Oral History Connecting the Past with the Present: A Secondary Social Studies United States History Curriculum

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Abstract

In June and November of 2013, I had the opportunity to spend a total of three weeks with one of the most incredible people in my life: my grandmother. My grandmother, Aird Stewart Sher Chung, was born in 1927 and has had a fascinating life that has spanned the last eight decades. It was imperative for someone in the family to record her story, a responsibility that fell to me. She was eager to share her stories and we discussed everything from her seven children to major historical events that she lived through. Throughout this process, as I have learned everything about my grandmother and my family, I have learned a lot about myself.

This experience is what inspired the development of a secondary (7th-12th grades) US History curriculum focused on oral histories. The intended audience is secondary social studies teachers who are responsible for planning and implementing history curriculum in their classrooms. Additionally, curriculum designers and education policy experts could benefit from understanding the importance of oral history and integrate it in social studies classes in the future. The curriculum is made up of three parts: an overview, themes of US History and other yearlong projects, and oral history resources with excerpts from my grandmother’s story broken down by US History units.
Curriculum Overview

In June and November of 2013, I had the opportunity to spend a total of three weeks with one of the most incredible people in my life: my grandmother. My grandmother, Aird Stewart Sher Chung, was born in 1927 and has had a fascinating life that has spanned the last eight decades. It was imperative for someone in the family to record her story, a responsibility that fell to me. She was eager to share her stories and we discussed everything from her seven children to major historical events that she lived through. Throughout this process, as I have learned everything about my grandmother and my family, I have learned a lot about myself.

This experience is what inspired the development of a secondary (7th-12th grades) US History curriculum focused on oral histories. The intended audience is secondary social studies teachers who are responsible for planning and implementing history curriculum in their classrooms. Additionally, curriculum designers and education policy experts could benefit from understanding the importance of oral history and integrate it in social studies classes in the future.

Importance of Oral Histories

Oral history can connect students to the past by bringing history to life. It provides a non-dominant perspective, especially on historical events, that is often missing in today’s social studies classes. In this curriculum, as students their own interviews, they will develop a personal narrative to history while making connections to the present day and their own lives. As seen in some of the resources on the following pages, recording oral histories is one of the most important responsibilities for preserving the past; every individual has a perspective and story to share. History is not to only be learned within the walls of a classroom. This curriculum is designed to link students to the past, apply social studies outside of the classroom, spark student
interest, and most importantly, give students an understanding of the world around them, as well as themselves.

**Literature Review: Existing Curricula**

The existing oral history curricula are limited, despite large amounts of oral history resources. There are very few that claim to be an “oral history curriculum” and of those that do, they focus on one particular culture/race or are meant to be a unit over the course of about two weeks, rather than oral history framing the entire class. Therefore, this curriculum fills the gap in oral history education by spanning the full length of a yearlong class and covering all aspects of the content. At the same time, most of the curricula are similar in their recommendations for projects, for example, students conducting their own oral history interviews.

The most holistic curriculum is titled *Tell Me Your Stories* and is sponsored by the Living Legacies Historical Foundation (“Tell Me Your Stories,” 2012). It is an online resource that outlines a ten-day curriculum complete with supporting materials, sample projects, and frequently asked question. Their curriculum seeks to be one that “involves students from middle school through college with their family and community” (“Tell Me Your Stories,” 2012). That mission is very much inline with this curriculum. Their ten-day curriculum outline begins with “What is Oral History?” then gives students information about conducting interviews. At the same time, students practice interviewing peers and research oral histories in class, which takes four of the ten class periods. The culminating project is a family elder interview, which is conducted over the final three class periods. Of all the oral history curricula, *Tell Me Your Stories* is the only national source. While *Tell Me Your Stories* is similar to this curriculum in mission and projects, it is different in the scope and resources.
Rather than a national policy, most oral history curricula are recommended to schools by states. Typically, these curricula consist of recommendations rather than details about content and pedagogy. The best example appears in an article by Kathryn Walbert from Learn NC, a program of the University of North Carolina that supports K-12 education in North Carolina (Walbert, 2013). This curriculum recommendation is a starting point for teachers but is not very detailed. These recommendations span all of K-12 and therefore feature differentiation by age. For example, the recommendations include “making the distant relevant” by listening to oral histories to make historical events more “real and urgent,” family history projects (such as the one detailed in this curriculum), and one extended project in which students reach out to their community to interview several people about the same event (Walbert, 2013). The high school recommendations are similar but take it a step further to expose students to diverse viewpoints, conduct life history interviews with a term paper element, and present in class as well as outside of class. While these recommendations are powerful in theory, it is unclear whether teachers in North Carolina follow these recommendations or even know that they exist.

In addition to the recommendations from researchers at the University of North Carolina, there are quite a few oral history sources that come from public universities, often from specific oral history departments. The top source in this field is from the Columbia University Center for Oral History and is titled *The Telling Lives Oral History Curriculum Guide*, which was developed in partnership with the New York University Child Study Center and support form the ChevronTexaco Foundation and the New York Times 9/11 Neediest Fund (Albarelli & Starecheski, 2005). Their oral history curriculum is extremely detailed and offers a lot of insights. More specifically, the curriculum defines oral history, details how it looks in the classroom, suggests how to implement it, and gives recommendations of how to use interviews.
However, there is only one section of one chapter that discusses oral history resources that can be used in the classroom. Instead, the majority of the information available in the curriculum serves an academic purpose rather than being applicable to teachers.

The last kind of source that is prevalent in oral history literature is curricula that are developed for specific races or cultures. For example, the Filipino American National Historical Society features summaries of five different curricula online and if teachers are interested, they can acquire these sources by email (“Oral Histories as Curriculum,” 2013). Although they claim this resource as a “curriculum,” it is more like a list of resources and does not offer suggestions for application in the classroom. Therefore, this source is pretty limited in scope and does not have enough resources to be directly implemented into a classroom.

This oral history curriculum fills the gap in the literature by providing numerous resources that is directly related to class content, offering suggestions for application in the classroom, and outlining possible assignments and activities. Furthermore, it covers multiple cultures and races and can be implemented across the country, not just to specific states.

**Outline of Oral History Curriculum**

This oral history curriculum is designed for the second half of a United States History class. In most American public schools, US History is divided into two parts: pre- and post-Civil War. Although oral histories can be incorporated into any class, this curriculum is best fit for the second half of US History; there are more resources now that can support the preservation of oral histories. One of the further purposes of this curriculum is to relate history to students’ lives, therefore conveying the importance of oral history as recorded history. This curriculum seeks to do that through interviews with a parent, guardian, grandparent, friend, or any other adult who
has lived through the historical events that compose recent US History. These assignments are detailed in the section titled “Yearlong Projects.”

