



TRAVELING THROUGH HISTORY

A Transportation Storytelling Project





Introduction

Through generations, students all over the world have traveled to school, sometimes near and sometimes far. They went by foot, bicycle, bus, or train, and made memories and shared experiences during those times.

Traveling Through History guides students through an oral history project that provides insight to how the transportation landscape has evolved through the years. This is a chance for students to ask their parents, grandparents, caregivers, or older community members about their trips to school, what it was like for them, and how it's different for students now.

Applicable Grades

9-12

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this projects, students should be able to:

- Understand the basics of conducting interviews
- Formulate questions based on the interviewee's answer
- Create questions based on research of a topic and the person that is being interviewed
- Summarize information from a primary source

Applicable Standards Aligned System Learning Standards

This lesson plan will help students in achieving the following, as set out by the state's Standards Aligned System (SAS):

English Language Development

- **Standard Area - CC.1.5: Speaking and Listening:** Students present appropriately in formal speaking situations, listen critically, and respond intelligently as individuals or in group discussions.
- **Standard - CC.1.5.9-10.E (Grades 9-10):** Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks.
- **Standard - CC.1.5.11-12.A (Grades 11-12):** Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions on grade-level topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively

History and Social Studies

- **Standard Area - CC.8.5: Reading Informational Text:** Students read, understand, and respond to informational text – with emphasis on comprehension, making connections among ideas and between texts with focus on textual evidence. (Grades 11-12)
- **Standard - CC.8.5.11-12.H:** Evaluate an author's premises, claims, and evidence by corroborating or challenging them with other information
- **Standard Area - CC.8.6: Writing:** Students write for different purposes and audiences. Students write clear and focused text to convey a well-defined perspective and appropriate content.
- **Standard - CC.8.6.9-10.D:** Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.
- **Standard - CC.8.6.9-10.F:** Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

Time Needed

This curriculum could take up to three 45-minute class periods, depending on whether the interviewing is done during class or as a homework assignment.

- **Period 1:** Warm-up, transportation choices discussion questions, introduction to Oral History as a concept
 - Homework – finalize interview questions
- **Period 2:** Conduct Interview
 - Homework – edit interview (if desired)
- **Period 3:** Reflection questions and discussion



Lesson Structure

Warm-Up

1. Ask students how they normally get to school. To make this an active exercise, have students move to corners of the room based on the mode – walking, biking, driving, or taking transit – that they arrived at school that morning or the last trip they took.
2. Ask them how they got to school in the past. For example, students might have walked to elementary school but drive to high school. This can be continued as an active exercise as described above.
 - a. Additional discussion questions:
 - i. How did their modes of transportation change through the years? Why?
 - ii. Do they use the same mode every day?
 - iii. What are the factors that help them decide which mode to use?
3. Introduce the project and tell students that they will be learning about how transportation has evolved in our communities through generations using oral history.

Main Learning Activity

1. Explain to students what oral history is and why it's important to understanding history.
 - a. Oral history looks at people's own living testimony of their experiences. People who specialize in oral history often interview people about their experiences, further research what they hear, and analyze them. Oral history relies on memory and spoken word, rather than reading and existing written historical documents.¹ Oral histories are critical to understanding history and help to share unwritten stories through generations.
 - i. Discussion questions:
 1. Has your family passed down a story of community through oral history? What is it?
 2. Why is that story memorable? Why do you think it was passed down?
 - b. Tell students that the class is going to be conducting their own oral history project that focuses on how transportation to school has changed over time.
 - i. The following are some optional videos that can be used to explain the importance of or offer examples of oral history:
 1. Oral History at Home - <https://youtu.be/pxrkkhLExxw>
 2. Recording History through Oral Tradition - <https://youtu.be/k3WLTYP4lPI>
 3. The Oral History Project - <https://www.jfk.org/the-collections/oral-history/>
 - ii. Interview tips can be found in Appendix A.
 2. Have students conduct a pre-interview exercise:
 - a. Have students answer the following questions (a worksheet with these questions is provided in Appendix A):
 - i. Who are some of the people in their community they can identify to interview? This can be an older family member, friend, etc. at home, at school, or somewhere in their community. *Instructor note – Instructors should identify a few older staff members that can be available if students do not have someone they can interview. This is to ensure all students feel included in the project.*
 - ii. Ask students: What would you like to know about their experiences in traveling to and from school?²
 - iii. Have students write a brief paragraph to the person they'd like to interview, telling them about the project and asking if they'd like to participate in an interview.
 3. Interview (Use the guidelines in Appendix B. Additional interview tips are in Appendix C.)
 4. Post-interview
 - a. Edit using editing software, if desired. Information on editing software can be found in Appendix D.
 - b. Have students write a brief summary (1 page/500-1,000 words) on the main takeaways from the interview. Students should provide context for the interview, including who was interviewed, what was discussed, and any lessons learned about conducting interviews.
 - c. Have students give short presentations about their interviews to the class, summarizing their interview findings and lessons learned about conducting interviews.

