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## Writing: Communicating Historical Research

This section provides ideas for organizing field journals and activities for soundly communicating historical findings to others through narrative/historical writing. This section also provides assistance with some technical aspects of writing such as in-text citation and bibliography writing.

## Field Journals: An essential research tool

*Most high school students have had some experience with journal writing. During the Latino Community History Project, we found that this introductory activity was necessary in order to introduce youth historians to the importance of field journals as a place 1) to gather and organize incoming information from oral history interviews and archival research, 2) to summarize and analyze findings, and 3) to strategize next steps in the research process. Every field journal also acts as an important record of student learning.*

### Suggested Materials:

- Journal or loose-leaf binder or folder

*A notebook or binder with subject tabs will help youth to organize their research.*

### Vocabulary:

*journal:* A notebook that is used on a regular basis to record experiences, ideas, impressions, emotions, questions, information, and/or to do assigned writing on a specific topic and that may include prose, poetry, sketches, charts, newspaper clippings, and photos.

*diary:* Daily records that are usually a personal record of events, experiences, and observations. Diaries about a person's life can provide interesting and invaluable observations rich in historical content about the daily life and the era in which one lived (i.e., Anne Frank's diary).

*log:* A record of the performance or the progress of an undertaking. They are usually more concise, outlining events in the form of a dated and timed list (i.e., a sea captain's log or a computer log).

*travel narrative:* This may include descriptive writings and sketches of a place, the people, and the types of activities a person encounters on a trip. Often, these writings shed light on cultures that have since changed dramatically (i.e., Christopher Columbus' travel narrative).

*Since these records may be personal accounts, there are many factors that influence them, including national and ethnic origin, education, social class, geographic region, etc. Historians who use these documents must take these perspectives into account in order to view them objectively.*

**Procedure:**

1. Ask youth if they keep records of their own life experiences. People keep records in various forms, such as journals, diaries, logs, and travel narratives.

*If you would like your group to appreciate the differences of these types of records, show different examples of them and ask youth to write about their daily life in these various forms.*

2. Give each individual a field journal to use daily throughout the project as an essential research tool. Discuss with youth how they could utilize the journals during the research process. Ask youth, “What might you include in your field journal?” Tell them to be sure to date and cite the location in each entry or day of note taking. Together, decide how the journals will be divided. As new information is gathered, prompt youth to decide where they will store it. Help youth develop a habit of being organized in their research.

3. Encourage youth historians to illustrate their journal covers and title page in creative ways so that they can begin to individualize and transform their journals into personal, important places for research, reflection, questions and new ideas.

*Remember that the notes you take must record the most important information from the interview in case the audiotape is lost or damaged. Imagine that a hundred years from now, the notes you leave will be the only record of this person’s life.*

# Organizing field journals

*Youth might divide their “tabbed” journal or binder into these suggested sections:*

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- Background research:** Include timelines, notes from secondary sources, creative summaries, notes from visits to historical sites, other information gathered during the first phase of “context gathering.”
- Interviews:** Include questions for the interview subject, biographical information, notes from the interview, striking quotes, sketches, photographs. It is important to take notes during the actual interview in order to keep track of what you’ve learned, frame your next questions, make notes of items to return to, and keep the overall story in front of you as you proceed through the interview. It is also a backup for the taped version.
- Archival research:** Include information gathered at local archives, photograph studies, artifact studies, copies of important documents and photographs, sketches.
- Research planning:** List your research questions and research strategies. Identify next steps in the process, for example, “investigate microfilm files of the Oakland Tribune for May 1945, and look for articles relating to the Zoot Suit Riots.” When one line of investigation runs dry, you will have other leads to follow. Even if you don’t end up having time to follow all of them, you will have created a resource for future researchers and saved them some time.
- Source citation:** List all primary and secondary sources utilized during the research process. Include title, author, publication, dates, publisher, call number, archive or library, location or collection within that archive or library, so that you don’t need to retrace your own steps to find something you “remember reading somewhere.” In historical work, you need to be able to show that your information came from a reliable source and was not just hearsay. Your final product will include some of these sources so that other researchers can build on the work you have done.
- Research summary & analysis:** This is a place for written reports that synthesize research findings.
- Reflections:** Includes daily journal entries with topics selected by educator (i.e., What does the word “history” mean to you?). It is important to spend time immediately after an interview and throughout the research process writing down impressions and reflecting on both the content and process of researching. Did the interview go well? Why or why not? Were there questions that you thought of but didn’t find an appropriate time to ask or forgot about? Are they worth following up? How did you feel about your own participation? Did you notice a skill you’re developing or one that you need help with? All these impressions can fade very quickly. Field notes help you evaluate the work as you do it, so that you can plan the next interview better, ask for help or clarification about things that trouble you, or decide to do a follow-up interview with someone, but also so that you can track your own process of learning and remember moments of insight that matter to you.