This curriculum begins with a discussion of the overarching themes of US History. For teachers, these themes can be integrated into the “essential questions” in the lesson plan. The next section of the curriculum outlines how to conduct oral history interviews and other instructions that should be given at the beginning of the school year before launching into the content of the class. Next, as mentioned previously, there is a section with ideas for yearlong projects. The rest of the curriculum is made up of oral history resources and examples for each unit. As with any curriculum, the assumption is that teachers can adapt parts that best fit their individual classroom.

Unit Plans

This curriculum is a synthesis of unit plans and history standards from the District of Columbia, Louisiana, Nebraska, and California. These states (and the District) are used because of their geographic locations in each of the four regions of the United States: East, South, Midwest, and West. Furthermore, the four places are diverse in their educational policies and student demographics. In drawing from four very different states, this curriculum should have reciprocity in all states. Each unit has a thematic title and is detailed by the dates it spans. The units (including titles, dates, and key terms/phrases) that are detailed in this curriculum are largely drawn from DC and Louisiana’s curricula because they are closely aligned and are made public online.

Common Core Aligned

The Common Core State Standards Initiative provides standards for core conceptual understandings by subject and grade. As of November 2013, 45 states, including the District of
Columbia and the four territories, have adopted Common Core Standards (“In The States,” 2013). To be aligned with Common Core is to be aligned with the next generation of education policy. Although history content standards are not yet developed, Common Core has outlined “Common Core Reading for Literacy in Social Studies Standards” and “Common Core Writing for Literacy in Social Studies Standards” (“Common Core,” 2010). Most relevant to this curriculum are the following reading standards:

1. “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.”
2. “Evaluate the authors’ differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors’ claims, reasoning, and evidence.”
3. “Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g. visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem” (“Common Core,” 2010).

In addition to this list, there are writing standards that require students to produce clear and coherent writing, practice multiple types of writing, utilize various forms of technology, conduct research, and cite textual evidence to support their answers (“Common Core,” 2010). This oral history curriculum requires students to hone these skills and develop work that is aligned with the Common Core Standards. In summary, this oral history curriculum is aligned with the key tenets of the Common Core Social Studies Standards, which also ensures reciprocity between states.

Resources and Examples

Each unit includes oral history resources and examples of interviews with my grandmother. The point of integrating my grandmother’s story is to provide an example; in my own class, this is a method through which I can connect with my students. Incorporating the teacher’s family’s oral history is one of the ways in which a relationship can be established with students while avoiding being too personal. I encourage the teachers that use this curriculum to
follow the template of my grandmother’s story to adapt it to their own family history.

Alternatively, the stories from my grandmother are great examples of the richness of oral history and intended to be shared; teachers should share them with their students as they see fit.
Themes of US History
(Essential Questions)

These questions highlight the themes of United States history. Teachers can use these in a few ways: distribute the questions to students at the beginning of the year, post them in the classroom, use them as essential questions in lesson plans, or students can adapt them to be interview questions.

How has the United States changed over time?

What can the past tell us about the present?

Martin Luther King Jr. said, “the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice.” How can this apply to United States history?

How has technology changed the United States?

How did the wars influence history?

How has globalization influenced America?

What is the American identity? How do you define it and how well is it aligned with your personal history?

How have the demographics of America changed over time? How has that influenced American culture, religion, and diversity?

What are the effects of capitalism and how has it influenced the United States?

What is the role of citizens in the American democracy and how has it changed over time?

How have American politics changed over time? What is the role of the government in the United States?

What are the biggest reforms that America has gone through and how did they shape the country/world?

What is the role of the United States in foreign policy?
How to Conduct Oral History Interviews

The best way for students to engage and understand oral histories is for them to conduct their own. This can be done with any adult in their life: a parent, grandparent, guardian, friend, or relative, just to name a few. At the beginning of the year, students must be made aware of this assignment in order to plan accordingly. Additionally, they need time to learn the basics of how to conduct oral history interviews. In conducting these interviews, students will also develop skills allowing them to be critical of the oral history sources that they will be exposed to over the course of the semester. Of all of the components in this curriculum, this is the one in which the most care should be taken to adapt it to the teacher’s individual school and classroom. The oral history interviews that students engage in will vary widely based on culture and socioeconomic background. It is imperative for teachers to be aware of this when assigning the oral history interviews.

The first step, and most important, is to assist students as they identify their interviewee. It is recommended that students choose someone over the age of 50 so that there is more historical content to ask them about. This can be one of the most challenging parts of the curriculum for the student. Again, when approaching this subject, it is important to be aware of the homes and family structure that the students come from. For example, one of the biggest hang-ups is that parents often do not want to share personal information with their children, especially if they are younger. Therefore, depending on the class, teachers should encourage the students to think deeply about who they want to interview and what they are hoping to get out of the experience, while also considering the willingness of their interviewee. Further, if students are hesitant to ask a family or friend, they have the potential to interview people in the school such as teachers, administrators, janitors, cafeteria workers, etc. Encourage students to think
outside the box and reinforce that they will get a lot out of the experience, even if it is not someone who is directly related to them personally.

Once the students have chosen their interviewee, they should conduct research to inform the questions that they will ask. Depending on how much structure the teacher gives the students with their oral history interviews, students can divide their interviews over the course of the year by what they are studying or they can conduct the interview in one sitting. This will determine how much research needs to be done before their interviews.

After researching, students should learn about the kinds of questions and develop open-ended questions to get the most information out of their interviewee. According to the Right Question Institute, there are three steps to the Question Formulation Technique: produce, improve, and prioritize your questions (“The Question Formulation Technique,” 2011). The most important step to formulating oral history questions is to improve closed-ended questions in order to make them open-ended questions. The teacher will most likely need to lecture students about the differences between the two kinds of questions and provide examples. After students have produced their questions, they can improve them by differentiating between “c” questions and “o” questions, then rewording the “c” questions to be “o” questions (“The Questioning Formulation Technique,” 2011). In order to fully understand the difference, students should apply what they learned to a practice interview with a peer. As students interview each other, they should be critical of each other’s questions and offer helpful suggestions.

