

# Georgia O'Keeffe Museum

## TELL ME A STORY

Grade: K- 12

**SUMMARY:** The Georgia O'Keeffe Museum not only exhibits O'Keeffe's artwork but also collects stories about the artist as told by people who knew her. In this lesson, to be taught in conjunction with a visit to the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, students will be introduced to O'Keeffe's online oral history archive, explore the process of interviewing and gain an understanding of why oral histories are so important to the preservation of the past. Each student will have the opportunity to interview their peers as well as family members and friends. *This lesson is meant to be flexible. Please adapt for the level of your students and your individual curriculum.*

### **GUIDING QUESTION:**

*How is history recorded?*

### **LEARNING OBJECTIVES:**

Students will...

- Become acquainted with oral histories and their importance to the historical record
- Craft a set of interview questions
- Conduct an interview with a peer as well as a friend, family member or community member
- Reflect on the interviewing process, identifying challenges and successes

### **INSTRUCTION:**

**Engage:** Reflect on your visit to the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum. *What did you learn about O'Keeffe at the Museum? If you wanted to know even more, where would you learn more about her history?*

Brainstorm some research methods and potential sources of information. *Who wrote these sources and determined O'Keeffe's history?*

Most of what we know about Georgia O'Keeffe is written, whether it's a journal article about her artwork, letters that she wrote to friends or books that narrate her life. Yet often there are gaps in her written story- times that no one wrote about, relationships among neighbors and friends that were never written down- stories that are only memories in people's minds. *How would knowing about these moments in O'Keeffe's life change your impression of her or help you to better understand this famous artist?*

### **Build Knowledge:**

*How would a historian capture these stories and make them a part of history?*

The process of capturing and recording people's memories and stories is called Oral History. Stories, or oral histories, give life to what otherwise might be dry factual information. They help us to connect and empathize with people of the past, and can add another dimension to history that is not captured elsewhere in the historic record.

Often oral histories record voices in history that are not often heard: voices of ordinary people who were never famous enough to be written about, or voices of people or groups who were forced to be silent or completely ignored by society and thus history. *Who were some of these groups throughout history?*

Historians and researchers carefully craft interview questions in the process of creating oral histories.



Georgia O'Keeffe—After Return from New Mexico, 1929  
Alfred Stieglitz  
Gelatin silver print  
3 1/16 x 4 5/8 in.  
Georgia O'Keeffe Museum  
Gift of The Georgia O'Keeffe Foundation (2003.01.015)  
© Georgia O'Keeffe Museum

Take some time to explore different Oral History Projects- including oral histories that are a part of Georgia O’Keeffe’s archive. *What do like about the different projects? What is successful? What is unsuccessful? If you designed your own oral history project- who would you want to interview?*

Georgia O’Keeffe Museum- Oral Histories

<http://contentdm.okeeffemuseum.org/cdm/landingpage/collection/oh>

QUESTIONBRIDGE

<http://questionbridge.com/>

7 Billion Others

<http://www.7billionothers.org/>

MOMA Oral History Project

<http://www.moma.org/learn/resources/archives/oralhistory#aohi>

National Gallery Of Art Oral History Project

<http://www.nga.gov/content/ngaweb/research/gallery-archives/oral-history.html>

### **Apply:**

1. Craft an oral history. Begin by interviewing your classmates. Find a partner and decide upon a subject to interview each other about. Alternatively, you could pick a subject as an entire class, such as your first day of school. *What do you remember? Who did you meet? What did you wear? How did you get to school that first day? Think about all of the senses. How did it feel? Smell? Taste? What could you hear? Were you afraid? Were you excited?*
2. Record the conversation if possible. Most cell phones have a recording application. Replay the interview and listen to the responses again. Reflect on the interview: *What were the most interesting parts of the interview? Why? Was it a good question? Was the interviewee more relaxed? If you have time, transcribe the interview.*
3. Now that you’ve had some practice with your classmate, decide upon a friend, relative or community member you would like to interview. *Whose story would you like to tell? Brainstorm a list of questions to ask your friend or family member. What do you not know about this person, what would you like to learn about them? Is there a specific event that you would like to know about? A specific time in their life that you would like to know more about? Use StoryCorps bank of questions as a resource for developing insightful and inspiring questions.*  
<https://storycorps.me>
4. Complete the interview and transcription!
5. Reflect as a class on the interviewing process. *What was challenging? What was rewarding? How would you do it differently next time?*

**Extension:** Create a class publication of student-selected interview excerpts.

### **ASSESS:**

Assess students on the completion of the following tasks:

- Identifying a person to interview and a theme or topic to pursue
- Designing insightful interview questions
- Completing the interview and transcribing the recording
- Reflection upon the interviewing process, effectively communicating challenges and successes

### **Additional Resources:**

[http://dohistory.org/on\\_your\\_own/toolkit/oralHistory.html](http://dohistory.org/on_your_own/toolkit/oralHistory.html)

<http://www.oralhistory.org/about/principles-and-practices/>

<http://www.loc.gov/folklife/familyfolklife/oralhistory.html>