# WRITING 2

## Narrative Writing Introduction and Practice

*The writing component of this project focuses on narrative and/or historical writing. Since all writing is based upon historical findings and oral history interviews, the educator must be aware that students will be telling a story, not explaining historical occurrences as in expository writing.*

**Estimated Time:** Day one – 60 minutes; Day two – 75 minutes

### Suggested Materials:

- Highlighters
- Copies of oral history transcripts (enough for one per student)

*If oral history transcripts are not available for students' use, you may adapt this lesson by having the students construct narratives based on field notes of their research. It may also be possible to write narratives based on listening to an audiotaped oral history interview.*

### Procedures:

1. Narrative writing is writing that tells a story or provides a personal account of an event. A great deal of what we are doing in this project is rewriting history; in other words, telling people's stories before they are lost. Narrative writing is also a necessary component of the culminating project. Providing interesting, compelling writing based on our research is one of our major goals of this project.

2. The easiest way to begin writing narratives is to write one about yourself. Tell the youth historians they will write a short narrative on the following prompt:

*Describe the story of how your ancestors or family came to the United States or migrated to their current location. If you experienced this trip firsthand, try to use as many details as you can to accurately express your experience. If you have only been told about this story, do your best to remember the facts and imagine what it must have been like for your family or ancestors to take this journey.*

3. Before the youth historians begin writing, write the following aspects of narrative writing to keep in mind on the chalkboard; youth should write this information in their journals. These aspects come from the California English-Language Arts Content Standards for Grades 11-12.

- Narrate the events in a sequence, the order in which they occurred. Communicate their significance to the audience.
- Locate scenes and incidents in specific places.
- Describe using details: sight, sound, smells; also depict characters' feelings using what they were thinking and gestures they may have used.

- Pace the presentation of actions to accommodate temporal, spatial, and mood changes.
- This is a first draft. Don't worry about spelling, grammar, etc. Just get the ideas down.

4. Allow the youth historians a few minutes to quietly brainstorm and organize their thoughts on paper before they begin writing. Then, the students are given fifteen to twenty minutes to write their narratives. Monitor time, and indicate how much time has passed at regular intervals, so youth can pace their writing accordingly.

5. Once the time is up, ask youth historians to volunteer to share their writing. The group should give the youth feedback on the narrative. Discuss the challenges to narrative writing and also reiterate necessary writing components that are being overlooked.

## Day Two

1. Youth historians will take their writing a step further by writing a narrative based on another's life experience. Instead of being given the writing prompt, the youth historians must look for a story or personal account that should be told from a transcript.

2. The youth historians will each be given a transcript of an oral history interview. They must read through the transcript for a quote or event that they can turn into a narrative. They are to look for an aspect of the interview that is interesting and/or emotionally compelling. Use the **Summarizing Information and Finding Gems in Written Texts** (page 65) to aid youth in finding an appropriate narrative topic.

3. Once the youth historians have selected the segment of the transcript that will be the basis for their narrative, they can begin writing. Youth must use the actual information given in the transcript as the focus of their writing, but may also have to infer the details that are not provided in the transcript. Youth should refer to their notes from Day One's lesson.

4. The youth historians are given twenty to twenty-five minutes to write their narratives. Monitor time, and indicate how much time has passed at regular intervals, so they can pace their writing accordingly.

