



Developed by Kate Reed and Kenji Cataldo

Emphasis: Engaging with Oral History
Lesson 0: Historicizing Refugeehood

Lesson Duration

50-55 minutes

Big Ideas

The legal status “refugee” has not always existed; nor has it always meant the same thing.

Key Terms

refugeehood, imperialism, displacement

Essential Questions and Capacities

Students should be able to answer the following questions by the end of the lesson:

- What are some key moments in the history of “refugeehood”?
- What are the shortcomings of the current legal definition of refugees?
- Why do countries like the United States favor restrictive and individualistic legal definitions of refugees?

This lesson helps students develop the following capacities:

- Critical reading
- Historical thinking and analysis

Lesson Materials

- [A Short Global History of Refugeehood](#)
- [Student worksheet](#)

Background Knowledge

None required.

Content Warning

The reading used for this class discusses difficult moments in history, including imperial violence and genocide.

In-Class

1. Warm-up (5-10 min.): Without introducing any class materials, have students brainstorm the words and ideas that come to mind when they hear the word “refugee.”
2. Pre-reading exercise (5-10 min.): Together, read the first paragraph of “A Short Global History of Refugeehood,” which introduces the current legal definition of refugees. Reflect on how this legal definition aligns with and differs from students’ instinctive ideas about refugeehood.
3. Reading (15-20 min.): Have students read the text “A Short Global History of Refugeehood.” This is a relatively dense essay, so you might consider scaffolding for students reading at different levels. Some ideas:
 - a. Read paragraph by paragraph. Have students identify the main idea of each paragraph and write it down as a complete sentence as they go.
 - b. Ask students to first skim the text and look for words, phrases, and sentences that are unfamiliar or difficult for them. Work through these together, then ask students to read the text a second time for comprehension.
 - c. Have students read the entire text. Then assign groups to each paragraph. Give them 5-10 minutes to come up with key ideas and insights from their paragraph. Then, each group shares their insights with the class.
 - d. Before reading, ask students to conduct brief internet research on the following topics to help contextualize them:
 - i. League of Nations
 - ii. United Nations
 - iii. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
 - iv. International Organization for Migration (IOM)
 - v. Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902)
 - vi. German genocide of the Herero
 - vii. World War I
 - viii. World War II
 - ix. 1951 Refugee Convention and 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees
4. Reading comprehension (15-20 min., or homework): Have students answer the following comprehension questions, either as a group/class discussion or in writing, or as a homework assignment.

- a. What is the current legal definition of a refugee?
- b. Why might some scholars of refugee studies consider the legal definition too narrow or limited?
- c. When does the “conventional story” of refugeehood begin? Why do the authors of this text disagree with that framework? Do you find their argument compelling? Why or why not?
- d. What is the relationship between colonial wars and refugee management/protection?
- e. What do you think historian Brett Shadle means by “reluctant humanitarianism”?
- f. What was the Nansen Passport? Why is it important?
- g. What have been some key changes in the global refugee regime since the 1980s?
- h. What is the role of narrative in the current refugee regime? Why is this significant?

Emphasis: Engaging with Oral History

Lesson 1: Thinking about Orality

Lesson Duration

50-55 minutes

Big Ideas

Oral histories can provide a different perspective on common narratives, but they require care and attention to interpret.

Key Terms

oral history, narrative, storytelling

Essential Questions and Capacities

Students should be able to answer the following questions by the end of the lesson:

- How are oral histories similar to, and different from, other forms of storytelling or information-sharing?
- What are some of the challenges of working with oral histories?
- What are some of the opportunities of working with oral histories?

This lesson helps students develop the following capacities:

- Critical reading/listening
- Empathetic reading/listening
- Media and internet literacy

Lesson Materials

- [Slideshow](#)
- [Student worksheet](#)

Background Knowledge

Before beginning this lesson, students should be familiar with the terms “refugee” and “asylum-seeker” and should understand the basic history of refugee resettlement in the United States. They should also have some understanding of what oral history is and how oral histories are created. Both *Lesson 0: Historicizing Refugeehood* from this set of lesson plans and [Lesson 2: What is Oral History? Who is a Refugee?](#) from the Catholic HS Curriculum are great ways to introduce these concepts if students aren’t yet familiar with them.

