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Explorer Classroom Storytelling Series 2026

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PROGRAM OVERVIEW

****Note:** To open the Table of Contents, click the  button in the upper left of the document**

Welcome to the **Explorer Classroom Storytelling Series**! Thank you so much for registering to participate in this exciting multi-week program to explore the power of storytelling and connect to the important stories in their own communities! **This document will be periodically updated to offer information that will help you navigate the Explorer Classroom Storytelling Series!**



About

In each event, our host, Younger Explorer and storyteller Andrea Villarreal Rodríguez, will connect a National Geographic Explorer with your students for a live 45-minute virtual class, filled with interactive moments and a Q&A session. Your learners will hear behind-the-scenes stories from the field and have their questions answered in real time!

Timeframe of Events

The Explorer Classroom Storytelling Series will kick off on **January 29** and end with a **celebration event on March 12, 2026**. Each event will take place at **10am and 2pm ET on Thursdays** (each session is identical, so pick the time that works best for your classroom). The program is designed for learners in **grades 3-8 (ages 8-14)**, but all are welcome to join.

Offline following each event, use our [Educator Mission Guide](#) to guide your learners through a short hands-on activity designed to understand the importance of storytelling and develop their own compelling stories about people who shape their communities.

Preparing for the program:

- 1 hour webinar for educators on January 14th at 7pm ET ([Webinar Link](#) | Passcode: explore)
- Pre-mission [briefing](#) from our host
- A 30 minute “[pre-mission](#)” activity for learners (to be completed prior to watching the first event)

Explorer Classroom Storytelling Series

- 5 forty-five minute live broadcasts
- 4 short action-oriented “missions” to engage your students in learning about how community stories can be discovered and shared
- A digital certificate for your classroom upon completion of the program (requires final mission submission)

Show Schedule




- **There are multiple ways to participate in the events. You can watch live on Zoom or live on Youtube at 10am or 2pm ET. Event recordings are also available immediately following each event and can be viewed on your own schedule.**




Jan 29, 2026	- Animating My Memory Manu Akatsu 🎬
Feb 5, 2026	- Cultural Lens of Food Sonya Lee 🍲
Feb 19, 2026	- Unhidden Voices of History James Edward Mills 🎤
Feb 26, 2026	- Stories on Foot Paul Salopek 🦶
Mar 12, 2026	- Storytelling Series Celebration Andrea Villareal Rodriguez 🎉

Viewing Links

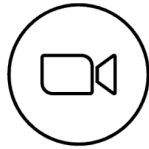
Here is where you can find the Zoom and YouTube links for upcoming events. Please take note of the event times you plan to attend and add them into your calendar! After each event has taken place, we will replace the Zoom links with the link to the event recordings on YouTube.

Please note, events are listed in Eastern Time (use this [time converter](#) for your location).

Date	Event	Zoom Links	YouTube Links	Resources
Wednesday Jan 14 @ 7pm ET	Educator Webinar 	Zoom link: https://ngs-org.zoom.us/j/84939575242?pwd=CnpKhnaBoK2INUFqnGTxyBTsB9DCgi.1	View Recording: https://youtube.com/live/p982n4eXiQU?feature=share Slide Show	Explorer Mindset Learning Framework
Jan 29th	Event 1: <i>Animating My Memory</i>  Manu Akatsa	10am ET: https://ngs-org.zoom.us/j/86592196251?pwd=gJZQIK1T1L9gr3ShjgwGUrLo05ChzX.1 2pm ET: https://ngs-org.zoom.us/j/87412371783?pwd=wQbCJlVmnc3ZzqWTtrjm1zfVgambk4.1 Password: explore	10am ET: https://youtube.com/live/LQkovpd0hRo?feature=share 2pm ET: https://youtube.com/live/cg8EmQLb9V0?feature=share	Manu's Work
Feb 5th	Event 2: <i>Cultural Lens of Food</i>  Sonya Lee	10am ET: https://ngs-org.zoom.us/j/88412069046?pwd=fvJaz7RTHxUEe9wFaJKsD109pBmKjy.1 2pm ET: https://ngs-org.zoom.us/j/88906601839?pwd=a42IQmKe5Alcbl0psmLQSMNz1Kut1.1 Password: explore	10am ET: https://youtube.com/live/oe2MJ_bJesw?feature=share 2pm ET: https://youtube.com/live/40EgQ42c2kM?feature=share	Sonya's Work