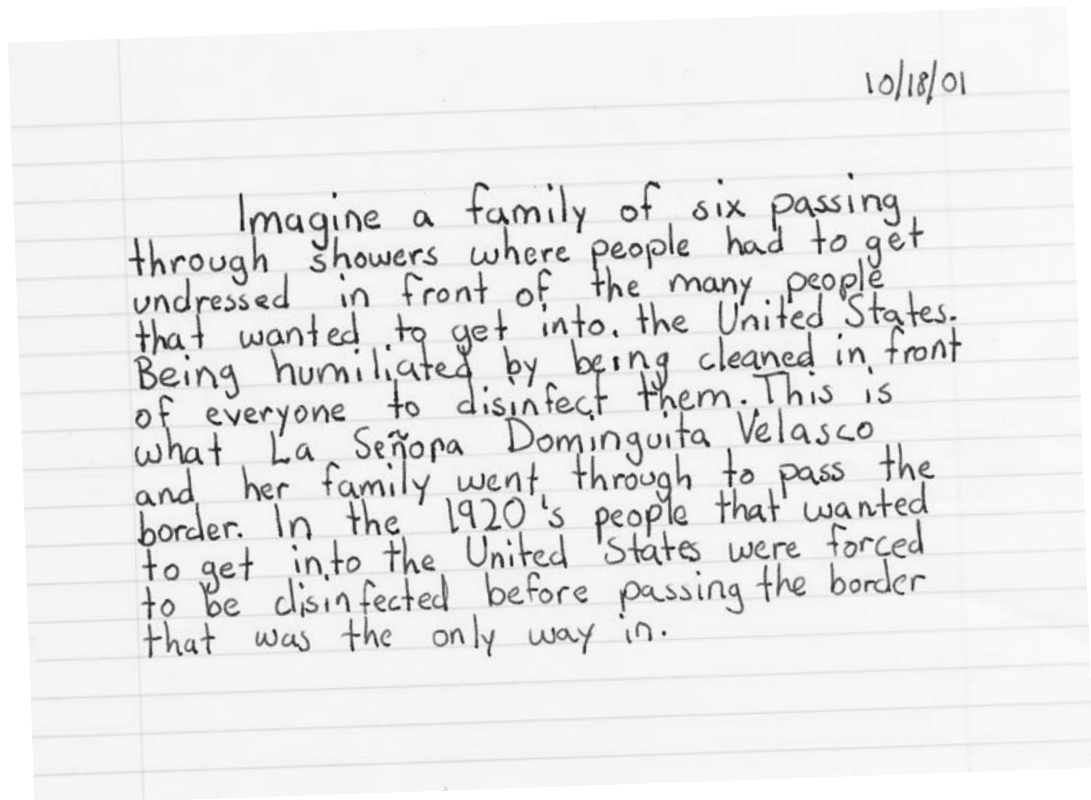
*During the summer project, we did not focus enough on writing. Since a large part of our culminating project was based on narrative writing, we realized that youth needed extra practice with writing and retelling in a narrative manner. This lesson was implemented in the after-school project along with a greater focus on writing, and as a result the after-school project's culminating project writings were more substantial and thoughtful.*

5. Once the time is up, ask youth historians to volunteer to share their writing. The group will give the youth historians feedback on their narratives. Discuss the challenges they experienced as well as the things that they are going well.

6. As a wrap-up, ask youth historians to reflect in their journals on this topic: *After writing two narratives, what are some aspects of narrative writing that you wish to improve on through the course of this project?*

**Transcript excerpt:**

*They brought all of their documents that showed they had constant work, and everything; there we passed through immigration. And all they gave us was a yellow paper that said we had passed through everything, the examinations, the showers ...now I remember how my hair got so messed up because you had to use water with a disinfectant, It was terrible, but it was the only way we could pass through this whole process. This is what I went through.*



YOUTH NARRATIVE BASED ON THE ABOVE EXCERPT.

# WRITING 3

## Creating a Bibliography

Estimated Time: 75 minutes

### Suggested Materials:

- Examples of each type of resource: book, magazine, reference books, newspaper/magazines

### Procedures:

1. Describe a bibliography as a way of citing what sources were used in the research process. Without a bibliography, research validity may be called into question. Therefore, the youth historians are expected to keep track of their sources and make a bibliography along with the culminating project.

*Youth historians will want to work with multiple sources in order to create their own historical narratives. These sources can include museums, historical societies, textbooks and other secondary sources, as well as various primary sources. For credibility of their narratives they need to do two things: 1) write a bibliography of all sources they consult in their research, and 2) cite their sources accurately and in accordance with the documentation format identified by the educator. When youth historians present their work to others with full documentation, they will speak and be heard with strong historical authority. They will, in fact, sound like professional historians.*

2. Carefully review the purpose of a bibliography, what writing needs to be cited, and the format style to be used (see **MLA Bibliographic Style resource**). It is important to have the youth historians note punctuation such as periods, colons, and commas that are used in each entry. Youth should also note indentations of second lines.