In-Class:

1. Warm-up (5-10 min.): Have students brainstorm independently, in small groups, or as a class. What is history to them?

2. Pre-listening exercise (10 min.): Share this quote from Paul Thompson, a famous oral historian, with students.

“Oral history is not necessarily an instrument for change; it depends upon the spirit in which it is used. Nevertheless, oral history certainly can be a means for transforming both the content and the purpose of history. It can be used to change the focus of history itself and open up new areas of inquiry; it can break down barriers between teachers and students, between generations, between educational institutions and the world outside; and in the writing of history--whether in books, or museums, or radio and film--it can give back to the people who made and experienced history, through their own words, a central place.”¹

Ask students to respond to the following questions for reflection, either individually or in pairs or small groups:

- When you brainstormed about history, did you include any mention of oral sources? Why or why not?
 - Based on what you know about oral history, what does Thompson mean when he writes that “oral history...can be a means for transforming both the content and purpose of history”?
 - What do you think might be some new questions or “areas of inquiry” that oral history opens up?
 - What do you think is required for oral history to be “an instrument of change”?
3. Listening/reading exercise (15-20 min.): Share some or all of the following excerpts. You might consider having students listen first, then listen again while reading; or have them listen as they read along; or even read the transcript first and then listen. You could also have students work in groups on 1-2 excerpts before coming together to discuss as a class.

Note: If students finish listening at different times, those who finish early can update their answers to the pre-listening questions based on what they have heard.

Narrator	Audio	Transcript
Wendpoulemde	36:37-40:17	Transcript : (36:17) Wendpoulemde : When I first came, the US, especially New York, is completely something different from where I come from. I needed to learn how to use a train, how to use the map, because we don't have all of these in my country. Now, things are coming, especially using Google maps. Businesses are starting

¹ Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 3.

		to use this in their daily life in Burkina Faso, but before that, it wasn't used. I had to adapt, to learn how to do things in order to be able at least to go places when I needed to, but the first month was really difficult because of the language barrier, a lack of family, I was sleeping in my friend's house in the living room, all of this for 3 months, I think. This was a terrible experience, living in this environment, even to have people to whom you can talk was really really hard. Here, it is not common to see people outside and to start engaging in conversation. At least, if you understand English, maybe it could work, but they are going to ask you, what are you talking about? But when I started to meet people... I have to mention something, because when I discovered the Community of Sant'Egidio, I realized that many people who were engaging in the Community speak French. That was exciting to me because at least I have people with whom I can interact and have good conversations because they speak my language. This was really refreshing for me and I started to love where I am settling. It has also been useful for my English learning, because I learned to write with somebody who speaks French, so they would tell me in French - even if you say this in French, in English it doesn't work. It was very helpful, because sometimes you want to translate word for word and it doesn't work, you know.
Joe P Htwe	01:40-03:37	Transcript: (01:40) Irene Hsu: So what was it like to come here? (01:50) Joe P Htwe: So I'm not really sure how it really works because I was really young, I was around six. So there's a process to it, I think there's a wait, you have to wait very - when I was younger, it felt like years so before coming here you had to go to a camp, and the camp that I was to be put in was Camp Tham Hin or something like that, I think that's what they call it. And we were stationed there for like three months, which was not that long if you think about it but as a kid's age like mindset, that felt like years, I thought it was years and years. But when I actually asked as I grew up, I asked my grandma how long we were really there, it was only for about three months. And while you're there they had a temple, they had churches too, people were teaching Bible studies, there's other kids, and there's actually locals who actually live there which was kind of - it's kind of scary cause it looks like a lawless place kind of. And we get food rations, every morning you get - there's trucks that come with water and they give you beans and rice for food and sometimes we don't have water we would go to the river and we'll boil the water so all the germs are dead and soil settles down and that's how we get extra water and stuff. Yeah that's what I can remember, and after being there for three months then you get the process of getting your shots and all the stuff before actually arriving to America.
Jessica González	19:33-25:14	Transcript: (19:33) Translator: Okay, so by this point, there was only about a group of eight. There were a couple with their children. There was a pregnant lady, two other children that were below 18 and then her. And then at this point, they were in El Paso, Texas, and they saw lights kind of like in the horizon, and then their guide told

