

Remembering the War

Veterans Oral History Project

Interviewing those who lived during a particular time period or event can make history come to life in ways textbooks cannot. The World War II generation is slowly passing on and with them, their accounts and memories of one of the most difficult times the world has ever known. Recording their stories now ensures we never forget the sacrifices and contributions they made.

Grade 3-12

Anticipatory Set: Ask students to think of someone in their family or in their community who lived during World War II. The person would have to be in their late sixties, seventies, or eighties. Ask them to write what they know about the person and what they would like to know concerning their experience during the war. (Introduction of this lesson should take place toward the end of the WWII unit so students can use their prior knowledge in developing questions and conducting the interview.)

Objectives:

- Students will learn how to conduct interviews in an attempt to record recollections of past experiences during a wartime situation
- Students will formulate questions about historical events, personages, etc...
- Students will develop a perspective of time and place
- Students will analyze and interpret primary sources to increase understanding of events during WWII

SOLs:

History and Social Studies

3.5, 3.6; VS.1; USI.1, USI.2; US II.1, USII.6, USII.7; CE.1; WHII.1, WHII.11; WG.1; VUS.1, VUS.10, VUS.11; GOVT.1, GOVT.17

English

3.1, 3.2, 3.7, 3.9, 3.10, 3.11; 4.1, 4.2, 4.7, 4.8; 5.2, 5.3, 5.7, 5.8, 5.9; 6.2, 6.6, 6.7; 7.1, 7.8, 7.9; 8.2, 8.7, 8.8; 9.2, 9.6, 9.7; 10.7, 10.8, 10.11; 11.7, 11.8; 12.1, 12.7

Direct Teaching:

1. Explain to student the meaning of oral history and why it is important. (information them that more than 1000 WWII veterans pass away each day. Without recording the stories of the WWII generation today, we will not have them to learn from tomorrow.)
 2. Explain each to them will find someone who lived during the war. The person may have served in the military or participated in activities on the homefront. The person may have been an adult during the war or a child with recollections from a
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younger point of views. Students will then interview persons using a tape player or a video camera.

3. Pass out the oral history project rubric and discuss with the students. The completed project should include a title page; notes taken during the interview; a map pinpointing the location or locations of the interviewee during the war; a timeline illustrating significant events in the person's life during the forties; a photograph or drawing of the person interviewed; a labeled audio or video tape of the interview (not to exceed 60 minutes); a signed release form; a biographical data form; a written reflection including basic biographical data on the person, interesting facts or memories the respondent reveals, and personal reactions about the interview; and the rubric which should be turned back in to avoid having to make copies again.
4. Students should develop a proposal for their project for the teacher's approval. The proposal should include the name of the interviewee, a brief description of the person's activities during the war (one to two sentences – was the person in the service or on the homefront?), supplies needed, and the proposed date of the interview.
5. Provide a copy of interview questions and have students write several of their own. Discuss various tips.
6. Have students choose a partner to practice interviewing in class. (Students can use the attached practice questions).

Check for Understanding: Practice interviews during class. The proposal and oral presentation will serve as an additional check for understanding.

Modeling: Demonstrate to the students how to conduct an interview by interviewing a student in class using the suggested practice questions.

Multi-modality: Auditory learners benefit from the oral presentation, the lecture, and the practice interview with partners. Kinesthetic learners benefit from the development of maps and timelines. Visual learners benefit from the map and the timeline exercise.

Independent Practice: Students will conduct their interviews with individuals who lived during the war.

Assessment: The attached rubric can be used for evaluation.

