



VOICES OF EMANCIPATION

NARRATING



FREEDOM

IN DC 1862 THROUGH TODAY

How to Use These Lessons

Narrating Freedom: Voices of Emancipation in D.C. 1862 through Today is a mini-unit about identity, power, oppression, democracy, resistance, emancipation, and liberation in Washington, D.C. from 1862 to present. The unit uses engaging oral histories to build background knowledge about Washington, D.C. residents' fight for freedom directly from the mouths of people who were there and some who are still fighting for freedom. The mini-unit also provides opportunities for learners to practice reading, listening, and oral language skills.

The five lessons are primarily intended for upper middle school learners (grades 6–8) and high school learners (grades 9–12). However, some lessons may also be suitable for elementary school learners (grades 3–5). It is suggested that teachers listen to oral histories, review lessons, and scaffold lessons based on the needs and abilities of students, before implementing lessons. Additionally, teacher discretion is advised when teaching lessons. Some oral histories contain content that is graphic and language that some may find offensive.

This lesson guide includes suggested content and skill targets (learning targets or learning objectives), lesson activities, vocabulary, and supplemental lesson materials (after lesson plans). It also includes a culminating lesson that allows students to practice recording oral histories. Each lesson can be taught as a stand-alone lesson or taught in the sequence provided (suggested approach). *For a list of Common Core State Standards and D.C. Social Studies Standards interwoven into the lessons, please see Appendix.*

If you are a teacher in Washington, D.C. and you would like the narrator from Lesson 4: Barry's Farm to Barry Farm to visit your classroom, please complete the Narrator (Speaker) Request Form here: <https://tinyurl.com/NarratingFreedomSpeakerRequest>

We would like to hear from you: tinyurl.com/NarratingFreedomLessonFeedback



What Are Oral Histories?

LESSON PLAN

- Hook and Background – 10 min
- Do Now/Opening Reflection – 5 min
- Lesson Activity – 25 min
- Exit Ticket/Closing Reflection – 5 min

LESSON MATERIALS

- Printed copies of Do Now/Opening Reflection and Exit Ticket/Closing Reflection
- Printed copies of lesson articles/readings
- Printed copies of Homework

LEARNING TARGET

- Students will be able to explain, orally and in writing, what oral histories are, why oral histories are important, and how they differ from other primary sources.

1

VOCABULARY

Interview Guide: a document the interviewer prepares in advance of the interview to help articulate his/her agenda for the interview; it is an outline, but not a script

Narrator: the person being interviewed in an oral history

Oral History: interviewing people about their life experiences while recording the interview

(Post student-friendly definitions for students to refer to.)

HOOK

Teacher shares a short recording or retelling of a personal experience (e.g., [Space Shuttle Challenger disaster](#), [9/11](#), [Barack Obama's first election](#)).

Say: *Today I am going to share with you my experience of something that happened in the past. I want you to listen closely, and take notes (optional), because afterwards I will ask you to respond to what you heard me share.* *For story share ideas, consider using an audio from storycorps.org.

Teacher shares recording/retelling of personal experience. After the share, the teacher charts the follow up questions that students ask about the event. Teacher then tells students to think of an event from their own lives that had an effect on them.

Say: *Think of an event from your own life that has stayed with you. Once you have an event, give me a thumbs up.*

Have students partner up (think-pair-share or turn and talk) and share (30 seconds each) WHAT they remember, WHERE they were, WHY that memory has stayed with them, and HOW it made them feel. [Post prompts for students to refer back to.] Have students share out their events and record them on chart paper as possible oral history topics. Then introduce the Learning Target and briefly explain that today they will be learning about oral histories as important primary sources.



Tips for Teacher: *A great oral history and storytelling strategy is to use as many sensory details and descriptions as possible—sights, sounds, smells, touch/texture, etc.—to create a context, talk about feelings, share dialogue, etc. Ask the students how they felt listening to the experience you shared with them. Guide them to see the power of personal connections and relationships in understanding history and the power of stories overall.*

2

BACKGROUND

Oral history is distinguished from other forms of interviews by its content and extent. Oral history interviews seek an in-depth account of personal experience and reflections, with sufficient time allowed for the narrators to give their story the fullness they desire. The content of oral history interviews is grounded in reflections on the past as opposed to commentary on purely contemporary events. (*Principles for Oral History and Best Practices for Oral History*; Oral History Association)

DO NOW/OPENING REFLECTION

PROMPT: How do we learn or find out about what happened in the past? (3 minutes)

Potential Responses:

- Photographs
- Social media feeds
- Objects/artifacts
- Diaries/Journals
- Letters/postcards/emails
- Personal stories (oral histories)
- Newspapers/Magazines
- Books/Reference Materials

Review Do Now: Have students do a quick share on their responses. Explain that each of the above mentioned (or the ideas that students listed) are either primary or secondary sources. Primary sources are firsthand accounts. Secondary sources use primary sources to better understand the past, but are created by people who did not live through or experience the event firsthand.

(2 minutes)

LESSON ACTIVITY

Have students read a short article about the same event that the teacher shared (possible options linked above). Once the students are finished reading, ask how that account was the same as or different from the teacher's account of the same event. Chart on a Venn Diagram.

