United States History

Glenbrook South High School

Living History: A Grandparent/Parent – Student Interview

Directions:

• You will have to (re)introduce yourself to one of your parents – or possibly a grandparent – for this project. Make an appointment in advance and plan on spending some time talking to him or her about one of the topics included below. The more time you have, the more information you will collect and the better this project will be. If you anticipate any problem completing this activity, speak with me as soon as possible.

• For your interview, you will need to record the conversation. Please use the following app:

  **STORYCORPS APP:** Storycorps, a well-known non-profit whose goal is to record, preserve and share oral histories, has developed an app to record an interview. This app allows you to publish the interview in the National Archives. Instructions for this app are at the end of this packet.

• It is important that you read the chapter in your book and do some additional research before the interview. The questions included below are intended to serve as a guide, not a script. You should prepare your own original questions as well from your research. **The best place to start your research is the Glenbrook South Library homepage.** A “LibGuide” has been set up for each of the topics below. This will direct you to some of the best websites on your topic. Click on “Classroom Resources and Homework Help,” find the Social Studies section, and then scroll down to “Living History—U.S. History.” You may also find a link to the ‘LibGuide’ on the USH google classroom page.

• On an assigned date to be determined by me, you will give a **formal presentation** about the story told to you during the interview. You will tell the class about your interview, including your interviewee’s experiences and personal opinions.

• You will be expected to have a visual component to the presentation. Your interviewee might have artifacts from the time period that they are willing to loan you for the presentation. You are encouraged to bring these items into class on the day of your presentation, but please make sure you reference them and weave them skillfully into your narrative. It is ok to have a powerpoint, but it should not have much text. Emphasize images that will enhance the narrative. Again, make sure that each image is skillfully woven into your narrative. Include a current picture of your interviewee as well as any images they have of themselves at the time.
• You will be expected to dress up for class on the day of your presentation. Gentlemen are to wear a collared shirt, slacks (no jeans or cargo pants) and presentable shoes (no gym shoes). Ties and coats are always welcomed, but not mandatory. Ladies are expected to wear either a dress, skirt, or neat slacks (again, no jeans or gym shoes). Think business attire, NOT social attire.

• Please let us know in advance if any special technology hardware will be needed which would enhance your presentation.

Your presentation will include the following:

1. A summary of the story your parent or grandparent told you. Be sure to formulate a logical narrative for your presentation with a clear introduction, highlights from the interview, connections and challenges to your research, and a conclusion.

2. Your reaction to hearing their story. Be sure to discuss these points:
   a) How does their interpretation compare with the information in the book? Do the facts seem to coincide with what the book said, or perhaps contradict or challenge it?
   b) Did you learn any additional facts about this event in history? Were there any seeming discrepancies or inconsistencies in your family member’s story?
   c) If so, why do you think they occurred?

3. Any additional props or “show and tell” items that may add interest. You may choose to make or create anything that you think enhances your presentation! At a minimum, include a current picture of your interviewee. Please note the guidelines for this in the bullet points listed above.
**Presentation Topics**

**Topic 1:** The Great Depression

What are some things that you remember about the Great Depression? Do you remember Black Tuesday? Did you or anyone in your family lose money in the stock market or as a result of a bank closing? Did you live in an urban or a rural area? How did the Great Depression impact the people around you? Did you ever see a shantytown? A bread line? What do you remember about the Dust Bowl? What was your impression of President Hoover? Who did you want to be President in 1932? Do you have any memories of the Presidential campaign in 1932? What is your opinion of President Roosevelt? Was the New Deal an effective response to the Great Depression? Did any of the New Deal programs help you personally? Did you ever listen to one of FDR’s fireside chats? Do you have any memories of Eleanor Roosevelt? Was there a particular time during the ten years of the Great Depression when your family hit hard times? Do you remember when things got better? What do you think brought the United States out of the Great Depression?

**Topic 2:** World War II

How old were you when World War II started in Europe? How did you get news about the war? What do you remember about Hitler? Mussolini? Stalin? Did you support the Allies or did you have an allegiance to the Axis powers? How did you learn about the Holocaust? Where were you on December 7th, 1941? What memories do you have of that day and the days that followed? What was your opinion of FDR as a Commander-in-Chief? What memories do you have about how the homefront mobilized for the war? Did you know any women who went to work in a job that had been traditionally held by a man? What did you think of the military strategy to focus on Europe first, and then turn the attention of the military toward the Japanese? What did you think about the decision to drop the bomb on Japan? Was it justified? Necessary? Unnecessary? How did World War II change your life? Change the nation? Was World War II a “good war”?

**Topic 3:** Cold War

When did you first realize that the Soviet Union had become an enemy of the United States? Was communism a legitimate threat to free-enterprise capitalism? Was containment an effective policy to thwart communist expansion? Was the Marshall Plan an effective way to subdue the appeal of communism in Western Europe? Should the United States have feared internal communist subversion in the 1950’s? Did you fear the Soviet Union? Did you believe that the Soviet Union might attack the United States? Do you have any memories of the Berlin airlift?
Topic 4: The Korean War

What did you think when you heard the news that North Korea had invaded South Korea? Did you support the United States policy of containment? Did you think the United Nations or the United States should assist the South Koreans? Was General Douglas MacArthur the right person to lead the United Nations mission in South Korea? Should General MacArthur have taken the troops so close to the Chinese border? Was Truman justified when he fired MacArthur? The Korean War ended in a stalemate, but do you think there was a winner and/or a loser? Should the United States have fought “limited wars” to contain communism?

