YALE NATIONAL INITIATIVE
to strengthen teaching in public schools®

Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2010 Volume III: Creating Lives: An Introduction to Biography

Voices of Emery Secondary: An Oral History Project

Curriculum Unit 10.03.04, published September 2010
by Mika Cade

Introduction

Gertrude Stein coined the famous phrase "There is no there, there" as a reference to Oakland in the early 1900s. These days most people living in the Bay Area might say that Stein's comment more aptly fits Emeryville, a square mile town nestled between the cities of Oakland and Berkley. At one point Emeryville was coined the "Armpit of Northern California" and "Rotten City" for its gambling, burlesque houses, speakeasies, and steel mills. Today, Emeryville is known for its strip malls, movie theaters and Pixar; a modern revival of its recreational and corporate past. If you visit Emeryville you may not see any signs of uniqueness or individuality in its numerous shopping centers. Although Emeryville is quite welcoming to corporations it is also a distinct community with a rich and interesting history that is rarely told.

Emeryville was a Wild West town. Officially established in 1896, it was designed to be a center of industry and pleasure. Its original founders re-drew the boundaries several times until there were no churches in its borders, "Emeryville became the antithesis of the picturesque suburban community. Be it stockyards, gambling, or steel mills, the city cultivated activities proscribed or shunned elsewhere." [1] However it wasn't until Edward Wiard opened his Shell Mound Park in 1877 that Emeryville really began to make a name for its own. The park, built on an ancient Ohlone Indian burial ground, was an entertainment complex that included a race track, two dance pavilions, gambling, rifle range, and park all with an exquisite view of the San Francisco Bay. Although this was all strictly legal, underground business quickly began to grow in Emeryville. Organized crime flocked to the gambling, and speakeasies soon set up shop. On the site of our abandoned middle school county sheriffs once raided a speakeasy, taking pictures of their captured loot. Emeryville was a haven for vice and people flocked their from Oakland, Berkeley, and San Francisco. Sometimes I imagine Emeryville to have been like a mini Las Vegas, whatever happened in Emeryville, stayed in Emeryville. Eventually some people did stay in Emeryville a small community of African-Americans, French, Portuguese, and British settled in its boarders and made it home. By 1886 Emeryville built it's first school and it's stockyards began to flourish. However, this growth wouldn't last long. Emeryville went from boom town to ghost town in about 60 years. Shell Mound Park did not make it through prohibition and after the Great Depression, and the loss of steel mill jobs in the 70's and 80's Emeryville was a devastated and devastating place to live. A local gang even named their territory "ghost town" after the abandoned buildings and streets of Emeryville and North Oakland. A civic plan is in place, however, and over the past 10 years or so Emeryville has seen a dramatic change. The city council is trying to evoke Emeryville's past as a pleasure center, this time with shopping

malls and movie theaters that sport giant pictures of the once famed Shell Mound Park. They even have a small exhibit of Ohlone artifacts from an archeological dig of the area, which I found by accident one day when I took a wrong turn down a narrow hallway on the ground floor of a mall. The abandoned steel mill factories also made an ideal new home for the new technology and biotech industries that now flourish in the small city. With so many parallels to its past it, is obvious that Emeryville is calling on its history to create its future. At a time like this, it is particularly valuable to learn about Emeryville's past from those who lived it and this curriculum unit is designed to do just that.

Initially, I envisioned a grand biographical undertaking of Emeryville. Students would map out the entire city, find people to interview that represent different sectors of the town, interview them, and write down their stories. As I began to give the project more thought, I realized that I was taking on way more than was possible in one school year, let alone one unit. I then came up with the idea of having students write oral histories of different sectors of the community. For this year, students will write an oral history of our school, Emery Secondary, founded in 1923. Students will interview different members of the school community both past and present, write their biographies, and create a final presentation. Although I've designed this curriculum for my 11th grade English class, it can easily be adapted for other grade levels, and subject areas.

This project is dependent upon the interest and drive of my students, which is why I chose a topic that is so personal to them. It requires students to do a lot of independent research and problem-solving. For example, students will need to figure out who should be interviewed, how to get those interviews, what questions to ask, and how to present their findings. All of these tasks provide ample opportunities for discovery in which the students are at the center of their own learning. By the end of the project, students will be able to prove that in fact there is a "there" in Emeryville.

Rationale

Oral History

Too often, the historical narratives my students read are limited in their point of view. They do not give a full picture of people, time period, or place. For example, a biography of Andrew Jackson may be very different depending upon the time period in which the author is writing and their race, class, and location. We may all have our own opinions of which author gives the most accurate depiction of Jackson, but we cannot gather an essential truth from just one text. Rather than argue that there is only one correct view of a given subject, I want my students to understand, critique, and value multiple narratives as a way to come to come to a complex sense of its truth.