Then, ask students:

- 1) Whose perspective is shared in teacher's account? In the short article?
- 2) Which version had more sensory details?
- 3) Which version of the event allows you to ask questions that you are interested in?

EXIT TICKET/REFLECTION

Reflecting on today's lesson, why are oral histories important and how are they different from other forms of interviews?

3

Final Teacher Reflection (*optional to share with students*): Oral history is a way to humanize life events. Oral histories give voice to ordinary people who do not get the chance to write history, and often, have not had history written about them, especially not from their perspective. People's personal stories are often more tangible and simpler ways to understand the realities and impact of historical events and moments in time.

HOMEWORK

Think of a person you would like to interview. Draft a brief letter requesting to interview them. Then develop five questions you could ask during your interview.

LINKS EMBEDDED IN LESSON

- Space Shuttle Challenger disaster: <https://www.history.com/topics/1980s/challenger-disaster>
- 9/11: <https://www.history.com/topics/21st-century/9-11-attacks>
- Barack Obama's first election: <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/barack-obama-elected-as-americas-first-black-president>

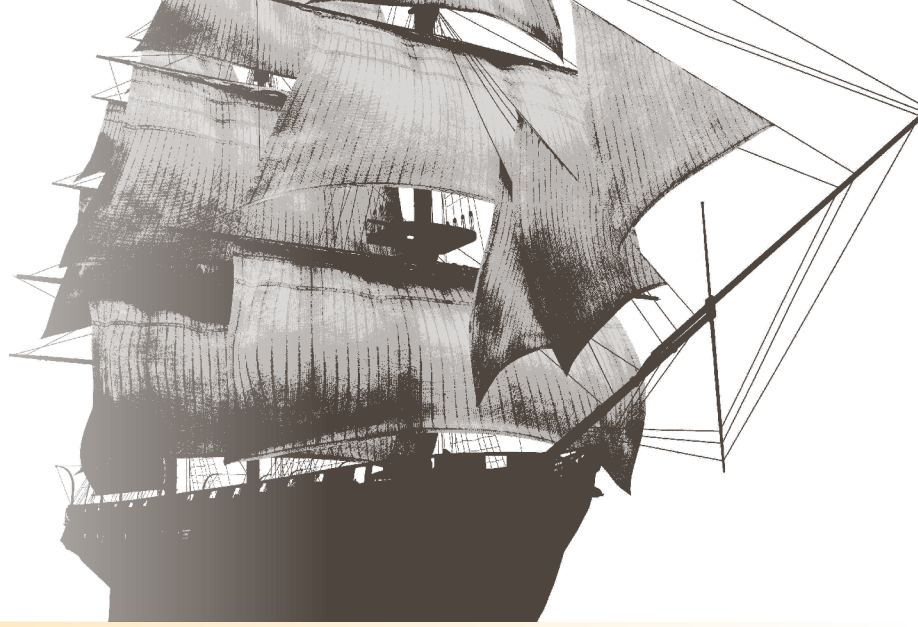
FURTHER LEARNING

Websites:

- DC Oral History Collaborative: <https://www.wdchumanities.org/oralhistory/>
- Oral History Association: <https://www.oralhistory.org/>

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The Pearl



LESSON STEPS/AGENDA

- Hook/Opening Reflection – 5 min
- Background and Audio – 15 min
- Partner Work - Questions – 15 min
- Exit Ticket/Closing Reflection – 5 min

LESSON MATERIALS

- Printed copies of Hook/Opening Reflection, Comprehension Questions, and Exit Ticket/Closing Reflection
- Printed copies of Homework

LEARNING TARGET

- Students will be able to use the following vocabulary words as they compose written responses to text dependent questions: *abolitionist* and *resistance*.

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VOCABULARY

- **Abolitionist:** a person who works to stop or abolish slavery
- **Oral History:** interviewing people about their past life experiences while recording the interview
- **Resilient:** able to become strong, healthy, or successful again after something bad happens
- **Resistance:** effort made to stop or to fight against someone or something

(Post student-friendly definitions for students to refer to.)

HOOK/OPENING REFLECTION

Share with students about a time that you displayed courage by taking a risk (e.g., leaving parents' home, moving to a new state or country, protesting for a cause, standing up for a person or group, etc.).

Say: *Today I am going to share with you my experience of displaying courage by taking a risk when I was afraid.* *For story share ideas, consider using an audio from storycorps.org.

Ask students to think of an event from their own lives when they displayed courage.

Say: *Think of an event from your own life when you displayed courage. Once you have an event in mind, give me a thumbs up.*

Have students partner up and share (30 seconds each) WHAT they remember, WHERE they were, WHY that memory has stayed with them, and HOW it made them feel. [Post prompts for students to refer back to.] Have students share out their events and record them on chart paper as possible oral history topics.



