



Voices of Resilience: Collecting Stories of Survivors - Teacher Guide

Setting the Stage

Oral Histories are a tool that historians use to record peoples experiences and stories. We can use these stories to gain knowledge for future events, and gain a better understanding of the strengths in our own community members' personal experiences. An important part of this exercise is for students to empathize with the experiences of people who have gone through, or are at higher risk of going through, a natural disaster event.



Interview with wildfire survivor, Lake County, CA. Credit: [Museums of Lake County video](#).

Lesson Overview

In this lesson, students will use multiple methods to investigate their own neighborhood or community's risk to a natural hazard; wildfire, flood or drought.

- *Part 1 – Engage (10 minutes) Oral History Example*
Watch an example of an oral history, and facilitate a think-pair-share to reflect on the video.
- *Part 2 – Explore (15 minutes) Practice Interview*
Students pair up and interview each other about an emotional event they experienced.
- *Part 3 – Explore (25 minutes) Preparing for an Interview*
As a class, students watch a video about how to conduct an oral history, and brainstorm a list of questions to ask.
- *Part 4 – Explore (Homework) Conduct an Oral History Interview*
Students interview a family member, friend, or expert in the community about a natural hazard they experienced.
- *Part 5 – Explain (30 minutes) Class Discussion*
In small groups, students share out their oral history interviews. In a class discussion, students look for patterns in how community members experienced hazards in the past.
- *Part 6 – Explore (20 minutes) Looking Back to Look Forward*
In a writing assignment, students use the evidence they collected in the oral histories to brainstorm ideas on how the community can be better prepared for the next hazard.

This project is funded by the NOAA Environmental Literacy Program, award number NA18SEC0080007.



Instructional Overview	
Grade Levels	Middle and High School
Instructional Time	100 minutes (2 50 min class periods)
Unit Driving Question	How can we make our community more resilient to wildfire/flood/drought?
Lesson Driving Question	What can we learn from community members experiences with natural hazards that can help us prepare for the next hazard?
Building Toward	NGSS: MS-ESS3-2 , HS-ESS3-1 CDE: SC.MS.3.9 , SC.HS.3.10
Three Dimensions	Science and Engineering Practices: - Asking questions and defining problems - Planning and carrying out investigations - Obtaining, evaluating, and communicating information Disciplinary Core Ideas: - ESS3.B: Natural Hazards Crosscutting Concepts: - Patterns - Cause and effect - Systems and system models
What Students Will Do	- Using the framework of oral history, ask a community member questions about their experience with natural hazards. - Look for patterns by analyzing and interpreting data collected from community members about their experience with natural hazards.
Materials	Oral History Collection Lesson Slides Oral History Collection Student Handout Oral History Collection Student Handout KEY - Recording devices (or apps on computers/tablets) for students that don't have access to a phone.
Material Preparation	Print out Student Handouts (1/person)
Vocabulary	<u>Oral History</u> is the collection of historical information by recording interviews with people that have person knowledge and stories about past events.
Instructional Strategies	Think-pair-share
Trauma-Informed Practices	Trauma-informed optional adaptations are suggested throughout this lesson, and indicated with this symbol. Refer to the HEART Force Trauma-Informed Practices Guide for general guidance of practices to use



	before and throughout the lesson. Remember that even if your community has not recently experienced a significant hazard, students may have experienced a traumatic experience related to a hazard in their past, or have family members that may have been affected.	
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Trauma-Informed Introduction to this Lesson:

A week before this lesson, and the day of the lesson, provide students with a heads-up to let them know what this lesson will be about. Consider adapting some of this language to share with parents ahead of the lesson.

Example script for a week before the unit:



“Next week we are going to interview people in the community about their experiences with [flood, fire, drought] in our community. These interviews will help us better understand how to make our community more resilient to [flood, fire, or drought]. These interviews may bring up some emotions for the people we interview, and in turn, could also trigger our own emotions. Come see me privately before next week if you feel this may be too upsetting for you and you would like to participate in an alternative exercise or if you have any questions or concerns.”

Example introduction script for the day of the lesson:

“Today we are going to listen to people talking about their experience with [flood, fire, drought]. It is normal to feel emotional about this topic- for me, this topic definitely brings up...[*describe your emotions*]. If you choose to not participate, I have an alternative assignment set up where you will...[*explain alternative assignment*]. Please take breaks if and when you need to by...[*share how you would like them to take breaks and inform you*]. What are some other ideas for things you can do to help cope with your emotions today? For example, I like to take a few deep breaths or stretch. Is there anything else that would make you feel safe as we delve into this lesson today?”

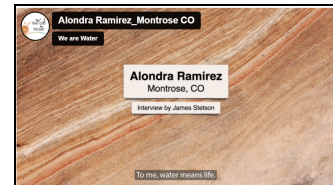
Consider having students complete the [Connecting to Special Places in Nature](#) activity if they have recently been through a traumatic natural disaster event. Spending time in nature or thinking about nature can help to ground students and more easily cope with a traumatic event. Identifying ways that they can help protect this special place can give them a sense of control when they may feel that a lot is out of their control. This activity takes between 25-35 minutes.

