

History at Home for Teens

Weekly Project 2: Become an Oral Historian of the Covid-19 Pandemic

Storytelling is at the core of who we are as humans. It is how we learn, identify ourselves, and connect to others in the past, the present and the future. Oral history, a form of storytelling, is a field of study as well as a method of gathering, preserving and interpreting people's stories and memories of past/current events. Oral history is both one of the oldest historical methods, and one of the most modern, using and taking advantage of the latest digital technologies today.

Here at the museum, oral histories are the main component of our current, temporary exhibit, [American Medina: Stories of Muslim Chicago](#). This exhibit draws from more than 100 interviews to tell the stories of Muslims, from all backgrounds, in Chicago. Another previous project of the museum that used oral history was Teen Chicago. This collection contains one hundred oral histories about growing up in Chicago during the twentieth century. [The Studs Terkel Center for Oral History](#) at the museum works with communities to record oral histories, often recruiting and training teens to conduct these interviews.

During this current global situation, one that will become part of the historical record, you can take the role of a historian and document stories of those who are experiencing this historical event, including yourself! Using the resources and guides provided here, record your own oral histories and share with us so we can begin to collect and document this unprecedented historic event.

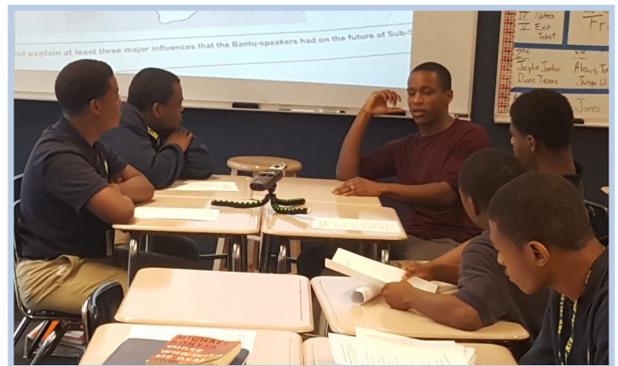


Image from the Studs Terkel Center for Oral History at the Chicago History Museum

Instructions:

- ◆ Watch this [brief video](#) to get a crash course in oral history.
- ◆ Identify your interviewees. Could be anyone in your home, someone who you can call or email, and/or it can even be yourself!
- ◆ Prepare for your interviews by writing down some guiding questions and reviewing some oral history basics, using the brief Oral History Guide.
- ◆ Conduct your interview/s. You can do as many as you'd like!
- ◆ Share them on social media or on our [Google Classroom](#) page.

To share with us, upload your recordings from your phone using the Google Classroom app, or from your computer through the submit assignment tab. You can also share your story on social media (Twitter @chicagomuseum, Instagram @chicagomuseum, Facebook @chicagohistory) tagging us and using #historyathometeens!

[All activities can be done from your phone! Just follow the blue hyperlinks to the materials/pages!](#)

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Additional Activities

Illustrated Timeline Activity:

Another effective method of recording and studying history is by creating and using a timeline. Timelines help visualize the passage of time and put historical events into perspective. As an example, check out the timeline below that documents some of the major events in the COvid-19 Pandemic. [Timeline adapted from the New York Times.](#)



One way to get more creative with a timeline is to make an illustrated timeline! Using images and pictures to highlight events helps break up all the text in timelines and reinforces what the text is communicating. Try creating your own illustrated timeline of current events.

Instructions:

- ◆ Using any sheet of paper or if you'd like to try creating a timeline on your computer, you can use Word, Publisher, or even PowerPoint to put together a timeline with images! Pick up where the timeline above ended, what else would you add?
- ◆ Pick your starting date, add a small (1-2 sentences) description of this event and add an image.
- ◆ Add more events, dates, happenings that you feel are important or would like to record.
- ◆ You can make these weekly timelines, monthly, or a continuous timeline of this whole pandemic!

Journaling:

In addition to oral histories and timelines, journaling is also a great way to record events as they are occurring. Keeping a journal is a great way to share your own thoughts, reactions, feelings, and observations of history as it is happening!

Consider keeping a journal of your experience during this pandemic. You can use a notebook, your notes app on your phone, and/or a document on your computer. You can also use your journal as a way to record events and then add them to your timeline!

Feel free to share any of your entries that you are comfortable sharing! Or share with us your thoughts on keeping a journal during these times and how you are journaling, so as to inspire others!

Share With Us!!

To share with us, upload your map and/or song from your computer or from your phone through the Google Classroom App, through the submit assignment button. You can also share your creations on social media (Twitter @chicagomuseum, Instagram @chicagomuseum, Facebook @chicagohistory) tagging us and using the hashtag #historyathometeens!

Brief Oral History Guide

Before speaking to your interviewee, make sure to keep the following in mind:

- ◆ **Review your questions.** (*What are you asking?*) Make sure to review your questions before hand so that there are no long pauses and the conversation can feel more natural.
- ◆ **Explain the reason for your interview.** (*Why are you asking this person questions?*) This way, the person knows exactly what to expect and everyone can be better prepared for the interview.
- ◆ **Take notes.** (*Even if you are recording it, notes help you find information more efficiently.*) As your interviewee is answering questions, take quick notes of things that caught your attention, are relevant to forthcoming questions, and things that you want to know more about.
- ◆ **Be open and attentive.** (*It is ok to go "off-script" as long as the conversation is relevant to the goal of the interview.*) As you are having your conversation, ask follow-up questions to things that were said, especially if they are relevant to the reason for the interview.

Ask open questions, not closed questions:

Why do you like history?
vs. ~~Do you like history?~~

Ask follow-up questions:

That's interesting, could you tell me more about _____?

Name of assignment: _____

Brief description of goal of the interview. (Why are you conducting this interview?):

Possible interviewees. (Think of three people, just in case your first choice is unavailable):

1) Name: _____ Age: _____ Occupation: _____

2) Name: _____ Age: _____ Occupation: _____

3) Name: _____ Age: _____ Occupation: _____

Use the back of this sheet to write down your questions. Make sure they are open questions and relevant to the topic/goal of the assignment.