		them like if they make it there, then it's amazing because the main point of getting them through the border was to get caught by immigration so they can ask for asylum. So they were seeking that originally. But if they made a you know -- to that city where they saw the lights and it would have been even better because you know they wouldn't have had to go through the immigration process they would have been, you know, all good to go, they would have contacted their families -- all perfect. However, they ran for about three hours through the desert, you know, nonstop. There were children, pregnant lady, so it was very difficult. About a few hours later, a helicopter ran through, the guide told them to go chest down onto the floor, so they wouldn't get caught but later on, they were surrounded by immigration staff and then they were pointing guns at them, they had dogs, they told him if they move then they would you fire. And after that they took them, they waited for about 30 minutes, and they were just going through the whole process after immigration caught them. (21:04) Jessica's narrative. (23:20) Translator: Ok. So at this time, they were already like in the immigration building when they were being held. They asked if they had any type of document to ID them. She had her Guatemalan birth certificate, so she showed it to them. Her birth certificate obviously said that she was 17 because she was 17. However, they told her she was lying because she's always been taller. You know, she's always looked like she wasn't 17 so they thought immediately that she was lying. After this, they took her to a place where they call it the freezer. She said it's very cold. There's cement benches, there's only like pieces of aluminum where they can warm up. It's very cold, the lights are very bright. So like the room looks white. And then she said that there -- when you were in there you couldn't see day or night. There was only a little window where you can see the officers just walking outside. She said she was here for about three hours and afterwards they took them to a place where she says they call [INDECIPHERABLE] which is basically like if you go to a shelter, the dogs are held in like little different cages, cells. So she said it's kind of like this because the place has different little cells so it looks like a shelter where the dogs are being held like dog cages. Here, there are a lot of other like young people like her where they were being held. And then the immigration people, they asked who she was coming to stay here with. And she said that she was coming here with her uncle. She called the number -- her uncle's phone number, but he didn't pick up and then they started accusing her of lying. They said she wasn't 17 she was running away from El Salvador, she was fleeing because she was a leader of a gang and they just started making accusations and they told her she was lying.
Solamon Thin	18:23-19:22	Transcript: (18:23) Irene Hsu: Did religion affect your journey in any way? (18:31) Solamon Thin: Religion...religion? No. It doesn't. (18:39) Irene Hsu: Would you consider yourself to have a faith?

		(18:42) Solamon Thin: Oh, yeah, yeah. I would consider myself to have a faith. Without it, I couldn't do anything peaceful. That's one thing about my religion. (19:01) Irene Hsu: What religion are you? (19:03) Solamon Thin: Christian. Oh, religion, like nationality? (19:12) Irene Hsu: No, religion like Christian. Did you guys have a church when you came? What was that like? (19:22) Solamon Thin: When we came, we had a church at the camp, yeah. We had church at the camp. We'd always go pray on Sunday. And we came here, same thing. We have our own church.
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4. Reflection questions (15 min.): After everyone has finished listening to and reading the selected excerpts, reflect on the following questions individually, in pairs, or small groups.

- Think about what it was like to listen to the recordings, and to read the transcripts. What differences did you note between listening and reading?
- For Jessica's interview, even if you do not understand Spanish, what do you notice when you listen to first Jessica and then the interpreter?
- What questions arose for you as you listened? Why?
- Imagine you were writing a research paper about the experiences of refugees in the United States. What challenges do these excerpts pose for you?
- Again, imagine you are writing this research paper. What unique contributions could these interviews make? What kinds of research questions might be well-suited to oral history research?

