

# Students as Digital Historians: Connecting Our Past to Our Future



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- *"This was the first time I was ever thanked for my service. It has helped me find peace."  
~ Sgt. Sherrell Byrd, Vietnam Veteran*
  - *"This experience has changed me as a person. I'm more thankful for what I have."  
~ Jordan A., U.S. History student*
  - *"To have a video of my dad telling some of his stories is priceless....I can't say thank you enough..." ~ Mrs. Marianne McDaniel*
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**Project overview:** Students will complete personal interviews that capture the experiences of veterans and their community using digital storytelling and inquiry-based learning. Stories are digitally preserved and submitted to the U.S. Library of Congress's Veterans History Project at <http://www.loc.gov/vets/>. Students create a video documentary utilizing primary sources from various websites, including the Library of Congress.

## Illinois Learning Standards for Social Science

SS.IS.1.9-12: Constructing Essential Questions

SS.IS.2.9-12: Constructing Supporting Questions

SS.IS.3.9-12: Determining Helpful Sources

SS.IS.4.9-12: Gathering and Evaluating Sources

SS.IS.5.9-12: Developing Claims and Using Evidence

SS.IS.6.9-12: Communicating Conclusions

## **Materials**

- VHP Field Kit <http://www.loc.gov/vets/pdf/fieldkit-2013.pdf>
- Library of Congress Analysis Tool  
[http://www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/resources/Primary\\_Source\\_Analysis\\_Tool.pdf](http://www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/resources/Primary_Source_Analysis_Tool.pdf)
- Digital Camcorder

## **Procedure:**

Introduce the project with students and share the *Veterans' History Documentary Project: Rubric & Checklist*

## **Prepare for the interview**

1. **Find a local veteran and have him / her complete the Biographical Data Form**  
<http://www.loc.gov/vets/pdf/biodata-fieldkit-2013.pdf> . Having this information will help students prepare for the upcoming interview. The local VFW, American Legion, or retirement communities are good places to find veterans.
2. **Students research veteran's war**  
Suggested background websites:  
A guide to WWII Materials (Library of Congress) <http://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/WW2/WW2bib.html>  
National WWII Museum <http://www.nationalww2museum.org>  
WWII (History Net) <http://www.historynet.com/world-war-ii>

Korean War National Museum <http://kwnm.org/virtual-museum/>  
Battlefield: Vietnam (PBS) <http://www.pbs.org/battlefieldvietnam/>  
Vietnam Online: *The American Experience* (PBS) <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/vietnam/>  
The Gulf War (PBS) <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/gulf/>  
World War I- Current (Armed Forces Museum) <http://armedforcesmuseum.com/military-history/>

3. **Students develop a list of interview questions.** Modify the Library of Congress sample list of interview questions <http://www.loc.gov/vets/vetquestions.html>
4. **Watch sample interviews**  
Ron Dwight Bell (Cold War) <http://memory.loc.gov/diglib/vhp/story/loc.natlib.afc2001001.64084/>
5. **Conduct the Interview**

Tips for conducting Oral History Interviews

- Conduct the Interview (Library of Congress) <http://www.loc.gov/vets/conducttheinterview.html>
  - Oral History Techniques (Indiana University) [http://www.indiana.edu/~cshm/oral\\_history\\_techniques.pdf](http://www.indiana.edu/~cshm/oral_history_techniques.pdf)
1. Find a quiet place with a simple background
  2. Setup camera next to the interviewer. Assign one student to monitor the camera and sound, another to ask the questions. The person asking the questions should be sitting close to the camera and making eye contact with the veteran. Students not asking questions should be taking notes
  3. Avoid asking questions that can be answered with “yes,” or “no.” Strive for open - ended questions.
  4. Note – be sure to pause and wait between questions / answers
  5. Interview must be a minimum of 30 minutes
  6. Fill out audio video logging sheet from the Library of Congress after the interview <http://www.loc.gov/vets/pdf/audiovideo-fieldkit-2013.pdf>
  7. Complete all forms and submit un-edited interview to the Veterans History Project at the Library of Congress to be archived nationally <http://www.loc.gov/vets/kitmenu.html>
  8. Scan veteran's photographs and take digital photos of artifacts and memorabilia

## Produce a documentary

1. Use video editing software such as Windows Movie Maker or iMovie to add text, music, and primary sources.
2. Research the Library of Congress to find primary source photographs, maps, and music to add to the documentary.
3. Add scanned veteran's images, digital photographs
4. Go over the *Veteran's Reflection Paper Assignment* document and have students record a reflection to add at the end of video.

Visit the IL Veterans & Community Classroom Project for example reflections  
<http://ilvets.ltc.k12.il.us/ilvets/VideoGallery/ProjectAwardWinners.aspx>

## Analyze Oral Histories

1. How does the veteran's experience compare with students' knowledge of the war?
2. Compare / contrast veterans' experiences from the same war or different wars
  - Veteran Stories by Theme (Library of Congress) <http://www.loc.gov/vets/stories/themes.html>
  - Select Veterans' Stories: The Veterans History Project (Library of Congress) <http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/primarysourcesets/veterans/>
  - Teacher's Guide: Analyzing Oral Histories [http://loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/resources/Analyzing\\_Oral\\_Histories.pdf](http://loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/resources/Analyzing_Oral_Histories.pdf)

- Primary Source Analysis Tool (Library of Congress)  
<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/primary-source-analysis-tool/>

### **Teacher Resources:**

Veterans History Project (Library of Congress) <http://www.loc.gov/vets/vets-home.html>

Teacher's Guide- Veteran's Story: The Veterans History Project

[http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/primarysourcesets/veterans/pdf/teacher\\_guide.pdf](http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/primarysourcesets/veterans/pdf/teacher_guide.pdf)

### **Additional resources for student research at [www.loc.gov](http://www.loc.gov) (Library of Congress):**

WWII Photos & Prints

<https://www.loc.gov/photos/?q=world+war+II>

A Guide to WWII Materials Web Guide

<https://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/WW2/WW2bib.html>

Korean War Photos & Prints

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/search/?q=Korean+War&fa=displayed%3Aanywhere&sp=1>

The Korean War: Not Forgotten (select veteran stories)

<https://www.loc.gov/vets/stories/ex-war-korea.html>

Vietnam War Photos & Prints

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/search/?q=vietnam+war&fa=displayed%3Aanywhere&sp=1>

Vietnam War: Looking Back (select veteran stories) <https://www.loc.gov/vets/stories/ex-war-vietnam50.html>

Persian Gulf War <https://www.loc.gov/vets/stories/ex-war-persiangulf.html>

Current Conflicts: Afghanistan & Iraq (select veteran stories) <https://www.loc.gov/vets/stories/ex-war-afghanistaniraq.html>