

# Oral History Lesson: From Transcript to Interview

## Materials:

- For student reference, copies of: (*pairs can share, make more copies on request*)
  - *Oral History Student Handout (scroll to last page)*
  - Oral History Rubric (in *Oral History Project* doc)
- Project on screen/board: Guided Example of Oral History Transcript to Narrative (scroll to pages 3-6) or linked here: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1cGuqHFIsJbl372yonFyNdZjetTEjGqe0SSsZF8R7oq4/edit?usp=sharing>
- Teacher/Student Reference: <https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/oral-history/> (Under "Turning Your Raw Material Into an Essay we are going for option B or C)

## Procedure:

1. Explain the **purpose of the lesson**: *We will be looking at examples of how to go from the Q&A Interview Transcript to a written Oral History Narrative.*
2. Together **read the example and go over the changes made** in the comments. (Use the excerpt with teaching comments on page 3-6 of this lesson plan.)
3. If time, discuss (turn and talk or whole class):
  1. Ask students what they notice is different between a transcript and written narrative? (Point out how the narrative does not change the interviewees responses/meaning, but does add and take out some parts to make it flow as a story.)
  2. Where do they see the changes preserve their interviewee's voice and words after they are rewritten?
  3. Talk about/share what they notice about the central idea, introduction, and conclusion of the example used earlier.
4. Ask students to look over their own transcript and identify any: (Turn and talk or share with whole class)
  1. recurring themes
  2. central idea
  3. poignant topic or meaningful message

Let students know they can focus their narrative on only the parts that reinforce these elements. They should rework the order of the responses and take out any parts that do not seem relevant to that central idea. *It is important for students to edit out any parts of the interview that stray off-topic or may confuse the reader.*

## 5. Have students read/go over requirements (on the student handout):

1. **Introduction** that gives some background about who the person is, where they immigrated from, what the circumstances were around their move, when they arrived here, and how old they were they came to the U.S.. It should also introduce the central idea or theme.
2. **Main body** contains the interviewees immigration story (may be broken into paragraphs if appropriate to their story) Reorder elements and cut out any parts that are not relevant to the central idea or theme you are highlighting.

3. **Conclusion** that gives an update on the person now (where the person lives now, how old he/she is now, and if he/she has a job, family, has become a citizen, fulfilled any of his/her dreams, etc.) OR offers a reflection or summary on the person's experience overall.
6. Pairs turn and talk to review the **project rubric criteria**. (on *Oral History Project* doc)
7. **Follow-up work:** Students work on writing their narrative during work time. They may write their names on the board to indicate they are peer conferencing (after they have made their initial draft). Remind students of the purpose of the peer conference for this assignment: to offer feedback to each other on how well the interviewee's voice is preserved, how well the writing flows, how clearly and concisely the introduction provides the reader background on the person or information about the central idea/theme, how well the narrative adheres to a central idea or theme, and how the conclusion creates a sense of closure.

#### **Extensions:**

- Students can visit the story corps site and read the introductions there for more examples, then listen to the interviews for inspiration on selecting the most poignant parts of their interviewees stories. Here's one to start with: <https://storycorps.org/animation/yelitza-castro-and-willie-davis/> (The storycorps link is available on google classroom at the top of the *class work* page)
- Students can visit this site for more immigrant oral history transcripts <https://www.libertyellisfoundation.org/oral-history-library>

#### **Standards:**

See project packet

## Guided Example of Oral History Transcript to Narrative (in 2 parts)

*This is a podcast, so the format is slightly different from the oral histories you will be composing for a reader (rather than a listener.)* <https://storycorps.org/podcast/storycorps-536-little-kids-big-problems/>

**Directions: Note how the presenter introduces the interview and interjects information which connects the interviewees' remarks to the central idea.**

**Pink**- introduction

**Blue**-interjections by the narrator or changes made from transcript to narrative

**Green**- conclusion

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### *Excerpts from StoryCorps 536: Little Kids, Big Problems*

#### **EXAMPLE 1:**

When you're a kid, the people you depend on most, the people you look to for safety and support, are adults. It's a grown-up world and most of the time, kids really have no choice but to go along with the course charted by the adults around them.

This means that kids are subject to grown-up problems often in ways they can't understand until much later in their lives.

Parents, teachers, caretakers of all kinds — they do their best to protect kids from the darker parts of the grown-up world, but sometimes the problems are so big that kids get swept up in them.

This is Roy and Aiko [EYE-CO] Ebihara's [EBB-IH-HARRA] story.

In 1942, President Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066 which authorized the internment of Japanese-Americans, like Roy and Aiko.

Roy was 8 years old then and he begins by describing the atmosphere in his hometown of Clovis, New Mexico in the weeks before his family was interned.

A sheriff and two plainclothesmen barged into the house and searched for what they called contrabands. They took out my brother's box camera, my father's shortwave radio, and they took the ax to it and chopped everything up. My father never protested, never said a word. He just stood there. And one night, vigilante groups formed in town. We saw the men were holding the oil torches coming across to where we lived. They were going to burn down everything.