Tips for Teacher: *A great oral history and storytelling strategy is to use as many sensory details and descriptions as possible—sights, sounds, smells, touch/texture, etc.—to create a context, talk about feelings, share dialogue, etc. Ask the students how they felt listening to the experience you shared with them. Guide them to see the power of personal connections and relationships in understanding history and the power of stories overall.*

BACKGROUND

On April 15, 1848, a schooner (sailing ship) called The Pearl was the escape plan of 77 enslaved people living in Washington, D.C. It was the largest attempted escape by enslaved people in American history. Ironically, the 77 men, women, and children were able to make it aboard The Pearl undetected because white Washingtonians were busy celebrating the new democratic revolution spreading across Europe.

Today we will hear the oral history of Samuel Edmonson told through the voice of native Washingtonian poet and playwright John Johnson. Oral histories preserve the voices and memories of people, communities, and participants of past events. You do not need to be an eye witness to a specific event to have your perspective preserved. There are no written accounts from the escapees. Most of what we know about their actions and feelings comes from stories passed down orally through generations and finally captured in writing by John Paynter in 1930. Paynter was the grandson of Edmonson's in-laws.

Audio: <https://soundcloud.com/anacostiaunmapped/the-pearl> (3:56)

Optional: Play a shortened version of the [audio](#) (0:20–3:32)

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Summarize the oral history without judgement. Include the words *abolitionist* and *resistance* in your summary. What was the narrator's main point(s)?

Answers vary.

2. "This map was never drawn. It had to be memorized." Based on the details in the oral history, why might the map need to be memorized and never drawn?

A written record of their escape plan would be dangerous and could lead to them being caught.

3. According to the information from oral history, what were some of the challenges that the escapees faced on their way to *The Pearl*?

Unpaved roads, barking dogs, slave traders' pen

4. Which quote(s) from Mr. Edmonson's oral history best explains why the escapees were caught?

"The air stopped and they were motionless in the water."

5. How does Samuel Edmonson exemplify resilience and resistance in the oral history?

He escaped (and was captured) multiple times before he was ultimately free (he self-emancipated).

6. Despite it being unsuccessful, the escape attempt on *The Pearl* reignited the abolitionist movement. How might an unsuccessful escape attempt act as a spark for people to work to abolish (stop) slavery?

Answers vary.

EXIT TICKET/CLOSING REFLECTION

How does the oral history that we listened to today relate to the two vocabulary words *abolitionist* and *resilient*?

HOMework

[Re-listen](#) to Samuel Edmonson's oral history (as told by John Johnson). If you were conducting an interview with Mr. Edmonson, what three additional questions would you have asked?

FURTHER LEARNING

Article:

- Ricks, Mary Kay. August 12, 1998. *Escape on the Pearl* (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/1998/08/12/escape-on-the-pearl/b4ce3e5f-707c-4fad-a886-ed8071423485/>). *The Washington Post*.

Books:

- Conkling, Winifred. 2015. *Passenger on the Pearl: The True Story of Emily Edmonson's Flight from Slavery*. Algonquin Young Readers.
- Ricks, Mary Kay. 2007. *Escape on the Pearl: The Heroic Bid for Freedom on the Underground Railroad*. William Morrow.
- Asch, Chris Myers, and George Derek Musgrove. 2017. *Chocolate City: A History of Race and Democracy in the Nation's Capital* (https://books.google.com/books/about/Chocolate_City.html?id=C2Y6DwAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=kp_read_button#v=onepage&q&f=false). The University of North Carolina Press.

Website:

- April 15, 1848: *The Escape on the Pearl Schooner* (<https://www.zinnedproject.org/news/tdih/the-escape-on-the-pearl-schooner/>). Zinn Education Project.

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The Hidden Cost of Emancipation



LESSON PLAN

- Hook/Opening Reflection – 5 min
- Background and Audio – 15 min
- Partner Work - Questions – 15 min
- Exit Ticket/Closing Reflection – 5 min

LESSON MATERIALS

- Printed copies of Hook/Opening Reflection, Comprehension Questions, and Exit Ticket/Closing Reflection
- Printed copies of Homework

LEARNING TARGET

- Students will be able to analyze the following vocabulary words as they compose written responses to text dependent questions: *compensate* and *emancipate*.

VOCABULARY

Compensate: to give money or something else of value (to someone) in return for something (such as work) or as payment for something lost, damaged, etc.

Emancipate: to free (someone) from someone else's control or power

Oral History: a recorded interview of a person or people about their past life experiences

(Post student-friendly definitions for students to refer to.)

HOOK/OPENING REFLECTION

Share with students about time that you displayed resilience by continuing after failing at something (e.g., earning a good grade, improving at a sport, making it to the next video game level, etc.).

Say: *Today I am going to share with you my experience of resilience when I did not give up even after I failed on my first try.* *For story share ideas, consider using an audio from storycorps.org.

Ask students to think of an event from their own lives when they displayed resilience.

