

ROBERSON MUSEUM AND SCIENCE CENTER

Pre-visit Lesson Plan

Marking Milestones: Rites of Passage

Grade Level: Grades 3 through 12

New York State Standards: ELA 1; Arts 1 - 4; SS 3

Pennsylvania State Standards: A&H 9.1, 9.2, 9.4; G 7.3, 7.4; H 8.4

Objectives: Students will be introduced to proper interviewing techniques and will gain a greater understanding of how various rites of passage influence one through his/her lifetime.

Materials:

- Pens or pencils
- Paper
- Tape recorder (if available)

Procedure:

Part 1: Momentous Occasions/Rites of Passage

Ask students to come up with a list of momentous occasions or rites of passage that are prevalent during one's lifetime. Some examples include birth, learning to drive, marriage, and death. Then ask students to choose a classroom teacher, family member, or influential adult to interview about a rite of passage he/she has experienced.

Part 2: Interview Techniques

Familiarize students with the interview process by reviewing proper interview techniques.

1. Prepare ahead of time

- Decide who to interview and what the subject(s) of the interview will cover.
- Decide which type of interview you will conduct. There are several methods including face to face, by mail, email, or over the phone.
- If conducting a face to face interview, set up a mutually convenient time and place to meet with the interviewee.
- Prepare questions to ask in advance.
- Decide how long you would like the interview to be.
- Gather any materials needed such as pen and paper or a tape recorder. (Check with your interviewee before using a tape recorder to ensure that he/she is comfortable with it.)
- If using a tape recorder, practice using it several times before the interview so that you are familiar with how to use it. Also, bring extra batteries with you to the interview.

Preparing interview questions (Grades 3 through 5)

- Prepare questions that ask about the facts.
- Focus on the Who? What? Where? When? and Why?
- Be sure to include questions that uncover the feelings of the interviewee. Were they nervous? Excited? Scared? This will make for a more interesting interview.
- Write your questions down and bring them with you to the interview.

Preparing interview questions (Grades 6 and Up)

- Devise questions that are specifically related to the interview topic.
- Questions should not ask just the facts, but should uncover the emotions or feelings one had during his/her respective rite of passage or monumental event. (Do not simply ask “How did you feel?”)
- As you prepare your questions, keep the following important points in mind:
 1. Do your research. Learn as much as you can about the person you will be interviewing. This will help you to formulate questions.
 2. Use open-ended questions that encourage personal commentary.
 3. Instead of the basic *who*, *when*, and *where*, think *how*, *what*, and *why*, to elicit facts as well as feelings and descriptions.
 4. People’s memories are usually tied to specific triggers. Ask questions about specific events or other concrete experiences.
- Focus on questions that will lead to a story. Questions that will result in a one word answer will not provide for a rich or meaningful interview.
- Your questions should uncover why the respective rite of passage or monumental event was important and what influence it had on the interviewee’s life.
- How has the historical context of the period influenced the interviewee’s answers?
- Prepare more questions than you think you may need. It is wise to over-prepare.
- Write your questions down and have them with you during the interview.
- Send the interviewee a list of your questions in advance, if possible. This gives them time to think about people and events that may not have occurred to them in a long time and can often improve the interview.

2. During the interview (Grades 3 through 12)

- Before beginning, ask the interviewee for permission to record or transcribe the interview.
- To begin the interview, ask for the interviewee’s name and age before any other questions.
- Next, ask your prepared questions.
- Make sure to give the interviewee enough time to respond.
- When you have finished with all of your prepared questions ask “Is there anything else you would like to add?”
- Thank the interviewee for his/her time.

Part 3: Immediately after the interview

- Read over your interview notes or listen to what you have recorded.
- Write down any reflections or thoughts you had about the interview- Was there anything that surprised you? Were the answers what you had expected?

Part 4: Share

- Have the students share their interview highlights with the class.

Part 5: Follow-up

- Have students send thank you notes to class interviewees.

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