Feb 19th	<p>Event 3: <i>Unhidden Voices of History</i></p>  <p>James Edward Mills</p>	<p>10am ET: https://ngs-org.zo.om.us/j/87337046014?pwd=N09UKl4w71tZoFHpBJ3lulhBoJtb9x.1</p> <p>2pm ET: https://ngs-org.zo.om.us/j/85348663598?pwd=X28s0VK8ZrWbckyJErbKaCfab0Uhp.1</p> <p>Password: explore</p>	<p>10am ET: https://youtube.com/live/X9ttcKMI-Es?feature=share</p> <p>2pm ET: https://youtube.com/live/TxfqKXgX8w?feature=share</p>	James' work
Feb 26th	<p>Event 4: <i>Stories on Foot</i></p>  <p>Paul Salopek</p>	<p>10am ET: https://ngs-org.zo.om.us/j/86553625715?pwd=fN5HW4dv5G3MRzBkz4MhypGQ0z617q.1</p> <p>2pm ET: https://ngs-org.zo.om.us/j/85141727870?pwd=Lka5BsRpr7N0oAREmn05MLwkacbB5q.1</p> <p>Password: explore</p>	<p>10am ET: https://youtube.com/live/gMSJXNMbOCU?feature=share</p> <p>2pm ET: https://youtube.com/live/CXfsoP1Xk5E?feature=share</p>	Paul's Work
Mar 12th	<p>Event 5: Storytelling Series Celebration</p>  <p>Andrea Villareal Rodriguez</p>	<p>10am ET: https://ngs-org.zo.om.us/j/89949190321?pwd=maWUYjxfuUHQtuaa4XplWi6sh1vYTB.1</p> <p>2pm ET: https://ngs-org.zo.om.us/j/85800093171?pwd=lZlaFmNTgTecaLIJgnKoQv7wjmk0e.1</p> <p>Password: explore</p>	<p>10am ET: https://youtube.com/live/tW24HnrApi0?feature=share</p> <p>2pm ET: https://youtube.com/live/GyqJPcu1T58?feature=share</p>	Andrea's Work

Viewing Instructions



Zoom Live



YouTube Live



On Demand

There are 3 ways to watch the events with your class

- Join us live in Zoom (your class may have a chance to ask a question live on camera)
- Join us live on YouTube (submit questions and engage with us via the YouTube chatbar in real time)
- Or watch the recording on YouTube

You will get **email reminders 3 days before** the event and the **day of** the event (**ET**) containing the links to all Zoom and YouTube sessions. Please select the ones that align with your class schedule.

Zoom Instructions



Onscreen Guests:



Join Zoom



Waiting Room



Event Begins



Presentation &
Engagement



Q&A

- **Install Zoom** on your computer or tablet. This device must have a camera and microphone for your student to be able to ask a question on screen if you are called on.
- Click on the Zoom link for the showtime that works best for your class. You will receive a link to both the 10am and 2pm ET shows via email each week (the links can also be found in the "[Viewing Links](#)" section).
- Join via the Zoom link 10 minutes before the event starts. You will encounter a waiting room; we'll let classes into the room about 5 minutes before the event starts.
- **You do NOT have to turn your camera on during the event (although our Explorers love seeing the students!). If you choose to turn on the camera, any portions of the event where the students' faces are visible will be edited out of the show recording.**

- Please do not share the Zoom link and only use **1 device per class if possible**, as both space in the call and time for questions are limited.
- When it's time for **Q&A**, use the hand raise function to signal that your class has a question. We'll call on as many classes as we can. If you are selected, the host will call on your class and spotlight your class on the screen. This means that your class will be live on YouTube! The host will then ask you to unmute so that a student can ask a question.
- Be ready to use the **chat bar** to ask questions, take polls, comment (etc...) during the show.