Part 1 (Engage) Oral History Example (10 minutes)



Humans have been telling stories since they created cave paintings on walls, and probably longer. Why do we tell stories? Perhaps to express ourselves, find connection and understanding with others, or pass on important information that will help others. Stories, especially oral histories that are about events in people's lives, provide us with a way to better understand and empathize with others. How better to learn about a community than through people who have lived in this community for a long time?

1. Listen to [this example](#) starting at 13:10 of an oral history interview about the Hayman wildfire ([slide 3](#)) or



Listen to [this example](#) of about the 1965 flooding that resulted in [the creation of Chatfield Reservoir](#) ([slide 4](#)) or

Listen to [this example](#) about drought in the southwest ([slide 5](#)), and examples about people's connections with water in Spanish [here](#).

.....and then facilitate a think-pair-share ([slide 6](#)).

The goal here is for students to realize that good stories often involve emotions, create empathy for one of the characters, and are relatable.

Part 2 (Explore) Practice Interview (15 minutes)

How do we collect stories about natural disasters in our community? This can be a tricky subject to broach as it can bring up a lot of emotions for people.

2. Have students pair up with a partner they trust and practice asking each other about an emotional event they went through, and are comfortable talking about ([slide 7](#)). The interviewee gets to pick the event so as to avoid talking about something too triggering. Note that these will not be shared with the whole class.



Consider passing out fidget toys during the interviews.

Tell students that the goal is to keep your partner talking for five minutes and find out what happened, how it made them feel, and how they are now prepared for a similar event moving forward. Students should each keep track of the number of questions they ask.

3. Facilitate a group discussion about the experience ([slide 8](#)). Ask students to only share about what they said, not what their partner said. Compare the types of questions from



interviewers who used few questions to those who used lots of questions- how were the questions different?

Part 3 (Explore) Preparing for an Interview (25 minutes)

Begin preparing students to conduct an interview.

4. Based on the oral history they watched, and their own experiences being interviewed/interviewing have students fill out questions 1-3 on their [Student Handouts](#) and then watch the Oral History Tips video ([slide 9](#)), and share tips on [slides 10-12](#). Have students add to their answers as you share the tips.
5. Have students brainstorm some individuals in the community that they can interview about the natural disaster you will be exploring together as a class (wildfire, flood, or drought) ([slide 13](#)).
6. As a class, brainstorm some questions students could ask their community surrounding this natural disaster ([slide 14](#)). Example questions are provided on [slides 15 and 16](#) as optional slides.

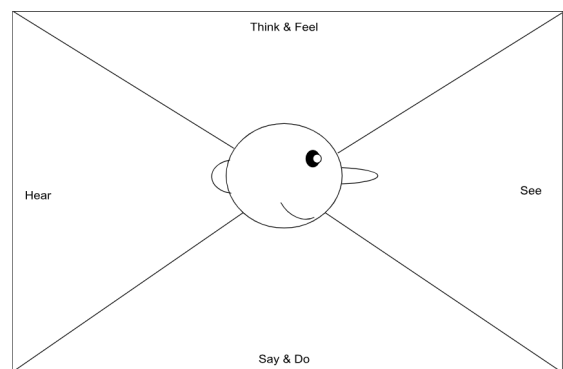


Part 4 (Explore) Conduct an Oral History Interview (Homework)

Share [slide 17](#) for the homework assignment. Have students conduct an oral history interview of someone in their community, using the tips they have learned about and some of the questions that the students identified as a class. Students should identify no more than 10 questions they want to ask. They should record the interview, listen to it again, take notes on the interviewee's answers to their questions, and write a summary of the story they heard, which can be in the form of bullet points or a couple of paragraphs.

Encourage students to practice self-care after the interviews, like getting out in nature, exercising, hanging out with friends, etc.

(Optional) Consider having the students use Earth Force's [empathy map](#) ([slide 18](#)) about the person they are going to interview, both before they interview them, and also after. This activity will help students be more empathetic during the interview process, help them anticipate responses to their





questions so they can be ready with follow-up questions, and reflect on what the interviewer said, perhaps didn't say but was implied, or omitted entirely because they didn't think to mention it or perhaps did not want to mention it.

Choose an example of someone in their community that you can create an empathy map for as a class so students understand how to use this with their own interviewee.

Part 5 (Explain) Class Discussion of Oral Histories (30 minutes)

After students have completed their oral histories, share them out in small groups, and have a class discussion to look for patterns and commonalities in the interviews.

7. Have students form small groups to share their oral histories ([slide 19](#)) Ask them to share a few minutes of their recording and/or their summary of the interview.



Consider handing out fidget toys, and reminding students to take breaks if they need to.

8. Lead a class discussion on the prompts in [slide 20 & 21](#).

Part 6 (Elaborate) Looking Back to Look Forward (20 minutes)

Ask students to complete the reflection question (#6) on their [Student Handout](#) using the Claim, Evidence, Reasoning Handout.



Consider a follow-up discussion after they have filled out their hand-outs: Based on what you learned from your interviews with community members, and in listening to the summaries of each other's interviews, what gives you hope about how your community will respond to a fire, flood, or drought in the future?