Establishing this schema for oral histories will foster students applying their knowledge to the oral history resources as well as their own interviews. Following these basic guidelines and instructing the class accordingly will give students the prior knowledge that they need to be successful for the rest of the school year. The assignment sheet is on the following page.
Oral History Interviews

Name: _______________________________

Directions: Over the course of the semester, you will be responsible for conducting a series of interviews (or one long interview) with an adult. You should spend approximately one hour interviewing for each unit (10 units=10 hours) in order to compile their oral history. Most of the questions will be about historical events, although there is a chance that you will have an opportunity to ask more personal questions if the adult is comfortable with you doing so. It is imperative for you to maintain contact with your interviewee, come prepared to your interview with questions, and most importantly, keep an open mind and learn a lot from their wisdom! If the adult has any questions, please feel free to contact me, TEACHER’S NAME, at CONTACT INFORMATION.

Adult Name: _______________________________

Year of Adult’s Birth: ________________

Relationship to Student: ________________________________

Adult’s Signature: ________________________________

Best Method to Contact the Adult: ________________________________
Yearlong Projects

There are two yearlong projects that students can engage in alongside their own oral history interviews. These include an oral history timeline and theme-based questions. These two assignments are modeled on the following three pages as worksheets that could be distributed to students. Both are important for students to understand the big picture of United States history. Furthermore, students will be able to understand how the oral history they conduct fits in with the history they are studying in the classroom. These can be assigned at the beginning of the year or individually over the course of the year. As with the other parts of this curriculum, teachers should exercise agency to adjust these assignments as they see fit.
Oral History Timeline

Name: ____________________________________________

Directions: On a piece of 12x18 paper (or larger), construct a timeline of historical events that we have covered in class this semester. Each historical event should have a brief synopsis with the date, location, 1-2 sentence summary of the event, and an explanation of how it impacted your oral history interviewee. You will be graded by this rubric, which should be turned in with your timeline. You can earn points on a scale of 1 (low) – 3 (middle) – 5 (high) for each item listed

Neat and Colorful

________ Overall timeline reflect neat, thoughtful work

________ Each event is legible and listed in a different color

Historical Events

________ At least five historical events are included

________ The historical events include the date, a 1-2 sentence summary of the event, and how it impacted the oral history interviewee

________ At least five personal events from the interviewee are included (examples: weddings, year of birth, graduation, etc.)

________ Student demonstrates understanding of historical events and how they relate to the life of the interviewee

Accuracy and Following Directions

________ Correct spelling

________ Timeline is labeled with a title, student name, and interviewee name

________ Historical event information is accurate

Total: ________/45 Final Grade: ________

Feedback (what went well, what could be better):
Theme-Based Questions

Name: _______________________________

Directions: Of the 13 questions on the themes of US History, pick 3 that spark your interest and write them on this paper next to “Question.” Then, answer the questions from the perspective of three different people: you, your interviewee, and one historical figure of your choice. First write your opinion, then a summary of your interviewee’s answer, and then predict how the historical figure would answer that question. Cite specific examples from the class content.

Interviewee’s Name: ___________________ Historical Figure: _______________________

Question #1:

Perspective 1:

Perspective 2:

Perspective 3:

Question #2:

Perspective 1:

Perspective 2:

Perspective 3:

Question #3:

Perspective 1:

Perspective 2:

Perspective 3:
Unit 1: Early Modern America and Westward Expansion (1865-1930)

Key Terms/Phrases

Oral History Sources
Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers’ Project, 1936-1938
Under Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s Works Progress Administration, more than 2,300 oral history records of former slaves. They are all available online through the Library of Congress and are a great resource for first-hand accounts of slavery. This is one of the most powerful oral history resources and there are a lot of opportunities for activities for students. For example, the teacher could pick one and have the whole class listen to it or each student could pick one and report back what they learned. To supplement the interviews, the Library of Congress also has an introduction to the slave narratives that would make a great warm-up or other various readings that could be done as homework or in-class alongside the interviews. “Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers’ Project, 1936-1938.” American Memory. The Library of Congress. 23 Mar. 2001. http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/snhtml/snhome.html

The Doris Duke Collection of American Indian Oral History
Between 1967-1972, the Duke Collection of the University of Oklahoma interviewed hundreds of Indians living in Oklahoma. These interviews are transcribed and available as PDF’s online. They contain accounts of the history and culture of various nations and tribes, as well as stories about their ceremonies, customs, social conditions, philosophies, and standards of living. If studying a specific tribe, this is an excellent resource for first-hand accounts. Alternatively, students could each research one of the tribes and present their findings to the class. “Doris Duke Collection.” Western History Collections. The University of Oklahoma. 2013. http://digital.libraries.ou.edu/whc/duke/

American Coal Foundation Lesson Plan: Coal Miners and Their Mining Towns: Their Stories
The American Coal Foundation encourages students to interview people who work or have worked in the mining industry. They assist teachers with this online resource complete with objectives, national standards, materials, discussion questions, procedures, assessment, extension, and differentiation. In other words, the lesson is already developed. Besides oral history, they have a plethora of resources for teachers. “ACF Lesson Plan: Coal Miners and Their Mining Towns: Their Stories.” American Coal Foundation. 2011. http://teachcoal.org/lesson-plan-coal-miners-and-their-mining-towns
Unit 1: Oral History Example

Hannah: How did your parents meet?

Aird: My mother was born in, well her mother and father, left Kansas in a covered wagon and came across the Oregon Trail. And at that time, they had three or four children. They came to a homestead in Oregon and my mother was born on that homestead. My grandfather rode off to find a doctor or a midwife and there was no one there. But she said an Indian couple came and helped her and delivered her. My father was born in Little Rock, Arkansas. His father owned a hardware store there. And then he sold that, took his family first to Los Angeles and started a construction company, then he moved to Phoenix. Oh, they hired him to do something in Phoenix and he loved it there, he didn’t want to leave. He was one of the founding members of the Phoenix Rotary Club. I ask him how they met and he said he saw her sitting in a car and he said she had the most beautiful smile he had ever seen. And he fell in love with her then. Cause then my grandmother on the homestead, that grandfather, they said, always thought the grass was greener on the other side. And he got tired of homesteading and took his family back to Kansas. My mother’s older sister married a man who brought my grandmother, his wife of course, and I think one of the sisters, brought them all to Phoenix. My mother went to work as a secretary for a man named George Aird McDonald. She loved that name and so she named me that. She said I would not give you a middle name because I was afraid people would call you that and not Aird because it’s such a strong name. And boy no one called me anything else. Except they always mispronounced it Arid, remember how they used to have Arid deodorant? Boys would cut out advertisements in magazines that said “free sample of Arid” and bring it to me. I used to beg her to let me change my name to Betty.

Hannah: To Betty? Why Betty?

Aird: It was ordinary! Everybody else would know what it was, they wouldn’t make fun of my dumb name!

Hannah: Don’t you love it now though?