YouTube Instructions



- Click on the **YouTube** link for the showtime that works best for your class. You will receive a link to both the 10am and 2pm ET shows via email each week (the links can also be found in the "[Viewing Links](#)" section).
- The live stream will automatically start at show time (10am or 2pm ET), but if it's a minute or two past the hour and nothing is happening, you can refresh the page, or type in the chat. Our team will be in the chat bar available to answer any questions, provide updates, and to moderate the conversation.
- Use the **chat box** found below or beside the video to introduce your student group, engage with our team, participate during the pop quizzes, and to submit student questions.

Educator Mission Guide

Here is the [Educator Mission Guide](#) to prepare you for all the missions throughout the series, including a pre-mission and a worksheet to use during the live events. This Storytelling Series is accompanied by a pre-mission and four missions, all short activities for your students to complete in class or at home that will help them demonstrate what it means to be an Explorer and storyteller in their local community.

We have also created an [Event Notes](#) document that you can print out for your students to use during the events to help the students engage with the information they are getting from the Explorer.

Completion Form

Please submit a [Mission Completion Form](#) for each mission that your students complete! We would also greatly appreciate the submission of examples of your students' work, though this is not required.. Student work will only be shared with National Geographic Society staff and the featured Explorers for the purposes of evaluating and improving on the program. We will not be evaluating individual student work.

Final Mission Submission

To have your students' work considered for the student showcase on March 12th during the celebration event, please ensure that submissions are completed by March 8th. We will pick up to 5 classrooms from the Final Mission submissions to showcase on-screen during the Celebration event on November 13th. Please kindly remember that this is not a competition; we'll choose a range of examples. We will reach out to selected classes with more information on how to prepare.

Finally, all educators that submit a [Mission Completion Form](#) for Mission 4 by **March 31st** will be sent a digital certificate of completion upon completion of the program! The first 50 educators to submit their students' final mission **and** complete a survey will also receive a small gift for their classroom!

Survey

Please complete [the survey](#) before March 31st. The survey includes questions for both you and your students. We value your feedback and would appreciate hearing from you. Your opinions will be instrumental in enhancing our programs for the future!

If you were one of the first 50 educators to submit your classroom's final mission and complete the survey, we'll be in touch soon to get your mailing address and send along your appreciation gifts!

Q&A

If you have any questions about participating in the Explorer Classroom Storytelling Series, please reach out to us via email at ExplorerClassroom@ngs.org. We will update this Q&A section as the questions come in.

Q: For the students who are online guests on Zoom, are students typically gathered in front of one camera or are they typically on their own devices?

A: We ask that the classes that signed up for Zoom access only use one device to sign into Zoom and broadcast the event onto a screen for the whole class to see if possible, as both space in the call and time for questions are limited.

Q: Can I attend both the 10am and the 2pm session if I have both a morning and an afternoon class?

A: Yes, you can! You will receive an email 3 days before and the day of the event containing the links for both the 10am and the 2pm event.

Q: Where can I find the on-demand link to watch the recordings if I missed the live show?

A: You will receive an email the day after the event with a YouTube link to access the show recordings. While we edit out students' faces during the Q&A session, we are not editing out any of the contents. The link will also be added to this document for your convenience.

Q: Is there a way for parents to watch it live?

A: Register as a household to watch it live. We try very hard to protect the students' privacy so you do need to sign up to watch the events.

Q: Can I download the recordings?

A: Unfortunately, you won't be able to download the recordings of the show.

Q: I can't submit the students' works on the form, what should I do?

