



Waterways Ireland Oral History Project Lesson Plan 2

Adopt a Memory

Transition Year Subject
History, SESE

KS 4
Environment and Society, Active
Enquiry-Based Learning

Aims of Lesson

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

Benefit to Students

By encouraging students to listen to memories and experiences, narrated by speakers from across the island of Ireland, this lesson plan will help students explore their understanding of North/South learning, intercultural awareness and as well as the commonalities of past experience.

What you Need

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



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Activity

Divide the class into pairs. The teacher puts numbers between 1 & 10 into a hat which are drawn by one student from each pair. The numbers connect with audio segments from the Waterways Ireland Oral History Programme (below). Each pair then is given time to listen and absorb the story/tradition/memory recounted in their adopted memory. They will then spend the following 2-3 lessons, creating a presentation based on their adopted memory and research into the subject discussed.

Ask each student to consider the following questions, when preparing their presentations:

- ✓ What was the most significant change in the status and function of waterways?
- ✓ How was this change shown in the memory you listened to?
- ✓ Explain why oral history is an important way of exploring the past?
- ✓ What are the main strengths of oral history?



Waterways Audio Samples

- (1) **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. 
- (2) **Fred Tiernan**
Fred Tiernan from Kiladeas, Irvinestown, Co. Fermanagh was born on Inniscoonra 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. 
- (3) **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?'. 
- (4) **George Morrissey**
George Morrissey, a historian from Belturbet in County Cavan reflects on the importance of waterways heritage 
- (5) **James Scully**
James Scully, a historian originally from Tullamore in County Offaly speaks about his favourite place on the Grand Canal. 
- (6) **George Brierley**
Here, George Brierley from Dublin recalls various jobs he had as a young boy 
- (7) **Brian Cassells**
Historian Brian Cassells from Lurgan discussing the tradition of the Banshee. 
- (8) **George Morrissey**
George Morrissey from Belturbet reflecting on the importance of waterways heritage. 
- (9) **Tommy Holland**
Tommy Holland from County Clare, remembers physical work as young man. 
- (10) **Noel Spain**
Noel Spaine's early memories of the Royal Canal in Dublin take us to 'the Emergency' (World War II). 