

A Bronzeville Story

Lesson 4: Oral-History Project

Focus Questions

Why did so many African Americans from the South move to Chicago during the Great Migration? Why do so many people still move here today? What is oral history? Why is it important for ordinary people to record their experiences?

Core Understandings

Students will understand that many different people and groups have relocated to Chicago and made valuable contributions to our history and culture. They will understand that new migrants found many opportunities as well as challenges upon their arrival in Chicago. They will understand that “witnesses to history” can help all people discover the past through the stories they tell and the artifacts they collect.

Knowledge

Students will know that the Great Migration was a significant historical event both locally and nationally. They will know how to conduct an oral-history interview and why the information they collect is valuable both personally and to future generations of Chicagoans.

Skills

Students will use their independent research skills to uncover information about their family’s arrival in Chicago. They will listen and speak effectively and express their findings in writing.

Common Core ELA Standards

CCSSR1. Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

CCSSR3. Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

CCSS.SL.1 Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSSW7. Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

ISBE Social Science Standards

Goal 15: Understand economic systems, with an emphasis on the US.

Goal 16: Understand events, trends, individuals and movements shaping the history of Illinois, the US, and other nations.

Goal 17: Understand world geography and the effects of geography on society, with an emphasis on the US.

Goal 18: Understand social systems, with an emphasis on the US.

In This Lesson

Students will relate their own family’s migration experiences to those of the characters in *A Bronzeville Story* by learning how to conduct an oral-history interview. The story elements of opening and character are addressed. Note: This lesson was designed as a two-day activity, but may be altered at will (see Lesson 5). Researched and written by Beatrice Quatroke.



Activity

Begin the lesson by listing on the board five reasons why so many African Americans moved to Chicago during the Great Migration. Then, tell students they are going to find out why their own families moved to Chicago by conducting an oral-history interview.

Distribute copies of the Oral-History Interview Worksheet found at the end of this lesson. Lead a discussion of the meaning and importance of oral history. Be sure to touch upon the following questions:

- 1) What is oral history?
- 2) What can oral history teach us about our own families?
- 3) Who else can benefit from our oral-history project?
- 4) Why is it important for ordinary people to record their experiences?

Next, bring in an adult volunteer (possibly another teacher or teacher's aide) to model an oral-history interview. As you ask the questions, show students how to record answers on the interview worksheet. Tell them that many oral histories are also recorded using audio or video equipment for accuracy. Get students thinking about how questions are worded, steering them away from those with yes or no answers. Stress the importance of listening carefully and recording answers faithfully.

If time allows, finish up by performing a mock interview of Uncle Obie. Play the role of Uncle Obie and have students ask the questions on the worksheet posing as Lurlene. (Because Uncle Obie is an "Old Settler," this is also a great opportunity to help students distinguish between the first and second waves of the Great Migration.)

Lesson 4 Home Connection

Have students conduct an oral-history interview of a family member.

Materials & Resources

- **Printouts of *A Bronzeville Story*:**
http://www.chicagohistory.org/greatchicagostories/pdf/story/A_Bronzeville_Story_by_Pamela_Dell.pdf
- **Oral-History Interview worksheets**

Instructional Notes

Encourage students to interview their oldest family member if possible. Ask them to bring in copies of old photographs or other family “artifacts” to add to the bulletin-board display or share during class presentations.

Extension Activities

Take a field trip to the Chicago History Museum to view the “Sweet Home Chicago” section of the *Chicago: Crossroads of America* exhibition to teach students about the city’s diverse neighborhoods. There is also a photography exhibit on Chicago immigrants on the museum’s first floor.

Worksheet: Oral-History Interview

Name: _____

Directions: Choose a family member to interview. If possible, choose the oldest member of your family. You may also videotape or make an audio recording of the interview.

1. Where did our family originally come from?

2. When did our family come to Chicago?

3. How did our family get here?

Worksheet: Oral-History Interview

Name: _____

4. Why did our family come to Chicago?

5. Are there any memorable stories about our family coming to Chicago (perhaps something funny, sad, happy or scary)?

Worksheet: Oral-History Interview

Name: _____

6. Does our family have any special artifacts? If we were going to donate something to the Chicago History Museum, what would it be?

7. What advice would you give someone just moving to Chicago?