A: If you cannot submit the form, please submit the Mission Completion form without the students' works and email us their work at ExplorerClassroom@ngs.org

Q: Do I need to submit each mission according to the given timeline?

A: No, but you will need to submit them before March 31st to receive the certificate!

Q: Would I still be able to receive the certificate if I select the option that says "I do not wish to submit my students' work" ?

A: Yes! You will receive the certificate even if you select "I do not wish to submit my students' work" as long as you submit the missions by 31 March 2025



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| MISSION GUIDE |

Explorer Classroom Storytelling Series 2026

The Explorer Classroom Storytelling Series is a series of 5 virtual events with National Geographic Explorers and 5 "missions" for students to complete in class or at home.

Drawing on inspiration and information from National Geographic Explorers and in alignment with the attitudes and skills of National Geographic [Explorer Mindset](#), students will...

1. Identify and reflect upon the purpose and impact of a story [**Empathetic, Communicate**]
2. Identify key individuals who contribute to their community [**Curious, Empathetic, Collaborate**]
3. Develop and practice skills for asking people challenging questions and listening closely to gather information and storytelling [**Empathetic, Empowered**]
4. Create a story with emotional resonance based on an interview [**Empathetic, Seek Interconnections, Communicate**]

Each mission builds throughout the programming helping students grow from curiosity and courage through to taking initiative on an important story in their own community.

Grades: 3-8

Subjects: Language Arts, Social Studies, Art, History

Standards-Based Skills: This program is designed to support US-based education standards such as the Common Core for English Language Arts and the College, Career, and Civic Life Framework in Social Studies Grades 3-5. Examples of specific standards alignment are below:

- LA-Reading: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text



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- LA-Writing: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective techniques, well-chosen details, and well structured event sequences
- LA-Speaking and Listening: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively
- SS-Civics: Describe the ways in which people benefit from, and are challenged by, working together, including through government, workplaces, voluntary organizations, and families
- SS-Using Evidence: Use evidence to develop claims in response to compelling questions

Essential Questions:

How do we find stories that need to be told?

How do stories inspire change?

What is my purpose in telling this story?

Key Concepts to Be Explored Throughout the Missions:

- Listening
- Impact
- Community
- Identity
- Audience
- Nonfiction

Use the [Key Concept Worksheet](#), when needed, to pre-teach vocabulary before the missions and throughout the series.



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Navigate this Educator Guide

[Introduction](#)

[Modification Guide](#)

[Pre-Mission: Identify Purpose of a Story](#)

[Mission One: Sharing Your Own Stories](#)

[Mission Two: Identify Community Members and Spotlight Stars](#)

[Mission Three: Connect with a Community Member](#)

[Final Mission: Tell a Community Story](#)

[Post Mission: Reflection](#)

Introduction

Welcome to the Explorer Classroom Storytelling Series! You and your students join a journey to explore how community stories can be discovered and shared. Along the way, National Geographic Explorers will share how they look and listen for compelling true stories and share those stories with wider audiences. Your students will join these talented Explorers in five live virtual events.

As students learn about the National Geographic Explorers, and the stories they tell, they will also practice finding and telling powerful stories from their own lives and community.

View a [short introduction](#) from series host Explorer Andrea Villarreal Rodríguez

The series of virtual events is accompanied by several short activities, called "missions" for your students to complete in class or at home.

Through the missions, your students will develop an [Explorer Mindset](#): the attitudes, skills and knowledge that embody what it means to be a National Geographic Explorer. Everyone has the potential to build an Explorer Mindset, driving us to ask questions, seek knowledge and think critically to help solve challenges both local and global. This series will emphasize three key attitudes Explorers bring to their work: **Curiosity, Empathy and Empowerment.**



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| Series Resource: Explorer Classroom Storytelling Series: Event Notes and Reflection

[Event Notes and Reflection: 2026 Explorer Classroom Storytelling Series](#)

Use this worksheet during each Explorer Classroom event to help students record what they learned about storytelling from each Explorer, while also reinforcing the attitudes, skills, and knowledge of the Explorer Mindset.

| Modification Guide

See the [Explorer Classroom Storytelling Series 2026: Modification Guide for K-2](#) or [Explorer Classroom Storytelling Series 2026: Modification Guide for Middle School](#) for additional ways to modify this mission for younger or older students.