Topic 5: The 1950s

Were the 1950s a time of great peace, progress, and prosperity for Americans? Did you benefit from the prosperity that many Americans experienced during the 1950s? The GI Bill of Rights contributed to the rise of suburbia and the baby boom. How were you affected by the demographic and population shifts that occurred at this time? What were the expectations for women? Do you think women in the 1950s led less satisfying lives than they do today? Was the family stronger in the 1950s than it is today? How would you define the “American Dream” in the 1950s? What do you recall about the consumerism of the 1950s? Has materialism and excess consumption become an unchallenged way of life in America? How did conformity apply as a value to the living and working choices of Americans during the 1950s? What shows did you watch on television? How did television shape American values in the 1950s? Did you listen to rock ‘n’ roll? Who were some of your favorite artists? Did the advent of rock ‘n’ roll bring about significant changes in our culture? Were you aware or involved in the civil rights movement? Do you think Rosa Parks’ refusal to give up her seat was the pivotal moment in the civil rights movement? Were you aware or impacted by the integration of public schools as a result of the Brown v. Board of Education decision? What do you recall about the nine students who attended Central High in Little Rock, Arkansas? How would so many Americans be enraged at Nazi Germany, but blind to the prejudice in our own society? What memories do you have of the Cold War? Were you afraid of “commies”? How influential was the media in shaping the attitudes and beliefs of Americans? Was President Eisenhower an effective president?

Topic 6: The 1960s

Historians typically see the election of President Kennedy in November, 1960 as the beginning of the 1960s. What do you remember about the presidential contest between Vice-President Richard Nixon (Republican) and Senator Kennedy ( Democrat) ? These two candidates participated in the first televised presidential debate. Did you see it on tv? What do you remember about the role television played in this election? President Kennedy’s inaugural speech is believed to have inspired a generation of Americans to public service. Did you hear the speech, what do you remember about it? What are some things that you remember about the Kennedy presidency? The Bay of Pigs? The building of the Berlin Wall? The Cuban Missile Crisis? Was the perception of his family/administration as being a sort of “Camelot” an appropriate description? Do you feel that Kennedy was successful or not as president? Has your opinion of him changed over the years? What were you doing when President Kennedy was
shot on November 22, 1963? What was your reaction when you heard the news? How would the future have been different if perhaps JFK had lived? President Kennedy’s Vice-President, Lyndon Baines Johnson (LBJ) assumed the presidency after the assassination, what do you remember about the way he led the nation after such a traumatic event? LBJ had an ambitious domestic agenda (Great Society), but his presidency is often shrouded by events in Vietnam. In what way was your life effected by the Vietnam War. The Vietnam War is called the first ‘television war’ – do you remember seeing coverage of the war at home in your living room? Did that impact the way you viewed the war? Many, though certainly not all Americans, were against the war. Did you or anyone you know participate in the antiwar protest movement? Were you a ‘hippie’? Did you know a ‘hippie’? Do you remember the music of the 1960s? Is there an artist that stands out to you? Why? Many Americans believe that the 1960s began with hope and confidence as a new, young president came to office; but by the end of the decade the nation had lost JFK, Medgar Evers, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Robert F. Kennedy by the hands of an assassin. How did these murders impact the nation? Was America ‘better’ after the 1960s?

**Topic 7: The Civil Rights Movement**

Ninety years after the end of the Civil War, African Americans remained second-class citizens in the United States. But people like Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King Jr., and James Meredith, among many others – began to change the racial status quo in the country. Did this movement affect you in any particular way? Was your school or community segregated? Were there any non-violent protests where you lived? Any violent ones? What impressions did you get of the movement or the people involved from the images appearing on your TV screen at night? Did you participate in any marches or protests? Is America still what the Walker Report stated after the 1967 Detroit Riots – a country made up of two societies, separate and unequal?

**Topic 8: The Vietnam War**

How did you feel about President Johnson’s handling of the Vietnam War? Do you feel that the president was being honest with the American people about Vietnam? Did you support the war effort? Should we have gotten involved? If so, why? If not, why not? Were you a dove or a hawk? And why? Did you know anyone who served in Vietnam? What was your reaction to the Vietnam protesters? What impression did you have of the country at this time? At any point did your views change concerning America’s involvement in Vietnam?

