

# Oral History Project: Women

**Goal:** To interview a female family member, neighbor, friend, or acquaintance who is 45 years or older (the older the better) and to learn how being a woman played a role in her education, family, and work life . . . how she thinks perceptions of women have changed during her lifetime, and how her choices have been influenced by her family, her culture, and the community where she lives.

## Requirements for Interview Subject:

- must be 45 years or older
- must be willing to talk to you about her experiences
- speaks English well and is in no need of translator
- must be willing to be interviewed for about 30 mins. in length (though you will only type between 1250-1500 words of the full interview)

## STEP ONE: Planning the Interview (do prior to April 30)

Begin by thinking of questions you can ask. Below are some examples adapted from the Worcester Women's Oral History Project. You don't need to ask all of these questions, but some of these questions – or variations of these questions – are obviously crucial questions. You must also ask follow-up questions during the course of the interview. Follow-up questions are those which you create on the spot during the interview, as you want to know more about a certain topic. Before you even begin asking these questions, remember to first state your name, the date of the interview, the interview location, and then state who you are interviewing. Remember to check out the Minnesota podcasts for more guidance here:

<http://education.mnhs.org/immigration/podcasts>

## BACKGROUND

What is your full name, including both maiden name and married name if applicable?

When were you born?

Have you ever married?

(If yes) What is the name of your spouse?

Do you have children?

Do you have grandchildren?

What cultures/ethnicities do you identify with (family background)?

Tell me about your parents.

Where have you lived during your life?

Where do you live in the city now? Have you lived in multiple areas?

Do other family members live in the same area?

## EDUCATION

Where did you attend school? What were the names of the schools?

Did you pursue any educational programs or vocational training?

Name programs, if applicable.

Did you attend/graduate from college?

Name programs and years if possible.

What were your challenges in education?

Upon finishing your formal education, what did you see as your options? Did you ever feel like options were limited because of your gender?

What support networks and mentoring have been important to you?

As a woman, did you think there were limits to what education you should pursue?

What did your family do to encourage or discourage you in your education?

What did others around you do to encourage or discourage you in your education?

## WORK

What was your first job?

What other jobs have you had and what do you do now?

How did you come to do this work?

What has this work meant to you?

What was the ratio of women : men in your workplace? Did this have any kind of impact on you and how you were treated by your colleagues?

Has being female in your workplace had any impact on the kinds of work you were expected to do or could do?

What were/are your primary responsibilities in terms of housework and child care?

Do you share this with anyone?

If you do share, to what extent do you share it?

How has this changed for you over time?

How have you balanced different priorities, responsibilities, roles, and interests in your life?

What do you think are the pros and cons of the path you have chosen?

How do you feel about the choices you've made in your life? Do you have any regrets?

## POLITICS/COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Do you consider yourself active politically?

Have you been involved in volunteer or community work?

If so, what groups did you work with/for? What led you to join with this organization?

What were the organization's main goals?

What were some of the main programs/initiatives that you worked on?

What did the work consist of?

What would you consider the group's major accomplishments?

Were you involved with other organizations?

What role has religion played in your life?

## HEALTH

How have health issues impacted your life or those in your family?

What are your experiences in accessing quality, affordable healthcare?

Whose health are you responsible for besides your own?

## INTERVIEW CONCLUSION:

How do you get through tough times? What kinds of thoughts keep you going?

How do you define success in your life? Has this definition changed over time?

Based on your life experience, what advice would you give to women of today and future generations?

### **STEP TWO: Do the Interview (audio recording due in class May 1)**

Do the actual interview, which must be about 30 minutes long. Record this using audio or video w/audio. Embed this file in the Google Sites page. Test out your recording technology to ensure that it will work and properly embed in Google Sites. The sound file must be able to be heard clearly and must be capable of being fast-forwarded (**m4a files recorded in Apple Voice Memo do not have that capability**) – mp3 files or files uploaded to SoundCloud will work fine. Have someone take a picture of you with your interview subject either before or after the interview. If you are doing this via Skype (or another similar app), include a picture of you sitting at the computer with Skype on and the person visible in Skype on the computer screen. (*In addition, you must take some video of you conversing with this person. This should be spontaneous conversation about any topic you like; a minute or two of conversation is fine. Save this video so that if we need to ask you for interview verification, you can show us the video.*)

### **STEP THREE: Type the Interview (due May 8)**

Decide which portions of the interview are most interesting to type. **Type up a question/answer transcript** that is verbatim (word for word of the conversation) of several portions of your interview. We should see follow-up questions throughout the interview. Make sure you spell all words correctly and that all of the punctuation is done correctly. Type all that is said by both you and your interview subject. This needs to be between 1500-1750 words (including the summary portions you type where you edit the interview). To help give context for portions of the interview that you excerpt, summarize what they were talking about before or just after the portions you type. You will show us the typed Q/A in class (in Google Docs) on this due date.

