

LESSON 8: RESEARCH AND INTERVIEW

PREP

Lesson Overview

Theme/Topic/Big Ideas: Creative representation of information, interview skills, and generating interview questions

Summary: Through artmaking and improv-inspired activities, this lesson prepares students to interview a second family member and begins to plant the seeds for a creative project.

Essential Question(s)

- How is my family's story connected to larger stories of Jewish migration?

Objective:

In this lesson, students will:

- Prepare for interviews and generate questions
- Learn interview skills
- Generate ideas for creative projects

***Note:** Since family participation (interview of an older relative) is critical to this lesson, please communicate with families in advance to share information about this lesson and its goals, set expectations for student-conducted interviews, and share deadlines for completing interviews.

Time: 55 minutes

[Handouts and Visuals Link](#)

Materials and setup

- Magazines, scissors, glue, markers, paper, and other art materials
- Interview worksheets or templates
- Question banks, if desired (online or printed out)
- Projection or printouts of symbolic portrait examples, if desired
- Paper/pencils or pens/clipboards
- Sticky notes

Background Information for Educators:

Oral history resources: <https://oralhistory.org/educators-resource/>
Interview Tips from StoryCorps:
<https://storycorps.org/discover/education/lesson-tips-for-effective-interviews/>

CREATE: Symbolic Name Portraits (20 min)

Handout Link

Ask students to reflect on the associations they made with their name and family stories. What symbols, objects, images, etc., came to mind? Why did you associate those with your name or family story? This will help get you in the mindset for our culminating project – a creative representation of your family’s migration story, through the lens of languages and names.

A few examples:

- My mom is Ashkenazi Jewish, and my dad is Hindu from India. When I visited my grandparents in India, my grandmother wore lots of gold jewelry, so gold is a color I associate with my family story.
- My mother told me I was named Sylvie after my great grandma Sylvia. Sylvia means forest, so I associate that name with trees.
- My family is from Turkey, and my father always makes bourekas, so a boureka is an image I associate with my family story.

Using the art and collage materials, encourage students to create a symbolic portrait of their name and family story, using the associations they made. If it is helpful, brainstorm some examples of ideas and how they could be represented visually. (See example of a symbolic portrait from the Portland Museum of Art.)

Share out portraits by hanging them on the walls of the room. Invite students to do a “gallery walk,” walking around the room and leaving comments and questions for one another on sticky notes.

DISCUSS: What makes a good interview? (15 min)

We've interviewed a few family members informally so far, to learn about our families' migration stories and the histories of our names. Now we're going to get ready to do a more in-depth interview.

Brainstorm and take notes on the board: What do you think makes a good interview?

You can share some ideas like:

- Set up a time to speak so you both can give your full attention.
- Come with a list of questions; keep your questions open-ended (more on this soon)
- Be respectful and help make your speaker feel comfortable sharing with you (offer a comfy chair, a snack—what are other ways we can do this?)
- Show you are listening (what does active listening look like?) and don't interrupt.

(Adapted from ANU's [My Family Story](#).)

Note: We eventually hope to add video clips from student interviews to use as examples in this lesson. Encourage students to have a family member record their interview (this works particularly well using Zoom, even if the interview is taking place in person). Feel free to share some particularly interesting interview videos with us by emailing jewishlanguageproject@huc.edu – we might ask permission to include one in our curriculum!

We're now going to practice some of these skills by playing a quick game.

Rephrase the Question (5 min)

This is an improv game that provides students with an example of a closed-ended question and compares their response to an open-ended version of the same question.

Example: Two students take the "stage." Partner A asks a pre-assigned question, such as one of these:

- Did you have fun in school today?
- Did you eat breakfast today?
- Did you enjoy the party?

Rephrase the Question (5 min)

- Do you like to read?
- Are you upset?
- Can you speak Hebrew?

Partner B improvises an answer, e.g., “no.”

- Reflect: What happened here? Note that the answer did not give you much information or open up a conversation.
- What other version of this question would provide a more interesting answer?
- What follow-up question(s) would you ask to get more information from your interviewee?
- What do good follow-up questions look like? (Consider those that begin with Why, How, When, or Tell me more about. . . .)

Partner A (or another student) should offer a new version of this question (e.g., “Tell me about what school was like today,” followed by, “How did you feel when you had to come in early from recess?”).

Try this with 2–3 different examples of questions and rephrasings.

Reflect: How was this different? How does this help us plan for our interviews?

PLAN: Family Interviews (10 min)

[Handout Link](#)

You’re now going to plan your interview with a member of your family who can continue to tell you more about your family story through the lens of language and names. An older relative (from the grandparent generation, if possible) is ideal to share more information, offering you a multi-layered perspective on your family. Who do you think will be best-equipped to share this information with you?

Spend some time planning your interview questions.

Family Interviews, continued.

Share the interview worksheet, as well as links to question banks, to help students prepare for their interviews. Encourage them to ask at least 6 questions from the worksheet, as well as follow-up questions and any other questions that are important to them. For example:

- Which of the questions about your names were your parents not able to answer? Make sure to include those in this interview.
- Revisit the KWL we did about family migration stories, asking the questions in the W category.
- If you haven't already filled out [this online survey](#) (from Lesson 2) about your ancestors' migration stories, please do it now. This survey will populate an interactive map that will give us an overview of our community's languages and migration patterns!

Set a deadline, based on your school calendar, for when students will conduct their interviews and return to class with their interview worksheets completed.

Optional: have students practice asking their interview questions, either in class or at home.

Here are some other resources for interview questions, if needed:

- Interview resources from StoryCorps:
<https://storycorps.org/participate/great-questions/>

Reflection/Conclusion: (5 min)

Discussion: What takeaways from today's lesson will you apply to your interviews? What support do you still need?