

Educator Guide—Introduction to Oral History



NYS Next Generation Standards:

(If not in NYS consult local curriculum standards)

- ELA 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.
- ELA RF.4: Read grade-level text with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension.
- ELA R.3 Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

Supplies:

- Audio clips (on a computer, tablet, or phone)
- Digital Speaker
- 1-2 copies of student transcripts
- PowerPoint or printed images of narrators and reference images
- Drawing supplies (blank paper and markers, crayons, or colored pencils)

Description:

Students will learn about oral history and local history through listening to, reading, acting, and drawing audio clips from the Cooperstown Graduate Program's oral history collection.

Outline:

1. Guidelines for discussion (2 min)
 - a. Go over guidelines with students before starting activity
 - i. Guidelines
 1. Be respectful
 2. Listen closely
 3. Make sure that everyone has a turn to speak
 4. Do not interrupt others
2. Introduction (2 min)
 - a. Start by asking students about their own experiences—have their grandparents or caregiver or anyone else ever told them stories about the past?
 - i. Allow a few students to share examples
 - b. What is oral history? We ask people about their stories and they tell us about their lives. Relate this back to the students' experiences hearing stories from individuals in their lives.
 - i. Show students the digital recorder (or photo of a digital recorder from the Supplementary Images) that we use to record oral histories
 - c. Go over what we are going to do today—listen, read, act, draw
 - d. Emphasize importance of listening—tell students to listen hard and imagine in their heads what they are hearing
3. Icebreaker clip (5 min)
 - a. Show students photo of the narrator and share the name of the clip
 - b. Listen to **Clip 1. Getting a Television by Orrin Higgins** from clip list below
 - c. Instructor reads clip transcript from clip list



- d. Prompts:
 - i. What are some things you heard?
 - ii. What shows do you like to watch?
 - iii. How would life be different without YouTube, television, tablets, or smartphones?
4. Acting and reading demonstration—Riding Bicycles (3 minutes)
 - a. Show students photo of the narrator and share the name of the clip
 - b. Listen to **Clip 2. Riding Bicycles by Claire Beetlestone** from clip list below
 - c. Instructor reads, has a volunteer act out (can be a school aide perhaps?) This is an example that can be acted out in a silly manner to get students excited about the activity and demonstrate the potential
 - d. Round of applause for the volunteer
 - e. Discuss how volunteer acted out the clip and ask students how they imagined the scene. Note that activity is not condoning riding on railroad tracks, and perhaps relate clip to riding bicycle on a bumpy road.
5. Reading and acting (10-15 minutes)
 - a. Instructor selects clip from **Clips 3-8** in the list below and asks for a volunteer to read
 - i. Give volunteer a transcript of the clip so they can follow along while they listen
 - b. Show students photo of the narrator and share the name of the clip
 - c. Listen to clip
 - d. Have the volunteer read the clip to the class
 - i. emphasize that the students listen closely and picture in their head what is happening in the clip and how they might act it out
 - e. Ask for a second volunteer to act out the clip while the reader reads it once more
 - f. Round of applause for the volunteers
 - g. Repeat with various clips to give other students a chance to volunteer. Repeat as many times as necessary so that all interested can have a turn. You can have two students act out a clip at once, and clips can be repeated as necessary.
6. Listen and draw (10-15 minutes)
 - a. Distribute materials for drawing
 - b. Show students photo of the narrator and share the name of the clip
 - c. Show images of tractors, plows, and horses that students can reference as they listen and draw
 - d. Listen to **Clip 9. Farming with Tractors by Rodney Ingalls** from clip list below
 - e. Instructor reads clip
 - i. Can play/read clip a few times, allowing students time to draw
 - f. Once everyone is about done, gather class together and have each student share their picture, briefly explaining how it connects to what they heard
7. Students practice (5 minutes)
 - a. If there is time/interest, have students “practice” doing oral histories by pairing up and asking each other questions
 - b. Prompts
 - i. What is a show that you like to watch?
 - ii. What is a game that you like to play?