Say: *Think of an event from your own life when you practiced resilience and did not give up when something was difficult. Once you have an event, give me a thumbs up.*

Have students partner up and share (30 seconds each) WHAT they remember, WHERE they were, WHY that memory has stayed with them, and HOW it made them feel. [Post prompts for students to refer back to.] Have students share out their events and record them on chart paper as possible oral history topics. Before transitioning to the next steps, ask



Tips for Teacher: *A great oral history and storytelling strategy is to use as many sensory details and descriptions as possible—sights, sounds, smells, touch/texture, etc.— to create a context, talk about feelings, share dialogue, etc. Ask the students how they felt listening to the experience you shared with them. Guide them to see the power of personal connections and relationships in understanding history and the power of stories overall.*

BACKGROUND

Eight months before the Emancipation Proclamation was signed and more than two years before the 13th amendment was ratified, President Lincoln signed the District of Columbia Emancipation Compensation Act on April 16th, 1862. The D.C. Emancipation Compensation Act resulted in 3,100 enslaved people in D.C. to be freed. They were the first to be freed by federal law. Every year on April 16th, Washingtonians celebrate D.C. Emancipation Day. Many in D.C. see it as the start of a new life for their ancestors.

Today we will listen to the oral history of Fountain Hughes, a formerly enslaved person in nearby Virginia. Oral histories preserve the voices and memories of people, communities, and participants of past events. You do not need to be an eye witness to a specific event to have your perspective preserved. Mr. Hughes recorded an interview of his memories of emancipation with the Library of Congress in 1949. It is one of the few surviving audio interviews of a formerly enslaved person.

Audio: <https://soundcloud.com/anacostiaunmapped/the-hidden-cost-of-emancipation>
(7:34)

Optional: Play a shortened version of the [audio](#) (4:04–7:10)

(Note: Audio includes the n-word which some may find offensive.)

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Summarize the oral history without judgement. What was the narrator's main point(s)?

Answers vary.

2. According to the information from 4:25 to 5:00 what were some of the challenges that formerly enslaved people experienced?

They had no homes and little or no education. They were turned out like cattle in the pasture (didn't have any money or personal property).

3. Chattel slavery is the system that allowed people (and their descendants)—considered legal property—to be bought, sold, and owned forever. Which quote(s) from Mr. Hughes' oral history best describes the experience of chattel slavery?

"They sell us like they sell horses and cows and hogs.... They had an auction bench and put you up on the bench and bid on you same as bidding on cattle."

4. Why do you believe Mr. Hughes doesn't like to talk about slavery? Choose the BEST quote from the text as evidence.

"I don't like to talk about it because it makes people feel bad."

5. Despite the hidden cost of freedom, it can be reasonably inferred from the ending of the oral history that Mr. Hughes felt how about enslavement?

He says, "If I thought that I'd ever be a slave again, I would take a gun and end it all right away." He would rather be dead than be enslaved.

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Tips for Teacher: Consider asking students why an oral history from someone who experienced slavery might be particularly valuable as opposed to statistics or information collected by governing organizations during the era of chattel slavery. Also, consider asking students which groups today are important to gather oral histories from since we may miss their stories otherwise.

EXIT TICKET/CLOSING REFLECTION

How does the oral history that we listened to today connect to our two vocabulary words *compensate* and *emancipate*?

HOMEWORK

[Re-listen](#) to Fountain Hughes' oral history. If you were conducting the interview with Fountain Hughes, what three additional questions would you have asked?

FURTHER LEARNING

Article:

- Davis, Damani. "Slavery and Emancipation in the Nation's Capital: Using Federal Records to Explore the Lives of African American Ancestors," *Prologue Magazine*, Spring 2010, Vol. 42, No. 1. (<https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2010/spring/dclslavery.html>).

Book:

- Asch, Chris Myers, and George Derek Musgrove. 2017. *Chocolate City: A History of Race and Democracy in the Nation's Capital* (https://books.google.com/books/about/Chocolate_City.html?id=C2Y6DwAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=kp_read_button#v=onepage&q&f=false). The University of North Carolina Press.

• LESSON FOUR

From Barry's Farm to Barry Farms

LESSON PLAN

- Hook/Opening Reflection – 5 min
- Background and Audio – 15 min
- Partner Work - Questions – 15 min
- Exit Ticket/Closing Reflection – 5 min

LESSON MATERIALS

- Printed copies of Hook/Opening Reflection, Comprehension Questions, and Exit Ticket/Closing Reflection
- Printed copies of Homework

LEARNING TARGET

- Students will be able to determine the meaning of words and phrases by using the following vocabulary words as they compose written responses to text dependent questions: *displacement and resistance*.

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VOCABULARY

Displacement: the act of forcing people to leave the area where they live

Oral History: interviewing people about their past life experiences while recording the interview

Resistance: effort made to stop or to fight against someone or something

(Post student-friendly definitions for students to refer to.)

HOOK

Teacher shares about a time when they moved from a place they knew well (e.g., changing schools, going off to college, living on their own, moving to a new state or country, etc.).

Say: *Think of an event from your own life when you had to move, but did not want to. Once you have an event, give me a thumbs up.* *For story share ideas, consider using an audio from storycorps.org.

Teacher then asks students to think of an event from their own lives when they had to move, but did not want to move.

Say: Think of an event from your own life when you had to move, but did not want to. Once you have an event, give me a thumbs up.

Have students partner up and share (30 seconds each) WHAT they remember, WHERE they were, WHY that memory has stayed with them, and HOW it made them feel. [Post prompts for students to refer back to.] Have students share out their events and record them on chart paper as possible future oral history topics.