A metaphor that may be useful here is that of an iceberg. The iceberg above water is grand and massive, we can explore its various sides, notice different crevasses and peaks. We can also dive underneath the waters of the iceberg, investigate what lies deep beneath its surface and explore its surroundings as well. Thus all sides can tell us something new and different or simply add to what we already know about the iceberg. But if we bring a friend along they may find things we can't find and go places that we can't go and see things that we never noticed. Oral historians are much like the investigators of this iceberg; they seek to gain a full picture of their topic by incorporating various perspectives. Some of these perspectives will show different sides and different depths of thinking but they all help us create a better picture of the topic, theme, or place of study.

The nature of the field also means that there is no clear definition of oral history. Some definitions are more broad, such as Thomas L. Charlton's "remembered experience" while others are more narrow like, "recorded interviews which preserve historically significant memories for future use." [2] The various definitions of oral history mirror the work and purpose of oral historians as multiple perspectives are shared. Oral history is based on memories, and memories change and shift over time. In addition, some people may simply forget facts or remember their role in an event differently from what actually happened. Thus, oral history is not a substitute for written history but rather an addition to it. It adds a personal narrative and perspective that you can't get from general data. Ideally, oral narratives will confirm, in a more personal and complex way, what the data and historical facts already say. In the classroom, this provides an opportunity for students to work with multiple texts from which they can investigate individual perspectives.

There are many important lessons that a student can gain from this unit. As Linda P. Wood shares "[Students] learn that history is assembled from these human pieces, that no one piece is any less important than any other piece, and that they have a role in making sure the pieces are not lost" (55). [3] These perspectives create a multi-layered view of history that is more rich and more truthful than any one source can share. Paul Thompson says that students who practice oral history experience the excitement and satisfaction of research and the struggles as well.

> They formulate an interpretation or theory and then find exceptional facts which are difficult to explain away. They find that the people whom they interview do not fit easily into the social types presented by preliminary reading. They need facts, or people, or records which prove tantalizingly elusive. They encounter the problems of bias, contradiction, and interpretation in evidence. Above all they are brought back from the grand patterns of written history to the awkwardly individual human lives which are its basis. [4]

Not only will this unit teach students about history, but students will learn elements of critical thinking about literature, writing, and human interaction as well. I would also add that it places students in active roles as field workers and investigators of history rather than passive consumers. My students will be asked to discover and put the "There" into Emeryville's written history through the people that lived it.

Oral history also allows us access to the history of people previously left out of the public record. Some people may not have the literary skills to write or just can't write at all, while others may not have the time; "it makes possible the preservation of the life experience of persons who do not have the literary talent or leisure to write their memoirs." [5] Oral history allows us to gather the perspectives of not only prominent figures but "ordinary" people as well. The inclusion of these narratives is one of the reasons why oral history is a perfect tool for this project. Emeryville was a steel mill and vice town. It was and still is filled with ordinary people that worked hard and live "ordinary" lives. However, these ordinary people have varied perspectives of their schools, community and the world. My hope is that when students interview and collect stories from the Emery Secondary community, they will understand the importance of seeing from multiple perspectives. Ultimately, I believe that this foundation will create a project that is highly engaging for my student population.

Objectives

At the end of this unit students will understand the basic principles of oral history and biography as outline in the previous section. They will accomplish this by conducting interviews of the Emery community,writing biographies of their subjects, and categorizing those biographies based on themes. Within each category, students will be required to analyze how the topic has changed over time. For example, students might describe how school sports have changed over time and what outside factors, such as Title IX and the economy, have impacted those changes.

I want my students to gather the stories of as many different representatives of our school community as they can, such as alums, teachers, administrators, janitors, food service staff, school board members, and parents. By interviewing a diverse group of people, my students will gain a more complete and complex understanding of their community. They will learn how to see Emery Secondary School from many perspectives in order to come to some truth(s) about the institution.

I like to begin my units with essential questions. These questions lend themselves naturally to the investigative nature of oral history which is not as easily achieved by presenting an objective written as a statement (i.e. "students will be able to..."). In addition, these questions can work as both formative and summative assessments. As formative assessments, students can reflect on their understanding of these questions at several points in the research process. I can monitor their progression and they can monitor their own changing answers to these questions. As a summative assessment, these questions can take the form of a final quiz or reflective essay in which the student articulates her understanding and knowledge of the topic. In my classroom, I find that students do best when the expectations are clearly laid out from the beginning and they can continually reflect upon their own learning.

This unit will be divided into two different sections, the first will focus on grasping foundational topics while the second will focus on applying those concepts to our specific oral history project. This will give my students opportunities to read, comprehend, and analyze good models of biography before they are expected to write one of their own. Before students can conduct their own oral history project, they will need to understand the elements of biography and oral history and why they are useful. The essential questions for this section are:

- What is biography?
- What are some of the key elements of a biography?
- What is oral history?
- How does oral history help us tell a more a complete story of the past and present?

