

**LEAVING HOME, FINDING HOME:
Texan Families Remember the Mexican Revolution
Educator's Guide**



NOTE TO THE EDUCATOR

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About The Exhibit

Texas received hundreds of thousands of immigrants during the 1910 Mexican Revolution. Arriving in fear and encountering uncertainty, they settled where they could find work and safety for their families. Most intended to return to Mexico when peace returned, but the chaos continued for almost 30 years. By then, most families had already put down permanent roots in Texas.

This exhibit is based upon stories and memories from the families of Colleen Barshop, Virginia Goss, Maria Berriozabal, Virgilio Elizondo, Charles A. Gonzalez, Mercedes Olivera, Rosa Canales Perez, and Margarita Guerra Salinas. It is dedicated to the brave souls of all immigrants who flee chaos for the uncertainty of a new life. Their contributions add to the ever-evolving tapestry of Texan cultures.

A Note about Oral History

Human beings have always shared information through stories. Anthropologist Barbara Meyerhoff coined the term “homo narrans” (man, the storyteller) to illustrate how fundamental personal experience narratives are to our learning and interpreting our place in the world. Oral histories are the recorded words of people who have lived and experienced events and ideas – including the folklore, myths, beliefs, and feelings of those who were there. This exhibit is based upon oral histories conducted with the families of those incredibly brave men and women that left their homeland in Mexico and came to the uncertainty of Texas because of the 1910 Revolution. Many of these stories are powerful and emotional, but that is the ultimate nature of the human experience.

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Mexican Revolution

The Mexican Revolution began in 1910 and was the 20th Century's first modern social revolution. Destined to change Mexico's society and economy, it would result in a flood of Mexican immigrants into the United States. The choices were simple for Mexicans who opposed the fighting: hide or leave the country. Many of the Mexican citizens chose to head north, immigrating to the United States. The turmoil of the war: the danger, the economic catastrophe, and the social chaos surrounding the revolution pushed Mexican natives north. Some revolutionaries and federals fled to the United States in order to plot further incursions into Mexico.

The Mexican Revolution lasted from 1910 to around 1920, marking a period of considerable political and social unrest in Mexican history. It began with efforts to oust President Porfirio Diaz, and ended for many with the election of a second party candidate..

Opposition to Diaz

The revolution began with efforts to oust President Porfirio Diaz who had been in power for over thirty years. Diaz stated that Mexico was ready for a democracy and that the president to follow him should be elected democratically. Diaz said that he looked forward to the formation of opposing political parties. Francisco Madero, a lawyer from Coahuila, took Diaz at his word and decided to run against him in the 1910 elections.

Diaz had Madero imprisoned and declared himself the winner of the elections. Madero wrote the *Plan de San Luis Potosi* which called for the people of Mexico to rise up in arms against the president on November 20th, 1910. Madero, along with his supporters: Francisco "Pancho" Villa, who led troops in the North; and Emiliano Zapata, who led troops of *campesinos* in the south, was victorious in overthrowing Diaz.

Madero was subsequently elected president. Up to that point the revolutionaries had a common goal, but with Madero as president their differences became obvious. Zapata and Villa had been fighting for social and agrarian reform, whereas Madero had mainly been interested in making political changes.

On November 25th, 1911, Zapata proclaimed the *Plan de Ayala* which stated that the goal of the revolution was for land to be redistributed among the poor. He and his followers rose up against Madero and his government in 1913 which led to a devastating battle in Mexico City from February 9-19 known as the "Ten Tragic Days."

General Victoriano Huerta, who had been leading the federal troops, turned on Madero and had him imprisoned. Huerta then took over the presidency and had Madero and Vice-President Jose Maria Pino Suarez executed.