3. For book sources, define the publisher, place of publication, and copyright and show youth historians how to locate this information. For magazine and reference sources, define editions and volumes, and show youth how to locate this information. The same process is repeated for electronic sources, defining and locating medium, information supplier, available protocol, access date, and Web address.

4. Give the youth historians each a different type of source and ask them to write a citation entry for their source on the chalkboard. As the youth historians are writing their answers on the chalkboard, give them additional help locating needed items, correctly sequencing entry components, and punctuating each entry correctly.

5. Once everyone has completed their entry, ask students to look at all the results on the board. Discuss any problems experienced during the process.

6. Youth historians use their own resources and begin collecting bibliographic information, writing this information in their journals.

7. As a wrap-up, ask youth historians to write a rough draft of the bibliography in MLA style in their journals. Use the examples of bibliographic style provided below to assess the youths' bibliographies.

# Modern Languages Association Bibliographic Style

The word, plagiarism, which derives from the Latin word for “kidnapping,” refers to the unacknowledged use of another’s words, ideas, or information. Students sometimes get into trouble because they mistakenly assume that plagiarizing occurs only when another writer’s exact words are used without acknowledgement. Keep in mind, however, that you need to indicate the source of any ideas or information you take note of when preparing any project which requires some form of research, even if you have paraphrased or summarized another’s words rather than copied down direct quotations.

Although there is no universally agreed upon system for acknowledging sources, there is agreement on both the need for documentation and the items that should be included. Writers must acknowledge sources for two reasons: to give credit to those sources and to enable readers to consult the sources for further information. For our project, we will be using the MLA bibliographic formatting style.

**Bibliographic Information** — Information should be organized in alphabetical order, according to the author’s last name. There should be no separate categories for various types of sources used. If an author’s name is not provided, begin with the title of the source, and alphabetize it according to the title.

## Books

Author’s last name, first name. Title of Book. Place of publication: publisher, copyright year.

Alvarez, Julia. In the Time of Butterflies. New York: Plume publications, 1994.

## Books with two or more authors/editors

Author’s last name, first initial & author’s last name, first initial. Title of Book. Place of publication: publisher, copyright year.

Adey, P. & Shayer, M. *Really Raising Standards: Cognitive Intervention & Academic Achievement*. London: Routledge, 1994.

## Books with six or more authors/editors

First author’s last name, first initial. et al. Title of Book. Place of publication: publisher, copyright year.

Roeder, K. et al. Nerve Cells and Insect Behavior. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967.

### Newspaper/Magazine Article

Author's last name, first name. "Title of Article." Title of Newspaper/Magazine. Date  
Month Year: volume (paper), pages.

Glastris, Paul. "The New Way to Get Rich." U.S. News & World Report. 7 May 1990:  
26-36.

### Electronic Sources: Internet

Author/editor. Title of Electronic Work. Medium. Information supplier. Available  
protocol: site/pate/file. Access date.

Pritzker, Thomas. An Early Fragment from Central Nepal. Online. Internet. Ingree  
Communications. Available  
<http://www.ingress.com/~astanart/pritzker/pritzker.html>. 8 June 1995.

### Oral History Interview

Interview with person's name on date of interview and location of interview.

Interview with Carey Fruzza on August 15, 2001 in her office at the Oakland Museum of  
California.

### In-text Citations

Remember to cite sources in your writings using in-text citation.

*Example of direct quote citation:*

"I think people should be kind to each other and share what they have" (Alvarez, 123).

*Example of an indirect quote citation:*

The Mirabel sisters fought with courage and conviction to overthrow Trujillo's tyrannical  
rule. (Alvarez, 5)

# WRITING 4

## Identifying Our Audience

Estimated Time: 30 minutes

*Every good writer knows their audience; therefore, it is imperative that the youth in this project understand who their audience is and effectively address their needs and desires. If we do not write in a way that is educational and provocative, many of our findings may not be understood, appreciated, or enjoyed. We wanted to be as mindful of this as possible. The students addressed audience again when creating the culminating project poster.*

### Procedures:

1. Ask the youth historians to brainstorm/discuss responses to the following questions as a whole group. As the youth respond, write their responses to each category on the chalkboard. Youth historians should take notes in journals based on the information on the chalkboard as well as aspects of the discussion that they want to keep in mind for their individual project. Possible questions/prompts may include the following:

Audience:      Who is our audience?  
                      Who do we plan or hope to educate through our work?  
                      How old are they?  
                      Are they in school or in the workplace? Are they in both?  
                      How will they come into contact with our products?  
                      How do they get news?