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| Pre-Mission: Identify Purpose of a Story |

Empathetic, Communicate: Identify and reflect upon the purpose and impact of a story


Before students meet the National Geographic Explorers, they should consider why stories are important. Why do we tell stories? What impact do they have on others? Encourage students to explore the details of a story and determine its purpose.

| Mission At A Glance:

- Students will listen to a story about a dedicated individual making a difference in their own community
- Students will identify the three main parts of the story to determine its purpose: Background, Choosing a community role and Impact on community

| Pre-Mission Resource: Identify Purpose of a Story

 Pre-Mission - Identify Purpose of a Story 2026

 Community Story (Slideshow)_ About Susana Scott Ayala by Andrea Villarreal R...

| Student Briefing: Identify Purpose of a Story

Tell students to think about the different kinds of stories they hear each day. Engage students in a discussion to brainstorm different types of storytelling and why we tell stories. Record responses.

Ask:

- What kinds of stories have your parents or grandparents shared with you?
- What types of stories do you hear on the news?
- What kinds of stories do you hear in songs?
- Why do we tell stories?

Reflect on students' responses and note that some of the stories mentioned are true (nonfiction) stories and some are fictional stories. Both types of stories can be very interesting and meaningful. Tell students that during these missions they will focus on



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true stories about people in their community. Instruct students to view/read the slideshow story by Explorer Andrea Villarreal Rodríguez about environmentalist Susana Scott Ayala. The story highlights how Susana contributes to her community in Monterrey, Mexico.

Pass out and review the Pre-Mission handout: Identify Purpose of a Story. Tell students that they will review the story and this time they will take notes to respond to the questions for the three main parts of the story: Background, Choosing a community role, and Impact on community. After the second reading, they should also reflect on the story by responding to the three Reflection questions on the back of the handout.

See the [☰ Explorer Classroom Storytelling Series 2026: Modification Guide for K-2](#) or [☰ Explorer Classroom Storytelling Series 2026: Modification Guide for Middle School](#) for additional ways to modify this mission for younger or older students.

| Mission Debrief: Check for understanding of the story by reviewing students' responses to the three main parts of the story. Make sure students have considered why the community member chose their particular role and how it has impacted the community. Then, dig a little deeper into their reflections on Andrea's storytelling:

- Discuss how the story made students feel and why it made them feel that way. Note how Andrea uses examples and details to show, rather than just tell, about Susana.
- Ask why they think Andrea wanted to tell this story to others. Let students know that they will be telling their own stories, including stories of members of their own community, in future missions.



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| Mission One: Sharing Your Own Stories |


Empathetic, Communicate: Identify and reflect upon the purpose and impact of a story

Given the opportunity, students might be surprised by the rich and meaningful stories they can share from events in their own lives. Reflecting on classmates' stories will allow students to gain insight into their own storytelling and the power of sharing stories.

| Mission At A Glance:

- In pairs or small groups, students share a nonfiction story from their own lives
- Students identify why a story from their life has power and meaning
- Students will discuss and complete the reflection worksheet together to understand why each story has meaning, power, and relevance

| Mission Resource: Mission One - Sharing Your Own Stories

 Mission One - Sharing Your Own Stories 2026

| Student Briefing: Sharing Your Own Stories

Tell students that tomorrow (or when convenient given class time constraints) they will take part in story circles, where they will share a true story from their own life with classmates. They should share a memorable personal, family or community story. The story can be about a more recent event that happened in their life or a nonfiction story that has been passed on from previous generations. Encourage students to discuss their story with community members before they share it and to think about why it is important.