Aird: Now I love it. And I did soon after that. At first I hated it. But now I love it.
Unit 2: An Emerging Industrial Giant
(1870-1920)

Key Terms/Phrases

Oral History Sources

Working for the Triangle Shirtwaist Company
This short interview of Pauline Newman conducted by Joan Morrison discusses Pauline’s story growing up as a migrant child factor worker. Although this interview is short, compared to the other sources, there is a great discussion of the Triangle Shirtwaist Company fire in 1911, which most likely is mentioned in the US History textbook. Because of the length, this source could be used to supplement a lecture on factory work and conditions during industrialization.

Ellis Island Oral History Project
The National Park Service on the whole has some incredible resources for teachers. Most applicable to this oral history curriculum is through Ellis Island. Their website features full audio and text versions of interviews, as well as excerpts if that better suits your class. Further, they include questions and graphic organizers that align with the interviews.
Unit 2: Oral History Example

Hannah: How did Joe Sher’s family come to the United States? (Joe Sher is my biological grandfather, Aird and Joe divorced in the 1960s).

Aird: His father’s brother had come over before the war. And his father, Label, was a horse trader. He was going along one day with a bunch of horses and a bunch of soldiers stopped him and took them away from him. His brother had been trying to get him to the states, so he immediately wrote to his brother and said, I want to come to America, I don’t ever want to be anywhere where they can take my horses away. So his brother sent for him. They lived in Lithuania, he left from Riga. They must’ve shortened the last name to “Sher.” When he got here, he sent for Joe and his mother. He was two years old.

Hannah: They’re lucky nothing ever happened to them.

Aird: His mother told me that everybody on the boat loved Joe because he was a two year old and he was talking. Even then, he never shut up. He was talking up a storm and they all thought he was adorable. But her family, a lot of them ended up in the ovens. She always said that because Label left, he saved them. Because a lot of her family who didn’t come ended up in the ovens.

Hannah: Do you know her last name?

Aird: Joe didn’t want to say it was Isaacson because it sounded Jewish, so he changed it to Itikson because it was Isaacson. And her father, I think, was a rabbi in Lithuania.
Unit 3: The Progressive Era
(1890-1920)

Key Terms/Phrases

Oral History Sources
Suffragists Oral History Project
One of the problems with most history curricula is that no voice is given to women. The University of California- Berkley conducted interviews with twelve women’s rights leaders, originally tape-recorded and transcribed, and are now available online. As students research these women, they can supplement the content by hearing directly from the women. “Suffragists Oral History Project.” Regional Oral History Office. University of California-Berkley. 2009. http://bancroft.berkeley.edu/ROHO/projects/suffragist/

Suggested Activity
This unit contains a lot of people, especially important American presidents. Teachers could use this unit to assign students historical people and have them write their own oral history interviews with responses that they think their historical figure would give. For example, a student could write an interview with Theodore Roosevelt asking questions and drafting responses that they think he would give based on his speeches, writings, and other research about him as a character. This same activity could be applied to any unit but fits well with the historical figures from the Progressive Era.
Unit 3: Oral History Example

Hannah: What were/are your thoughts on organized labor?

Aird: My father and his father owned and operated a construction company. They hated organized labor! There was something about a bunch of organized labor people were put on a train in Phoenix and shipped to Mexico to get rid of them. They were called the IWW’s. My father and his father were involved with that… They hated, hated organized labor. We treat them well, they don’t need to be organized. We give them good wages. You didn’t know you had bad things in your closet… I always thought it was horrible when he would talk about it. These people are just trying to make a living!

Hannah: Did you feel the same way?

Aird: No! I thought these people are just trying to make a living, don’t be like that.

Hannah: I’m really glad I asked that. It was kind of a strange question.

Hannah: What happened when women gained the right to vote?

Aird: I have never missed a single election. I think that was my father too. I think he told me that that’s your job, that’s your duty, don’t ever not do it. And if you don’t, you have no right to b*tch. Because he was a conservative and he absolutely hated Roosevelt. And when we used to sit and listen to the Fireside Chats, he used to swear and yell at what he was doing wrong. He was a super conservative. It hink that’s why I’m such a liberal. Another thing he promised her, she could always have nurse maids for the kids and a woman to clean her house. We always had, I’m told, Mexican nurse maids. I apparently, maybe Mary Ann too, I don’t remember, I spoke Spanish before I spoke English. I don’t remember that. I do know when I took Spanish in school it was easy for me. But she also always had a black woman to clean her house once a week. And god forbid, nobody called blacks in those days, they were coloreds. My mother used to say, and it used to just enrage me, I don’t mind coloreds as long as they know their place and stay there. And I used to think, who are you to tell another human being what their place is? That used to upset me to no end. And then when he used to yell at Roosevelt for starting Social Security to make life easy and you know tolerable for seniors, he used to think that was terrible, and I hated that. No one ever told me to feel that way, I just did. I just thought, that’s not right, that’s not fair. But you know, all kids have an innate sense of fairness. They always know if they are being punished unfairly, if something is unfair, I guess that’s what it was, my innate sense of fairness. Who are you to tell somebody else what their place is? In Phoenix, in those days when we went to movies, all blacks had to go upstairs, they had to sit upstairs. My mother would never take us or go to the movies. The first movie I ever saw was unbelievably, a colored movie, and it was a Disney film, Fantasia. I was absolutely floored, I couldn’t believe it, I thought it was the most wonderful thing I had ever seen. To this day when I hear that music I love it. That was the very first movie I ever saw. In the theaters. With all the poor blacks sitting upstairs. I always thought that was unfair.
Hannah: Would you ever sit with them?

Aird: You weren’t allowed to do that. I would have been thrown out.

Hannah: Did you have any friends that were black?

Aird: Nope. We didn’t have any blacks in the school. No Indians in the school. They had an Indian school out near Camelback but we were taught all about them. We were taught about their customs, but never about how badly they were treated. They never taught that.
Unit 4: Imperialism, Isolationism, & World War I
(1870-1920)

Key Terms/Phrases

Oral History Sources

Oral Histories of the First World War: Veterans 1914-1918
Surprisingly, there are few, if any, oral histories recorded in the United States relating to World War I. Instead, this source is from Library and Archives Canada along with Veterans Affairs Canada and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. The website is divided into seven themes, the most relevant being “trench warfare” and “perspectives on war.” Students can compare these accounts to American experiences.


Interview with Sam Ketron, July 25th, 1985
The University of Kentucky launched an oral history project to interview American veterans of World War I. Most of these are not available online, however the exception is the powerful story of Sam Ketron which is on the website in both audio and transcript forms. Although the substance of the conversation is remarkable, there is room for students to critique the interviewer’s questions and how he leads the discussion with Sam Ketron. This, too, can be compared to the Canadian oral histories.