1 http://dohistory.org/on_your_own/toolkit/oralHistory.html

2 Students will likely need help with this, but it's good to see if they can creatively come up with their own questions at first. See Appendix B for sample questions.

Reflection

1. Guide students through a series of reflection questions. These questions could also be done in small groups, with a report out from each group to the whole class. A list of reflection questions is provided in Appendix E.
2. This lesson may be extended in the following ways:
 - a. Have students individually present their findings to the class using a medium of their choice – PowerPoint, video, etc.
 - b. Have students create posters or a similar medium to hang around the school or during a night when parents/caregivers are at school, like conference night or a school event.
 - c. Use this series as part of a bigger research project on community history or transportation choices and options in the community.
 - d. Have students listen to a selection of StoryCorps stories (<https://storycorps.org/stories/>) and evaluate which ones are the most interesting, why the questions asked worked or did not work, and identify follow-up questions for the interviewee.



Appendix A.

Traveling through History

Pre-Interview Exercise Worksheet

1. Who are some of the people in your community you could interview? This can be an older family member, friend, etc. at home, at school, or somewhere in their community.

2. What would you like to know about their experiences in traveling to and from school?

3. Write a brief paragraph to the person you would like to interview, telling them about the project and asking if they'd like to be interviewed for this project.



Appendix B: Interview Structure and Sample Questions

Materials

- Recording device (phone, tape recorder, or recording app such as the [StoryCorp app](#) or [Zoom](#) – more information on technologies is in Appendix D)
- Paper or computer for reading the interview questions

The following offers sample questions for students' interviews and tips for ending up with a dynamic and interesting story.

The Interview

Warm-up

Before the interview starts, give the person being interviewed an idea of what you're doing. You might say something like:

Hi, grandma! I'm doing a project for school/class/fun to learn about how people got to school when they were young. I have a few questions for you, and the whole interview should last about 10 minutes. Does that sound good? Would it be okay if I recorded our conversation?

Introduction Questions

Once you get permission from the person you're interviewing, start the recording and ask a few introduction questions. You may already know the answers to these questions, but they help set the scene for others listening to the interview. Introduction questions could include:

- What's your name?
- Can you state how we know each other?
- Can you tell me a little bit about yourself, and the years you went to school?
- What schools did you go to when you were young? Where were they? (You can decide whether you want to talk about elementary, middle, or high school)

Interview Questions

Once you've covered the introduction, ask some questions about how they traveled to school when they were young. Ideally, pick two questions and be ready with follow-up questions. Make sure to really listen to their answers – sometimes their answers will lead to follow-up questions that you didn't anticipate, but that are really interesting and relevant to your project. It is also important to ask questions that elicit responses, not questions that can be answered with a 'yes' or 'no.'

The following are some sample interview and follow-up questions:

- How did you get to school when you were young?
 - *Follow-up questions: Why did you walk/bike/take the bus? Did you walk/bike/take the bus alone, or did you go with someone?*
- Do you have any specific memories of traveling to or from school?
 - *Follow-up question: Why do you think that memory sticks with you?*
- What was your favorite way to get to school when you were young?
 - *Follow-up questions: Why was that your favorite way? Was that also the way you traveled to other places around town?*
- Was there anything you did when you were young to make sure you were safe on your way to or from school?
 - *Follow-up questions: Were you scared of anything on your trips to school? Did you ever have an unsafe experience on a trip to school?*
- What do you think is different about getting to school when you were young and how we travel to school now?
- What did you like about the way you traveled to school? What were the challenges of the way you traveled to school?
- Do you see anyone traveling to school today as you saw when you traveled to school?