The essential questions for the second section are:

- How has Emery Secondary School changed over time? (consider physical, social, demographic, and academic changes)
- How have historical events affected Emery Secondary School?
- How do different point of views shape your understanding of a theme?
- What legacies have people left and how have they helped shape our community?

When I created these essential questions, I needed to keep in mind the California State Standards. For example, our standards state that students must "demonstrate an understanding of the elements of discourse

(e.g., purpose, speaker, audience, form) when completing narrative, expository, persuasive, or descriptive writing assignments." In addition, point of view is another important standard that plays an important role with oral histories. Oral histories are often written in the first person, "but there are problems with a first-person narrative. For example, the person telling the story may leave out some information that the reader needs in order to understand the story." [6] Cynthia Brown discusses her experience of using point of view when she wrote *Ready From Within; a student guide for writing oral history*: "For a while, I thought I could solve the problem of not enough background material by telling the story in the third person...By using this device I could add what I wanted to, because I had become the narrator." Ultimately however, Brown felt "It seemed to lack authenticity, even if there were more details." [7] Although I agree with Brown, I also feel that writing the oral histories in the third person, as a biography, will help my students grasp the elements of discourse and other standards better because they will have to assert a position as an author. It is easy for my students to "hide" behind the voice of another person, especially an adult. I think they will learn more about their own voice as a writer if they are forced to make choices about the organization and writing style of the text.

There are many opportunities for learning that are not associated with our state standards or specific to an English class but are equally as important learning objectives. For example, I want students to be able to engage in meaningful dialogue with adults outside of their family, learn to take notes effectively, ask open-ended questions, and listen carefully. By doing so, my students will become more involved in their community and engaged citizens.

Texts

There will be no full length book assigned for this unit. Instead, I will use shorter texts as models for the students and utilize a variety of strategies listed in the next section. The texts chosen are oral histories, biographies, and various primary sources. Some of the texts are written in first person narrative while others are written in the third person. Some texts cover similar topics to offer "multiple perspectives" and others offer interesting structures that my students might want to model.

Listening is an Act of Love[8] is a collection of oral histories gathered by the Storycorp project. Storycorp provides a recording booth in which anyone can bring someone they want to interview. At the end of the interview, you are given a recording of the interview and another recording goes into the Library of Congress. This book offers short excerpts from many of the interviews. It is organized thematically and is appropriate for all levels of readers. What I like about the organization is that students can read different excerpts from a chapter and compare perspectives on a subject such as "work and dedication."

The Foxfire Book[9] is one of the most famous examples of a student driven oral history project in the United States. The project is based in the Appalachian mountains and began in 1966. The stories in Foxfire are fascinating. They tell about a system of living that has all but disappeared in the United States and is far removed from the lives of my students today. What I like about the book is the way the stories are structured and written. Students give a brief introduction to each section, often discussing how and why they interviewed that person. Some use a question and answer format while others are more of how-to manuals. What is clear in each chapter is that there is a strong relationship between interviewer and subject. I think it will be important to explore the value and challenges of relationships with one's subject through excerpts of this

book.

Temescal Legacies: Narratives of change from a North Oakland neighborhood[10] is based on a neighboring community to Emeryville. What is unique about the book is the way it is organized and the information that is provided. Each section provides oral histories and historical documents to tell a story. This adds to the concept of multi-layered and varied perspectives that is at the center of this unit.

The Hero Project[11] is a collection of biographies written by two teenage brothers who made a list of their heroes and interviewed them. The brothers interviewed Desmond Tutu, Dolores Huerta, Steve Wosniak, Jackie Chan and several more. They also include how they got each interview and a transcription of it. These will serve as great models for read aloud and think aloud activities.

Our school library also has a large collection of school yearbooks dating back to 1937. These yearbooks include valuable information that can serve as primary sources. The students can use them to learn about the activities, classes, perspectives, and demographics of the students from the past. Also, the yearbooks have been compiled by students, so they reflect student perspectives. From their investigations students can develop hypotheses and questions for their interviews. They might ask about life during a war, social movements, or when they demolished our school and rebuilt it. They may also want to find people in the yearbooks that they can interview now. For example, a student might find someone that wrote for the school newspaper in a yearbook, she can then try to find that alum and ask about his experience as a school journalist and how that impacted his life after Emery. These yearbooks are a crucial piece of written history that will help move students to do oral history.

