InterviewSummaryWorksheet.docx>

Classroom Materials:

Computers loaded with Express Scribe (<https://www.nch.com.au/scribe>), a free software that turns computers into transcription machines

Headphones

Student-provided Materials:

Recorded interviews

Pre-Lesson Preparation

Discuss the purpose of research—to add new information to the collective historical record. Note that it takes a long time to listen to interviews. To make the interviews more accessible to others, students will need to provide summaries and an index of the topics discussed.

Print out copies of the Completed Summary/Index for the class.

Print copies of the Interview Summary Worksheet for the class.

Procedure

Explain that the program Express Scribe makes the process of creating summaries and indexes easier by allowing students to easily start and stop interviews and to slow down the speed of the recording to make it more closely match typing speed.

Hand out Completed Summary/Index and blank Interview Summary Worksheets to the class (or provide access to the Interview Summary Worksheet Word document).

Discuss the model and give students the chance to begin. Have students complete the summaries as homework.

If your students will be creating final products based on the interviews, provide time and guidance as needed to complete the project.



III. Student Materials

Student Introduction

What Is Oral History?

Oral history is different from other types of interviews—those conducted by journalists, for example. Journalists (and other researchers) sometimes interview people for specific projects, excerpting relevant quotations and discarding the rest. Oral historians, on the other hand, gather interviews in their entirety to create a public record. An interview only “becomes an oral history when it has been recorded, processed in some way” and made available to the public—in a library or archives, or as a published transcript (Ritchie, 6).

Why Do Oral History?

Many historical sources only document the experiences of the famous and powerful. But the experiences and perspectives of ordinary people are just as valuable. You can learn some things about the Vietnam War by reading the biography of a general—but it won’t tell you what fighting in the jungles of Vietnam felt like to the average soldier. For that you need to hear from the men on the ground—and that’s what oral history can help accomplish.

How Do I Do Oral History?

The first obligation of a doctor is to “do no harm.” The same could be said for an oral historian. That’s why oral historians follow a specific code of ethics. It recognizes that

Narrators (the people being interviewed) own their stories. The narrator gets to decide what s/he feels comfortable talking about—and even after an interview is completed, the narrator gets to decide how s/he wants to share it with the public—or if s/he wants to share it at all.

Narrators hold the copyright to their interviews until they transfer those rights to an individual or institution. That’s why it is essential to get a signed release form. Without a release form you

have no right to use any of the material in the interview (and no future historian can either).

The narrator’s time is valuable. That’s why you want to make sure you don’t waste it. Courtesy requires that you come prepared for your interview—that means you have done your homework. You don’t want to ask the narrators for information you can easily find elsewhere. Before you schedule an interview, you owe it to your narrator to have conducted background research, developed good questions, and gained experience using the recording equipment.

By agreeing to be interviewed and signing a release form, narrators are giving the world something precious: their stories. That’s why it is especially important to express gratitude—before, during, and after the interview. Make sure to thank your narrators formally with a written note and provide them with a copy of the recording and/or product you create.

Out of respect for the narrators and the history being preserved, it’s important to make the material available to future researchers. That’s why it’s important to make the material you’ve gathered accessible by creating summaries or transcripts of your recording.

Your Work Matters

By recording an oral history, obtaining the proper release form, and preserving your work in a public repository, you will have done something remarkable. In cooperation with your narrator, you will have added to the historical record. If you’ve done your job well, not only will you have learned something new, but you will be providing an opportunity for future researchers to learn something new as well. Future historians will thank you for preserving information that would have been lost. A well-done oral history is a gift of scholarship to your community. It’s a gift within your power to give.



Vocabulary List

Closed Question: A question that takes only one or two words to answer

Narrator: The person being interviewed

Open Question: A question that takes more than one or two words to answer

Oral History: A recorded, in-depth interview, created to gain information about the narrator's (or interviewee's) past experiences—and reflections on events s/he lived through

Primary Source: A source of information about the past that was created at the time of an event or by someone who directly experienced the event.

Release Form: The form the narrator (interviewee) completes that gives the interviewer permission to share and use the material in the interview.

Secondary Source: A source of information created after the event, by someone who did not directly experience the event

Transcript: A typed verbatim (word-by-word) copy of the interview



Student Checklist

1. Your name: _____
2. Name of narrator (full name): _____
3. Interview topic: _____
4. Was the narrator directly involved in the event or a witness?
Involved _____ Witness _____
5. Date, time, and location of interview: _____
6. Has the narrator agreed to sign the release form and be recorded?
Yes _____ No _____
7. Did you explain the purpose and use of this project? Yes _____ No _____
8. Has your narrator been interviewed before? If yes, on what topic?