**Topic 9: Richard Daley and the 1968 Democratic Convention**

The chant from the streets of Chicago was: “The whole world is watching.” Were you? What was your understanding of the issues that disrupted the convention? Were you there, or watching on television? What did it look like was happening from your perspective? How did you view the actions of the Yippies? What was your view of Mayor Richard Daley and how he ran the city of Chicago? The Walker Commission later described the events that took place that August a “police riot.” Was this fair or not? Why?
Topic 10: Service in the United States Military: Gulf War, Iraq, & Afghanistan

Why did you join the United States military? How old were you? How many years did you serve? What was your primary occupation in the military? Were you an enlisted person or an officer? In what countries have you been stationed as a member of the United States military? Did you serve overseas? If yes, did your service overseas change your world views? If so, how? What were you told about the reasons why you were being sent to this region? Describe what the conditions were like when you arrived. What was a typical day like while you were serving in this region? When should the United States use military force? Should the United States use military force to support democracy in Eastern Europe? The Middle East? Latin America? Is it constitutional for the United States to fight preemptive wars? Should limits be placed on civil liberties during times of national crisis? Is the U.S. safer because of our involvement in this region? Did the media accurately report on the key issues of this region? Did you develop a greater appreciation for America as a result of your service?

Topic 11: The New Immigrants*

America is witnessing today an increasingly large wave of immigrants flooding its shores from all corners of the globe. What were the “pushes” and “pulls” that led to the decision to leave your homeland? What dreams and/or expectations did you have about America? Are they being met? What was your employment or work situation when you arrived? Do you feel that you were welcomed, rejected or ignored? How well do the words of Emma Lazarus’s poem on the Statue of Liberty reflect your own experience? Describe some of your most memorable experiences so far. What has been the most difficult part about becoming an American? What, if anything, would you most like to change about your life in the United States? (Read text pages 1102-1103 and 1091-1095 for the research assignment. See instructor for additional text reading based on your topic.)

Topic 12: The War on Terror

The world has changed for Americans since the attacks on September 11, 2001. No longer are Americans safe from international terrorists and the violence they perpetrate. Now the United States has engaged in military action in both Afghanistan and Iraq. Were these actions an appropriate response to the events on 9-11? How has your life changed or been affected by what took place on that terrible day? Did this cause you to look differently at the world today? Explain. What other alternatives might our government have pursued instead? How has your life been affected since 9-11? Is this “War on Terror” winnable? President Obama brought the troops home from Iraq. Do you agree or disagree with this decision? When should the U.S. pull out of Afghanistan?

Topic 13: LHP Potpourri

Does your family have an interesting story that does not fit any of the topics listed in this packet? Please contact your teacher and let him or her know. The teacher will review the topic and determine if it is suitable for this project – there is a very good chance that it is!
Do-It-Yourself Interview Instruction Guide

1. Select Your Interview Partner

Start by selecting whom you wish to interview. Some people are hesitant to participate; emphasize that everybody’s story is important. Let your interview partner know that you would be honored to record the conversation.

2. Create a List of Questions

Preparing ahead of time will greatly improve the quality of your interview. Think about what you would like to learn from your interview. You have been given a list of questions, but you should craft some of your own based on the individual circumstances of your interviewee.

3. Choose an Interview Location

Pick the quietest place possible. A carpeted room is best. Avoid kitchens which have reflective surfaces and noisy appliances. Be sure to turn the volume off on any TV, radio, or stereo.

4. Set Up and Test the Equipment

Download the Storycorps app ahead of time. Make sure you are familiar with the app and understand how it works. Arrive with a phone that has a full charge, but please make sure to bring a charger just in case. Storycorps recommends that you publish the interview right away to avoid losing it for any reason. **MAKE SURE YOU HIT RECORD** when you begin the actual interview.

5. Begin the Conversation

Start the interview by stating your name, your age, the date, and the location of the interview. Then ask your interviewee to do the same.

Remember, the questions you prepared in advance are just suggestions. Trust your instincts and ask questions in whatever order you feel is right. If something interests you, ask more about it. Sometimes your interviewee may need to know that it is ok to talk about a certain topic. Grant permission by saying, “Tell me more.” Avoid saying “uh huh” or interrupting. Instead, use visual cues like nodding your head to encourage your interviewee to continue.
6. Keep the Conversation Flowing

- **Listen closely.** Look your interviewee in the eyes. Smile. Stay engaged.
- **Stick with good stuff.** Try to keep to the topics that your interviewee is passionate about. If the interview is going in a direction you do not want, gently steer the conversation in another direction.
- **Ask emotional questions as well as factual questions.** Asking “How does this make you feel?” often elicits interesting responses. Don’t be afraid to ask.
- **Respect your subject.** If there is a subject that your interviewee does not want to talk about, respect his or her wishes and move on.
- **Be curious and honest.** Great things will happen.
- **Use “memory sparks.”** Images from the time period that might enrich the conversation. For example, a headline from a newspaper the day after 9/11, an iconic photo from WWII, lyrics to a popular song.....to name a few.

7. Wrap It Up

Before you turn off the recording, ask your interviewee if there is anything else he or she wants to talk about. Then make sure to thank the person; opening up can be difficult. Express your gratitude, and let him or her know that it was a privilege to listen to the story.

Finally, hit STOP on the app AND **publish right away** to avoid losing the interview. Email the interview to your teacher right away as well. You can do this by clicking on the ‘share’ icon.