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Model telling a brief personal/family story of your own with students. Afterwards, encourage students to ask you questions about your story to demonstrate good listening and gain more understanding. Provide sample questions or sentence starters if needed.

Brainstorming: To help students choose a story to tell, ask them to take a few minutes to close their eyes and imagine a particular moment or situation when someone told them a story or to envision a person, place, or object that reminds them of a specific event/story. Have students consider who told them the story and when they first heard it, perhaps it is a generational story that has been passed down to them or a funny moment that occurred in the distant past or more recently.

Students should plan their stories at home, on Section One of the worksheet, and be prepared to share them in school. In pairs or small groups, allow students to share their stories. Remind listeners to ask questions about each story afterwards. Encourage students to observe any connections between their stories. They should be starting to develop confidence that each of them is a budding storyteller with meaningful ideas to share.

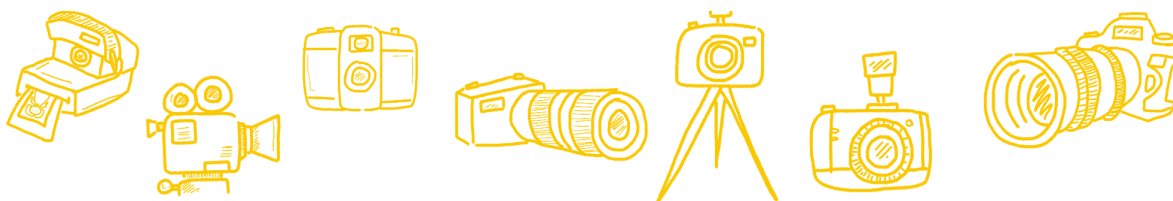
Mission Debrief: Next, review and instruct students to complete Section Two of the Sharing Your Stories worksheet to reflect on a classmate's story. Afterwards, engage students in a whole group discussion that gets them thinking about the purpose and impact of telling stories. They can draw on their responses to the reflection questions:

- Why is your story meaningful to you and/or your family? What made you want to share it?
- Why do we keep telling each other these stories? How can hearing a story change the way you think, feel, and act?
- Reflect on how these stories helped you learn more about your classmates. Have students identify any connections made between the stories and the storytellers (e.g., two group members shared stories about younger siblings, a travel memory, an embarrassing moment, etc.)

See the [☰ Explorer Classroom Storytelling Series 2026: Modification Guide for K-2](#) or [☰ Explorer Classroom Storytelling Series 2026: Modification Guide for Middle School](#) for additional ways to modify this mission for younger or older students.



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| Mission Two: Identify Community Members and Spotlight Stars |

Curious, Empathetic, Collaborate: Students will be able to locate and identify key individuals who contribute to their community

In every community there are many wonderful stories to tell; stories of people who are working hard to improve their communities in a variety of ways. Students will now consider the various communities they belong to and identify stars within those communities.

| Mission at a Glance:

- Students will identify the various communities they belong to
- Students will begin to identify individuals who shape their community and who have potential stories to tell
- Students will select three dedicated community members for Community Star awards

| Mission Resource: Mission Two - Identify Community Members and Spotlight Stars

☰ Mission Two - Identify Communities and Spotlight Stars 2026

☰ Mission Two - Identify Communities and Spotlight Stars 2026 (Exemplars)

| Student Briefing: Identify Community Members and Spotlight Stars

Ask students to come up with words they think of when they hear the word "community." Discuss student responses, noting which words are most common (use an online word cloud generator to enhance engagement and enable students to recognize patterns in their responses).

Review Step One of the Identify Communities and Spotlight Stars handout. Then, pair students and instruct them to brainstorm and record their own communities on the Identify Your Communities chart. Tell students that these can be communities based on location (their neighborhood, town/city, etc), social interests, sports, religious or civic



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groups, hobbies, etc. Refer to the word cloud for any possible additional ideas or categories. After pairs brainstorm, lead a whole class discussion where you record responses and note similarities and the likely wide variety of communities shared by students. Share the exemplar for Step One to support students' understanding.

