

## Welcome students!

We hope you are enjoying your summer in any way you can, especially after the end of a strange school year. We've put together this oral history toolkit as a small project that can help you stretch your art & communication muscles while you're on break.

### Project goals:

- **20-minute oral history interview (or longer)**
- **3 quotes from the interview**
- **3 photos that represent the quotes**

We want this to be an opportunity for you to sit down (in-person or virtually) with someone in your life, learn more about their experiences, and represent them in an artistic form that helps you honor their story.

**We would also love to feature your work on our website! If you are interested in sharing what you are able to create, please email [edu@voiceofwitness.org](mailto:edu@voiceofwitness.org) with any photos and quotes, and we'll be in touch! You can also email us with any questions you have about the project.**

### Oral History Artifact Interview

Think about who you would like to interview. This might be someone in your household, or someone at a distance. Even the people we're closest to have stories that we haven't heard yet, but interviews can also bring us closer to people we are still getting to know.

The interview will center around an artifact (an object) that your narrator chooses to share. This artifact can be anything meaningful to them: a piece of clothing, a cooking utensil, a family heirloom, a photograph, jewelry, a souvenir, etc. Once you've chosen a narrator, ask them to bring an artifact to your interview that they would like to talk about.

You should prepare at least 10 open-ended questions for your interview, but don't treat the questions like a checklist! Honor your curiosity and use follow-up questions to ask for more details about an experience, or a relationship, or a feeling they have shared.

### Open-ended Questions

- Can you describe your object?
- Where did it come from? / Who gave it to you?
- Can you share a story connected to this object?
- What emotions do you associate with this object?
- Why did you choose this object for this interview?

## Follow-up Questions

If they start sharing about the person that gave them the object, you might ask:

- Can you tell me more about your relationship with [Person]? Where are they now?

If they talk about a location or experience, you might ask:

- Can you tell me more about [place or experience]? What do you remember seeing, hearing, and feeling in your body?

## Recording the Interview

You can use a basic smartphone (Voice Memos application) to record your interview, or any audio recording device. We recommend turning on “airplane mode” to avoid interruptions during the recording. You can also just take notes as you listen! It’s okay to ask your narrator, “Can you repeat that?” to capture a quote you’d like to use later.

## Selecting 3 Quotes

After you’ve recorded your interview (or taken notes), listen to the interview again and choose 3 quotes (about 100 words per quote) that you think best represent your narrator’s story. Type them up (or write them down) as close as you can to the original wording, then use them as the basis for the 3 photographs you will take.

## Capturing 3 Photos

Using the camera on your smartphone (or any camera available), use the 3 quotes you chose from your interview to guide your artistic process. Maybe your narrator mentioned something about a difficult time in their life, and you choose to take a photo of a dark and shadowy corner. Maybe they talked a lot about a journey, so you take a photo of a long street. This is a chance to be creative, stretch your artistic skills and think about how you can visually represent emotions and text!

You can also practice your photo essay skills by following the prompts from First Exposures on their class website at: [www.firstexposuresed.wordpress.com](http://www.firstexposuresed.wordpress.com)

## Bringing It All Together

Consider including a short biographical paragraph to introduce your narrator to your audience. For example, this might look like:

Cassandra M. is a rising senior at Haverford College in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. She is a first-generation college student and shared her story about family relationships, childhood memories, and future dreams.

If the quotes you choose don’t describe the object, you might want to identify it in the biographical paragraph so readers will know how the interview started.

To bring the photos and quotes together, you have a few options:

- **Digital:** You can use a photo editing software (such as Canva, Gimp, Pixlr) to combine the photos and quotes, create Google Slides or a PowerPoint, or simply email the photos and corresponding quotes in the body of the email to your narrator (and to us!). If your narrator agrees, you can also share the series on social media, such as Instagram. Tag @voiceofwitness to share your story!
- **Physical:** If you have access to a printer, you can also print the photos and quotes together to share them with your narrator and your community.