Once everyone has had time to reflect, come together as a group to discuss. Perhaps select one or more excerpts to listen to again, in light of what everyone has shared. Now that you have reflected carefully on the interpretive challenges and possibilities of oral history, what specific things are you listening for the second time around? How does your perception of the interview change?

5. Connecting questions (5 min.): Select one of the narrators. Think of at least three questions you would want to ask this person, based on what you heard from their story so far. What do you think makes a strong interview question?
6. Preparing for next class (5 min.): Next class will focus on how oral histories can complicate, nuance, or change our understandings of the news stories and histories we read or watch every day. To prepare, please spend some time preparing the following:

Homework Assignment

- Find a news story about refugees from a *reputable source*.
- Read the story carefully.
- Annotate: how are refugees described in the story? Where do those descriptions come from? Did the journalist speak with refugees? Did they speak with experts in refugee studies? Are they reproducing facts and statistics reported elsewhere? Or is the source of their information unclear?
- 3-2-1 exercise. Briefly jot down:
 - 3 things you learned from the article.
 - 2 connections with what we discussed in class today or with your own experiences and understanding.
 - 1 thoughtful question for discussion in class.

Emphasis: Engaging with Oral History

Lesson 2: The Politics of Oral History

Lesson Duration

50-55 minutes

Big Ideas

Oral histories can provide a different perspective on common narratives, but they require care and attention to interpret.

Key terms

oral history, narrative, storytelling

Essential Questions and Capacities

Students should be able to answer the following questions by the end of the lesson:

- How do oral histories change our understanding of the experiences of refugees and migrants?
- What insights can we glean from placing oral histories in conversation with other ways of representing people who are refugees or migrants?

This lesson helps students develop the following capacities:

- Critical reading/listening
- Empathetic reading/listening
- Media and internet literacy
- Community-engaged thinking and scholarship

Lesson Materials

- [Slideshow](#)
- [Student worksheet](#)

Background Knowledge

This lesson follows on from *Lesson 1: Thinking about Orality*.

In-Class:

1. Warm-up activity (10 min.): Ask students to work in small groups to share their 3-2-1 exercises. Each group should share 3 things they learned, 2 connections, and 1 question they have for whole-class discussion and reflection.
2. Framing activity (5 min.): Based on the interviews they listened to in *Lesson 1*, as well as the articles they reviewed for homework, ask students to brainstorm differences and similarities between how the two mediums represent migrant

and refugee experiences. They should bear these ideas in mind as they move on to the reading and listening activity.

3. Pre-listening activity (10 min): Read and discuss the following passage with students. Does it resonate with them?

“In a refugee camp, stories are everything. Everyone has one, having just slipped out from the grip of a nightmare...Everyone is a stranger, in need of introduction,” writes Dina Nayeri, who fled Iran with her family as a child and spent years as a refugee in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Italy.^[i] But, she continues, the stories refugee people have to share may not be the ones they are expected – required – to tell. Narratives of flight and rescue – the stories refugees are expected to tell – may not align with the narratives needed to secure asylum, to “calm casual skeptics,” to assure an affirmative answer to the question “Am I a real refugee?”^[ii] And the narrow emphasis on narratives of refuge-seeking restricts the other stories, other knowledge, that people who are refugees may prefer to share. In *The Ungrateful Refugee*, Nayeri interweaves her life history, the life stories of other refugees, and an incisive critique of the way prevailing narratives of “refugeeness” limit, censor, and delegitimize other narratives about what it is to be a refugee. “It is your choice how to hear their voices,” she writes to the reader, knowing, surely, that some will choose to hear her and her interlocutors as the title of her book suggests: ungrateful refugees.

[i] Dina Nayeri, *The Ungrateful Refugee: What Immigrants Never Tell You* (New York: Catapult, 2019), 6.

[ii] Ibid., 7.