9. Have you completed a Biographical Questionnaire or a Life History General Outline for this narrator? Yes _____ No _____
10. What historical period or event will the interview focus on, and what was going on during that period? Be detailed with dates.

11. Why did you choose this narrator and period of focus?

12. Preliminary works consulted to understand historical context:

13. Topic(s) of interview:

14. Equipment information



IV. Resources and Reference Materials

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Oral History in the Classroom



Rubric	Beginning 1	Developing 2	Accomplished 3	Exemplary 4	Score
Background research	None conducted	Cursory research conducted	Consulted relevant sources	Conducted thorough research using a variety of sources	
Questions	Did not write questions	Questions were mostly “closed” questions or were not adequately focused on topic	Questions were relevant to topic, with a similar amount of “open” and “closed” questions	Questions were well thought out, included mostly “open” questions, and were relevant to topic	
Interview	Interview was cursory, no follow-up questions, poor audio quality, did not collect relevant information on topic	Interviewer was distracted at times, occasionally asked follow-up questions, collected some relevant information on topic	Interviewer was mostly polite and actively listening, asked follow-up questions; interview was mostly on-topic with generally good recording quality	Interviewer was polite, listened actively, asked good follow-up questions, gathered useful information in a high-quality recording	
Summary	Summary of topic and tape were cursory or incomplete	Summary of topic and interview covered some of the necessary information, but with poor organization and execution	Summary paragraph of topic is relevant, but summary of tape lacks detail	Good summary paragraph describing topic plus summary of every five minutes of tape	
Thank you	Thank you note and recording were not mailed or delivered	Thank you note and recording were not delivered or mailed in a timely manner, and/or thank you note was cursory	Mailed or delivered adequate thank you note and recording in a timely manner	Mailed or delivered thoughtful and genuine thank you note and provided recording to narrator in a timely manner	
				Total	



Suggestions for Project Topics

- Life histories
- A national historical event that affected the community (for example, the Gulf War)
- A local event important to the community (the 1964 flood, the 1967-68 strike in Butte, construction of the Libby Dam)
- A historical trend or federal policies that may have affected your community or members of your community (Indian boarding schools, Indian relocation, school consolidation, Conservation Reserve Program)
- Economic transitions
- Did your town experience a catastrophic economic event, particularly the closure of a major employer (for example, the railroad, or a mine, mill, or smelter)? Or has a new industry developed (oil and gas, for example)? Document how this changed the town.
- Was your town organized around a primary, unionized industry (for example, timber, copper, or the railroad)? Consider examining the role of labor unions in your town or the history of a particular strike.
- Childhood or teenage life
- Community celebrations (an annual powwow, for example)
- Military veterans
- A historical era (1950s, 1960s, 1970s)
- Institutions (Main Street businesses, schools, churches, civic organizations)
- Discrimination and the fight for civil rights in Montana



Sample Letter

Dear (Name of Potential Narrator):

We are in (name of teacher)'s class, and we are doing an oral history unit about (topic). We're wondering if we could talk to you about your experiences with/about (topic). We are particularly interested in recording your memories of (subsection of topic you will focus on in the interview). We would also like to look at any old photographs, letters, or scrapbooks you might have.

We won't need more than an hour of your time. Any evening or weekend day would be fine. Please let us know what would be best for you.

We have attached a biographical questionnaire that you can fill out and send to us before the interview—it will help us to save you some time during the interview, and help us ask more informed questions.

Our assignment is to (detail nature of final product). Because we will be preserving the interview for use by future historians, we will need you to sign a "release form" giving us permission to share your stories. We'll bring the form with us to the interview. We would be glad to send you a recording of the interview (and a copy of the transcript or final product) when we're done.

Let us know if this works for you, and we're looking forward to working with you!

Sincerely,

(your names)



Biographical Questionnaire

Please answer only the questions that apply to you or you feel comfortable discussing. Feel free to use the back of the form to complete your answers.

THANKS FOR HELPING WITH OUR PROJECT!

Name: _____ Email Address: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Place of Birth: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Name of Spouse: _____

Names and birth years of children: _____

Father's Name: _____

Place of Birth: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Mother's Name: _____

Place of Birth: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Military service, if any: _____

Arrival of family in Montana: Where? When? _____

Arrival in current county if different than above: _____

Occupation(s): _____

Groups or organizations you are or were a member of:

Briefly describe what your experience focused on during the time period we are researching (if applicable).

Return to (fill in school address):



Release Form

I hereby give, convey, and consign to _____ (name of school or organization), or anyone authorized by them, the absolute and unqualified right to the use of this recorded interview for such scholarly, educational, academic, and historical purposes as they shall determine.