Tips for Teacher: *A great oral history and storytelling strategy is to use as many sensory details and descriptions as possible—sights, sounds, smells, touch/texture, etc.—to create a context, talk about feelings, share dialogue, etc. Ask the students how they felt listening to the experience you shared with them. Guide them to see the power of personal connections and relationships in understanding history and the power of stories overall.*

BACKGROUND

In 1867, two years after the Civil War, a white man from the Freedmen's Bureau purchased a 375 acre plantation from David and Julia Barry. Unbeknownst to the Barrys, their former plantation Barry Farms was transformed into a community where free blacks and newly emancipated blacks could purchase land to build a house. One of its founding residents was Emily Edmonson (see The Pearl [lesson](#)). In 1943, the land was transformed again. This time by the National Capital Housing. In 1943, a 432 unit public housing complex of the same name was built on the site.

Today we are going to listen to the oral history of Paulette Matthews. Ms. Matthews lives in the Barry Farms public housing complex and is resisting displacement by refusing to move until there is a plan in writing for current residents to return after the mixed-income redevelopment is completed.

Oral histories preserve the voices and memories of people, communities, and participants of past events. You do not need to be an eyewitness to a specific event to have your perspective preserved. There are no written accounts from Barry Farms' original residents.

Audio: <https://soundcloud.com/anacostiaunmapped/schyla-pondexter-moore-visits-paulette-matthews-at-barry-farms> (4:50)

Optional: Play a shortened version of the [audio](#) (0:15-4:28)

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Summarize the oral history without judgement. What was the narrator's main point(s)?

Answers vary.

2. "They (U.S. government) didn't reveal their plans for the 375 acres." Based on the details in the oral history, why might the plan have been kept a secret?

The Barrys might not have sold the land if they knew it would be used to promote black home ownership.

3. According to the information from 3:48 to 4:28 what is Ms. Matthews's vision for the new Barry Farms? How does her vision connect with the original plan for the land post-Civil War?
- (a) *Live in houses that have been well put together. Take care of the neighborhood better. Police their own area. Make sure that there is training available to help the people of Barry Farms.*
- (b) *The original plan was to provide a place where recently emancipated men and women could be full people and begin again.*
4. Which quote(s) from Ms. Matthews's oral history best explains how she feels about being displaced?
- "They're trying to uproot us... We are not plants, we're human beings." "This is my home and I want to stand for it." "We have the right to stay here."*
5. How does Paulette Matthews's oral history connect to the theme of resistance?
- Ms. Matthews is one of the few remaining residents who has refused to get up and go.*
6. What do you believe the history of Barry Farms tells us about what it means to be a U.S. citizen and D.C. resident?
- Answers vary.*

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EXIT TICKET/CLOSING REFLECTION

How does the oral history that we listened to today relate to the vocabulary words *displacement* and *resistance*?

HOMEWORK

[Re-listen](#) to Paulette Matthews's oral history. If you were conducting the interview with Paulette Matthews, what three additional questions would you have asked?

FURTHER LEARNING

Article:

- Williams, Juan. May 26, 1977. "The Anacostia Story: 1608-1930" (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/local/1977/05/26/the-anacostia-story-1608-1930/23952a70-5940-4650-b7bc-51726c933758/>). *The Washington Post*.

Book:

- Asch, Chris Myers, and George Derek Musgrove. 2017. *Chocolate City: A History of Race and Democracy in the Nation's Capital* (https://books.google.com/books/about/Chocolate_City.html?id=C2Y6DwAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=kp_read_button#v=onepage&q&f=false). The University of North Carolina Press.

Recording a Mini Oral History



LESSON PLAN

- Hook and Background – 5 min
- Do Now/Opening Reflection – 5 min
- Lesson Activity: Storing My Story: Recording Mini Oral Histories – 30 min
- Exit Ticket/Closing Reflection – 5 min

LESSON MATERIALS

- Printed copies of Do Now/Opening Reflection and Exit Ticket/Closing Reflection
- Printed copies of Homework
- Cell phones or digital recording devices (*optional*) OR Storing My Story written transcript document
- Internet/wifi access (*optional*)
- Student email access (*optional*)

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LEARNING TARGET

- Students will be able to draft interview questions and conduct a mini oral history interview.

VOCABULARY

Interview Guide: a document the interviewer prepares in advance of the interview to help articulate his/her agenda for the interview; it is an outline, but not a script (*optional*)

Narrator: the person being interviewed in an oral history

Oral History: interviewing people about their life experiences while recording the interview

Oral History Transcript: a written or typed copy of words that have been spoken during an oral history interview

(Post student-friendly definitions for students to refer to.)

HOOK

Teacher shares a short recording or retelling of a personal experience connected to being interviewed or interviewing someone.

Say: Today, I am going to share with you a memory from a life experience that is important to me. I want you to listen closely, and take notes (OPTIONAL), because afterwards I will ask you to respond to what you heard me share. *For story share ideas, consider using an audio from storycorps.org.

Teacher shares recording/retelling of interview experience. Teacher then has students briefly recall details of the experience shared. Teacher may also ask one or two simple questions to check for understanding.