Reflection questions

- a. Does this passage resonate with you and what you have learned about refugee and asylum-seeker experiences?
 - b. What does Nayeri suggest about her relationship to gratitude? Why might she have this perspective?
 - c. Do you have a preconceived notion of what a “refugee narrative” or “refugee story” is? If so, what is it? How might your expectations shape your interpretation of oral histories, media coverage, and other representations of refugees?
4. Reading and listening activity (25-30 min.): Ask students to read either an article of your choosing (you might look for something covering a recent change in immigration, asylum, or refugee policy), or one of the suggested

articles below. In addition to asking them to read the text, draw their attention to the headlines, images, and other elements that help present the story to readers/viewers.

- a. José Torres and Lizbeth Díaz, “Caravan of mostly Central American migrants advance slowly across Mexico,” *Reuters*, 28 October 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/caravan-hundreds-migrants-press-no-rth-across-mexico-2021-10-27/>.
- b. David Agren, “Remain in Mexico: migrants face deadly peril as Biden restores Trump policy,” *The Guardian*, 3 December 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/dec/03/remain-in-mexico-migrants-face-deadly-peril-as-biden-restores-trump-policy>.
- c. Kaamil Ahmed and Lorenzo Tondo, “Fortress Europe,” *The Guardian*, 6 December 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/dec/06/fortress-europe-the-millions-spent-on-military-grade-tech-to-deter-refugees>.

After reading, give students some time to reflect on the article and place it in conversation with others they may have read. Then, share an interview excerpt. Ask students to practice the skills in active and empathic listening they have been developing through this curriculum. They may choose to listen once, then listen again and take notes; to read along with the recording; or to listen first and then read. Some suggested excerpts include:

- a. Ghaiath Idrees, 04:24-17:12 ([audio](#) / [transcript](#))
 - b. Aleyssi Padillou, 12:57-24:16 ([audio](#) / [transcript](#))
 - c. Jessica Gonzalez, 00:01-03:40 ([audio](#) / [transcript](#))
5. Reflection activity (10 min.): Working individually, in pairs, or in small groups, students can discuss the following reflection questions.
 - a. What is the impact of different media (audio, written, visual...) on how stories by/about refugees are told? How does the choice of medium affect your understanding?
 - b. What do you notice about the ways refugees’ voices are included, if at all, in most news coverage? What do you make of this?
 - c. Does your emotional response to the written articles versus the oral histories differ? How so? Why do you think this is?
 6. Extension activities
 - a. Return to Thompson’s quote from *Lesson 1*. In your community, what are some ways that oral history might act as an “instrument for change”? This could include some form of sharing existing oral histories, or creating new ones. Depending on time/resources/curriculum, consider a longer-term project that seeks to use oral history as an instrument for change in your school or community.

- b. Choose an oral history from the archive to listen to in its entirety--at least once, and ideally more than once. A longer reflection/writing activity could center on what both the form and content of this oral history communicates to the listener.
- c. Based on your comparisons of oral and written sources, choose one challenge of working with oral histories and reflect/write about how you might address it. Examples might include: lapses of memory; translation/interpretation; the interpersonal/co-constructed nature of oral histories. How does thinking critically about these challenges with oral sources shape your approach to written texts?

Emphasis: Doing Oral History

Lesson 1: Doing Oral History I: Preparations

Lesson Duration: 50 min

Big Ideas: Thorough preparation is essential for a successful oral history interview. This includes 1) having a clear vision for the project, 2) identifying and contacting your narrator(s), 3) getting informed consent, and 4) preparing your questions.

Key Terms: oral history, narrator, informed consent

Essential Questions:

- How do you decide whom to ask for an interview?
- How do you explain your project to potential interviewees and ask for consent?
- What do you need to do before the interview to be prepared?

Background Knowledge: Prior to this lesson, students should have a basic understanding of what oral history is and how it is produced. Students should also have a sense of why people do oral history (as opposed to text-based history). One option for this is the lesson "[Thinking about Orality](#)."