Strategies

I chose these strategies because I know they work with my student population. Most of these activities allow students time to digest information and synthesize it into their own language and ways of understanding. For the past three years our school has used Pebble Creek Labs curriculum in 9th and 10th grade English and Geography. This curriculum, independently owned and created by a veteran teacher, uses a core set of research-based literacy strategies as a framework for each unit. As a result of teaching this curriculum over the past three years, my own metacognative skills have developed and I've been able to adapt the curriculum to new units and texts. More importantly, my students are well versed in these core strategies by the time I receive them as juniors. They know how to use them, they know what it helps them do, and they comprehend their reading much better than they might have without the use of strategies. However, not all of the strategies listed below come from Pebble Creek Labs. Some are ones that I feel will be particularly useful for this project, such as fishbowls and literature circles.

The question I always struggle with, particularly in higher grade levels, is when to take off the "training wheels." At some point, my students should be able to pick up a book, with academic vocabulary, and be able to read, analyze, and check for comprehension without explicit assistance from a strategy given by a teacher. I want my students to be able to internalize these strategies, or at least what these strategies help them do, without always relying on them being there. With that said, all but a few of my students read and write at grade level; they still need the support of explicitly taught literacy strategies for comprehension, metacognition, and analysis. My hope is that because they are already so comfortable with the strategies, we

can dialogue about ways to internalize them as we go along.

Think-Pair-Share

It is well researched that our brains need "think time" to process new information. In my class, I usually conduct a think-pair-share along with direct instruction or a brief lecture. Students are given a few minutes (1-3) to think about a topic and possibly jot down what they remember in their own words and questions that come up for them. Students then pair up and share their thoughts and questions. Sometimes I will ask a few pairs to report back to the whole class. This strategy can be used to break up time between longer lectures as well.

Socratic Seminar

There are many different variations of Socratic seminars. In my class, we create an inner circle and an outer circle out of the desks. Students are usually given a question or topic to discuss in the inner circle. The goal is to have an academic conversation among students without the teacher leading it. The students do not have to come up with an answer to the question, but rather, broaden their understanding of the topic at hand and perhaps come up with more questions. Meanwhile, the outer circle listens to the inner circle. They cannot participate in the discussion during the Socratic seminar. Sometimes, especially if the conversation stagnates in the middle, I will allow students from the outer circle to write a question and give it to someone in the inner circle. I assign roles to the outer circle such as "silent contributor, note taker, reference checker, process checker, and observer." At the end, the outer circle will share their observations. For this project, I will probably use Socratic seminars towards the beginning, as students are hypothesizing about what they may discover during their interviews. We can also use this method to discuss short biographies and oral histories.

Fishbowl

A fishbowl usually involves two or more people in the center of the classroom modeling a lesson or having a discussion while the rest of the class watches in a circle around them. For this unit, I plan on using this strategy to model the interview process. I will bring in at least two different people to interview while students take notes on what went well, what could be improved upon. We can use that modeling as a springboard for discussion around interviewing skills.

Questioning

Students will need to learn how to ask open-ended interview questions. First, I want students to write down questions they will ask their subject as a pre-assessment. Next, we will read a brief piece about writing open-ended questions. I will then give students back their questions which they can revise to be open-ended. Along with this basic lesson, we will also need to generate questions in class, some that are more general and others that are specific to a certain high school theme.

Think Aloud

We are not naturally metacognative readers. The strategies that good readers use are generally hidden in our minds. A think aloud attempts to model the strategies that good readers use. For example, I may read a short text on an overhead and comment in the margins. My comments can focus on a variety of strategies such as making connections, asking questions, predicting, and summarizing. Make sure that your notes and comments are concise and you don't deviate from the text. [12]

Read Aloud

A read aloud is different from a think aloud because it is followed by discussion and analysis among the students. First, the teacher reads aloud, followed by a think-pair-share or other information processing strategy. Students may also jot down reactions, take notes, or respond to a prompt at this point. After, the teacher assigns any number of activities that relate to the lesson goals such as a mimic write, summary paragraph, make predictions, make inferences and more. [13]

For this project in particular, we will read various short pieces about the same place, event, or person to understand point of view and the author's role. We may also use a read aloud to break down the elements of discourse discussed under objectives.

Inductive Model

This model uses a "data set" as its core text. A data set is a collection of short pieces of text (usually about a paragraph long) that are numbered and have a unifying topic like oral history. Student read the data set, which can occur in a variety of ways such as independent reading, whole class or small group and highlight and annotate the text. Next, students must identify themes or categories and classify information. This stage often includes literally cutting up the data set and moving the passages around. Students then identify critical relationships between groups and build hypothesis which can later be used for research. [14]

Visual Thinking Strategies

These are research-based strategies designed to help students improve their critical thinking and language skills through the analysis of images. The premise of VTS is simple: the teacher provides the students with an image which they look at silently for a minute or so; then the teacher can only ask three questions 1) What's going on in this picture? 2) What more can you find? 3) What do you see that makes you say that? It is important that the teacher then paraphrases what each student said, making connections between observations and statements. [15] Although VTS was designed to use with images, I plan on using it when teaching writing as well, particularly when we identify the organization, structure, and mechanics of a text.

