



Communication Skills Through Oral History Collecting, Presenting and Writing

Deirdre Hurley, Bayonne High School, Bayonne, NJ

Grade level: 9-12

Number of class periods: 6-8

Objective

Students develop listening, presentation, and writing skills while learning about a key event in contemporary history through person-to-person dialogue. Students identify and conduct an oral history with a family member, teacher or community member to learn how 9/11 impacted, and continues to impact, our lives.

Common Core Standards

Comprehensive Common Core Alignments at end of lesson plan.

- Reading Standards for Literature 9
- Writing Standards 2, 3, 4, 9
- Speaking and Listening Standard 4
- Writing Standards 1, 2

Resources

- [“Conducting and Oral History, Teacher Guide and Student Questions,” 9/11 Tribute Center](#)
- [“The Rising,” Bruce Springsteen \(optional: photographs\)](#)
- [“I Will” pledge](#)
- [Guest speaker from the 9/11 community](#)

Preparation

Discussion of the importance of honesty and trust in listening to and communicating another person’s story. Students understand that their interviewee is a primary source for narrating a part of the history of 9/11 and how it has changed people’s lives. For a homework project, each student created and conducted his/her own oral history by interviewing one or two people about their experiences on 9/11/01.

Activity

Each student presented the oral history of at least one family member’s memory of 9/11/01. We then reflected on the oral history process as well as what the students learned. We went over a brief history of 9/11, listened to songs and albums such as “The Rising,” and openly asked and answered questions. We prepared and sent questions to a guest interviewee who would be visiting our class. During the visit, the interviewee’s 9/11 story was shared in our classroom and students asked additional questions.

Assessment/Reflection

Students participated in class discussions and wrote a personal reflection of what the experience of conducting an oral history meant to them and if/how it influenced their understanding of this tragic event.

Optional Project

The students’ experience culminated in a trip to the Tribute Center and 9/11 Memorial.

Students were also given the option to create and share an “I Will” pledge for the program created by *9/11 Day of Service*.



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Common Core Alignments

This lesson was written for the 9th-10th grade level. However, this lesson can easily be adjusted for use in an upper-level class. Student assessments and expectation may vary depending upon grade level and ability.

Reading Standards for Literature

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas (Grades 9-10)

Standard 9: Analyze how an author draws on and transforms source material in a specific work

- Students will analyze how songs and photographs, including Bruce Springsteen's "The Rising" have drawn on primary source material in their treatment of the legacy of September 11.

Writing Standards

Text Types and Purposes (Grades 9-12)

Standard 2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

- Students will be compiling their own oral histories and will be using their interviewee's stories to compose an informative text and will effectively select, organize, and analyze the content of their interview in order to present information clearly and accurately.

Standard 3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

- Students will be using their interviews to conduct a narrative storytelling of the legacy of September 11th in the lives of the American people today.

Production and Distribution of Writing (Grades 9-12)

Standard 4: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

- Students will work to ensure that their oral history project conforms to the teacher's task and purpose and is appropriate for an audience of their peers.

Research to Build and Present Knowledge (Grades 9-12)

Standard 9: Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

- Students will be using songs, photographs, as well as their own and their peers' findings in their oral history projects to further and deepen their understanding of the legacy of September 11th.

Speaking and Listening Standards

Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas

Standard 4: Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.

- Students will be presenting their findings and reports on their oral history projects to the rest of the class and will do so in a way that their peers as well as any others who may be listening can clearly understand the organization and development of their ideas.

Language Standards

Conventions of Standard English

Standard 1: Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar usage when writing or speaking

Standard 2: Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling.

- Students will be expected to adhere to the conventions of standard English both in their writing and speech.