In-Class:

1. Review (5 min): [[Doing Oral History](#) presentation]

Slide 2: Review: what is oral history? What is its purpose?

Oral histories are interviews conducted to collect information about the **experiences of an individual** to understand the personal and human elements of history. Oral history interviews are **open-ended** and **versatile**, allowing narrators to speak about what is most important to them. Beyond the confines of traditional history textbooks, these interviews and narratives can be used **to study and understand how historical and political events impact individuals**.

"Oral history" refers to both the product (the recorded interview/transcript) and the process (recording interviews to document a person's experiences).

- Discussion questions:
 - What are some examples of experiences that could help us understand history?

- If it doesn't come up, bring up refugee resettlement as an example.
Why is oral history well-suited to learning about this history?

2. Listening activity (10 min): *Slide 3: Example oral history: family history*

Victor Chan interview [09:20-13:51] [\[Audio File\]](#) [\[Transcript\]](#)

- (09:20) **Chesley**: And how has that changed from living in Vietnam, and then going to Indonesia, and then going to New York, and then going to Florida?
- (09:32) **Victor**: That was like 1975. I was 13 years old. And actually, it's the country, it's changed, like the Communist come in was 1975. I was 13 years old. And about 3 years later, I turn 15, and then my Daddy try to let me get out from the country because that was like, it might be a lot of be happen to me, when I young, like when you are 18 in Vietnam, by that time, they might take you go to join to the army and do a lot of things. Some things like go to another country, do everything. And this is my Daddy maybe he don't let me to because to do that, try to make some send me get out from Vietnam, So that's I get out, by that time is 1978. We took the boat from Vietnam, so we going to Malaysia. Malaysia, they don't accept us because we took the boat from Vietnam almost like 10 days. I remember from Vietnam to the boat and Malaysia is packed. One of the island, I saw, it is a lot of refugee. And I don't think the government, they support too much people there. And that's why they don't accept us and our boat. One of the ship, the captain, so he change mind, he going to another direction. So find some place we going to stop. And that's why we see one of the island of the Indonesia. So we just get off there, because cannot stay in the boat that long because it's almost two weeks, 14 days. All the food and the water in the boat is almost empty. So we have no choice, so we just get off from the boat. We jump in the water and younger people can jump to the water first and help the older people, so it was take so long and almost a whole day. So we just get on the island and then so we wait for the government, Indonesia, to help us to let them send us to another city. So one of the island of the Indonesia. It's called "Dang Yung Benang." And then I spend almost 14 months and I apply for United States. And almost 14 months, 1979, it's May, I remember. So that time, I'm the first to go to the New York City. And I was there from 1978 in New York City, and I working part-time and I go to school until when I getting like 20 years later I guess? Maybe 32 I remember, and I go to meet my wife and we get married and I have a daughter and I have a son. So after we decide we try to do own business, and this is the only one place the good choice and have a chance to do own business, that's in the Orlando, Florida.
- Discussion questions:

- Victor is describing his journey from Vietnam to the U.S. What did you learn from this?
- The person interviewing Victor is his daughter. Based on what you heard, what are some reasons you can think of for why she chose to interview her father?
 - After generating some ideas, give context for this project: interview was part of a larger oral history project about religion and refugee resettlement.

3. Presentation/Worksheet (20 min)

Slide 6: Knowing your goals

Before you approach someone for an interview, you must know two things:

- **Why you want to interview them:** what experiences do you want to document? Why do you want to document them? Who will benefit from this project?
- **What you are going to do with the interview:** how are you going to preserve the interview and make it accessible? Are you creating additional products beyond the recording/transcript (e.g. report, podcast, documentary)?

Example: Religion and Resettlement Project

- Discussion: RRP/Victor Chan example

Slide 7: Identifying and contacting narrators

Whose stories do you want to hear and record? Why? How do the potential narrators fit into your project as a whole?

