Lesson plan for

RECORD Oral Histories
**Introduction**

In this activity, students will identify and interview a naturalized citizen. During the interview, students will also draw out the story behind one special belonging of the naturalized citizen. Through compiling the interview, students will work to understand a recent naturalization experience, while developing technical skills in video production. Each video interview will then be publicly shared to enable other students to learn from that citizen’s story.

**Objectives**

The student will be better able to

- Record and edit video to communicate a central story.
- Interpret objects as connections to personal, family, and national history.
- Summarize a story about naturalization.

**Time**

75 minutes or more

**Instructions**

1. Introduce the topic of naturalization by watching an oral history created by the National Museum of American History at [http://americanhistory.si.edu/citizenship/oralhistories.html](http://americanhistory.si.edu/citizenship/oralhistories.html) or on YouTube at [http://www.youtube.com/video_response_view_all?v=-FT3KZ8OjDO](http://www.youtube.com/video_response_view_all?v=-FT3KZ8OjDO). On YouTube, the oral histories are all “video responses” to the main video.

2. Explain to students that they will record their own oral histories by interviewing naturalized citizens.

3. As needed, assist students in locating naturalized citizens.
   - Consider reaching out to ESL classes offered by library, community center, or religious groups.
   - Ask around in your school’s community. The teachers, custodians, or students in your school might be naturalized citizens or have friends or relatives who are. Just be careful to ask with respect and without judgment—there are many reasons why a person may not want to share their stories or may be a non-citizen uninterested in naturalization.

4. Contact the naturalized citizen to establish permission to interview as well as logistical details. Ask your informant to bring an object with them to the interview. Explain that
the object could be a special memento from their naturalization ceremony (such as a program from the ceremony or a piece of jewelry worn to the ceremony), something from their studying or application process (such as flashcards or a study notebook), or any other object that helps tell their story.

**Why Objects?** These oral histories are special because they include one of the informant’s belongings, in addition to the oral record. Objects are important sources of historical information because they create enduring visual records with describable features, such as size, weight, or texture, which can be used by researchers to understand the past. They can also be tangible reminders that help bring a person back to a specific time or place, either stimulating the informant’s memory or offering an entrance point for the interviewer.

5. In preparation for the interview, have students create questions and practice reading their questions with other students. Depending on the age of students, consider using the attached page 4, Questions to Ask During a Naturalization Oral History.

6. In preparation for the interview, review the operation and use of the technology equipment. Additional suggestions on preparing oral histories can be found on pages 5 and 6, “Creating an Oral History Source” from Engaging Students with Primary Sources.

7. Have students conduct and record their interviews.

8. *(Optional)* Students may edit their oral history interviews before uploading the videos.

9. Students over the age of 13 may submit their interviews to share them with the Museum via YouTube.
   - First, have students create accounts and log in to YouTube.
   - Next, visit the Museum’s video at [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-FT3KZ8OjDQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-FT3KZ8OjDQ).
   - Below the video, expand the comments section to see “Respond to this video.” Then click in the text window. Click on the link that says “Create a video comment” and follow the prompts to either choose a video or upload a new video.
   - In the description of your video, please include the name of the person being interviewed and the name of the person conducting the interview.
   - When the video has been uploaded or attached, you will see a green notice at the top of the window that says “Your video response will be posted after it has been approved by the video owner.”
   - Museum staff will review the video and approve it as appropriate.

10. *(Optional)* If you have time, also consider using the accompanying lesson plan for analyzing oral histories.
Questions to Ask During a Naturalization Oral History

Please state your name and approximate age.

When did you come to the United States? Where did you come from?

What made you want to become a naturalized citizen? Did you have a discussion with your family about the pro’s and con’s of becoming naturalized?

Please describe your experience of the naturalization process.
  - What were some of the major steps in becoming naturalized?
  - When did you become a naturalized citizen?

What object did you bring and what is the story behind it?

How was your life affected by becoming a naturalized citizen?