

TELL ME A STORY PROJECT: FAMILY STORIES - GUIDELINES FOR STUDENTS AND PARENTS

In our fourth grade research classes we are investigating family treasures. Your child has been asked to interview a family member in order to share some of their family history with classmates and their families.

INTRODUCTION TO STUDENTS:

You are invited to go on a very special treasure hunt. You will look in your own home, or perhaps your grandparents' or some other family-member's home for a family treasure or story.

First, you have to find a family treasure. Then the real detective work begins:

- Why is that treasure so precious to the family?
- What is the story behind the treasure?
- Or, what family story is there to tell?

You will interview a person or persons in your family. You could interview parents, grandparents, brothers/sisters, or maybe an aunt or uncle. This kind of research is **called oral history** as it involves listening to people's stories and recording them. It's also **called material history** because it deals with objects and the reasons why they are important.

Through your detective work - your research - you will be doing something exciting and important. You will be discovering part of your family's history and writing it down so that this story will not be forgotten.

CHOOSING A TREASURE

1) Give your family as much time as possible to find a treasure for this project. Talk to your grandparents as well as your parents, if you can. Or talk to other family members. Find out if your family has any photographs, newspaper clippings, letters etc. These could give you some clues about the treasure. The more we can document your story with images, the better; the more you know about your treasure ahead of time, the better your interview will be.

Possible question you could ask:

- What family heirlooms or keepsakes and mementos do you possess? Why are they valuable to you? What is their history? How were they handed down? Are there any memories or stories connected with them?
- Do you have any photos, photo albums, scrapbooks, home movies? Who made them? When? Can you describe/explain their contents? Who is pictured? What activities and events are documented?
- What is the oldest object in our home? How did it get there and why is our family saving it? Is there an event associated with it? If the object could speak, what would it say?
- Is there a family treasure in our home? What does that treasure tell us about the history and/or culture of our family?
- Is there a family story that you remember that might be told at family gatherings? Are there differing recollections about the same event?

2) The treasure, or story, should be very important to somebody for personal reasons. It would really be interesting if the treasure was related to your family's culture. If it has been passed down from one person to another in your family, that's terrific It could be a:

- a) child's toy
- b) Family recipe
- c) Souvenir family photograph
- d) Tool
- e) Family Bible or other book
- f) Jewelry
- g) Story
- h) Cooking pot
- i) Whatever it is, it should matter a lot to its owner(s).

3) Your family treasure should be something that you can bring in to school. If you bring it to school, we will take a photograph of it and then return it to you so that you can bring it back home. Or you could bring in a photo of it. If you choose something that is large or breakable or worth a lot of money, it would be better to bring in a photograph of the object. If you bring in an old photograph, we can scan it to the computer. If it is a digital photograph, you can email it to me at kkliegman@herricks.org

4) We will be using a program called *Photostory* to create your family memoir. Once you have collected images of your family 'treasure' and written your story, you will create a narrated digital (on the computer) story at school.

INTERVIEWING

- 1) Decide on your questions ahead of time and write them down. Show them to the person you will interview. People need time to think - and remember.
- 2) Choose the right time to do your interview. People also need to be relaxed and in a good mood. Ask them for at least half an hour of their time.
- 3) It may be best to interview two - or more - family members at the same time. They can help each other remember things about the treasure. If the person you really want to interview is shy, do the interview with him or her alone.
- 4) Find a quiet place - no TV, radio, telephone. Close the window or door if there is distracting noise. You want people's full attention!
- 5) You can use a tape recorder if you have one - make sure the person being interviewed agrees. Put it on the table between you and the other person. People soon forget that the machine is there.
- 6) **Take notes.** Try to write down important things in the person's own words, if possible.
- 7) If you are using a tape recorder, test it both before and during the interview to make sure it is working. Use at least a 30 minute cassette so you don't have to interrupt the conversation to turn the tape over.
- 8) **Be a good listener!** Make sure you give the person time to answer your question or finish what he or she is saying. Then ask the next question.

WRITING YOUR STORY (done in class)

- 1) Listen to the tape and/or go over your notes. Begin to organize your story by:
 - a) Describing the treasure - what it is, how big, how old;
 - b) Telling who the treasure belongs to, and why;
 - c) Describing how family members feel about the treasure and why it is important to them;
 - d) Describing your own feelings about the treasure

- 2) Read your story to a classmate. Use their suggestions to help make your story as interesting as possible. Check your spelling, grammar, etc.
- 3) Rewrite or type your story into a storyboard.
- 4) Include a photograph/s of your treasure with your story. We can take a digital picture at school.
- 5) Go online to find a few more images to document your story. We will discuss this in class.

Parents - SHARING WITH THE COMMUNITY

A permission slip is included with this packet. We would like to share your family story with the community by posting it on our website, *Tell Me a Story*. Our website address is: <http://eev.liu.edu/KK/tellmeastory/index.htm>. Please feel free to go online to learn more about this exciting project.

You may opt out of posting it on the website. Whichever choice you make, your child's family story will be shared with the Searingtown School community at a celebration to be announced later.

Thanks for your help with this project,
Mrs. Kliegman

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