Next, review Step Two of the handout, Identify Dedicated Community Members, and tell students that they will choose three of their communities for the web, identifying two to four key adults, such as leaders and community helpers, who provide a lot of support to each of those communities. Share the exemplar for Step Two to support students' understanding. Make sure students widen the net to include a variety of vital community members; parents, teachers and rescue workers are wonderful choices, but encourage them to also consider restaurant owners, delivery workers, coaches, volunteers, etc. It takes all kinds of individuals to create a community! **Note: Since students will later interview one of these individuals, be sure to make students aware of this and guide them to choose people who they can readily access for an interview.**

Finally, review Step Three of the handout, Spotlight Stars in Your Community, where students will select three especially dedicated community members from their web to receive Community Star awards. Share the Community Award exemplars with the class and point out the variety of roles these three award winners have in their communities. On their certificates, students will briefly describe the role of each of these individuals in their community and share what they provide to this community.

Mission Debrief: In small groups, instruct students to share their Community Star awards with their classmates. Encourage students to ask questions and share comments about the Community Stars their classmates have selected.

See the [☰ Explorer Classroom Storytelling Series 2026: Modification Guide for K-2](#) or [☰ Explorer Classroom Storytelling Series 2026: Modification Guide for Middle School](#) for additional ways to modify this mission for younger or older students.



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| Mission Three: Connect with a Community Member |

Empathetic, Empowered: Develop and practice skills for asking people challenging questions and listening closely to gather information and tell a story.

How do we find stories that need to be told? Personal and local stories are a good place to start. Often, local stories can focus our attention on the people and places we know best. They highlight impacts that can be felt immediately. We can shine a light on a person whose story and contributions might otherwise go unnoticed. In this mission, students will choose a community member to interview and use the skills they have been developing throughout this series to seek details to create a story.

| Mission at a Glance:

- Students choose an important community member to interview so that they can share a story that needs to be told, using the worksheets as a guide

| Mission Resource: Mission Three - Create a Community Story

- ☰ Mission Three - Connect with a Community Member (Interview) 2026
- ☰ Oral Storytelling: Interviews(OER)

| Student Briefing: Connect with a Community Member

Guide students to interview an important community member. Ideally they should choose from their Community Stars from the previous mission, but they can select another changemaker in their community, if desired. It could be someone they already know well or someone they want to discover more about, but they should be easily accessible for an interview. Students will conduct the interview *outside* of class. Be sure to remind students to have these conversations in a safe and public location and with trusted community members. A parent or caretaker should accompany younger students for the interview; adjust worksheet directions as needed. If possible, students may want to record this interview so they can collect exact quotations for their story.



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Pass out the Mission Three handout "Connect with a Community Member." Point out that they will ask questions to help answer the Three Parts of a Story (like Andrea Villarreal Rodríguez's story in the Pre-Mission); these are already included in the handout. Review these questions with students to clarify any confusion.

Review the Oral Storytelling: Interviews handout with students to help them prepare for their interview. Students should prepare two warm up-questions and any additional questions that they feel will add interest to their story and help convey the impact of this individual on the community.

| Mission Debrief:

After students have conducted their interviews, direct them to listen to the recording of the interview so they can add additional details and quotes to their handout. Back in class, encourage students to review the handout and highlight key details and quotes that will help them to create a three part story about this community member in the final mission. They can work in pairs to help accomplish this task.

See the [☰ Explorer Classroom Storytelling Series 2026: Modification Guide for K-2](#) or [☰ Explorer Classroom Storytelling Series 2026: Modification Guide for Middle School](#) for additional ways to modify this mission for younger or older students.



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| Final Mission: Tell a Community Story |

Empathetic, Communicate, Seek Interconnections: Choose from a variety of formats to tell human stories that inspire connection and change.