See, Think, Wonder

This strategy comes from the Visible Thinking project at Harvard University. Students are asked three different question 1) What do you see? 2) What do you think about that? 3) What does it make you wonder? It is very similar to VTS and was primarily developed for use with images. What makes this strategy different is that students can write their responses down before discussing them. It also asks students more explicitly to make connections to their prior knowledge and things outside of the image.

Literature Circles

Literature circles are small groups that read a text together and discuss it. There are many variations and ways of organizing them. In my class, students are able to choose the text they want to read and I create groups around those choices. Students then read the text and relate it to our essential question(s) for the week. During the discussion, I provide students with a discussion protocol that they may or may not follow exactly. Harvey Daniels is an excellent author to check out for more information about literature circles.

KWL Chart

A KWL chart is designed to follow students throughout their learning of a particular topic. The chart is divided into three categories: "What I **K**now," "What I **W**ant to Know," "What I **L**earned." In my classroom we have a large KWL chart on poster paper which is kept up for the duration of the unit, each student also has their own individual KWL chart which they are asked to add to at different times in the unit. I ask students to write with a different color pen or pencil each day that they add to their chart so that they can easily monitor their questions and learning over time; students may also just date each entry but using color seems to be more exciting for them. I also stress that good learners always ask questions when they learn something new; learning never ends and we must ask questions to learn new information. This is probably one of the most important parts of the KWL chart because students often think that asking questions means you are "stupid."

ABC/PQC Response

In education we love acronyms, and what better than ABC? This is a writing strategy for short answer responses to specific texts. Students are given a question and they must **A**nswer it, **B**ack it up with evidence from the text, and **C**omment (by making connections between the evidence and answer or other relevant information). PQC works best with prompts rather than questions. The teacher gives students a prompt and the student must make a **P**oint, provide a **Q**uote to back up their point, and **C**omment on their point and quote. My students have a hard time asserting a point of view and backing it up with evidence, this strategy helps them develop an authoritative writing voice in small chunks. I usually use this writing strategy as a homework assignment and formative assessment. The drawback is that it teaches students formulaic writing, but it is small enough that students can be more creative when writing longer pieces.

Activities

For the purpose of this unit, activities will be broken up into two categories 1) foundational activities and 2) project based activities. The foundational activities are designed to help students learn the genre of biography and oral history while the second categories allows students to apply their new found knowledge to a real life situation. Below is a sample of activities from each category. The final project will likely include mini-lessons on topics that students are not readily familiar with.

Foundational Activities

Defining Biography Part I - Think-Pair-Share and KWL Chart

Students will jot down a response to the question "what is biography?" in their journals. The will then get into pairs, and share their responses. After student have had time to share with a classmate, I will call on a few pairs to report out their thoughts to the class. Their responses will make up our preliminary definition of biography as a class which we will add to the "K" column of a KWL chart. Next, in pairs, students will create a list of at least 5 questions they have about the genre of biography. We will frequently revisit these questions as we continue to study the genre of biography. The idea is that over the course of our study we will answer these questions and add more questions as we continue to learn more about biography.

Defining Biography Part II - Think Aloud and Read Aloud

I've chosen a short biography from Temescal Legacies to "think aloud" with my my students. The biographies in this book are no more than a page in length, easy to read, and relevant to the communities my students come from. It is important at this stage for me to chose a biography that is of a lower reading level than my students because I want to challenge them in thinking about the genre of biography without getting stuck on vocabulary and other writing choices that may make it difficult for students to engage in the discussion.

I will read this biography aloud using my overhead projector and give each student a copy so that they can read along with me and make notes on their own copy. I will interject a few times to note when the author is making an important writing choice that relates to biography or when I notice some of the characteristics we identified in the class with our KWL chart. This shouldn't take too long as I don't want students to get bored; the objective is to model good reading habits, not lecture about the content. When I am done reading and note-taking I will open the lesson for questions and comments from the students. The think aloud model allows me to show students what I expect from them when they take their own notes during the next stage, the read aloud.

Students will receive a packet of three short biographies which they will "read aloud" and take notes on. After reading each biography aloud, students will be asked to highlight and take notes on key elements of a biography. They will also answer the question "how do you know this is a biography?" There are two possible groupings I may use for this: students may work independently or I may have them work in small groups. Once everyone is done with the read alouds we will add any new key elements students found to the "L" column of our KWL chart. I will have to make sure that any key elements that students did not "discover" make it to the final list. For example, I want to make sure that we include point of view, purpose, voice, and "through line" to the "learned" column.

Extension Activity - Reading a Full Length Biography

Depending upon time limits and the strengths of my class, I may introduce a full-length biography, at this time. This will give us more time to explore the stylistic choices of the writer, their own assumptions, and point of view.