The state patrol came roaring in and told us quickly to gather up what we can in pillowcases and whatever can fit into the trunk of the car. I remember my sister Kathy my sister Mary and my brother Bill and I, the four of us were squeezed into the back seat of the sedan, and we left in the darkness of the night. We were all crying, and we couldn't stop. It was just terrifying. And some months later, we were put into camps.

**My brother** remembers getting on these Army trucks. **He was** probably 5 or 6 years old. **He** thought **he** was going on a vacation. I was 8 years old, and I really didn't understand what this all meant and how it would affect our family. I guess I felt we were guilty of something but what, I didn't know. When we were released, if we talked about some of these things, even at dinner table, we were silenced, especially by my father who said I don't want to hear that. So **we** maintain that silence of our parents.

Yeah, we regret it very much.

RE: You know, I just feel that I want to go back and accept that pride, that pride of who we are.

**In 2014, Roy and his family received a formal public apology from the mayor of Clovis, NM.**

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## **EXAMPLE 2:**

*(This example is the original transcript; comments show the changes that could be made to turn it into a narrative story. At the end, you are asked to try changing the last two parts yourself. NOTE: The interviewer already edited out content that was not relevant to the central idea of the podcast.)*

Next — we'll hear from a Mexican-American who was deported in 1933.

It happened as part of a Mexican Repatriation Program, run by the U-S Government.

During the Great Depression, hundreds of thousands of people of Mexican descent were forcibly deported to Mexico without due process including many American citizens.

Ruben Aguilar (AG-ee-lahr) was born in the U-S, but was deported with his parents, who were undocumented. At the time, he was 6 years old.

Here, he tells his story to a friend, Bill Luna.

Bill Luna (BL): So you were born in Chicago?

RA: In Chicago.

BL: Now what happened when you were deported to Mexico?

RA: Well, when I was deported what I remember is the way that the agents crashed into the house. Okay people. Line up against the wall. We were put into the trucks, taken to the train station, and then shipped out.

I grew up when that happened. From six years old, all of a sudden I felt like I was 15.

**BL: You hadn't been to Mexico before then?**

**RA: Never. I could speak fluent English, but not Spanish.**

**BL: Now, how did you return to the U.S.? How did you come back here?**

**RA: I was an American citizen. So in 1945, I was drafted into the Army.**

**My father explained to me, he says, "You got a little card from Chicago to join the United States Army. You're going back to your country."**

**So I took the bus to the United States. It stopped in Laredo before we take off for Chicago. And I asked the bus driver, "Where is the washroom, sir?" And he said, "Right around the corner." So I go around the corner and I see a big sign, No Mexicans or dogs are allowed. And I said, Welcome back.**

**You know, it's a funny thing, because when I talk about it, you know, it looks like yesterday. Those things, you never get rid of that.**

**BL: How do you want to be remembered Ruben?**

**RA: I want to be remembered as somebody got hurt by his country, came back to this country, and is going to die in his country.**

# Oral History Student Handout

C1W5

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** Your interview transcript will need to be transformed into a biographical narrative.

**Requirements:** Make sure you include the following parts in your narrative.

1. **Introduction** that gives some background about:
    - i. who the person is
    - ii. where they immigrated from
    - iii. what the circumstances were around their move (why they moved)
    - iv. when they left their home country and/or arrived here
    - v. how old they were they came to the U.S.
    - vi. Introduces the central idea or theme
  
  2. **Main body** contains the interviewees immigration story (may be broken into paragraphs if appropriate to their story)
    - i. Identify the main theme/message or central idea. Make sure you connect ideas together with transitions or clarifying information so they flow together smoothly.
    - ii. You will need to decide which parts of the interview to leave out. Only include the most relevant and/or interesting parts.
    - iii. Adjust word or add words so they make complete, flowing sentences and ideas.
  
  3. **Conclusion** that *either*:
    - i. gives an update on the person now (where the person lives now, how old he/she is now, if he/she has a specific job/career, if he/she has family here, is he/she has become a citizen, is he/she has fulfilled any of his/her dreams, etc.) **OR**
    - ii. offers a reflection or summary on the central idea or the person's experience overall.
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## Directions for Peer Conferencing

After you have finished your first draft of the narrative, ask a peer or two to give you constructive feedback on any of the following items:

- Central Idea- Does the narrative stay focused and communicate the central idea/theme?
  - Voice- Does the interviewee's voice come through?
  - Flow- Does the writing flow like a story? Are there any parts that are unclear or confusing?
  - Introduction- Does the introduction provide the reader clear and concise background on the person?
  - Conclusion- Does the conclusion create a sense of closure?
  - Rubric- Does my oral history meet the requirements on the rubric?
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## What's Next?

1. Edit your narrative using the editing checklist (*available on the google classroom hub*)
2. Have 1-2 peers edit your narrative using the same editing checklist.
3. Turn in a final copy to Ms. Jen (due Monday 12/17)