This includes all legal title and interest in copyright in this (these) specific recorded interview(s) and most particularly the exclusive right of reproduction, distribution, preparation of derivative works, public performance, and display (including presentation on the World Wide Web and successor technologies).

I understand that full literary rights of this interview pass to _____ (name of school or organization), and that no rights whatsoever are to vest in my heirs now or at my death.

I hereby release and discharge _____ (name of school or organization) from any and all claims and demands arising out of, or in connection with, the use of such observations, memories, and experiences, including, but not limited to, any and all claims of libel, slander, and invasion of privacy.

Restrictions (if any) _____

I understand this does not preclude any use I would want to make of the material therein.

Date of Interview: _____

Date of Agreement: _____

Narrator's Name (printed): _____

Narrator's Name (signed): _____

Narrator's Mailing Address: _____

Interviewer's Name (printed): _____

Interviewer's Name (signed): _____



Sample Completed Summary/Index

Interviewer: Charles McLeod

Narrator: Emil Christiansen

Date of interview: December 7, 1987

Location of interview: Emil Christiansen's home, Bozeman

Recording format: Tape

Primary subject of interview: Service in World War I

In five-minute intervals, summarize interview topics in the order they occur during the recording.

Minute mark	Topic of discussion
0-5	Discusses military's attitude toward gambling and recreation while at Fort Douglas. Tells about clearing fields for camp with bayonets and shovels. While there, one man deserted to Mexico in order to evade the law.
5-10	In 1917, upon United States entry into World War I, Christiansen was activated and sent to New York for duty overseas. Prior to overseas duty, he had gotten married in Butte, Montana. His wife borrowed the money to be with him before he shipped out.
10-15	While in New York, his wife visited him, but he had to "sneak out" to visit her. Troops slept in tents. On Thanksgiving they were invited for dinner.
15-20	Upon arrival in France he was assigned to a "casualty" [medical] company because of his experience in a Bozeman hospital while a civilian. Emil wanted to stay with his own unit. He had enlisted with Company A in Bozeman, Montana but was transferred.
20-25	While walking along a railroad track he was picked up by MPs [Military Policemen]. The medical company he was assigned to was part of the Montana Guard.
25-30	While in France he had to take a medical course for three months before being assigned to a field hospital in the Argonne Forest. The field hospital had two doctors. Recalls telling a wounded soldier about the Armistice, who said he was glad and then died.
30-35	Describes experiences with German prisoners of war. Some of Christiansen's duties included the interrogation of German prisoners. The German POWs were glad to have been taken by the Americans rather than the French. Describes things he heard about gas warfare and states it is more horrible than he can imagine. After the war Emil served three years in the Montana National Guard.

Oral History in the Classroom

Sample Completed Summary/Index *(continued)*

- 35-40 Emil was “mustered out” [discharged] at Fort Russell near Cheyenne, Wyoming, and provided transportation back to Bozeman. Emil states he was a German citizen at this time and that when he married his wife also became a German citizen—something she did not like.
- 40-45 Returns to discussing experiences on the Mexican border. Talks about meeting Major George Stahl, a chaplain in the regular army. He met Stahl again in France.
- 45-50 Describes return to Bozeman. Emil went to work in the hospital because he was transferred to the medics upon his return to the United States following the war.

Write a summary paragraph, detailing the major topics this interview covered.

Interview Summary

Emil Christiansen was born and raised in Germany, but moved to Bozeman in the years before World War I. He worked in a local hospital and joined the Montana National Guard's 2nd Infantry in 1914. In 1916, Christiansen went to Arizona with Montana's 2nd Infantry to protect the Mexican-American border from Mexican revolutionary Pancho Villa's raiding parties. Shortly after the 2nd Montana Infantry returned home, the United States entered World War I, and the unit was sent overseas. In France, Christiansen served as a medic in a field hospital, where he witnessed the effects mustard gas and other war munitions had on troops. His officers utilized his German-speaking skills by having him guard German POWs. After the war, Christiansen returned home to his wife, Edith, and remained active in the Montana National Guard.

Interview Summary Worksheet

Interviewer: _____

Narrator: _____

Date of interview: _____

Location of interview: _____

Recording format: _____

Primary subject of interview: _____

In five-minute intervals, summarize interview topics in the order they occur during the recording.

Minute mark	Topic of discussion
--------------------	----------------------------

0-5

5-10

10-15

15-20

20-25

25-30

30-35

35-40

40-45

45-50

Interview Summary

Write a summary paragraph, detailing the major topics this interview covered.