Defining Oral History - Inductive Model Data Set

In addition to some of the same activities utilized for introducing biography I will also create an "oral history" data set. This will allow me to front load information and show the various ways in which an oral history can look. The data set will have four categories: first-person narrative, third-person narrative, definitions, and issues with oral history. I will not give students these categories; instead, they will have to come up with their own based on what they read. Students will be given several short excerpts based on each category and will have to sort out each excerpt and create categories. This means that students are getting crucial information in small enough chunks to read easily. It will also require students to show their comprehension by categorizing the information.

Exploring Oral History - Literature Circles

Students will be broken into groups of four and each small group will read an oral history and discuss it. Usually I allow groups to pick which book they would like to read as this creates buy-in for each student to complete the assignment. I've developed a book group discussion protocol for my classroom in which the students are given an essential question and then asked to discussion it. For this assignment, the essential question is, "How does oral history help us tell a more a complete story of the past and present?" To help

answer this question, I will ask students in their small groups to write a short factual biography of their main subject and then compare that to the oral history. I think this will help them see that oral history adds narrative, perspective, feeling, and emotion to an event or simple facts.

If I can, I would like to pick one event in history and have each group read a different oral history from people during that same time period. This way, we can discuss how oral history can benefit our understanding of an event by adding multiple perspectives.

On-Going Homework - ABC/PQC Response

To demonstrate their understanding of our essential questions and readings, students will be required to write two ABC/PQC responses each week. These short responses will give students a chance to share what they learned and what they think about biography and oral history. I can also use these responses to address many of the state standards around literary analysis (see Appendix A).

Project-Based Activities

Daily Warm-Up Activity - See, Think, Wonder

At the beginning of each day, we will use the See, Think, Wonder strategy with an image from one of our school yearbooks or Images of America: Emeryville. Students will have a daily worksheet divided into 5 boxes. The image will be projected onto the screen at the front of the room and students will have to write for 5 minutes silently on what they see, what they think about it, and what they wonder. After they write silently we will go over the image together as a class. This will take about ten minutes and allow students to get into the frame of mind of analyzing images and making predictions about them. My hope is that this will ignite student interest to investigate our school's history.

Exit tickets

At the end of most classes, students will be required to complete an exit ticket before they can leave. I may ask students a question that they should have learned the answer to that day, what was challenging that day, or what they learned that day. Students write their responses on an index card or post-it note and turn it in to me before they leave the class. This is a quick way for me to monitor my students' learning and reflect on what went well and what I can improve on as a teacher. I usually post some exit tickets up around the classroom as a reminder of what students have already learned during the unit.

Investigation of school yearbooks

Our school library houses yearbooks dating back to 1937. In collaboration with our librarian, students will work together to research and gather information from these yearbooks. In pairs or groups of three, students will review at least 2 yearbooks and come up with a summary of their findings. Their summary must include a short list of at least 5 interesting pages from the yearbook, a brief summary of what made them interesting and what they learned from these pages. Each group must also answer the following questions about the yearbooks in general:

- What do you notice about life at Emery during this time period?
- What was similar and different from now?
- What was surprising to you?
- What questions would you ask someone in this yearbook?

- What else did you notice?
- What hypotheses can you make about life at Emery during this time?

We will then have a gallery walk in which students will share the yearbooks and summary of their findings while their classmates walk around and view them. As students walk around they will have to either make a connection to something they found in their yearbooks or something they know about Emery currently. After, the hypotheses will be written as large posters on the wall. We will return to these hypothesis after students interview alums and other members of the school community. This activity is designed to build students' ability to critically analyze images and text in a historical context as well as make comparisons and hypotheses.

Questioning - Socratic Seminar

We will begin brainstorming questions to ask alums and community members through a Socratic seminar. The main texts for this Socratic seminar are the yearbooks. Students will be asked the night before to answer the following question "If you could ask someone that attended Emery in the past anything, what would you ask them? What time period(s) would they come from? The following day students will discuss their answers in a Socratic seminar and come up with a brainstorm list of possible questions to ask. I will use this brainstorm to teach a mini-lesson on the difference between open-ended, closed, and follow-up questions. Students can then modify and/or eliminate any close ended questions. Then, we can create a solid list of potential interview questions. At this time, we will decide as a class if there is a specific set of questions that everyone will ask or if they want to choose their own questions.

Model interview - FIshbowl

I will bring in a counselor who has worked at our school for 40 years to model an interview in front of the entire class. I will use questions from the list we created in the previous activity. While I interview the counselor, students must note what they think I did well and what I could have improved on, we will discuss their analysis after the interview.