Madero, Francisco Indalesco, 1873-1913
Photo of Francisco Madero and S.P. Madero in Juarez, Mexico, ca 1911. Mexican Prints ITC library collection

Venustiano Carranza

In March 1913, Venustiano Carranza, governor of Coahuila, proclaimed his *Plan de Guadalupe*, which rejected Huerta's government and planned a continuation of Madero's policies. He formed the Constitutionalist army and Villa, Zapata, and Orozco joined in with him and overthrew Huerta in July 1914.

In the *Convencion de Aguascalientes* of 1914, the differences between the revolutionaries again came to the forefront. Villistas, Zapatistas, and Carrancistas were divided. Carranza, defending the interests of the upper classes, was backed up by the United States. Villa crossed the border into the U.S. and attacked Columbus, New Mexico. The U.S. sent troops into Mexico to capture him, but they were unsuccessful. In the south, Zapata divided up land and gave it to the *campesinos*, but he was eventually forced to seek refuge in the mountains.

In 1917, Carranza formed a new Constitution which brought about some social and economical changes. Zapata maintained the rebellion in the south until he was assassinated on April 10, 1919. Carranza remained president until 1920. Villa was pardoned in 1920, but was killed on his ranch in 1923.

Women in the Mexican Revolution

Before the Mexican Revolution, Mexican women were relegated to a traditional existence: working in the home and in fields with their men and wielding little political, economic, or social clout. With the strife of revolution came an opportunity for participation and many women joined up serving as writers, politicians, and even soldiers. Zapata's army, in particular, was known for the number of female soldiers or *soldaderas* among the ranks, and *soldaderas* even served as officers. Women, who participated in the revolution, were unwilling to return to their quiet lifestyle after the dust settled, and the revolution marks an important milestone in Mexican women's rights.

There were three essential roles filled by women who contributed to the Revolution: the intellectual, the *soldadera*, and the victim. Victims were often would-be *soldaderas* whose husbands had left for battle with a band that did not accept camp followers. Some were former *soldaderas* that had been left behind when provisions became scarce or their services were no longer needed. A number of women who were active in the Revolution fulfilled several of the above roles and/or changed roles during the course of the Revolution or in the following years. In addition, there were groups of women who were actively against the Revolution, and generally belonged to Catholic organizations. The Catholic Church held a position strongly in contrast to the Revolution and those women who had strong connections to the Church were inclined to support its political tendencies. Women falling into any of the categories above are likely to have had a profound impact on the future of their country, but have gone virtually unrecognized, in life and in death, for their achievements.

Results of the Revolution

The revolution was successful in getting rid of Porfirio Diaz, and since the revolution no president has governed for longer than the prescribed six years in office. The Institutionalized Revolutionary Party political party (*Partido Revolucionario Institucional*, or PRI) was a fruit of the revolution, and maintained the presidency from the time of the revolution until Vicente Fox of the PAN (*Partido de Accion Nacional* - National Action Party) was elected president in 2000.

More than 890,000 legal Mexican immigrants came to the United States for refuge between 1910 and 1920. The Revolution had created a state of turmoil to the south, and Mexicans sought the peace of the north. The railroads hired a bulk of the immigrants for construction and maintenance.

U.S. immigration officials noted that the poor and the sick constituted most of the Mexicans fleeing north. In 1914, during the strongest flurry of fighting in the revolution, the upper class of Mexico began to immigrate in big numbers as well.

Mexican Immigration after the Revolution

Mexican immigration slowed dramatically during the Depression when jobs in the U.S. were scarce. In fact, the U.S. sponsored a repatriation program that sent 500,000 Mexicans back across the border. By 1942 there was a labor shortage in the U.S. as thousands of young Americans went to Europe and Asia to fight in World War II. Although Mexican-Americans fought bravely during that War (and all subsequent U.S. wars), not everybody was happy about the sudden influx of new Mexican immigrants.