Say: Think of a time when you felt respected and treated as important. Once you have an event, give me a thumbs up.

Have students partner up (think-pair-share or turn and talk) and share (30 seconds each) WHAT they remember, WHERE they were, WHY that memory has stayed with them, and HOW it made them feel. [Post prompts for students to refer back to.] Have students share out their experiences and record them on chart paper as possible oral history topics.

Say: Today, we are going to practice conducting mini oral history interviews as a way to share about ourselves and learn more about our peers. As we do this, we will practice deep listening to treat our life experiences as important events that deserve respect. OPTIONAL: For this activity you will practice responsibly using your cell phone or a digital recorder.

Then introduce the Learning Target and briefly explain that today students will learn how to record oral histories by conducting brief interviews. (Note: Please emphasize the importance of oral histories as primary sources and explain that oral history interviews are a way to humanize life events: oral histories give voice to ordinary people who do not get the chance to write history, and often, have not had history written about them, especially not from their perspective. Also, some students may not feel comfortable having their voice and story recorded. Please allow students to opt out of the recording portion, but not the interview portion. Have partner instead attempt to write down as much of the narrator's responses as possible).



Tips for Teacher: A great oral history and storytelling strategy is to use as many sensory details and descriptions as possible—sights, sounds, smells, touch/texture, etc.—to create a context, talk about feelings, share dialogue, etc. Ask the students how they felt listening to the experience you or their classmate shared with them. Guide them to see the power of personal connections and relationships in understanding history and the power of stories overall. **Additionally, for this lesson, you may want to create a consent form to send home to parents/guardians in advance. Allow students the opportunity to opt out of having their stories audio recorded. Students should only record their stories on their own cell phones or pre-assigned digital recording device.**

BACKGROUND

Oral history is distinguished from other forms of interviews by its content and extent. Oral history interviews seek an in-depth account of personal experience and reflections, with sufficient time allowed for the narrators to give their story the fullness they desire. The content of oral history interviews is grounded in reflections on the past as opposed to commentary on purely contemporary events. (*Principles for Oral History and Best Practices for Oral History*; Oral History Association)

DO NOW/OPENING REFLECTION

Prompt: Generate a list of questions you could ask a peer or older family member if you wanted to learn more about them (or to save time, have students read from a list of a pre-created questions and have them select which questions they would ask). **(3 minutes)**

Potential questions:

1. Describe yourself in three words. Why did you choose those three words?
2. Who or what is most important to you? Why?
3. If you could change one thing about yourself or your life what would it be? Why?
4. Who, living or dead, has had the most impact on your life? Explain.
5. What goals or hopes do you have for your future?
6. What is a memory or experience that has brought you joy? Explain.
7. Describe a time when you were a member of a group or a team. What did you like or dislike most about that experience?
8. What are you currently reading/watching/listening to/playing (video games or sports)? What do you enjoy about it?
9. What can your friends and family count on your for?
10. Describe a time when you overcame a tough moment or situation. How did you overcome it?

Review Do Now/Opening Reflection: Have students do a quick share of their responses. Write down their responses on chart paper and post in a location where students can see the responses generated, or type and project them. **(2 minutes)**

LESSON ACTIVITY: Storing My Story: Recording Mini Oral Histories

Part A (5 mins): Model conducting a mini oral history interview with a student or co-teacher using one or two of the questions students generated or selected as a class (you may also use a pre-existing example of an oral history interview). The model interview itself should be one to two minutes.

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1. Have the interviewer frame the interview. “This is an oral history interview for [enter course name here] at [enter school name here]. I am [interviewer name here] and the narrator is [narrator’s name here]. It is [enter today’s date here], and we are in Washington, D.C., in [enter teacher’s name here] class.”
2. Have the narrator state their full name, date, and place of birth.
3. Proceed with one or two questions (keep responses brief for the purpose of modeling).

Then ask students to quickly share responses to the following questions (point out these details if students do not make the connection right away and note that lesson activity documents follow this format as a support for students):

- 1) Who started the interview and what information did they state?
- 2) What information did the narrator provide?
- 3) Why is it important to have the narrator state that information at the beginning of the interview?

Part B (15–20 minutes): Students conduct interviews and record mini oral histories.

- 1) Either have students take out cell phones or digital recorders (this can be set up before the lesson starts) or turn to the “Storing My Story: Recording Mini Oral Histories Written Transcript Document.”
- 2) Have students work with a partner (or in small groups of no more than three if there is an odd number of students) and pick 3 or 4 questions from the list to ask each other (if time permits, students can ask additional questions). Have students ask each other for consent before recording.
- 3) Have the interviewing student conduct a 3 to 5-minute interview and then switch roles. Use a timer or count down to let students know when to switch. Remind students how to frame the interview. Make sure both partners (or each member of the triad) gets a chance to share.

Part C (5–10 minutes): Leave time for either a whole group or small group reflection and share. Ask students to respond to these questions:

- 1) What did they or their partner share as examples of important life events/experiences/memories?
- 2) What are some experiences they had in common with others?
- 3) Were there questions they wanted to ask, but did not have the chance?