Oral History Rubric

Name: _____

Class Period: _____

1. Rubric	5	_____
2. Proposal	5	_____
3. Cover Page	5	_____
4. Interview Notes	10	_____
5. Map	10	_____
6. Timeline	10	_____
7. Photo/Drawing	5	_____
8. Tape or Audio of Interview	5	_____
9. Signed Release Form	5	_____
10. Biographical Form	5	_____
11. Witten Reflection (two paragraphs)		
*Grammar	5	_____
* Content	10	_____
12. Oral Presentation		
* Communicated clearly	10	_____
* Well Organized (discussed map, timeline, photo, etc...)	10	_____
Total:	100	_____

Comments:

Suggested Practice Questions with Students

Note: Have the students practice the first part of the interview by naming the date, place, and name of the person being interviewed. Afterward, they can follow through with their interview questions.

1. What is your name?
 2. Where and when were you born?
 3. Where do you live now?
 4. Do you have brothers or sisters?
 5. What are your hobbies?
 6. What is your favorite television show?
 7. Have you ever traveled to another state? If so, where? Did you like it? Why or why not?
 8. What occupation would you like to have when you get older? Why?
 9. Where would you like to live in the future?
 10. Who is your favorite singer or singers?
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Interview Tips:

- Prepare for your interview by reviewing notes on the war.
 - Have interviewee complete the biographical data sheet prior to the interview. For civilian respondents, only a portion of the form needs to be completed.
 - Try to avoid yes/no questions. Yes or no questions prevent the interviewee from going into detail with answers. Open-ended questions, however, encourage them to discuss answers in-depth which makes a more interesting interview and can lead to some fascinating stories and recollections.
 - Record an opening segment by naming the date, place, name of the person being interviewed, and the names of those attending the interview.
 - Questions written out beforehand are to provide guidance during the interview. Interviewers should remember to let the respondent tell his or her story. Not all of the questions have to be asked.
 - Do not be afraid of silence. Give the respondent time to think and answer questions completely.
 - Take notes.
 - Label the audio or videotape with the interviewee's name and date.
 - Have interviewee sign the release form.
 - Remember to send the respondent a thank you letter. Also, ask if the interviewee would like a copy of the interview to be sent to them when you finish the project.
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The National D-Day Memorial is an official partner with the Veterans History Project and the Library of Congress. Sample questions for the students have been developed by the Veterans History Project team, working in coordination with the Oral History Association. A set of those questions are included – one for civilians and one for veterans. Students may add their own questions to the following lists.

Suggested questions for civilian interviews:

Segment 1: For the Record

Record on tape the date, place of the interview, the name of the person being interviewed, and the names of the people attending the interview, including the interviewer and his or her affiliation. Ask the civilian what type of work he or she performed, and where he or she lived/worked during the war.

Segment 2: Jogging Memory

What is your name? For married women, what was your maiden name?

Age?

Where were you born and raised?

What was your family background?

What is your educational background?

What is your current occupation?

At the time of the war, were you in a relationship, married, or single?

What was your spouse/partner/fiancée's name and wartime occupation?

If married, when and where were you married?

Did you have children at any time during the war?

Segment 3: Wartime Work

Where did you live/work during the war?

What was your main wartime activity?

Were you employed outside the home? In industry?

Why did you choose that activity?

What kind of training were you given?

What kind of activities did you perform?

What was your specialty at work?

What did you like and dislike about it?

What special rules did you have to follow?

With whom did you work?

If you had children, was there child care at work?

If not, what arrangements did you make?

Were you unionized?

Were you an organizer?

How did you feel about the unions?

Did you develop friendships during training or the activity itself?

Did you have family and friends in the service or doing war work?

Segment 4: Life During Wartime

How did you feel about the war?

What were your family's or friends' feelings?

Did you live with family, friends, or coworkers?

In what ways did the war change your activities or habits?

Were you or other in your community treated differently because of your gender/ethnicity/race or other factors?

If so, how did you or other react?

What were some of the first changes in your life after the war started?

What different responsibilities did you have to assume?

What social activities were you involved in at work or after work with coworkers/friends?

How did you entertain yourself outside of work?

Did you or others get married during wartime? What were weddings like?

Did you worry about who would win the war?

Did you know anyone who was killed or wounded in the war?

Tell me about corresponding via letters or otherwise with friends or family in the service.