Beginning in 1942 the desperate need for agricultural labor led to the creation of the Bracero (guest worker) Program. For two decades hundreds of thousands of migrant farm workers—primarily from Mexico, but also from Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and other Latin American countries came to the United States for a growing season, a year, or several years. Braceros were not allowed to apply for citizenship; they were expected to return home at the end of their agreements but the need for workers was so great that they were allowed to renew their visas over and over again. The U.S. ended the Bracero Program in 1964. When the Immigration and Naturalization Amendments of 1965 loosened the rules about who could immigrate to the U.S., hundreds of thousands of immigrants from Mexico crossed the border.

Mexican immigration grew to unprecedented numbers with each succeeding decade. Legal immigrants from Mexico quadrupled from 453,937 in the 1960s to 1.65 million in the 1980s. More than 2.2 million Mexicans immigrated legally to the U.S. in the 1990s, and an average of 170,000 has arrived each year since 2000. An equal or greater number of immigrants are believed to have crossed into the U.S. without authorization.

Cultural differences, language barriers, poverty, and public policy have impeded the success of Mexican immigrants in finding upwardly-mobile jobs, a good education, and quality healthcare. Most Mexican immigrants, particularly those here legally, are integrating into mainstream America as immigrants from other countries have. Many are putting down roots in America that now extend back two, three, and even four generations. Mexicans currently constitute the largest single group of immigrants to the U.S., and their influence will increase in future years.

Stories of America

Oral History Lesson Plan

Subject: U.S. History, Language Arts and Humanities

Overview: First-person narratives about immigration experiences are enlightening, providing personal and moving insight into individual immigrant stories.

TEKS:

(7) History. The student understands how individuals, events, and issues shaped the history of Texas during the 20th and early 21st centuries. The student is expected to:

(D) describe and compare the civil rights and equal rights movements of various groups in Texas in the 20th century and identify key leaders in these movements, including James L. Farmer Jr., Hector P. Garcia, Oveta Culp Hobby, Lyndon B. Johnson, the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), Jane McCallum, and Lulu Belle Madison White;

(11) Geography. The student understands the characteristics, distribution, and migration of population in Texas in the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries. The student is expected to:

(A) analyze why immigrant groups came to Texas and where they settled;

(B) analyze how immigration and migration to Texas in the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries have influenced Texas;

(17) Citizenship. The student understands the importance of the expression of different points of view in a democratic society. The student is expected to:

(A) identify different points of view of political parties and interest groups on important Texas issues, past and present;

(21) Social studies skills. The student applies critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired through established research methodologies from a variety of valid sources, including electronic technology. The student is expected to:

(B) analyze information by sequencing, categorizing, identifying cause-and-effect relationships, comparing, contrasting, finding the main idea, summarizing, making generalizations and predictions, and drawing inferences and conclusions;

Objectives:

Students will:

- Conduct interviews to gather first-hand stories about immigrant experiences
- Gather first-hand stories about immigrant experiences
- Determine new immigrants' common experiences

Materials needed:

1. Sample immigrant oral history audio file with Virgilio Elizondo
2. Transcription handout of oral history with Virgilio Elizonda
3. List of community organizations that serve immigrants
4. Immigration Oral History Assignment (Attachment A)
5. Guiding Questions for Oral History Interview (Attachment B)
6. Oral History Interview Tips Handout (Attachment C)

Teacher Note:

Allow students three to four hours of class time and seven to eight hours of homework time to conduct and write up the oral history. Students will need time to identify their interviewees, create appropriate questions, undertake relevant research, etc. It might be helpful to provide a tentative timeline for students. Be sure to build into your teaching schedule troubleshooting time- helping students with their individual projects.