Equipment Information

Oral history is a recorded medium—as a result, you need to know how to use your recording device to best capture the interview. This section will walk you through how to use the functions on the Sony IC Recorder provided in the footlocker to record oral histories.

- Find the “Hold • Power On/Off” switch, which is located on the left side towards the bottom of the recorder. Slide this switch to the right and hold it for about 3 seconds to turn the recorder on. Repeat the process to turn it off.
- Record audio by pressing the red “Rec/Pause” button. Press the same button to pause while recording, and resume recording by pressing the button once again.
- To stop recording, press the “Enter” button or the square, white “Stop” button located between the left and right arrow keys toward the bottom of the recorder. When “Enter” is pressed, the file will stop recording and automatically begin audio playback. When the square, white “Stop” button is pressed, the file will stop recording without automatically beginning playback.
- To listen to the audio file you recorded, press the “Enter” button when you are finished recording.
- You can use the “Scene” button to change the microphone’s input volume and equalization (i.e., the balance between high and low frequencies in the audio). After pressing the “Scene” button, you can select a different “scene” by using the left and right arrow keys at the bottom of the recorder. Press “Enter” to select a scene. Experiment with each of the five scenes to find the one that works best for your recording environment.
- Use the “Volume” buttons on the recorder’s right side to adjust playback volume.
- Subsequent recordings will add multiple audio files to the recorder. Use the left and right arrow keys at the bottom of the recorder to move between files and press “Enter” to listen to the selected file.
- To delete an audio file, use the red “Erase” button on the top of the recorder’s right side. Once the button is pressed, use the left and right arrow keys at the bottom of the recorder to select “yes” and hit “Enter” to erase the file.
- Files can be saved into different folders. Press the “Folder” button on the top-left of the front of the recorder and use the left and right arrow keys at the bottom of the recorder to scroll through different folders. Press “Enter” to select the folder in which to save your files.
- To transfer audio files onto a computer:
 - Connect the recorder to the computer with the included USB cable.
 - Once the computer recognizes the recorder, select the on-screen prompt to examine the IC Recorder’s files.
 - Click on the “Voice” folder, which contains the five different subfolder locations you can save audio recordings into on the recorder.

Oral History in the Classroom

Equipment Information *(continued)*

- Select the folder(s) containing the audio files you recorded and copy them onto your computer—either to the desktop or another folder you may have created.
- You should now be able to listen to your audio recordings using your computer’s media player.
- Once you are finished transferring files, eject the IC Recorder and unplug it from the computer once it is safe to do so.
- Turn the recorder off by moving the switch on the left side labeled “Hold • Power On/Off” towards the bottom of the recorder.

For more information, see the Sony IC Recorder’s instruction manual included in this footlocker.



Sample Student Oral History Projects

What Did You Do in the War Grandma?

https://cds.library.brown.edu/projects/WWII_Women/tocCS.html

Oral histories of Rhode Island women during World War II, completed by students in the Honors English Program at South Kingstown High School

The Whole World Was Watching: an oral history of 1968

<http://cds.library.brown.edu/projects/1968/>

“The Whole World Was Watching” is an oral history joint project between South Kingstown High School and Brown University’s Scholarly Technology Group. The resource contains transcripts, audio recordings, and edited stories of a series of interviews that cover Rhode Islanders’ recollections of the year 1968. Their stories are a living history of one of the most tumultuous years in United States history, and include references to the Vietnam War, the struggle for civil rights, the assassinations of Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert Kennedy, as well as many more personal memories. In order to make the site as useful as possible to secondary educators, as well as to scholars, the project includes a glossary (glossary terms used on any page are linked from the bottom of that page), timeline, and bibliography of references for 1968 and the period in which it is embedded.

Web-Based Oral History Projects to Which Your Students Can Contribute

Veterans History Project <https://www.loc.gov/vets/kit.html>

The Veterans History Project of the American Folklife Center collects, preserves, and makes accessible the personal accounts of American war veterans so that future generations may hear directly from veterans and better understand the realities of war. This site accepts interviews from students in the tenth grade and above.



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Additional Resources

Additional Oral History Resources

Express Scribe

<https://www.nch.com.au/scribe>

If you plan on having students transcribe their oral histories, you'll want to download this free software that turns your computer into a transcription machine. Once installed, the typist can control audio playback using "hot keys" on the keyboard.

Guidelines for Oral History Interviews, The History Channel <https://images.history.com/images/media/interactives/oralhistguidelines.pdf>

A History Channel guide for younger students who will prepare for, plan, and conduct oral histories. This PDF orients students on how to contact a potential narrator, research the appropriate time period, and how to ask questions.

