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## Oral History Lesson Plan

### (Grades 1-3) with upper grade level extensions

Students utilize a Newark oral history as a tool for learning about people, places, and events related to Newark. As students explore the interview process by developing interview questions, conducting interviews with their classmates, and retelling the stories they collect, they gain an understanding of the way their oral histories help us to learn about Newark and its residents.

#### Objectives:

Students will:

1. Understand that oral history is a way of gathering detailed information that helps us understand a specific time, place, person, or event.
2. Understand what an interview is.
3. Experience what it is like to participate in the interview process.
4. Understand that all of us have important stories to share.

#### Essential Questions:

1. How do historians learn about the Newark?
2. How can oral histories help us to understand Newark's past?

#### Materials:

- All grade levels Newark Public Library Great Migration Panels
- All grade levels Interview Worksheet (page 5)
- Lower grade levels Story Worksheet (page 6)
- Upper grade levels Interview Comparison Worksheet (page 7)

#### Vocabulary:

1. Historian
2. Oral History
3. Interview

#### Activities:

1. Ask students if they know any stories about themselves from when they were a baby.

2. Instruct students to share that story with a student sitting next to them. Select a few volunteers to share their story with the class.
3. Ask students how they know about those stories if they were not old enough to remember the events of the stories themselves. Help students arrive at the realization that someone else had to tell those stories to them.
4. Explain to students that historians also collect stories about events, times, and places for which they may not have a personal memory.
5. Reinforce that one way historians learn about these stories is by asking or interviewing people who experienced or remember those events, times, and places to tell them the story. Clarify that this process is called oral history.
6. Explain that students will do the work of historians and conduct an oral history. Students will interview each other about an event—specifically their first day of school in Newark.
7. Work with students to prepare the interview questions.
8. Explain that before historians can interview another person, they need to prepare for the interview and choose what questions that they want to ask.
9. Discuss what information students think is most important to learn from these interviews and what questions will allow them to acquire that information.
10. Help students think about different types of questions (i.e. Yes-or-no questions versus open-ended questions):
  - a. Example of a yes-or-no question: Did you have a nice day?
  - b. Example of an open-ended question: How would you describe your day?
11. Create a “question bank” by recording students’ question suggestions on the board.
12. Depending on your students and their grade level, assign students to choose 2-4 questions to ask the person that they will interview.
13. Give students’ time to interview one another and, depending on the grade level, record the interviewee’s responses on the Interview Worksheets
14. Instruct students to retell the story that they heard by writing or creating a drawing on the Story Worksheet
15. Bring the class back together to share what they learned and to reflect on the interview experience. Discussion questions might include:
  - a. What information did they learn about their classmate’s first day of school?
  - b. How did it feel to be asked all of those questions?
  - c. How did it feel to be the person asking all of those questions?
  - d. What was fun about interviewing someone in class?
  - e. What was difficult?
  - f. What would you try to do differently next time?
16. Have students keep in mind their own interview experience as they look at part of an oral history recorded by the Newark Public Libraries mobile display panel.
17. Tell students that the woman they are about to learn about migrated from Florida to Newark as a baby.
18. Display the picture of Zaudria Mapson so that students can attach her face to her story.

19. Read the panel about Zaundria Mapson oral history, which can be on the travel panel display.
20. Ask students to turn to their neighbor and share something they learned from listening to Zaundria Mapson story.
21. Facilitate a wrap-up conversation. Some questions might include:
  - a. How did oral history help us to learn about Zaundria Mapson, Newark and her family?
  - b. How did oral history help us to learn about each other?
  - c. How did Zaundria Mapson interview compare to the interviews the students conducted?
  - d. What kinds of questions do you think the interviewer asked Zaundria Mapson?
  - e. If they could interview Zaundria Mapson what questions would they want to ask her?
  - f. What other events and experiences, would the students want to learn about using the oral history method?

**Assessment:**

1. Review the Interview and Story Worksheet.
2. Listen to the interview questions students choose to ask.
3. Ask students what they were able to learn about each other from their interviews.
4. Ask students what they were able to learn about Josephine from listening to her oral history.

**Extension:**

1. Have students “publish” their work. Compile students’ “works of history” as part of a Classroom History Book, by binding together students’ Story Worksheets with a front and back cover or scan the students Story Worksheets and create a virtual Classroom History Book.
2. Upper grade levels - Being a Historian:
  - a. Using the Zaundria Mapson story as a sample of documenting oral history and the importance of historians documenting these types of stories, students will become “historians,” by recording a similar story of another Newarker who has migrated/immigrated to the city.
  - b. Instruct students to interview a person who migrated to Newark from another state or country about their first day at a school in Newark.
  - c. Have students record responses and write a “work of history” that tells the narrative.
  - d. Have the students compare and contrast their first day of school with that of the non-Newark native. If the non-Newark native is non-English speaking, have the students’ record or write an English transcript of the interview.
3. Upper grade levels - Being a Historian:
  - a. Using the Zaundria Mapson story as a sample of documenting oral history and the importance of historians documenting these types of stories, students will

become “historians,” by recording a similar story of another Newarker who has migrated/immigrated to the city.

- b. Instruct students to interview a guest speaker (immigrant or migrant to Newark)
  - c. Have students record responses and edit them digitally on Windows Media Player, Quick Time, Snow Leopard or other like program (with or without video).
  - d. If the non-Newark native is non-English speaking, have the students record or write an English transcript of the interview.
4. Upper grade levels:
- a. Instruct students to interview a guest speaker (immigrant or migrant to Newark) or instruct students to interview a person/classmate who recently migrated/immigrated to Newark from another state or country about their first day at a school in Newark.
  - b. Students will then compare the guest speakers or other interviewee oral history with Zaundria Mapson’s oral history using the Interview Comparison Worksheet (page 7).

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Interview Worksheet

**Question:**

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**Answer:**

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**Question:**

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**Answer:**

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**Question:**

---

**Answer:**

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**Question:**

---

**Answer:**

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Event: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

I interviewed \_\_\_\_\_ and learned about Zaundria Mapson

In both stories:

- Not everything was the same in both stories.
- The two people had similarities in their stories and some differences.
- Here are some examples of these differences:

1) In Zaundria Mapson story, \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_, but in \_\_\_\_\_ story, \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2) In Zaundria Mapson story, \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_, but in \_\_\_\_\_ story, \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3) In Zaundria Mapson story, \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_, but in \_\_\_\_\_ story, \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_