What effect did the war have on your physical and mental health or that of other you knew?

Do you think medical care changed because of the war?

What was your most memorable experience? Most humorous experience?

Have you visited any memorials or participated in any commemorations of the war?

How did your community respond to the war and civil defense or other homefront initiatives?

Tell me about shortages and rationing of food and gas. How did you cope with wartime shortages?

Did you have a victory garden or other ways to get enough food?

Talk about recycling of rubber, grease, or other commodities.

To what extent was there hoarding or black market activity in your area?

How did you feel about war news from newsreels or radio?

Segment 5: Postwar Experiences

How did you feel when the war ended?

What did you do when you heard the news?

How would you describe the ways the war changed lives?

Did you keep your job or continue other wartime activities after the war?

Is there one thought about your wartime experience you want to share with future generations?

Segment 6: Closing Questions

Is there anything else you want to add? *Thank the interviewee for sharing his/her recollections and have them sign the release form.*

The following questions were developed by the Veterans History Project team working in consultation with the American Folklife Center and the Oral History Association.

Sample Questions for Veterans

Segment 1: For the Record

Record on tape the date, place of the interview, the name of the person being interviewed, and the names of the people attending the interview, including the interviewer and his or her affiliation. Ask the veteran what branch of service he or she served, rank, and where he or she served during the war.

Segment 2: Jogging Memory

Were you drafted or did you enlist?

Where were you living at the time?

Why did you join?

Why did you choose the service branch you joined?

Do you recall your first days in service?

What did they feel like?

Tell me about your boot camp/training experience(s).

Do you remember your instructors? Any of the men/women you trained with?

How did you get through it?

Segment 3: Experiences

Where exactly did you go?

Do you remember arriving and what it was like?

What was your job/assignment?

Did you see combat?

Were there many casualties in your unit?

Tell me about a couple of your most memorable experiences.

Were you a prisoner of war?

If so, tell me about your experiences in captivity and when freed.

Were you awarded any medals or citations? If so, how did you get them?

Were you ever wounded in action? What were the circumstances?

Segment 4: Life

How did you stay in touch with your family?

What was the food like?

Did you have plenty of supplies/

Was there something special you did for "good luck"?

How did individuals entertain themselves?

Were there entertainers?

What do you do when on leave?

Where did you travel while in the service?

Do you recall any particularly humorous or unusual events?
What were some of the pranks you and others pulled?
Do you have photographs?
What did you think of officers or fellow soldiers?
Did you keep a personal diary?

Segment 5: After Service

Do you recall the day your service ended?
Where were you?
What did you do in the days and weeks afterward?
Did you work or go back to school?
Was it supported by the G.I. Bill?
Did you make any close friendships while in service?
Did you continue any of those relationships?
Did you join a veterans' organization?

Segment 6: Later Years and Closing

Did your military experience influence your thinking about war or about the military in general?
If in a veterans' organization, what kinds of activities does your post or association have?
Do you attend reunions?
How did your service and experience affect your life?
Is there anything you would like to add to this interview we have not covered?

Thank the interviewee for sharing his or her recollections. Have the interviewee sign the release form.

Oral History Release Form

To be completed by veteran or civilian.

I, _____ hereby give and grant _____
_____ School my recorded memoir for use in scholarly and educational projects as the school deems appropriate. I understand my materials may be used for exhibition, presentation, or publication. I also grant my absolute and irrevocable consent for any photograph(s) provided by me or taken of me in the course of my interview to be used, published, and copied by the school and its assignees in any medium.

I agree the project may use my name, video or photographic image or likeness, statements, performance, and voice reproduction, or other sound effects without further approval on my part.

I release the school, and its assignees and designees, from any and all claims and demands arising out of or in connection with the use of such recordings, documents, and artifacts, including but not limited to, any claims for defamation, invasion of privacy, or right of publicity.

ACCEPTED AND AGREED

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Printed name: _____

Address: _____

_____ ZIP: _____

Telephone: (_____) _____ - _____