Interviewing Classmates

In preparation for interviewing community members, students will first interview each other. The benefits of this process are that it allows students to go through the entire process with someone they are comfortable with and allows me to monitor their skills. Second, it gives them space to make adjustments to their own interviewing process before they interview someone from the larger community. Classmates will then write out the biographies of their partners and share them with the class. These biographies will be included in the final presentation.

Interviewing Alums and Community Members

Students will work in partners and be responsible for finding two people to interview. For each interview, a different partner will be the lead interviewer while the other partner will take notes and act as an assistant. Each pair will be responsible for interviewing one alum and one other type of member of the school community. Students will also be responsible for arranging their interviews. I will create time to do this while they are conducting interviews with their classmates so that they have sufficient time to make arrangements. One possibility is that we could host an interview "night" where school and community members could come by and be interviewed. This would provide a safe place for the students to interview and it may bring up old

memories for the subjects being interviewed. In addition to interviewing their subjects, students will also be required to take pictures of them which will be included in the final presentation.

Students will use recording devices and note taking to capture the interviews. Before they can conduct these interviews, they will need to have a consent form signed (see Appendix B) by their subjects. This is for legal reasons and is meant to make the subject at ease knowing the purpose of the interview.

Writing Biographies

The first stage will be to write a one page biography of the subject's life. Each student will be responsible for writing one of the biographies and revising his or her partner's. Students will not be required to transcribe the entire interview; instead, they will take notes from the audio recording and use those to write their biographies. This will encourage students to write biographies rather than first person narratives and put the subjects' stories into their own words. During the writing process, students will be required to create a brainstorm, an outline, a first draft revised by her partner, a second draft revised by me, and a final draft. When writing, we will pay specific attention to the elements of discourse, organization, and focus as outlined by the California State Standards (see Appendix A). I will also use VTS to model revising and editing skills with my students. I will ask each student to volunteer a paragraph of their biography and I will chose a few of those to edit in front of the class (they will be anonymous). I will also use a rubric to grade all final drafts of written work.

The second page of the biography will be based on a theme chosen by the students. As a class, we will pick 4-6 themes that show up throughout the interviews; for example, themes might include school activities, slang, sports or academics. From these themes each student will decide which one(s) their subject covers and which one of those they want to write about. They will then write 2-3 paragraph summaries of what their subject said about this theme and transcribe an excerpt from the interview. The transcription is meant to give voice to the person interviewed.

Presenting Themes

For the final presentation, the biographies and photographs will be grouped into the designated themes so that comparisons can easily be made between time periods. These will be displayed on large foam core for our school wide exhibition. This exhibition is open to the community at large and we will invite everyone who participated in the project.We will also create a binder of all of the interviews and pictures and donate it to the school library. Eventually, these should be put onto a website however I am not that technologically savvy yet.

Another key part of this presentation will be for students to share their reflections on the interview process, what they learned, and what conclusions they have made. This gives students a chance to think about their own learning process and what content they learned. Presenting these reflections will also help the audience gain further insight into the process of creating biographies and oral histories.

Resources

Teacher Resources

Association of Personal Historians. http://www.personalhistorians.org/.

Provides practical tips and resources for getting started on an oral history project.

Brown, Cynthia S. *As It Was: A guide to Writing Oral History*. New York: Teachers & Writers Collaborative, 1988.

An easy guide for both teachers and students to follow. I found this book to be the most useful guide out of all that I reviewed.

Dunaway, David D., and Willa K. Baum. eds. Oral History: An Interdisciplinary Anthology. Nashville: The American Association for State & Local History, 1984.

A fundamental read for anyone interested in understanding the theory behind oral history

Mercier, Laurie, and Madeline Buckendorf. *Using Oral History in Community History Projects*. : Oral History Association, 1992.

A simple guide to follow

Pebble Creek Labs. http://pebblecreeklabs.com/

An online resource for Pebble Creek curriculum but also provides excellent descriptions of research based literacy strategies

StoryCorps. http://storycorps.org/.

An online resource for anyone interested in learning more about The StoryCorps.

Visual Thinking Strategies. www.vtshome.org.

A description of strategies designed to develop critical thinking through visuals.

Visible Thinking. http://www.pz.harvard.edu/vt/visibleThinking_html_files/VisibleThinking1.html

An excellent collection of critical thinking strategies from Harvard's Project Zero.

Wood, Linda P. *Oral History Projects in Your Classroom*.: Oral History Association, 2001.

Addresses specific concerns for conducting oral history projects in schools.

Classroom Resources

All of these resources would make excellent read alouds, think alouds, and literature circle readings.

Hatch, Robert, and William Hatch. *The Hero Projec*t. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2006.

A collection of biographies and interviews written by two teenage brothers.

Isay, Dave. *Listening is an Act of Love*. New York: Penguin Books, 2007.

A collection of interviews from the StoryCorp project.

Norman, Jeff. *Images of America: Emeryville.* San Francisco, Cal.: Arcadia Publishing, 2005.