Potential topics of interest:

- Stories of migration
- Stories of a town/city/place changing over time (local history)
- Family history
- Participation in social movements
- Personal experiences of historic events

Remember: Some people may decline to be interviewed, and narrators may

choose not to speak about particular topics.

- Worksheet/Discussion: Write the name of one person whose story you would like to hear and record. Why did you pick this person?

Slide 8-10: Voluntary, Informed Consent

- Text of slides: "[Your Rights in Research](#)" (Canadian Council for Refugees)
 - **Voluntary** means that you can decide of your own free will—with no penalties for refusing to participate and no major benefits (like large amounts of money) for agreeing to take part.
 - **Informed** means that you have the right to know what the research is about, what you are asked to do, and what are the potential benefits and risks to participating.
 - You should ask how long the research will take and what exactly is required of you.
 - You have the right to know how the research will be shared and how you can access the research results.
 - You have the right to this information in a language you understand. You can ask for interpretation or translation if you need it.
 - The researcher must provide you with contact information that you can use if you have questions or concerns. This contact information can also be used if you want to withdraw from the study at a later time.
 - You have the right to ask questions at any time
 - **Consent** means that you explicitly agree to participate.
 - No one can consent on your behalf (except for minors or adults with limited cognitive abilities; see below for information on assent in these cases).
 - Usually, you will be asked to sign a form to officially show that you have consented to taking part in the research. You have the right to discuss the form with relatives, friends, settlement workers, community members, or any other person before you decide whether or not to sign it. The researcher should provide you with a copy of the form you signed.
 - If you prefer, you can ask to give oral consent instead. This is not always possible, depending on the requirements of the researcher's Research Ethics Board (REB).
 - You can withdraw from the research at any time—you are not obliged to finish a research study. If you decide to withdraw, you

have the right to ask that none of your information is used.

- You can also refuse to answer any particular question or take part in any specific aspect of the research.

4. Partner Activity (10 min): interview prep

- a. Have paired students discuss possible interview topics (interests: sports, music, etc; family history; clubs or organizations) and each choose something to be interviewed about in the next lesson
- b. Go through the [pre-interview checklist](#) and make sure they have everything they need

Lesson 2: Doing Oral History II: The Interview

Lesson Duration: 50 min

Big Ideas: Oral history interviews are well-researched, open-ended interviews to collect and preserve firsthand information.

Key Terms: oral history, narrator, informed consent

Essential Questions:

- What do you need in an interview?
- What do different kinds of questions look like (open-ended, follow up)
- What is good interview etiquette?

Background Knowledge: Prior to this lesson, students should know how to prepare for an oral history interview (recommended to complete *Lesson 1: Doing Oral History I: Preparation* first).

In-Class:

- Presentation (10 min): how to record (using phones, or Zencast/Zoom for remote), opening interview protocol
 - See instructions for remote interviewing (to come)
- Mock interview activity (30 min): pairs of students alternate in roles of interviewer/narrator
 - Each round (15 min)
 - Pre-interview brief (1 min)
 - Interview (10 min)
 - Release form (1 min)
 - Feedback from narrator (2 min)
- Debrief (10 min): full class discussion
 - How did it feel to ask questions as the interviewer?
 - How did it feel to be interviewed?
 - What kinds of questions did you ask?
 - Examples of open-ended questions?
 - Are there any questions you wished you'd asked that you didn't?

Lesson 3: Doing Oral History III: Outcomes

Lesson Duration: 50 min

Big Ideas: After the interview, the researcher has the responsibility to preserve the interview and make it accessible. This usually involves 1) transcribing and 2) archiving the interview.

Key Terms: oral history, transcript, primary source, archive

Essential Questions:

- What is your responsibility now that you have the interview recording?
- What is a transcript?
- How do you incorporate narrator participation in the post-interview process?
- When is the oral history “done”?

Background Knowledge: Prior to this lesson, students should know how to prepare for and conduct an oral history interview (recommended to complete *Lesson 1: Doing Oral History I: Preparation* first).

