

# Exploring Family History: The Informative Speech

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## Objective:

- To offer students a practical application of the basic public speaking skills obtained through course instruction, motivate students to learn more about their personal histories, and offer professor a heightened understanding of students.

## Approximate Time Required:

- 10 minutes of class instruction while introducing task and entertaining questions. Followed by 10 minutes of student generated discussion about the assignment.

- Number of full class sessions for student presentations and follow-up questions/discussion will vary according to how many students are in the class and the speaking time assigned by the professor.

## Materials Needed:

- Students:**
- Note taking devices for conducting interviews
  - Speaking notes as discussed in class
- Instructor:**
- Assessment tool for presentations
  - Photo copies of assignment handout

## Rational:

This assignment allows students first-hand exposure to the process of putting together and presenting an informative speech while exploring personal history at the same time.

Collins and Cooper (1997) described family stories as personal narratives that are taking on new meanings and significance and that are bringing people together on a national level. This assignment builds community as it brings the class closer to each other and to their own family histories.

## Things To Do Before Class:

1. Teach students the basic elements of preparing and presenting an informative speech.
2. Photocopy assignment handout.
3. Create and photocopy assessment tool for presentation.
4. Have a plan ready should you have a student in your class who is truly an orphan. Suggestions include allowing students

to choose a senior citizen from their life, making a new senior citizen at a local nursing home, or adopting a friend's grandparent.

5. Be ready, should a student come forth with facts that support their older relatives are no longer living, to encourage them to speak to the next generation to find out more about the chosen grandparent.

6. Schedule speeches into course calendar.

### **What To Do During Class:**

Distribute "Exploring Family History" handout, review, and entertain questions. Refer students to course calendar for scheduling.

### **What To Do After Activity:**

Allow for class discussion or assign a written reflection. Ask students questions that allow them to critically analyze what they have learned as a result of experiencing this assignment. Try some combination of the following:

- What did you learn about yourself?
- What did you learn about your classmates?
- What would you do differently if you had it to do again?
- What negative aspect of this assignment can you identify?
- What positive aspect of this assignment can you identify?
- How might research like this help others?
- How would your experiences been different if you were researching some other person's grandparent?
- What similarities did you hear during the speeches?
- What differences did you hear?

### **Alternative Uses Or Extensions:**

Encourage students to submit written transcripts of their work for inclusion in campus literary publications, hometown newspapers, or family newsletters.

Feature best student speeches in a department end-of-the-semester speaking showcase. Best speakers from each section could be invited to present their speeches.

Incorporate the White House Millennium Council supported family history project, which can be accessed electronically at <http://www.myhistory.org>.

### **References**

Akeret, R. (1991). *Family tales, family wisdom: How to gather the stories of a lifetime and share them with your family*. New York: Morrow.

Collins, R., & Cooper P. J. (1997). *The power of story: Teaching through storytelling*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Green, B., & Fulford, D. G. (1992). *To our children's children: Preserving family histories for generations to come*. New York: Doubleday.

McAdams, D. (1993). *Stories we live by: Personal myths and the making of the self*. New York: Murrow.



## EXPLORING FAMILY HISTORY: AN INFORMATIVE SPEECH ASSIGNMENT

**Task:** Perform family research designed to uncover information about **one** of your Grandparents while offering heightened self-awareness. After choosing a Grandparent, ask yourself the following questions:

1. What do you really know about this person?
2. Who was she or he?
3. What was she or he like when she or he was young?
4. How did she or he like their job(s)?
5. Where did she or he meet their partner?
6. What did she or he do in their free time?

Before no one in your generation can answer *questions like these*; you must find the answers yourself.

### **Goals:**

Understand how research is incorporated into speech preparation.  
Recognize and use chronological and/or topical organizational patterns.  
Experience extemporaneous delivery.  
Reduce uncertainty concerning speech presentation.  
Apply public speaking guidelines to peer presentations.  
Improve skills necessary to publicly communicate more effectively.  
Explore the life of the chosen grandparent.  
Motivate students to learn more about their personal histories.  
Increase self-awareness.  
Share personal histories with others.

**Assignment:** Inform your audience about one of your grand or great-grandparents. Students who do not have family must see instructor for further guidelines.

**Presentation:** You will present your informative speech in class on \_\_\_\_\_.

Your presentation must have a complete introduction, body, and conclusion. Your speech will have two to five main points arranged in either chronological or topical order. For assistance, follow guidelines discussed in class regarding how to prepare an informative speech.

You must use \_\_\_\_\_ sources outside of yourself during the speech. Each source must be quoted from at least \_\_\_\_\_ time(s) during your presentation. Since most Grandparents have not been honored on the pages of books or magazines, personal interviews (of family and friends) will most likely serve as your sources.

**Delivery:** This speech is to be presented using extemporaneous style. In doing so, you must carefully prepare and practice in advance and use only brief speaking notes during your presentation.

**Evaluation:** Instructor will provide specifics regarding your grade.