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EXIT TICKET/ CLOSING REFLECTION

Reflecting on today's lesson, how do oral histories help us practice active listening and respect for others?

Oral histories give us an opportunity to deeply listen to someone's life experiences, which shows respect for that person and treats their experiences and memories as important.

HOMEWORK

Part 1: Think of a person you would like to interview. In a few sentences, draft an example of how you would ask to interview the person you identified. Then develop three to five questions you could ask during your interview.

Part 2: Use your cell phone or digital recorder (or a second copy of the "Storing My Story: Recording Mini Oral Histories Written Transcript document") to conduct a 10- to 15-minute interview with your narrator. Email the recording (or submit document) to your teacher.

FURTHER LEARNING

Websites:

- DC Oral History Collaborative: <https://www.wdchumanities.org/oralhistory/>
- Oral History Association: <https://www.oralhistory.org/>
- The American Association of University Women (AAUW): Resources (*How to Conduct Your Own Oral History Project*): <https://www.aauw.org/resource/oral-history-project/>

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Name: _____ Date: _____

Class/Period: _____

DO NOW/OPENING REFLECTION

PROMPT: How do we learn or find out about what happened in the past?



Name: _____ Date: _____

Class/Period: _____

EXIT TICKET/CLOSING REFLECTION

Reflecting on today's lesson, why are oral histories important and how are they different from other forms of interviews?

Name: _____ Date: _____

Class/Period: _____

HOMEWORK

Think of a person you would like to interview. Draft a brief letter requesting to interview them. Then develop five questions you could ask during your interview.

Dear _____ ,

I am writing because _____

Sincerely,

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

20

Name: _____ Date: _____

Class/Period: _____

HOOK/OPENING REFLECTION

PROMPT: Think of an event from your own life when you displayed courage. Once you have an event in mind, give me a thumbs up.

.....

Name: _____ Date: _____

Class/Period: _____

EXIT TICKET/CLOSING REFLECTION

How does the oral history that we listened to today relate to the two vocabulary words *abolitionist* and *resilient*?

Name: _____ Date: _____

Class/Period: _____

HOMEWORK

[Re-listen](#) to Samuel Edmonson's oral history (as told by John Johnson). If you were conducting an interview with Mr. Edmonson, what 3 additional questions would you have asked?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Name: _____ Date: _____

Class/Period: _____

HOOK/OPENING REFLECTION

PROMPT: Think of an event from your own life when you practiced resilience and did not give up when something was difficult. Once you have an event, give me a thumbs up.

.....

Name: _____ Date: _____

Class/Period: _____

EXIT TICKET/CLOSING REFLECTION

How does the oral history that we listened to today connect to our two vocabulary words *compensate* and *emancipate*?

Name: _____ Date: _____

Class/Period: _____

HOMEWORK

[Re-listen](#) to Fountain Hughes' oral history. If you were conducting the interview with Fountain Hughes, what 3 additional questions would you have asked?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Name: _____ Date: _____

Class/Period: _____

HOOK/OPENING REFLECTION

PROMPT: Think of a time from your own life when you were forced to move or forced to do something. Once you have an event, give me a thumbs up.

.....

Name: _____ Date: _____

Class/Period: _____

EXIT TICKET/CLOSING REFLECTION

How does the oral history that we listened to today connect to the two vocabulary words *displacement* and *resistance*?

Name: _____ Date: _____

Class/Period: _____

HOMEWORK

[Re-listen](#) to Paulette Matthews's oral history. If you were conducting the interview with Paulette Matthews, what 3 additional questions would you have asked?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Name: _____ Date: _____

Class/Period: _____

DO NOW/OPENING REFLECTION

PROMPT: Generate a list of questions you could ask a peer or older family member if you wanted to learn more about them.



Name: _____ Date: _____

Class/Period: _____

EXIT TICKET/CLOSING REFLECTION

Reflecting on today's lesson, how do oral histories help us practice active listening and respect for others?

Name: _____ Date: _____

Class/Period: _____

HOMEWORK

Part 1: Think of a person you would like to interview. In a few sentences, draft an example of how you would ask to interview the person you identified. Then develop three to five questions you could ask during your interview. You may use a blank piece of paper for additional space.

Dear _____ ,

I am writing because _____

Sincerely,

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Part 2: Use your cell phone or digital recorder (or a second copy of the “Storing My Story: Recording Mini Oral Histories Written Transcript document”) to conduct a 10- to 15-minute interview with your narrator (an older family member, friend, classmate, teacher, or member of your community). Email the recording (or submit document) to your teacher.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Class/Period: _____

STORING MY STORY: RECORDING MINI ORAL HISTORIES WRITTEN TRANSCRIPT DOCUMENT

Directions: Conduct a mini oral history by following the steps below.

A) Work with a partner (or in small groups of no more than three if there is an odd number of students) and pick three or four questions from the list below to ask each other. Circle the question numbers you intend to ask.