Veterans History Project

<https://www.loc.gov/vets/kit.html>

Resources for educators and students, guides and tips for preparing for and conducting the interview.

Lesson Plan for Using Oral History from the Library of Congress <https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/oral-history-and-social-history/>

These teacher-created lessons use oral history recordings and transcripts available through the Library of Congress's American Memory Project, especially interviews conducted as part of the Federal Writers Project, 1936-1940.

Oral Histories

<https://www.ohs.org.uk/>

This UK website, run by the Oral History Society, provides practical advice on how to start an oral history project. Find

information on all the steps from planning the interview to what you should do once the recording is made.

Oral History in the Digital Age

<http://ohda.matrix.msu.edu/>

Oral History in the Digital Age offers resources for best practices, technical assistance, and essays and blog posts related to topics ranging from ethics and legal issues to microphones. Check out the "Getting Started" section for fantastic information!

The Smithsonian Folklife and Oral History Interviewing Guide Grades 4-12 <https://folklife.si.edu/the-smithsonian-folklife-and-oral-history-interviewing-guide/smithsonian>

This guide is designed to inspire students to turn to members of their own family and community as key sources of history, culture, and tradition. It features a general guide to conducting an interview, as well as a sample list of questions that may be adapted to your own needs and circumstances.

Tips for Interviewers

<https://web.archive.org/web/20170510184158/https://www.lib.berkeley.edu/libraries/bancroft-library/oral-history-center/oral-history-tips>

A list of nineteen suggestions to guide the interviewer through the interview process.

Oral History in the Classroom

Additional Resources *(continued)*

Resources and Lesson Plans from the Montana Historical Society

A variety of free lesson plans and resources are available through the Montana Historical Society's [Educator Resources website](https://mhs.mt.gov/education/index7), <https://mhs.mt.gov/education/index7>.

These include:

Ordinary People Do Extraordinary Things! Connecting Biography to Larger Social Themes Lesson Plan (Grades 8-12). This lesson uses essays published on the Women's History Matters website to help students explore how ordinary people's lives intersect with larger historical events and trends and to investigate how people's choices impact their communities.

Montana's Landless Indians and the Assimilation Era of Federal Indian Policy: A Case of Contradiction (Grades 8-12). This week-long unit is designed to introduce students to the history of the landless Métis, Cree, and Chippewa Indians in Montana between 1889 and 1916, while asking them to analyze historical and primary source materials.

Reader's Theater: Letters Home from Montanans at War (Grades 7-12). This three- to five-period unit asks students to work in groups to read and interpret letters written by soldiers at war, from the Civil War to the Operation Iraqi Freedom. After engaging in close reading and conducting research to interpret the letters, they will perform the letters as reader's theater.

Hazel Hunkins, Billings Suffragist: A Primary Source Investigation (Grades 7-12). In this lesson, student historians will analyze photos, letters, newspaper articles, and other sources to learn more about the suffrage movement as experienced by Billings, Montana, native and National Woman's Party activist Hazel Hunkins.

Blood on the Marias: Understanding Different Points of View Related to the Baker Massacre of 1870 (Grades 7-12). This

flexible learning activity challenges students to grapple with historical evidence and to better recognize the complexity of native-white encounters.

Mining Sacred Ground: Environment, Culture, and Economic Development on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation (Grades 7-12). This learning activity familiarizes students with an important and contentious issue now facing Montana's native peoples: whether or not to develop their reservation's coal and coal-bed methane resources.

Montana's Charlie Russell (Grades 1-12). Bring the Cowboy Artist to your classroom with eight standards-aligned lessons, biographical PowerPoints, and images of sixteen Russell paintings, letters, and sculptures.

The Art of Storytelling: Plains Indian Perspectives (Grades K-12). Designed to provide you and your students with an exciting way to incorporate Indian Education for All into your art curriculum, "The Art of Storytelling" includes grade-appropriate lesson plans aligned to the Essential Understandings and the Montana Art Content Standards.

Montana Mosaic: 20th-Century People and Events (Grades 7-12). *Montana Mosaic* explores twentieth-century Montana through twelve brief films that explore such topics as federal Indian policy, homesteading, and the 1972 Montana Constitution. Copies of the DVD were sent to every middle and high school library in Montana. User guides are available as downloadable PDF files.

Digital Projects

Discover a myriad of digitized collections (including historical photographs, newspapers, and C. M. Russell art) and online exhibits, such as "Montana and the Great War," "ExploreBig: Montana's Historic Places," "Women's History Matters," and "Montana's African American Heritage Resources." Many of these digital projects have associated lesson plans.