In this mission, students will use key details and quotations from their interview to tell a star community member's story.

| Mission at a Glance:

- Students use the Tell a Community Story organizer to add interview questions and record details from their community member interview
- Students present the community member's story using a chosen media
- Class shares the stories they have collected and discusses how sharing stories can change the way people think, feel, and act.

| Mission Resources: Final Mission - Tell a Community Story

Final Mission - Tell a Community Story 2026

Final Mission - Tell a Community Story-Exemplar 2026

Community Story_ About Susana Scott Ayala by Andrea Villarreal Rodríguez.pdf

Final Mission - Tell a Community Story - Slideshow Template 2026

| Student Briefing: Tell a Community Story

Students will create a three-part story, similar to the one Andrea Villarreal Rodríguez shared in the Pre-Mission. Share Andrea's example again, this time in the template students will use to develop their story and the other exemplar handout. Review the exemplars with students to demonstrate how they can use pictures (their own drawings, photographs or clipart/found images), direct quotes and a detailed paragraph to respond to the questions for each part of the story.



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Provide the blank Tell a Community Story template. Instruct students to use their Connect with a Community Member notes and interview recording to complete the Tell a Community Story organizer. Guide students through this process and provide feedback on their organizers to prepare them for the final step of the mission.

As students prepare, emphasize the importance of using examples, stories and quotes to "show, not tell" about the person. Consider using this example from the exemplar:

Telling: "The students in Jackie's class can express themselves."

Showing: "She does a "soul train" where she dances one on one with each student and allows them to freestyle."

Once they have completed their organizer, students can tell the story of their community member in a variety of formats.

Format Options: Consider the following options for student stories, depending on the available time and technology. Encourage creativity from students.

- Written story
- Photo story/slideshow with captions or narration (see the "Tell a Community Story slideshow template")
- Other visual story format (mobile, poster, graphic novel format, etc.)

*Note: If you or your students plan to share these community profiles publicly, be sure to discuss with your students the ethics of storytelling and legal permission to share such stories. Here are two documents that you can use as guidance:

Ethics: [Ethics of Non-Fiction Storytelling](#)

Law: [Legal Issues to Consider in Storytelling](#)

| Mission Debrief: After students have shared their community stories, reflect on the following questions in a whole class discussion or in writing:

- How do the stories we heard and shared today relate to our essential questions?:
 - How do we find stories that need to be told?
 - How do stories inspire change?
 - What are the responsibilities of a storyteller?
 - What is my purpose in telling this story?
- How do you think these stories could change the way people think, feel, or act? Choose one specific example.



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- What is a story that particularly impacted you? Why?
- After hearing other community stories, what is something you might change if you were to tell the story of another community member?

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| Post Mission: Reflection |

As you finish this Explorer Classroom Storytelling Series, take a moment with your students to reflect on what they have learned about Storytelling and how their Explorer Mindset has developed. Use the Post-Mission Reflection worksheet below to give students a chance to look back on their experience. If time permits, discuss their responses to find commonalities and patterns.

| Post Mission Resource: Post Mission Reflection

 Explorer Classroom Storytelling Series 2026: Post Mission Reflection

| Optional Extension Activities:

Are your students motivated to do more? Here are some ways students can explore further:

- Have students refine their stories for publication. Then, hold a community showcase - such as a gallery night or community night - to share the stories that your students gathered and told. Ask community visitors to respond to the showcase anonymously using the same Essential Questions that students and Explorers asked and discuss your survey responses.
- Use [StoryMaps](#) or similar software to create a digital community map using students' stories.
- Explore more global stories from Paul Salopek's Out of Eden Walk. Explore stories about [human migration](#), [culture](#), [water](#), and [food](#), that have been leveled for readers of varying ages and participate in engaging classroom activities.

[Original OER Resource \(Do Not Remove this Link\)](#)
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