In-Class:

1. Pre-activity lecture (5-10 min):
 - What is an interview transcript?
 - A transcript puts the audio recording of the interview into written form. It's a tool for making the oral history interview more accessible. It's usually much quicker to read through a transcript to find sections of interest than it is to listen through the recording. In a digital transcript, the user can search for key terms, for example. A transcript also makes the interview accessible to people who are deaf or who have limited hearing.
 - A transcript is NOT the primary source itself. The audio recording is the primary source. The process of transcribing spoken language involves many editorial decisions, like punctuation. The transcription is a written interpretation of spoken language. There is a bias in historical study toward textual sources that the method of oral history resists, but for that to work, it's crucial to remember that the audio recording, not the transcript, is the primary source.
 - Show example transcript and point out relevant formatting: names of narrator, interviewer, and transcriptionist; date; names of speakers; spaces between speakers
2. Transcription activity (15-20 min):

- Materials needed: recorded interview (preferably recorded during Lesson 2 but can be any), headphones, computers
 - Teacher sets a 10 minute timer for the whole class. Students transcribe their recorded interview for 10 minutes. Emphasize that accuracy is important. See how much they get through.
 - Goal of the activity: show how much work it is to transcribe an interview. Explain that this is part of the responsibility when asking someone for an interview.
 - Debrief:
 - How many minutes of the recording were you able to transcribe?
 - Were there any challenges?
 - Did you have to make any editorial decisions (e.g. punctuation, inclusion of filler words, parts that were hard to hear)?
 - What are the next steps once you have the full transcript?
3. Post-activity lecture (5-10 min):
- Approval for release: the transcription of the interview is an important stage for maintaining informed consent. Before the transcript is made available to anyone outside the project, you must make sure the narrator approves of the transcript and how it represents their story.
 - Send to narrator and ask for feedback: it is essential that the narrator has the opportunity to read the transcript and make corrections/edits. For factual errors (e.g. a wrong date/name), the narrator might want to insert a note with the correction. For stylistic choices made by the transcriptionist (e.g. punctuation), the narrator might feel that the meaning has been altered and suggest changes. And the narrator has the right to limit which parts of the transcript (and recording) are made available. No matter what your goals are, the narrator has the final say. They can instruct you to remove sections of the transcript. They can say that the transcript can only be released after a specified period of time (for example, for politicians who don't want the interview to affect their career). The most important thing is to respect what they want done, or not done, with their oral history.
4. Archives (20 min)
- Goal: Look through an online oral history archive to get a sense of what a full oral history project can look like (archive of recordings/transcripts, podcast, anthology)
 - The final product doesn't have to be an archive of recordings/transcripts at an academic institution. While that has advantages (experts who maintain the collection and assist researchers), there are other ways to make the interviews available to different users.
 - Examples:

- Multiple products: [University of Hawai'i Center for Oral History](#) (collection of transcripts)
 - Collections of Transcripts: [University of Hawai'i Center for Oral History](#)
 - ["Captive on the U.S. Mainland: Oral Histories of Hawai'i-born Nisei"](#) (Nisei is second-generation Japanese American)
 - ["Life Histories of Native Hawaiians"](#)
 - Podcast: ["Experience: Hawai'i Life Histories"](#) featuring excerpts from interviews (also available on [Apple Podcasts](#) and [Spotify](#))
 - Anthology: [Hawaii Stories of Change: Kokua Hawaii Oral History Project](#) (interviews from participants in social movements)
- ["Making Gay History"](#) Podcast ([Apple Podcasts](#), [Spotify](#))
 - Podcast description: "Bringing the voices of LGBTQ history to life through intimate conversations with champions, heroes, and witnesses to history."
- If there are any local oral history collections in your area, use those!
- Note: If the class is working on a group oral history project, this is a good time to discuss what the final collection will look like.
- Discussion questions:
 - What are the advantages and disadvantages of each of these different formats (collection of transcripts, podcast, book)?
 - Can you think of other ways to share interviews and make oral history resources available to the public?