

Waterways Ireland Oral History Project Lesson Plan 3

Creative Writing and Listening

Transition Year Subject

History, Creative Writing, English

KS 4

Language and Literacy,
Communication

Aims of Lesson

This Lesson Plan will encourage students to actively listen to selected memories in order to find inspiration for creative writing. It will challenge students to consider their own lives in the context of memory and time and to reflect (in writing) how life may change in their lifetime, as it has in the lives of the people recorded in the Waterways Ireland Oral History Programme.

This Lesson Plan will introduce students to the idea of oral history and encourage them to engage with story and memory. It will also familiarize students with sites such as www.waterwaysireland.org and help them develop a better understanding of Waterways heritage.

What you Need

Teachers will need an Internet Connection, Whiteboard/Computer, amplification and printout paper.

Preparation

Teachers should make sure that the Waterways Ireland Archive website is accessible within the classroom and that the oral history selections are playing through your speaker system/whiteboard.

Getting Started

If introducing oral history, teachers should explain the following:

Oral history is 'the recording of people's memories and experiences and using those oral sources to better understand the past. It can be divided into two categories:

- Oral History – The direct memories of a speaker
- Oral Tradition – Stories passed to the speaker from a previous generation



The stories you will hear are told in a variety of different accents from across the island of Ireland, so listen carefully!



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Activity

The below four Lesson Options provide exercises which will engage students with recorded material and stimulate creative writing. They can be used across a range of lessons, decided by the teacher. Two segments should be played per lesson and the audio can be reintroduced for different writing exercises, drawn from the Lesson Options.

Lesson Options

These lessons can be recycled by changing either the audio selections or the exercise.

1 – Write a Letter

Take what you feel is the key message of the piece of audio you select and write a letter to your cousin in America, explaining this.

2 – Short Story

Develop a character from the memory played. Write a short story (1-2 pages) from the perspective of either the person remembering or a character he/she mention in the audio segment.

3 – Write a letter from speaker

Listen to the people mentioned. Reflect that some have long since passed away. If they could write a letter now, what would they say? Write a 1-2-page letter from the perspective of the character.

4 – Imagine you are old

The person you have heard is looking back, reflecting on their life in their old age. Imagine what you will say when you are reflecting back on your life. What will you say? - Write a (1 – 2 page) diary entry from yourself reflecting back on your life. Begin with the words 'When I heard the man/woman recall his/her memories of a life connected to waterways, it made me think about my own life and how I will look back when I am old ...'

Note for Teachers:

Writing is storytelling. Encourage your students to listen to the stories and find inspiration to write. The audio clips are all approx. three minutes long, which make them excellent starter activities.

Tell your students that the audio segments will act as Writing Prompts and encourage them to listen carefully. They should attempt to capture emotions along with sensory details of sound, smell, and touch, reflected in the audio.

Waterways Audio Samples

Brian Cassells

Brian Cassells, a historian from Lurgan outlines his interest in the Irish Famine period (1845-51) and tells the story of a local man, Thomas Miller, who made great efforts for the poor during this time.

Christy Bolger

Christy Bolger, a baker and former boatman from Graiguenamanagh, County Kilkenny speaks about the Lock Keeper Essie Conroy who operated the lock at Lowtown, County Kildare.

Fred Tiernan

Fred Tiernan from Kiladeas, Irvinestown, Co. Fermanagh was born on Innisconra Island on Lower Lough Erne, where he lived until he was 18 years old. Here, Fred recalls vividly his earliest memories of being on a boat with his father.

George Brierley

George Brierley, a retired Dock Master from Dublin remembers some of the characters he met during his time on the Grand Canal Docks remembers 'the two English men' who arrived in a small boat asking 'Where is England?'

George Morrissey

George Morrissey, a historian from Belturbet in County Cavan reflects on the importance of waterways heritage

James Scully

James Scully, a historian originally from Tullamore in County Offaly speaks about his favourite place on the Grand Canal.