### **STEP FOUR: Create a Google Sites Page (due May 15)**

**Create your Google Sites page for the oral history**, put your Q/A there, embed the audio file (either by uploading the file as an mp3 from Google Drive or by first uploading it in a service such as SoundCloud or YouTube and then embedding that file in your Google Sites page). Add a *minimum* of four relevant images with captions to your Site, either on the main Site page or on a sub-page. One image must be of you with the person during the interview (either in person or on the computer), and the other photos must be of your interview subject – preferably photos from that time period they are describing, people they talk about. . . any photos they have that help to tell their story. No pictures from the Internet.

You will also need a 400- 450-word introduction to the Q/A transcript which sets up the interview and provides some background to the person you are interviewing and the topic. In this introduction, you must identify the person, their relationship to you, and provide a description of where they grew up. You can use some partial quotes from the actual interview in what you write here. Better introductions will also include some historical facts about the time periods they discuss. End with a sentence that segues into your interview. Sometimes a full-sentence quote from them can work well, or you can write your own sentence . . . something like, “*And while my aunt says that she is happy to have escaped the challenges she faced as a woman in Iraq, part of her wishes she had stayed in Iraq to see how women’s lives improved after the war.*”

**Turnitin.com deadline for the Q/A (don’t upload the intro!) is May 15).**

# Grading Rubrics

## Point Range

19 – 20	Fulfills well and perhaps exceeds all criteria listed above and in the rubrics below.
17 – 18	Fulfills all of criteria listed, but not with consistent success.
14 – 16	Fulfills most of the criteria listed, or all, to some degree of success.
12 – 13	Fulfills some of the criteria well, but fails to meet most standards listed.
11 – below	Fulfills few of the criteria or does so with poor attempt.

## Oral History Writing Rubric (writing grade for English and History)

(Must meet word count – 1250-1500 words – for C or higher)

- Questions are asked in logical progression; follow-up questions seen throughout interview.
- Questions are relevant to topic and ask for reflection and comment.
- Typing of transcript shows care in transcribing. Few to no errors in punctuation, spelling, or sentence construction.
- Q/A is periodically broken up by interviewer's summary of what was left out of the typed text (in order to make the Q/A portion make sense)
- Text sounds like real conversation and not something that was written out as a play and then read aloud.

## Google Sites Rubric (project grade for history and English)

- Intro effectively describes the person you interviewed, their relationship to you, where they grew up, etc. This writing should show some historical knowledge about the time period and what it meant to be a woman in this place and time.
- Intro writing is nearly flawless, no significant errors.
- Page has an appropriate title at top, is intuitive, easy to use, graphically interesting and easily readable.
- Audio/video file properly embedded near top of page (as mp3 or SoundCloud / YouTube embedded link), and images match quantitative and qualitative requirements described above.

## Google Sites Directions

While logged in to your student account, go to [sites.google.com](https://sites.google.com)  
Click on Create (in new Sites)

Give your Site a title

# Checklist

- \_\_\_\_\_ Oral history page has a fitting title at the top.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Functioning audio file is embedded (not requiring the opening of a new page or link) near the top of the page and is easily accessible. If more than one file, the files are in order. If the file is a private YouTube (or other file format) video or audio file, it is made accessible for us to listen to. File should be mp3 or SoundCloud embedded file.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Introductory writing is between 400-450 words.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Introductory text is written as multiple paragraphs and not just one long paragraph.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Introductory writing creates an interesting introduction to your Q/A and follows the project directions. This writing should show some historical knowledge about the countries where this person lived and the time period. May be in first-person or in third-person point of view.
- \_\_\_\_\_ At least one image is shown near the top of the page (most appropriate would be a picture of you and your interviewee)
- \_\_\_\_\_ All images are not stretched, a decent size.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Excess space between lines is removed.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Oral history writing is 1250-1500 words (or just *a bit* over).
- \_\_\_\_\_ Portions of the Q/A that are not typed are concisely and accurately summarized [in brackets] so that the text flows as a well-told story of one's experiences.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Interview text is formatted as a dialogue with clear distinction between interviewer and interviewee (**bold** and non-bold, for example)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Text is in a font choice / size / color that is easy to read.
- \_\_\_\_\_ At least four images relevant to your interviewee and topic (one of these images must be of you talking to your interviewee; the others must be original images, not from the Internet, that your interviewee provided to you or that you took of your interviewee or of some object related to their story).