

ARTS • BASED SKILLS & STRATEGIES

• middle school •
• elementary •

title

Oral History Through Song

skill



music

about the strategy

Oral history is the collection of people's experiences through interview. This strategy is a powerful tool to connect children to parents or other adults, to help children understand the context in which adults learned songs, and to build a classroom community through a shared song repertoire in which they have ownership.

visual

Illustrating the songs

auditory

Listening to and learning the songs

kinesthetic

Learning movements or dances that accompany the song

instructional steps

objective Students collect songs from parents, school staff, and/or community members.

materials Tape recorders and blank cassette tapes (optional)
Paper and pens
Flip chart, markers, drawing media

procedure

1. Modeling a Song

- Share a song from your childhood. The students work together to construct questions about how and when you learned the song.
- Have one student interview you to collect more information about the song, with others helping to shape the questions.
- Identify the types of information that can be collected through questioning, including the details of who, what, where, when, why, and how. Focus on why the song is important to the person, including the feelings that person remembers.

Oral History Through Song

instructional steps

procedure

2. Collecting Songs

- Choose a song to share with a partner. Review interviewing strategies, focusing on careful listening and asking questions that will help students to understand how the song was learned.
- In pairs, students share with one another, and ask questions of one another to get more information. (These interviews can be tape-recorded. This will allow later review to learn the song, and to transcribe the rhythm, pitch, and/or text.)

3. Collecting Songs from Adults

- Invite adults: (grandparents, parents, family, staff, and/or community members) into the classroom (grandparent's day, parent's visitation are good days to plan around), or have children go in pairs to visit their chosen adults.
- Collect the songs, and interview the guests to discover details about when and how the song was learned. Record both the songs and the interviews.
- Write the songs down, using tapes from the recorded sessions.

4. Creating a Classroom Songbook

- Have students work in pairs to write and illustrate their songs on large pages.
- Teach the song to the class and share the story.
- Compile the pages into a class songbook.

Oral History Through Song

strategy for curricular connections



language arts

- Songs are authentic literature that can be spoken, sung, listened to, read, and written. Include songs as part of your language arts repertoire.



mathematics

- Students will enjoy creating math challenges for each other based on song lyrics, for example:
 - If Old Grandma cooked meals for twenty-one boys three times a day, how many meals did she cook in a year?
- The forms and rhythms of music are based in mathematical relationships. Students can represent songs through models such as fraction pies, bar graphs, etc.



social studies

- Consider what the song tells you about the social customs of the time period and compare to today. If students notice that many of the collected songs were playground chants, what does that tell them about how their parents or grandparents spent their leisure time? Is this the same or different for present day children?



science

- Notice any words in the collected songs that indicate what scientific beliefs there were at the time. Are they different from what is believed today?



music

- Collaborate with the music teacher to help transcribe the songs. If using music notation is impractical, use graphic notation to show the long/short and high/low aspects of the tune.



visual art

- Illustration can occur in many media and styles. Look at picture books to see a range of styles, including abstract, line drawings, collage, watercolors, stamping, and so on. Consider the medium and style that best fits the song text..

Oral History Through Song

strategy for curricular connections



dance

- Many children's songs have movement or dances. Include them in the transcription and sharing.
- Add scarves or movement to highlight the form or text of the song.



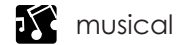
theatre

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multiple intelligences target



adaptations

to simplify

- Have the class interview individuals all together or in groups, rather than in pairs.

to challenge

- Create a songbook that can be published and shared at a performance. Invite an audience, and distribute the book to all attendees.

special needs

- Take the time to collect stories of special learners. Their feelings and perspectives are often overlooked, and this is an opportunity for them to share themselves with others.
- Replace paper-and-pencil reporting with visual, oral, aural, and/or kinesthetic representations. For example, a student can play the tape recording of the song, or sing it, rather than write it down.