## EXAMPLE QUOTES & PHOTOS



I have dreams of living a remote life still connected to the world; to be able to grow my own food and give it to my neighbors if I have it... I think it's important to learn how to—I wouldn't say "be self-sufficient" 'cause you need other people in order to survive—but I think the whole supermarket thing... the whole health thing that they sell in front of your face... Let's just avoid that and grow our own food. On a small scale, if everyone—if they have the access to do it—spent some time to grow their own things, they would learn... I don't want to say the price, but the value of the vegetable they're eating. You can't just wastefully get so much of something, eat it all at once, and have nothing left; when you grow something by yourself you have a limited amount of stuff. You learn how to be more conservational.




A: This was 2 euros and really cute, so I bought it in Berlin, and it's been with me since!

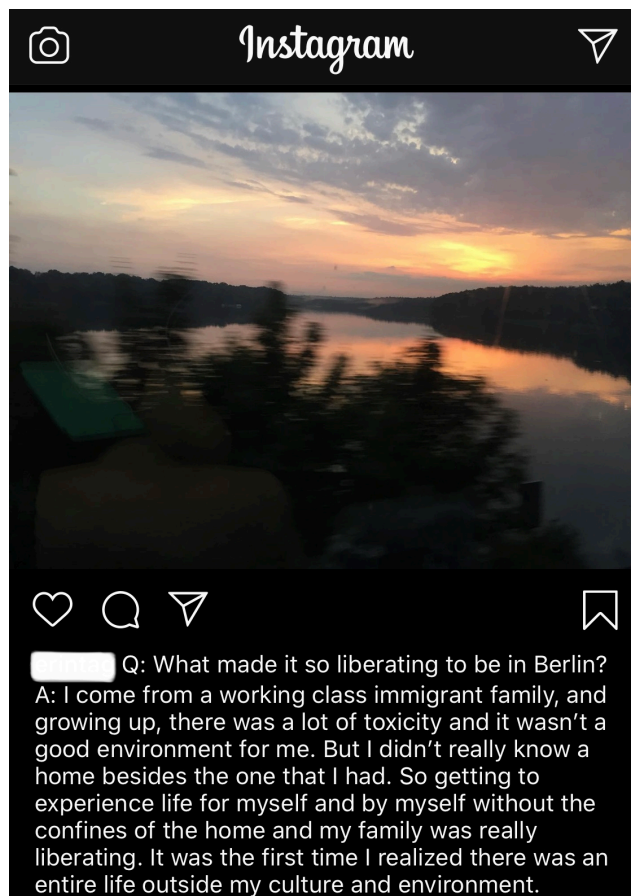
Q: Can you tell me the emotions you had when you got the object at that time compared to the emotions you have now and whether they've changed or not?

A: It was this rush of independence that I never really had before. I feel like [the object] really symbolizes the freedom I had felt for the first time in my life that I did not have access to before. It was a very important time in my life.

And yeah, I think that's why I've kept it for so long, moving from place to place, this always comes with me.

Google Slides example:

	<p>The object is actually a picture of marigolds. It was hard for me to pick an object for this, because I don't really have sentimental attachment to things. In my family we don't really pass things on to each other. So, this is different because there is a family association, memories, associated with it. I actually got it from the dollar store. Growing up I always watched my mom and my grandma plant flowers at our house before we moved to Philly [...] I don't know if I made this up, but I feel like I remember running through the grass. It was tall. It was green then. It was memories of my childhood before things changed so much.</p>
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Instagram

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[Redacted] Q: What made it so liberating to be in Berlin?  
 A: I come from a working class immigrant family, and growing up, there was a lot of toxicity and it wasn't a good environment for me. But I didn't really know a home besides the one that I had. So getting to experience life for myself and by myself without the confines of the home and my family was really liberating. It was the first time I realized there was an entire life outside my culture and environment.