The only written history book of Emeryville that I could find.

Norman, Jeff. *Temescal Legacies: Narratives of Change from a North Oakland Neighborhood.* Oakland, Cal.: Shared Ground, 2006.

This book is based on a neighboring community to Emeryville.

Terkel, Studs. *Working: People Talk About What They Do All Day and How They Feel About What They Do*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1974.

A classic compilation of oral histories by one of America's most famous oral historians.

Wigginton, Eliot. *The Foxfire Book*. Garden City, N.Y.: Double Day & Co., 1972.

The most famous example of a high school oral history project still going today.

Appendix A

Implementing District Standards

Writing Strategies

1.1 Organization and Focus: demonstrate an understanding of the elements of discourse (e.g., purpose, speaker, audience, form) when completing narrative, expository, persuasive, or descriptive writing assignments

- Covered when defining biography and oral history as well as writing biography.

1.2 Organization and Focus: use point of view, characterization, style (e.g., use of irony), and related elements for specific rhetorical and aesthetic purposes

- Covered when defining biography and oral history as well as writing biography.

1.6 Research and Technology: develop presentations by using clear research questions and creative and critical research strategies (e.g., field studies, oral histories, interviews, experiments, electronic sources)

- Covered when conducting interviews, developing questions, investigating yearbooks, and developing presentations.

Reading Comprehension

Covered during literature circles and when reading full length biographies and think/read alouds.

2.5 Comprehension and Analysis of Grade-Level-Appropriate Text: analyze an author's implicit and explicit

philosophical assumptions and beliefs about a subject

Literary Response and Analysis

3.2 Narrative Analysis of Grade-Level-Appropriate Text: analyze the way in which the theme or meaning of a selection represents a view or comment on life, using textual evidence to support the claim

3.5 Narrative Analysis of Grade-Level-Appropriate Text: analyze recognized works of American literature representing a variety of genres and traditions:

3. evaluate the philosophical, political, religious, ethical, and social influences of the historical period that shaped the characters, plots, and settings

Our school is committed to integrating art into every classroom. The Visible thinking and Visual Thinking Strategies are designed to support these school standards.

Appendix B

Oral History Legal Release Form

Emery Secondary School

Oral History Project

Interviewee Agreement

You have been asked to participate in the Emery Secondary School Oral History Project. The purpose of this project is to gather and preserve information for historical and scholarly use.

A tape recording of your interview will be made by the interviewer and will be kept and used at Emery Secondary School. A biography will be written using information from the tapes and a copy will be made available to you if you upon your request. These materials may be made available for purposes of research, instructional use, publication, or other related purposes.

I,_____ (name of interviewee), hereby give the copyright of my interview to Emery Secondary School, to be used for whatever educational and scholarly purposes that the school shall determine.

_____ _____

Interviewee Signature Interviewer Signature

_____ _____

Date Date

Endnotes

1. Emeryville Historical Society, "The town without a church," in *Images of America: Emeryville.* (Arcadia, 2005), 19.
2. Charles T Morissey, "Introduction," in *Oral History: An Interdisciplinary Anthology*, eds. David D. Dunaway and Willa K. Baum. (Nashville: The American Association for State & Local History, 1984), xix.
3. Linda P. Wood, *Oral History Projects in Your Classroom*. (Oral History Association, 2001), 55.
4. Paul Thompson, "History and the community," in Oral History: *An Interdisciplinary Anthology*, 44-45.
5. Alice Hoffman, "Reliability and Validity in Oral History," in Oral History: An Interdisciplinary Anthology, 72.
6. Cynthia S. Brown, As It Was: *A Guide to Writing Oral History*. (New York: Teachers & Writers Collaborative, 1988), 17.
7. Ibid., 19.
8. Dave Isay, *Listening is an Act of Love.* New York: Penguin Books, 2007.
9. Eliot Wigginton, *The Foxfire Book*. Garden City, NY: Double Day & Co., 1972.
10. Jeff Norman, *Temescal Legacies: Narratives of Change from a North Oakland Neighborhood*. Oakland, CA: Shared Ground, 2006.
11. Robert Hatch and William Hatch, *The Hero Project*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2006.
12. Pebble Creek Labs. "Think Aloud Strategy Summary." http://pebblecreeklabs.com/instructional-strategies/think-aloud.html (9 July 2010).
13. Pebble Creek Labs. "Read Aloud Strategy Summary." http://pebblecreeklabs.com/instructional-strategies/read-aloud/181-read-aloud-strategy-summary.html (9 July 2010).
14. Pebble Creeks Lab. "Inductive Model Summary." http://pebblecreeklabs.com/instructional-strategies/inductive/180-inductive-model-summary.html (9 July 2010).
15. Visual Thinking Strategies. www.vtshome.org (9 July 2010).