Procedure:

1. Distribute the transcription handout of oral history with Virgilio Elizondo
2. Listen to the oral history audio file with Virgilio Elizondo
3. Have students discuss this oral history interview. What elements of immigration does it express? What historic values does this interview present?
4. Provide students with background on the oral history, particularly its historic value as a primary source document. The following provides a basic overview:

An oral history, loosely defined, is the personal story of a person's life. It can be autobiographical, a person telling their own life history, or biographical, telling the story of another person. Cultures around the world use oral histories to pass on knowledge from one generation to the next. Our culture is no exception and many academic fields, such as History, English, Anthropology, Sociology, Education and even Psychotherapy use oral histories to provide intimate, vivid pictures of people's lives from their point of view in order to gain better insight for their respective fields.

Source: Oral History

http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/oral_history.html

5. Invite students to list the questions interviewers probably asked their oral history subjects or generic questions that would be the basis of an oral history.
6. Distribute students **the Immigration Oral History Assignment (Attachment A)**. Tell students that they will be conducting oral histories with first-or second- generation immigrants. The first step is to select an interviewee. Brainstorm with students several ways to find such individuals (through their immediate family, friends, neighbors, English as a second Language classes, churches, immigrant relief organizations, etc.) Provide students with lists of local agencies serving community immigrants.
7. For homework, ask students to find and approach a potential interviewee (this may take several days). Should the person consent, have student write a brief paragraph about the individual, for example: name, where he or she is from, how long she or he has been in the United States, why the person came here, etc.
8. Divide students into pairs. Have students exchange their interviewee descriptions and brainstorm possible interview questions for each person. As a guide, students can review **Guiding Questions for Oral Histories (Attachment B)**. For homework, students should finalize their list of questions.
9. Provide students with in-class research time to learn more about their interviewees' homelands and other background information relevant to their interviewees' stories. Have students add questions that evolve from this research.
10. Discuss with students the best approaches and tools during the interviews. Refer to **the Oral History Interview Tips handout (Attachment C)**.
11. Let students get started on their oral history projects. Be sure to give them sufficient time to conduct and synthesize their interviews.
12. A few days before the final oral histories are due, conduct a writer's workshop that enables students to share initial drafts with their peers, who can provide constructive feedback and ask clarifying questions.
13. Invite students to share their oral histories over several classroom sessions. Students can decide on the presentation format. After each presentation, the class should jot down their reactions. Some prompts include:
 - What I heard that surprised me was...
 - One thing that shocked me was...
 - Something I learned from the oral histories was...
 - One thing I thought was important from the interviews was...
 - From what I heard, I have a question or would like to know more about...
14. After the presentations have been completed, students can compile and publish these oral histories in book form, and host an evening to which interviewees are invited to hear the oral histories read aloud.

Assessment

Have each student write a brief thank you letter to the interviewee. This letter should incorporate student understanding of broad immigration issues that correlate to the interviewee's particular experience.

Assess student oral histories using the scoring rubric below:

Oral History Scoring Rubric

- 5**
- Introduction is concise, effective, original and appropriate
 - Significant editing is demonstrated between text and Q/A, early drafts
 - Text retains strong voice of interviewee
 - Text focuses on topic; doesn't ramble
 - Text details significance as well concrete details
 - Text meets word guidelines
 - Writing is flawless; no typos, spelling, mechanical, grammar errors
- 4**
- Introduction is concise, effective, and appropriate
 - Significant editing is demonstrated between text and Q/A, early drafts
 - Text retains distinct voice of interviewee
 - Text focuses on topic; generally doesn't ramble
 - Text details some significance as well as concrete details
 - Text meets word guidelines
 - Writing is nearly flawless; virtually no typos, spelling, mechanical, grammar errors
- 3**
- Introduction provides adequate lead-in text
 - Some editing is demonstrated between text and Q/A, early drafts
 - Text retains some voice of interviewee
 - Text focuses on topic; generally doesn't ramble
 - Text details some significance as well as concrete details
 - Text meets word guidelines
 - Writing is nearly flawless; virtually no typos, spelling, mechanical, grammar errors
- 2**
- Introduction provides adequate lead-in text
 - Some editing is demonstrated between text and Q/A, early drafts
 - Text retains little voice of interviewee
 - Text may not focus well on topic; may ramble
 - Text details little significance; mostly concrete details
 - Text may meet word guidelines
 - Writing contains some flaws; some typos, spelling, mechanical, grammar errors