Because my grandmother was born after World War I and we do not have any family connections to the war, this unit does not have an oral history example.
Unit 5: The Roaring Twenties and the Great Depression (1919-1939)

Key Terms/Phrases

Oral History Sources
Hard Times: An Oral History of the Great Depression
This book by Studs Terkel is comprised of interviews from hundreds of people who lived through the Great Depression but all walked very different walks of life: from the unemployed to politicians to artists. Reading a book of oral histories is very different than listening to them, which should lead to an interesting discussion with students. As mentioned with the slave narratives, this is an event in history that is best explained through individual stories. Therefore, it is worth the time in the school year to commit to reading this book.

The Louis Armstrong Jazz Oral History Project
In the 1990s, the Louis Armstrong Jazz Oral History Project conducted oral history interviews with some of the most influential jazz musicians of the Jazz Age. Furthermore, they sponsored concert performances and rescued films of rare footage from various jazz festivals. They have some clips and full-length videos online. Students should be exposed to these important musicians, as well as their music.

Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers’ Project, 1936-1938
Although this source is repeated from Unit 1, it can also be incorporated or at least referenced when discussing the New Deal because the interviews were conducted by the Federal Writers’ Project (citation in Unit 1).
Unit 5: Oral History Example

Hannah: Prohibition was when you were young but were your parents affected?

Aird: I don’t remember anything about living through it because I wasn’t interested in drinking anyways, I was so young. I know my parents used to drink bathtub gin. My uncle who was Arizona’s first mine inspector drank bathtub gin and went blind from it. You used to go blind from bathtub gin. They advised everybody all the time, don’t drink it, you’ll go blind, and by god he did.

Hannah: Your theory is that prohibition made your generation’s parents alcoholics?

Aird: Yes, definitely. I definitely believe that. That’s always the case when you know it’s there but you’re not supposed to get it. My mother and all my girlfriend’s mothers were alcoholics. We used to take turns, like if we were out of town, like I always used to go check on Sissy’s (her best friend) mother when she was out of town because they were all alcoholics and we had to take care of them.

Hannah: Would they drink all day or was it just in the evenings?

Aird: My mother drank all day. I can remember when we lived with my grandfather downtown, the first thing she would do in the morning was come downstairs and go to the kitchen cupboard and take out a bottle of gin and drink gin, on an empty stomach, first thing in the morning.

Hannah: How was your family impacted by the Great Depression?

Aird: After my grandfather died, my father took over the construction company. And he lost it when some Depression came because the construction company is all on borrowing money- you get a contract, you borrow the money to get the stuff, then you pay it back. He had a ton of debts. He told me he worked for I forget how many years and would not declare bankruptcy, he thought it was dishonorable. So he worked for all those years in order to pay off all those debts. And then he went to work for a company called General Adjustment Bureau. He worked as an appraiser. One of the times he was gone so long they had a huge hurricane in Galvenston. He was sent to Galvenston to do the appraisal and then the company would know how much money to pay in insurance. And he did that all his life until he retired.

Hannah: What do you think was the longest lasting effect of the Great Depression?

Aird: Well in my father’s case, the debt. He would never ever buy a house, for the rest of his life. He would only rent. I think it made a tremendous impression on the people who lived through it, either by losing a home or a business or something.
Unit 6: World War II  
(1939-1945)

Key Terms/Phrases

Oral History Sources

Pearl Harbor Oral Histories with Ann Hoog
Sponsored by the Library of Congress, this is the most extensive source because it includes Ann Hoog’s oral history interviews titled “After the Day of Infamy: ‘Man-on-the-Street’ Interviews Following the Attack on Pearl Harbor,” Library of Congress websites of interest, additional outside websites, and finally, other materials of interest (such as books and journal articles). In this way, this website covers more than just Pearl Harbor. Because there are so many sources on this one website that fits into this unit, the possibilities in the classroom are endless. “Pearl Harbor Oral Histories with Ann Hoog.” Journeys and Crossings. The Library of Congress. 20 July 2010. http://www.loc.gov/rr/program/journey/pearlharbor.html

Veterans History Project
While this source has a variety of sources on veterans history, the most valuable of them is their collection of existing oral history sites for World War II. The resources range from bomber group stories to large archives to histories of women during the war. This is a great starting point to design a wide range of activities on oral histories of World War II. “Existing Oral History Sites.” Veterans History Project. The Library of Congress. 3 Nov. 2011. http://www.loc.gov/vets/vets-portal.html

The Good War: An Oral History of World War II
The same author as the oral history book on the Great Depression, Studs Terkel, also compiled this book about the experiences of World War II. For this work, he earned a Pulitzer Prize in 1985. Providing students with both texts by Studs Terkel gives students the opportunity to compare the two time periods more easily. Furthermore, some of his interviews are featured on his website. http://www.studsterkel.org/gwar.php
**Unit 6: Oral History Example**

Aird: I can remember hearing about Pearl Harbor. I had to stay home from school that day because I had the flu or a cold or something. I was lying in bed with the radio next to me and I heard the announcement of the attack on Pearl Harbor and how horrified I was.

Hannah: What do you remember hearing about it?

Aird: The fact that anybody would attack. I didn’t know where Pearl Harbor was, just that it was US territory and we had been attacked.

Hannah: So then did it take a couple of days for people to learn about it and put together the pieces of what happened?

Aird: Oh yes. During all of World War II, I had a huge world map and I Scotch taped it on the wall above where I did my homework so when they would say something that happened somewhere, you know it was in all of these places in Europe I had never heard of, or in the South Pacific, I could look and see, because I was always interested in world affairs, always, I don’t know why, but I was. It was so funny, I can remember lying in bed, otherwise I would’ve been in school!

Hannah: What was daily life like after Pearl Harbor?

Aird: In San Francisco, we were told to keep lights off at night because we were a coastal city, so we were all supposed to keep lights off at night. Of course there was rationing. Every car had an alphabet, like a, b, c, or something, and posted in the windshield and that denoted how much gasoline you could have and what days. That and then sugar was rationed, shoes were rationed, and butter was rationed. We had a ration book with little coupons in it that when you bought sugar, they would tear out however many coupons you used. It was very strict in Phoenix at the grocery store.

Hannah: How would you get the coupon book?

Aird: In the mail. Every family had their coupon books, every family had the thing in their windshield about the gasoline.

Hannah: How did it affect what you ate? Did you find that you ate less?

Aird: Well not being in charge of cooking, no I don’t think we ate less. I don’t think meat was particularly rationed, I know sugar was and butter was, but I don’t think meat or anything else was. And you couldn’t drive any further than you had gas.