1. Describe yourself in three words. Why did you choose those three words?
2. Who or what is most important to you? Why?
3. If you could change one thing about yourself or your life what would it be? Why?
4. Who, living or dead, has had the most impact on your life? Explain.
5. What goals or hopes do you have for your future?
6. What is a memory or experience that has brought you joy? Explain.
7. Describe a time when you were a member of a group or a team. What did you like or dislike most about that experience?
8. What are you currently reading/watching/listening to/playing (video games or sports)? What do you enjoy about it?
9. What can your friends and family count on your for?
10. Describe a time when you overcame a tough moment or situation. How did you overcome it?

B) Conduct a 3 to 5 minute interview. Make sure all partners get a chance to share. Use the Oral History Interview Frame below to start and conduct your interview. If you are not recording the interview, please take detailed notes and create a transcript.

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Oral History Interview Frame

Name: _____ Date: _____

Class/Period: _____

STEP 1: INTERVIEWER

This is an oral history interview for [name of class] _____

at [name of school] _____

I am (interviewer's name here) _____ and the

narrator is [interviewee's name here] _____.

Today's date is _____, and we are in

Washington, D.C., in [teacher's name] _____
classroom.

STEP 2: NARRATOR

My full name is _____.

I was born on [birth month, day, and year] _____.

I was born OR I was raised in _____.

STEP 3: INTERVIEWER AND NARRATOR

Start the interview using the questions you preselected. Make sure you either record or take notes if you are the interviewer. Repeat the process until each person in your group has an opportunity to be the interviewer and the narrator.

STEP 4: INTERVIEWER

Conclude the interview by thanking the narrator for their time, willingness, and openness to be interviewed. Stop recording or transcribing.

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COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

Key Ideas and Details:

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.1](#)

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.2](#)

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

Craft and Structure:

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.4](#)

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.6](#)

Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts).

Key Ideas and Details:

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.1](#)

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.2](#)

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.3](#)

Analyze in detail a series of events described in a text; determine whether earlier events caused later ones or simply preceded them.

Craft and Structure:

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.4](#)

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social science.

Key Ideas and Details:

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.1](#)

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.2](#)

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.3](#)

Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain.

Craft and Structure:

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.4](#)

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including analyzing how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term over the course of a text (e.g., how Madison defines faction in Federalist No. 10).

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.5](#)

Analyze in detail how a complex primary source is structured, including how key sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text contribute to the whole.

D.C. SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARDS

K.4. Students identify and describe the events or people celebrated during U.S. national holidays and why Americans celebrate them (e.g., DC Emancipation Day, Columbus Day, Independence Day, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Presidents' Day, Thanksgiving Day, and Flag Day)

1.2.1. Understand when and why we celebrate Labor Day, Columbus Day, Veterans Day, Thanksgiving Day, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Presidents' Day, DC Emancipation Day, Memorial Day, Flag Day, and Independence Day

3.4. Emphasizing the most significant differences, students describe Washington, D.C., at the end of the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries.

5.5.b. Analyze the rationales for the Emancipation Proclamation and the emancipation of African Americans in Washington, DC.

12.DC.6. 5. Explain the Snow Riots, the Pearl Affair, and incidents of fear and violence triggered by mounting tensions over slavery

12.DC.7. 6. Describe the emancipation by compensation of slaves owned by residents of Washington, DC, and the emancipation of slaves in the Confederacy.

12.DC.10.1. Describe how segregation and discrimination limited opportunities for African Americans.

12.DC.22. 1. Explain the tension between gentrification and the interests of long-term residents.

Lesson Designers



NICOLE R. CLARK is an educator with more than twelve years of experience in middle school classrooms, a decade of which has been in Washington, D.C. She was a member of the 2016–2017 Leading Educators teacher leader cohort. Clark currently teaches history at Two Rivers PCS and is a member of their Deeper Learning Cohort. In 2019, through a partnership between Two Rivers PCS and the Smithsonian, she created lessons for the Smithsonian Learning Lab. Prior to her current position, Clark taught English and served as an Instructional Coach and English Department Chair. She is currently a member of the D.C. Area Educators for Social Justice network and has a rich background in facilitating equity-oriented professional learning experiences for classroom teachers. Clark holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Philosophy and Political Science from Trinity University, and she resides in Washington, D.C.



JESSICA A. RUCKER is an electives teacher and the Electives Department Chair at Euphemia Lofton Haynes High School in Washington, D.C. She is a member of the D.C. Area Educators for Social Justice network and was a writer-participant in the 2018–2019 Stories from Our Classroom teacher writer’s course. Rucker was a participant in the summer 2018 NEH Summer Teacher Institute at Duke University where she learned the “bottom-up history” of the Civil Rights Movement by a team of scholars, veterans, and educators from Duke University, the SNCC Legacy Project, and Teaching for Change. She is a native Washingtonian and community accountable scholar with more than a decade of youth development and community education expertise. Rucker is the founder of Our Curated Community Story—a volunteer group dedicated to teaching youth how to document and present community-specific narratives through curated walking tours or by serving as interpreters for curated community events. Rucker holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology, with a concentration in Social Justice Analysis, from Georgetown University, and she resides in Washington, D.C.

★ ★ ★
VOICES OF EMANCIPATION
NARRATING
FREEDOM
IN DC 1862 THROUGH TODAY

