

**From:** Shushan Karapetian  
**Sent:** Friday, October 23, 2020 4:33 PM  
**To:** Mary Nicely  
**Cc:** Savage, Daniel; Salpi Ghazarian  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Armenian Lesson Plan

Dear Mary and Dan,

Attached please find a complete Armenian lesson plan that focuses on oral history and Armenian migration.

Please let us know if you may need anything else.

Best,

Shushan

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*Deputy Director*  
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## **General Ethnic Studies**

### **Sample Lesson 1: Armenian Migration Stories and Oral History**

Theme: History and Movement

Disciplinary Area: General Ethnic Studies

Ethnic Studies Values and Principles Alignment: 1, 3, 6

Standards Alignment:

CA HSS Analysis Skills (9–12): Historical Interpretation 1

CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy: RH.9–10.1, 3, 8, 10; WHST.9–10.2, 4, 6, 7, SL.9–10.1, 4, 5, 6

CA ELD Standards: ELD.PI.9–10.1, 5, 9, 10a

Lesson Purpose and Overview:

As part of a larger unit on migration and oral history, this lesson guides students to explore the role of oral histories in historiography, with a particular focus on Armenian personal stories. The goal of this lesson is to understand the history of Armenian migration to the U.S. and delve deeply into the Armenian-American experience. This lesson uses the voices of Armenian women, men, girls, and boys through oral histories, to create an understanding of the nuances and experiences of the Armenian-American Community.

The students will learn about how Armenian migration stories connect to their local history.

Key Terms and Concepts: oral history, Armenian migration, interviewing, archive, memory

Lesson Objectives (Students will be able to...):

1. Evaluate perspectives on history making and historiography through the lens of oral history
2. Watch, listen to, and conduct oral history interviews, transcribe narratives, develop research questions, and build upon interpersonal communication skill

3. Better understand the diversity of experiences of Armenian-Americans by synthesizing and analyzing oral history sources

#### Essential Questions:

1. What is the significance of oral history in the construction of minority histories in the U.S.?
2. What is the history of Armenian immigration to the U.S.?
3. How did various cohorts and generations of Armenian immigrants' experiences differ from each other and that of their children who were born in the U.S.?

#### Lesson Steps/Activities:

#### Part I: What is Oral History?

1. Ask students to write down a response to the question: ***What is history?*** This could be in one word, quick responses, or a paragraph response to a writing prompt. Have students share responses in a class discussion. See where students have similar ideas about what defines history.
2. Follow up questions: ***How do we know what happened in the past? Who writes history?***
  - a. There are many ways we know about what happened in the past (journals, objects, legal documents, photos, letters). Discuss the students' answers and how they relate to what we know about the past.
  - b. Point out that historians look at a lot of different topics when they study history. They might study politics, wars, big national events, important things we might see on the news. But, historians also study the everyday lives and activities of "regular" people.
  - c. For upper high school grades and college students, the discussion can focus on historiography and notions of what makes good, proper history.
3. All of these ways we know what happened in the past are considered primary sources. ***Where do you usually go if you want to learn something?*** (common answers: books, internet, Wikipedia)
4. These are all considered secondary sources. Primary sources are first-hand accounts of an event or moment in time and are in their original form. Secondary sources are books or articles that use a variety of primary sources to provide

commentary on an event, but these are created by people who do not have first-hand knowledge of the event.

5. One way we know about the past is by doing oral history. What is oral history?

Oral history is the systematic collection of living people's testimony about their own experiences. Oral history is not folklore, gossip, hearsay, or rumor. Oral historians attempt to verify their findings, analyze them, and place them in an accurate historical context. Oral historians are also concerned with storage of their findings for use by later scholars.

## Part II: Why is oral history important? How does it add to history?

5. Discuss as a class why oral history is important. Emphasize that it is important to understand **people's stories and their experiences** related to an event.

We all have stories to tell, stories we have lived from the inside out. We give our experiences an order. We organize the memories of our lives into stories. Oral history listens to these stories. Historians currently recognize that everyday memories of everyday people, not just the rich and famous, have historical importance. If we do not collect and preserve those memories, then one day they will disappear forever.

6. **Oral history accounts add the life to the facts.** And they give voice to people, regular people, who often aren't involved in writing history.
7. Review publicly available segments from the #MyArmenianStory archive and follow up with the following questions: ***After reviewing the example, why do you think oral history is important? How does it add to historical accounts? Do you understand the facts differently after listening to the oral history account?*** Sometimes statistics and numbers are difficult to relate to. But we might be able to relate to an account of someone's life as told in their own words.

## Part III: Doing Oral History

8. Explain to the class that they will be conducting some of **their own oral histories** to learn about the **Armenian experience**.
9. Advise students to think of the person they wish to interview. The teacher can provide a list of Armenian organizations, institutions, and community centers students can utilize. This will serve the dual purpose of familiarizing students with the Armenian presence in California while helping them find an interview subject.
10. Have the student determine what they hope to discover about the person's life. In **preparation for the interview**, the student should research the following:

- a. Historical and significant events
  - b. Social and economic conditions
  - c. Culture and other interesting information about the time
  - d. Appropriate linguistic skills based on which language(s) they'll be conducting the interview
11. Have students review the **#MyArmenianStory Guidelines, Interview Guides, and FAQs** from the USC Institute of Armenian Studies #MyArmenianStory project in detail.
  12. Review **best practices in interviewing**; watch/listen to several sample oral history recordings; conduct mock interviews in class.
  13. Students should set up an appointment with the interviewee. They should be prepared with recording equipment and the question guides.
  14. Students can ask the interviewee if they have any letters, photographs, or objects that they would like to share and use these for their final product in class.
  15. Students may be asked to transcribe the interview. The process of transcription offers new insights on the content in a written medium.

#### Part IV: Analysis and Reflection

16. Students are given a choice in the **creative medium** (interpretive paper, PPT presentation, newspaper article, digital history videos, podcast, portfolio, etc.) with which they would like to present their findings and analysis of their interview. The **analysis** may focus on:
  - a. A summary of their findings
  - b. What were some of the most interesting things they learned
  - c. What they found out that was surprising
  - d. What the stories of the interviewee tell us about a certain time period or event
    - i. Perhaps discuss how what they learned from the interview conflicts with what they know or what they have learned about in school
  - e. Further questions they would ask if they could go back to learn more and clarify some points
16. After the whole class presents their findings, you may want to **discuss and reflect** on some themes, such as:
  - a. the constant movement and migration
  - b. the process of adaptation and integration
  - c. the common threads and unique elements of the various interviews
  - d. intersectionality of identities
  - e. the value of oral histories as primary resources

17. Students should carry out a series of **reflections** throughout the process at various stages. The reflections can cover sociocultural, sociolinguistic, and historical observations. For example, students can journal about their expectations before the interview, the experience during the interview, and how their oral history interview reflected or changed their thinking about central themes. Encourage students to compare and contrast themes, perspectives, and experiences based on the oral history projects.
18. **Share** students' oral history projects with the larger school community by organizing an oral history viewing/listening event.

#### Materials and Resources:

- Oral History Association, How Do I Engage Students in Oral History Projects?:  
<http://www.oralhistory.org/how-do-i-engage-students-in-oral-history-projects/>
- USC Institute of Armenian Studies #MyArmenianStory Oral History Project  
<https://armenian.usc.edu/myarmenianstory/>
- List of Armenian organizations, institutions, community centers in California