Hannah: Can you imagine if they did that today?
Aird: Oh god. One of the main things I remember that was so strange was the Italian prisoners of war. They kept them in a camp in the Arizona desert. Mary Anne (her sister) remembers we would be sitting on the lawn at the high school, waiting for the school bus and a truckload would go by filled with Italian prisoners and they would be hooting and hollering at us but of course we didn’t know what they were saying because it was in Italian. Then Arizona was a cotton producing state and during the war, there were no immigrants to pick the cotton. So they decided they would try having the high schoolers pick it. So they took my class out one day, it was so hot, just unbearably hot, it was miserable, it’s sticky and it pricks. Plus, we had to walk right by the camp where all the Italian prisoners of war were and they would yell at us and carry on. At first I was afraid, but then of course, it just got to be funny. But they only let us pick one year and then they decided we did too much damage. And it was miserable, it was hot, very hard, unpleasant work. But then they decided nope, they didn’t want us, we did too much damage. Plus they had a few girls faint because of the heat and they decided that was too dangerous so we only had to do it once. But I do remember the Italian prisoners of war and wondering why they didn’t keep them in Italy.

Hannah: Why did they do that?

Aird: I guess they didn’t have a way to keep them in Italy and they wanted to keep them somewhere they couldn’t get away. So they put them in Arizona, well if they escaped in Arizona, where were they going to go?

Hannah: Were there any episodes when they escaped?

Aird: No, not that I know of. And I’m sure I would’ve heard about it.

Hannah: When did you find out about the concentration camps in Europe?

Aird: Well it was in the news, I know. It was not generally known until after the war. And the soldiers coming through, both American and Russian, were so horrified, they were sending pictures and everything, so it was all over the news. But not until after the war, it wasn’t during the war, nobody knew.

Hannah: So when they sent the Americans to Germany, did you support the war?

Aird: Everybody supported that war. Everybody. Because they attacked us. And then when they started hearing about Hitler’s atrocities, then everybody was.

Hannah: What were your thoughts when you learned about the full scope of the concentration camps?

Aird: Horrified. And 6 million people he killed, gassed them. Oh, just horrified.

Hannah: Was it something that people talked about often?

Aird: Yes. Couldn’t understand how the Germans could accept this man so wholeheartedly.
Hannah: How did you get the information about it?

Aird: Television and radio.

Hannah: I just can’t imagine finding out about that in real time. Just realizing that this has been happening for the last four years and we had no idea.

Aird: Yes, and I was very upset that the US had turned away a ship full of Jews. I just thought that was horrible. That they were headed for a concentration camp, and we knew they were called concentration camps, but we didn’t know about the extermination. And of course, I had all the boys that I knew that went to war, and they all wanted letters.

Hannah: Do you remember any World War II propaganda?

Aird: Oh yes, Uncle Sam wants you. That was everywhere. And I don’t remember anything on the radio, but I know they were all dying to go. They couldn’t wait to go. And we had an ROTC class there so they probably went there to get to go.

Hannah: Do you remember anything about women going to work? Like the changing gender roles?

Aird: They must have been older than I because I was still a teenager in high school. I was too young. The main thing I remember all the boys that I knew who had gone wanted me to write. And I wasn’t the only one, they wanted letters!

Hannah: Did they write you back? Does anything stand out from their letters?

Aird: Yes! And I remember their letters had lines that were blacked out. I was so surprised by that. Then we knew someone else had read our letter.

Hannah: And you had boys who tried to propose to you, right?

Aird: I was engaged at one point to a P-38 pilot. Didn’t last long…. But I wrote to him and of course his letters were heavily censored. I don’t think I ever got a letter that wasn’t. They weren’t supposed to tell you where they were or what battles they were in or anything. And of course being high school kids, they probably wrote whatever they wanted and then it got censored.

Hannah: Were any of your friends in the big battles?

Aird: We used to spend every summer in Nogales, Arizona to get out of the heat. A boy that I knew there, when he came back, he had lost his arm below the elbow, and he said “I left it on Omaha beach.”
Unit 7: Cold War America
(1945-1991)

Key Terms/Phrases

Oral History Sources

Teaching the Cold War Through Oral History
This source is unique because it is an article from the Organization of American Historians Magazine of History. By the time students are learning about this unit, they may be exhausted from reading or listening to oral histories, but also need a refresher why they are learning about oral histories in the first place. This article not only offers Cold War oral history sources but also discusses the importance of oral history with an emphasis on the context of the Cold War. In assigning this as a reading, ask students to develop questions that they have about the article. Then, guide them through making their own oral history assignments based on what they learned and the sources that the article offered. In exercising such agency and creativity, the students will be more engaged and hopefully rejuvenated to finish the remaining units.

Soviet Baby Boomers: An Oral History of Russia’s Cold War Generation
Author Donald J. Raleigh interviewed 60 students from the 1967 graduating class of two Russian high schools in two different parts of the country. The elite status of the schools meant that many of the students had influential parents, yet grew up in the midst of the Cold War. This book can be used to compare perspectives on the Cold War, as well as compare to the students’ own lives today.
Hannah: What was life like during the Cold War?

Aird: We were told in school that we might have an air raid warning, if we did, we were to what they call duck and cover, get under the desk. When I was older and was driving the kids, I was told to keep my gas tank completely full at all times. And if we had an air raid warning, I was to pick up a certain number of children and drive, I forget the name of the town in the peninsula that I was supposed to take them. But every mother had instructions to keep her gas tank full, pick up X number of children, and to go to that town. And we were reminded of that constantly.

Hannah: How were you reminded of that?

Aird: At school, when we dropped the kids off, somebody would tell us.

Hannah: I see, so the schools were in charge of that information. How many kids were you to drive?

Aird: I don’t remember. All of mine plus others. But I remember always checking the gas tank to be sure it was full.

Hannah: So you must’ve filled up gas all the time?

Aird: Yes! Especially in those days because those cars were gasoholics, they took a lot of gas. I don’t think they had any cars that were not gas guzzlers. Course gas didn’t cost what it does not either.

Hannah: Was it like living in a constant fear?

Aird: I don’t remember ever being afraid. I thought it was just ok, just something else we’ll do, it’s not going to happen. I never thought it was going to happen. But I was prepared anyways, I did not have a choice.

Hannah: No other signs of the Cold War in daily life?

Aird: Not particularly in daily life, of course it was on the television all the time and in the news.

Hannah: What about?

Aird: Just about whatever was going. They have so many atomic bombs so we have to have this many. The UN worked it out so they were telling us what to do. The Republicans had a stroke over that.