Conclusion

At the end of the interview, you should always thank the person for their time. If possible, also relay something back to them about why you thought something they said was interesting. This shows them that you were listening and that you appreciated their effort. A conclusion could be something like this:

Thanks for telling me about how you got to school, Grandma! I had no idea that you took the city bus by yourself in 4th grade and your parents were okay with it – that’s so different than what my parents would let me do today. I’m so glad I was able to hear more about your childhood and hope to learn more in the future. Thank you!

Editing

Your interview may not need edits, or you might not be using editing software. If that’s the case, then you’re done! But if you can/want to edit, make sure that the final product still has a natural flow to it and that any edits don’t take away from the storyline.



Appendix C: Interview Tips

All interviews are different and will reflect your style and personality – and that makes them great! That said, a few things can help an interview run more smoothly:

- **Who should you interview?** Any older adult in your community! Think about somebody that you're comfortable with, someone that is a great storyteller, or someone you would like to interview. Think about trusted adults in your family, at school, or other spaces.
- **How long should the interview be?** Plan on the interview taking no longer than 10 minutes. To make the interview 10 minutes or less, you should plan on asking the introduction questions and 3-4 more questions. Make sure to have your questions already picked when the interview starts and have follow-up questions ready in case you need them.
- **What should I do about awkward silences?** Be okay with pauses. You're asking people to think back years, sometimes decades, and it might take them a while to get there. Silence can show that you're listening and allow the person being interviewed to remember another part of their story. You can also edit out any long gaps when you're finished!

Check out the following for more interview tips:

- Best Practices for Conducting an Interview (Source: StoryCorps DIY): <https://storycorps.org/participate/storycorps-diy/>
- 5 Interview Tips for Collective Better Stories (Source: The Storytelling Non-Profit): <https://www.thestorytellingnonprofit.com/blog/5-interviewing-tips-for-collecting-better-stories/>
- How to Conduct a Strong Interview (Source: What Kids Can Do, Inc.): http://www.whatkidscando.org/featurestories/2007/maine_students/tip_sheets/INTERVIEWING%20TIP%20SHEET.pdf



Appendix D: Interview Technology

Recording an interview gives you the chance to try technologies you may not be familiar with. Here are some options for technologies you can use to record and/or edit the interview.

Recording the Interview

You don't need fancy equipment to conduct an oral interview. The following are a few technologies you could use to record your interview:

- Most phones have a "Voice Memos" function. More information on how to use this function can be found here: <https://www.imore.com/how-use-your-iphone-recorder>
- Zoom is a free video and audio software. It can be set up to record sound and/or video as desired.
- StoryCorps App allows users to record a story and, if desired, store it at the Library of Congress. This requires that the user downloads the free app on their phone. <https://storycorps.org/participate/storycorps-app/>
- 123Apps Online Voice Recorder is a simple online tool that can be used in any internet browser. It allows you to record your voice using a microphone and save it as an mp3 file. This program allows the user to crop their recording and delete silences. <https://online-voice-recorder.com/>

Editing Software

You may wish to edit your interview or add other elements, such as music or sound effects. The following are options for free audio editing:

- Audacity - <https://www.audacityteam.org/>
- Free Audio Editor - <https://free-audio-editor.com/>
- Ocenaudio - <https://www.ocenaudio.com/>



Appendix E: Reflection Questions

An important part of being a good interviewer is being able to look back and reflect on how the interview went, which parts went well, and what you would change for future interviews. The following are reflection questions that could be asked in a class discussion, in small groups, or in a writing assignment:

1. Which of your interview questions led to the most interesting stories and responses? Did you ask any follow up questions?

2. Was it hard to keep the interviewee on topic? If so, how did you re-focus the conversation?

3. How has transportation to school evolved in Philadelphia communities or other communities you discussed? What were you surprised to learn about how transportation to school has evolved in these communities?

4. Did your interviewee responses have anything in common with how you get to school today? Do you see similarities in how transportation has changed in Philadelphia?

5. Which sources would you use to verify the information your interviewees provided? Did you question the accuracy of the information provided? Why or why not?