- c. Ask students to share what they talked about with their partner
8. Wrap up/evaluation (5 minutes)
 - a. What is oral history?
 - b. What is one thing you learned today?
9. Thank students for participation



Clips for Program

1. Suggested Introductory Clip: Getting a Television

Interviewee: Orrin Higgins

Date: 2014

Length: 34 seconds

I grew up right after the Second World War. We grew up poor and we were very lucky, I guess, to eventually have a TV in the home, and that made quite a change for us all, just having a television in the home. We were in there watching Tom Mix or Roy Rogers or Lassie or some of those other shows at the time.

2. Suggested Acting Demonstration Clip: Riding Bicycles

Narrator: Claire Beetlestone

Date: 2012

Length: 38 seconds

My freedom came when they gave me a bike. I learned to ride the bike. My neighbor, two blocks away, got a bike at the same time and I took him on adventures. I said, "I know a place that's fun," because we have balloon tires. I said, we'll ride the railway tracks. So we rode them, bumm-pita, bumm-pita, bump- it's lovely. Then I said, "Dicky, we've got to get off these tracks." He said, "huh?" I said, "Off!" So we got off, and the train came through. Dicky and I never said anything to each other about that.

3. Growing up on a Farm

Narrator: JoAnn Van Vranken

Date: 2009

Length: 20 seconds

My older brother was usually the one helping on the farm, but sometimes we had to help unload the hay too, so it's not like we were playing all the time. We did help unload hay. My father had to stack them. It was different than it is now as far as unloading hay.

4. Sheep Parade

Narrator: Dorothy Bolton

Date: 2012

Length: 38 seconds

They said, "The sheep were coming." And I said, "What sheep?" Well, they owned sheep, way up on the hill. It was probably two miles. They drove them down the road. It, of course, was a dirt road. Sheep, they were driving down the road, and they put them in a barn behind the house right there in the village. And you see sheep coming down the road, herding them like cows. It was amazing to me because I was a little girl then. I thought that was the biggest event of the year, having sheep come down the road.

5. Square Dancing

Interviewee: David Petri

Date: 2010

Length: 27 seconds

They had house dances, my grandfather was a square dance caller and he played the guitar and when they had a square dance they cleaned out three rooms in the house. Usually the dining room and the two parlors, the living room parlor, take the furniture out on the porches. He sat in the middle room and called the dances. My grandmother said you could hardly breathe the dust was so thick in the old houses.



6. Rotten Apples

Narrator: Frank Van Auken

Date: 2012

Length: 27 seconds

The canned goods never spoiled, but you get carrots, potatoes, and onions and that stuff and apples. Apples were hard to keep because if one started all the rest of them would go after awhile. We started eating up the apples that were rotting and as a result we ate rotten apples all winter long.

7. Bringing out the Beds

Narrator: Juanita Bass

Date: 2018

Length: 47 seconds

When we all got sick, my dad would bring our beds out of the bedrooms and put them all in the big front room in front of the old wood-burning stove. He had us all there so he could take care of us all together. Every day he'd look at you and see if you were feeling better, and if you were feeling better, you could sit up on the edge of the bed. Then the next day you could get out of bed and sit in the chair by the stove. The day after that you could go to the doorway, look into the kitchen, but not go into the kitchen. So, every day, he wanted us to feel better. At the end of the measles bout that we had, we could finally go out into the dining room, into the kitchen, and you knew you were all better.

8. Morning Chores

Narrator: Lynn Green, Jr.

Date: 2010

Length: 40 seconds

Well, of course, I started going to the barn when I was seven years old and I'd go in the morning. My father would get up, his standard line was, "We're late," every morning, we're always late. And we'd go down to the barn and, of course, we'd be milking cows. We had several milking machines. He did the milking, at first alone, when I was a kid. I would sweep the mangers out and put feed in for the cows. That was essentially my job, to feed the cows, and then I'd scoot up to the house, take a bath, and get ready for school.

9. Suggested Drawing Clip: Farming with Tractors

Interviewee: Rodney Ingalls

Date: 1977

Length: 47 seconds

When I first started farming it was just about the end of the horse age. After a couple of them ran away with you, you were happy to go back and drive a tractor all day. So the tractor came in with me, you might say. But my father always talked about how they always had quite a few horses on the farm. His pride was to have the best looking, fastest team around and to have a nice-looking carriage and so on and cording and all that stuff. So that was of his generation, yet the automobile and tractor and so on was of my generation.