Hannah: Do you remember Sputnik at all and the space race?
Aird: I do remember there was a space race and I do remember where I was when he stepped on the moon. We were up the river because we went up there ever summer and we were up there. And I remember when he stepped on the moon.

Hannah: Was it exciting?

Aird: Yes, I thought it was! And I was waiting to hear what he would have to say. And then I was very disappointed, I thought it was very ordinary.

Hannah: Why?!

Aird: I don’t know! I just expected I guess something more inspiring. I thought it was just dumb. I never thought it made any difference who got there first. If they got there first, who cares, it was still man on the moon. It didn’t matter to me and I didn’t get how it mattered to anyone else. Ridiculous, who cares?
Unit 8: A Time for Change/An Age of Reform
(1945-Present)

Key Terms/Phrases

Oral History Sources

Civil Rights Documentation Project
Featuring a civil rights oral history bibliography, oral history transcripts, and a civil rights timeline, this website from the Civil Rights Documentation Project perfectly aligns with this curriculum. Students can explore their resources and conduct a lot of research all through the one website, which makes it a great source for a research paper.
http://www.usm.edu/crdp/

Iran Hostage Crisis
Within the last year, the Hollywood movie “Argo” was released and depicts the story of the Iran Hostage Crisis. In comparing the movie to this resource form the Miller Center of the University of Virginia, students can seek what really happened and understand the event from different perspectives. This source focuses on the Reagan and Carter administrations by outlining the different parts of the crisis with clips from their presidential oral histories. It is well organized so that students can either focus on the big picture or be divided into groups to understand various aspects of the crisis.
http://millercenter.org/newsroom/news/iran

Little Rock Central High School
Similar to the Ellis Island source, Little Rock Central High School is considered a National Historic Site in Arkansas so the National Park Service offers a variety of educational resources online to teach this content. Namely, they have three links to oral histories discussing the events of 1957-1959: “The Little Rock Nine Attend Class,” “State and Federal Involvement,” and “Student Interaction.”
http://www.nps.gov/chsc/historyculture/oral-history.html
Unit 8: Oral History Example

Hannah: Do you remember the passage of the Civil Rights Act or the Voting Rights Act?

Aird: I don’t remember the Voting Rights Act as much as the Civil Rights Act. And then all the atrocities when they would march for it and the Ku Klux Klan would go after them.

Hannah: Did San Francisco have anything going on during Civil Rights?

Aird: I think those were all in the South. I remember the governor who would stand out and he wouldn’t let any n-word in. And the soldier walking the little black girl into school and she was shaking, terrified. That was very memorable.

Hannah: Did you watch that on TV when they went to school?

Aird: Yes. It was a big deal. And it was so amazing to have television.

Hannah: Did you instill those beliefs in your kids? Of equality? If yes, how so?

Aird: Of course I did. I’m sure we discussed all kinds of stuff because we always watched the news on the television.

Hannah: Do you remember the women’s rights movement?

Aird: I remember always being in favor of the rights. Extremely in favor.

Hannah: Were you pretty vocal about it?

Aird: Oh yes. Very vocal.

Hannah: Did you ever participate?

Aird: I don’t think so.

Hannah: So do you consider yourself a feminist?

Aird: Yes I do. Very much so.
Unit 9: Domestic Growth and Change
(1946-Present)

Key Terms/Phrases

Oral History Sources

Presidential Oral History
Presidents Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush, William J. Clinton, and George W. Bush all have oral history resources available through the Miller Center at the University of Virginia. These oral histories include interviews with various presidential officials, often including Cabinet members, White House staff, and campaign advisors. This is a great resource for students to truly understand these presidents.


In Oral History Interviews, A Very Candid Jackie Kennedy
Recently, Jackie Kennedy’s seven-part interview conducted by Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. has been released in the form of a book. Instead of reading the book, there are dozens of articles online that summarize the most important and insightful parts of her account. Students can read various articles, consider John F. Kennedy’s response to parts of her interview, and predict how history would have been different if the president hadn’t been shot in Dallas. The source is an article from NPR, although there are numerous others from sources such as the New York Times and the JFK Presidential Library.


Nixon Presidential Library Oral Histories
Similar to the Presidential Oral History, the Nixon Presidential Library has over 150 interviews with Nixon officials and key figures of the time. For example, they have subject groups not only for the White House but also the investigators of Watergate, friends and family, as well as media/entertainment figures. This diverse set of oral histories will give students a well-rounded version of Nixon. If the class enjoys debating, they could “put Nixon on trial” to debate his character by citing evidence from the oral histories.

http://www.nixonlibrary.gov/forresearchers/find_histories.php
Unit 9: Oral History Example

In the 1990’s, my grandmother took a writing class and chose to record her fight with Polio in October-November of 1954, around the peak of the epidemic. The following is an excerpt from her piece of writing: she was hospitalized for polio for about two months, lost the use of her right hand, and yet her child was born without any complications. This could be supplemented with her numerous oral history interviews on this topic, but her own writing is so powerful that I wanted to include it in this curriculum.

Excerpt from Chapter 1:

Sunday morning I was worse. I seemed to float in and out of consciousness. Dr. Byron Hall, our family physician, was summoned. Dr. Hall asked me many questions:

“Have you become severely chilled recently?”

Yes. I remember that last week I’d taken advantage of one of San Francisco’s hot Indian summer days to wash my car. The fog had rolled in and the temperature had dropped so that I was shaking with cold before I’d finished.

“Have you experienced any insomnia? Unusual energy? Backache? Stiff neck?”

Yes, yes, yes and yes.

Then he asked me to put my chin on my chest. I thought that very strange. Everyone knew that was the test for infantile paralysis, or polio as it was now being called. I thought adults did not get polio. I knew San Francisco was experiencing an unusually large number of cases this year. I had been terrified that my children would be exposed. No one knew exactly how this dreaded disease was transmitted; which made it even more frightening. Whenever my sons had even a sniffle, I made them put their little chins onto their tiny chests. Nothing could strike more terror to the heart of a mother than the thought of polio! If any of my children had exhibited my symptoms I should have thought at once of polio.

Gently, Dr. Hall explained that pregnant women were extremely vulnerable to the polio virus. I must go to the hospital where I could undergo a spinal tap for an exact diagnosis.

While waiting for Mary Ann to arrive to collect the boys, I went around the living room pulling down window shades. Lifting my right arm over my head, I pulled down the first. Going to the net, I found that I couldn’t lift that arm at all. I felt a choking sense of panic. What was happening to me? Does paralysis happen this quickly?