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- Ineffective and inappropriate introduction
- Little editing is demonstrated between text and Q/A, early drafts
- Text retains little voice of interviewee
- Text may not focus well on topic; may ramble
- Text details little significance; mostly concrete details
- Text does not meet word guidelines
- Writing contains many flaws; many typos, spelling, mechanical, grammar errors

Attachment A
Immigration Oral History Assignment

Introduction

Much of what we study in history is what is considered 'traditional' history - that is the accepted and institutional history of major political figures, important historical events, and significant historical trends. Now it's your turn to help to create the history- the story of everyday people, the story of immigrants.

What is an oral History?

Oral Histories are created when one person (the interviewer) interviews another person (the interviewee) about a specific time period in the interviewee's life or a specific topic they can recall. The interviewer takes the interviewee's responses and creates a text of the interviewee's worlds told through the point of view of the interviewee.

Requirements for Immigration Oral History

- Text must be 750-1000 words
- An introduction is included
- Your introduction should show some knowledge/understanding of the person's country of origin
- The person may be first or second generation

Steps to Completing the Oral History

- Select a person you wish to interview
- Obtain their permission
- Set up an interview time and location; set aside an hour or so
- Do some research on the country of their origin
- Create questions to guide your interview
- If possible, record the interview; take notes on interviewee's mannerism, etc.
- Transcribe the interview into Q/A format, word for word
- Edit the Q/A into the final oral history

Attachment B

Guiding Questions for Oral History Interview

- What country are you originally from?
- Why did you leave this country?
- When did you leave? How old were you at that time?
- What were the conditions in the country when you left?
- How did you prepare for your trip here?
- Who came with you when you emigrated? Who did you leave behind? What did you leave behind?
- How did you get here? Did you stay somewhere else before arriving here?
- Why did you choose the United States? Why not some other country?
- Who decided you would come here? Did you want to leave?
- How did others in your home country treat you when they knew you were leaving?
- What changes in lifestyle did you make when you came here?
- What was your first impression of the United States? Has this initial impression changed over time?
- What are some of the differences/similarities you've noticed in the cultures here and in your home country?
- What were your hopes for yourself (and/or your family) when you came here? Have you realized these hopes?
- How were you treated when you first arrived in the United States? How are you treated now?
- Were your expectations of America met? Was your idea of America the same as the reality?

Attachment C

Oral History Interview Tips

Interview Manners

- Be punctual: arrive on time
- Be prepared: have your questions ready, your notebook out, and your equipment in good working order.
- Be polite: say please and thank you and address people formally (using Mr., Mrs., Ms., Miss, and so on).
- Be patient: provide time for the person to answer questions.
- Do not argue with or correct the subject. Oral histories are not always accurate. But they do provide important information about feelings and impressions.
- End your interview by thanking your subject.
- After the interview, send a thank you letter to the subject.

Getting Started

- Introduce yourself: give your name, age, the class and school you attend. Describe the research project.
- Ask your interview subject if you can tape record the conversation. Have the subject sign a Release Form so you can share the information you collect with others.
- Begin the interview by asking where and when the interview subject was born.
- If your subject strays from the topic, try to refocus by asking one of your prepared questions.

Asking Follow-up Questions

- Listen carefully while your subject is talking. Often, what a person says may suggest a follow-up question that will produce interesting information.
- Write down follow-up questions as your interview subject speaks. That way, you can ask the follow-up questions at a pause in the interview, without interrupting your interview subject's train of thought.

After the Interview

Transcribing the Interview Tape

- Listen to the tape of your interview.
- Transcribe (write down or type) the contents of the tape or the most important parts of the tape. You may need to listen to the tape many times as you transcribe what is said.

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