Excerpt from Chapter 2:

The next day I was taken to one of the “contagion rooms.” Patients were isolated in these small rooms as long as they were possible transmitters of the disease. Anyone coming into the room must don gown, mask and gloves; which they must remove before leaving the room. Hospital personnel only was allowed into the room. Visitors were permitted to look at the patient through a small window in the door. They were not allowed inside, so conversation was impossible. There was a young child in the room next to mine. He was alone and frightened and was calling for his mother. All day and all night we could hear his cries:

“Mommie, Mommie, Mommie…”

Hearing him made me think of my own babies. I was terribly worried that they might have caught polio from me. I could imagine it was one of them calling for me. Calling and calling and I was unable to help. For hours I lay there sobbing and begging God to spare them. I had
been taught that it was wrong to bargain with God but I didn’t care. Right or wrong, I swore to Him that if He would only spare my children and let my baby be born healthy I would never utter one word or complain about my own paralysis—no matter how bad it might be.

It was very bad. I was almost totally paralyzed. I could turn my head slightly from side to side and raise my left hand an inch off the bed. I was incapable of any other movement. I was so frightened I felt I couldn’t breathe. My heart was racing and tears were rolling down my cheeks. A nurse came into the room carrying a black object with dials and hoses that look as if it should be used by deep sea divers. She explained that it was to be used to measure the amount of air I was getting into my lungs. If I were not getting enough, I would have to be put into a respirator or iron lung, as they were called. With that, she clamped the device over my face. I felt total panic at being plunged into suffocating darkness. I opened my mouth to scream. I must have taken a huge gulp of air. I heard a loud whirring noise on the top of the device as the large dial spun to indicate my lung capacity.

“Hummm,” she said, “You’re borderline.”

She left the room. I lay there unable to move; unable to wipe away the tears that were streaming down my face. I was shuddering with the aftereffects of panic. My heart was still galloping when the door was opened by an orderly pushing a huge gleaming iron lung into the room. My hysterical screams brought nurses and aids rushing to my bedside. It was impossible to calm me until they moved that monstrosity out of my sight. (I learned later that it was parked in the hallway just outside my door for the duration of my stay in that room.)

Excerpt from Chapter 4:

My introduction to hot packs occurred the day after Dr. Niebauer’s first visit. A nurse wheeled what looked like a small washing machine up to my bed. She explained that it contained my hot packs. They were cut from khaki colored woolen army blankets. She told me she was going to wrap my arms and legs completely and said it would be VERY hot. She opened the pot bellied canister and used tongs to remove a wet, steaming hot piece of wool. I gasped when she wrapped it around my arm. No wonder she had used tons! It was certainly too hot to touch! After wrapping the hot, we wool around my arm she covered it with a wrapping of plastic, then a wrapping of dry wool to keep in the heat. She worked very quickly and I was soon encased in steaming wool. The nurse told me I would remain in the packs until they cooled—about half an hour. After the first shock of scalding heat, it was quite comfortable to be enveloped in the warmth. For many patients, it was the only time they could sleep

[...]

When I began therapy, I could turn my head slightly from side to side and lift my head off the bed about one inch. I was otherwise completely immobile. Gradually I began to regain the use of my left arm and the ability to hold up my head. I had hated being totally helpless and was delighted when I could feed myself and brush my own teeth. Performing these ordinary tasks required enormous effort. Not only was I still very weak, but I was strongly right handed and so was very clumsy with my left hand. Everything had to be served to me already cut into bite sized pieces. Liquids were served in paper cups as glass was too heavy to lift. I started with one inch of liquid in the cup. As I got stronger the amount of liquid in the cup was gradually increased, but it was many months before I could left a full glass of water to my lips. To this day, I cannot cut meat.
Unit 10: Modern United States in a Global Society (1990-Present)

Key Terms/Phrases

Oral History Sources

9/11 Memorial
Although this is something that teachers lived through, it is important to remember that the students do not. Therefore, one of the best ways to increase their understanding of September 11th is through the 9/11 Memorial’s Oral Histories. Family members, first responders, lower Manhattan residents, recovery workers, survivors, and many more all are represented on their website.
http://www.911memorial.org/oral-histories-0

United Nations Oral History
To get the most use out of this source, students should research historical topics that are available through the website and then use specific individual interviews to make connections between the past and the present of the United Nations. As time allows, students could participate in a Mock United Nations and use evidence from the website to support their statements. Additionally, this could be supplemented with videos from United Nations meetings.
http://www.unmultimedia.org/oralhistory/

The Iraq and Afghanistan War Veterans Oral History Project
Of all of the oral history resources, this project out of the University of Utah, by far, has the greatest amount of interviews. Because there are so many interviews, students could work in groups or could discuss one from each of the categories as a class. The categories that teachers should prioritize are “Afghanistan” and “Iraq” (others include civilian life, training, life on the home front in the military, and coming home) because they have the greatest amount of content. Thompson, Patrick. “The Iraq and Afghanistan War Veterans Oral History Project.” American West Center. University of Utah. 2012. http://patrickthompson.me/awc/
**Unit 10: Oral History Example**

Hannah: Which decade would you redo?

Aird: Which one was Bush elected in?

Hannah: 2000’s?

Aird: That one. I would do anything to get rid of him and that useless war.

Hannah: Compared to everything, that’s what stands out to you?

Aird: Yes.

Hannah: What would your utopia look like?

Aird: I would have a Democratic president.

Hannah: Would you have a democracy?

Aird: Oh yes, I would have a democracy that worked. I would have a Democratic majority in the Senate and House, and in the Supreme Court.

Hannah: That’s it? You’d probably get rid of poverty.

Aird: Oh, of course. But if we had a Democratic majority we probably would.

Hannah: They would fix all the problems, huh?

Aird: I would hope they would. In a utopia at least.

Hannah: So what do you predict for the future?

Aird: Oh… I don’t know. I don’t know what I would predict. I would hope that my children would all be happy.

Hannah: What are your thoughts on my generation?

Aird: I think your generation is fine.

Hannah: That’s good, most people don’t think that.

Aird: I do. I think you’re fine. And I think that you’ve handled the advances in technology very well as a generation. I think you’ve done very well with that. Which I think also gives me great hope. But I think you’ve done fine.
Hannah: What is your best advice for young people?

Aird: Always tell the truth. And get a good education. Take lots of different courses in college so you can find what you really love. And then pursue that so that you can spend your life doing what you really love to do.

Hannah: This makes me sad! That was my last question, I’m tearing up, I don’t want to be done! Can you think of anything else?

Aird: No, I’ve had a wonderful time with you. You ask very good questions.

Hannah: Hopefully I can get my students to do that, too.
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