Likes/Dislikes: What types of reading/information attracts our audience?  
                      What types of reading/information does our audience shy away from?  
                      What other things are interesting to our audience that we may include  
                      in our final products?  
                      What do we want to be sure to avoid?  
                      What aspects of the topic will interest them?

Ability:            What level of reading is our audience capable of?  
                      What length of readings is our audience capable of?  
                      How much and what type of exposure to our topics has our audience had?  
                      How familiar is our audience with the subject/topic?  
                      Does our audience adhere to any commonly held beliefs or misconceptions  
                      about the subject/topic?

Uses: How might our products be used?  
What things should we do to make our culminating products more versatile?

Considerations: What other considerations/accommodations should we try to make so that our culminating products are used and enjoyed by our audience?

3. Ask the youth historians if there are any other aspects of the audience that they feel they need to address. Finish the discussion, reminding the youth to always keep the audience in mind while they are working on their projects, so they stay focused.

4. As a wrap-up, ask youth historians to reflect on this topic in their journals: Given your specific topic, what do you need to keep in mind about your audience? Think in terms of content, writing, knowledge, design, and presentation. How will you continue to attempt to convey/communicate the key points of your research focus?



REVIEWING ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW NOTES AND TRANSCRIPTS, A YOUTH HISTORIAN CONSTRUCTS A WRITTEN NARRATIVE.

# WRITING 5

## Process Writing: Editing Your Work

**Estimated Time:** This process takes place over the course of five to six days, with approximately 60 minutes per day to edit.

### Suggested Materials:

- Rough drafts
- Access to various knowledgeable staff members
- Computers with printers and paper
- Computer disks (one per student)

### Procedures:

Youth historians will be engaging in multiple editing phases of their writing known in education circles as the “writing process.” This process will take place over the course of a number of days, and will involve a great deal of writing. The youth historians now have the first draft of the writings for their culminating project. This is the time the editing process begins.



A YOUTH HISTORIAN AND EDUCATOR EDIT WORK TOGETHER.

1. Begin by defining what a rough draft is and what it means to revise something.

*rough draft: A piece of writing that is unfinished; it contains errors and is most likely disorganized. The writings the youth historians have now are rough drafts. A graphic organizer is helpful in beginning the drafting process.*

*revise: To edit a draft is to make REAL changes to it in terms of organization, paragraph structure, content, supporting examples and quotes, thesis statement, grammatical and mechanics mistakes, etc. These changes may come about as a result of another person’s input or as a result of a youth’s own understanding of the shortcomings of his or her writing. The editing process is a lengthy one; usually four to five revisions must take place before the writing achieves the concise, polished nature that is desired.*

2. The youth historians exchange rough drafts with another youth historian. Youth are encouraged to edit honestly – not being too easy or hard on the writings. It is only through honest feedback that the writings can truly be improved. Each youth historian is told to read the writing through once. After the first reading, youth are to edit the writing using the **Peer Editing Checklist Worksheet** provided and following the directions outlined. Monitor youth historians and answer their questions regarding the writings they are evaluating. Once the students have completed the checklist, they return the writings with the checklist to their original owner.

3. Each youth historian reads through the checklist and feedback from their writing and takes notes on the improvements they must make in their journals. Also, the youth historian may notice something that the youth editor did not. Any additional changes that the writer wants to make should also be noted in the journals. The checklist should be kept with the writing for future reference.
4. Youth historians then rewrite their drafts, keeping in mind the editor's input outlined on the checklist and their notes.

### **Over the course of the next week or so...**

The educator(s) edits the youths' second drafts. After the draft is read and edited, the youth historian revises/rewrites the draft based on the advice given to them. Youth type their writings on the computer and save their work on disks. Youth make revisions to their saved work and print out another draft for the next editing round.

Continue to read and edit the youths' writing, and youth continue to revise/rewrite their drafts. At the end of the process, each youth should have four to five separate revisions of his or her first draft. Each revision should be an improvement upon the earlier draft. It is beneficial to the youth to have a variety of knowledgeable people to read and edit his or her writing in order to get input and suggestions from different people who will notice different things about their writing.

### **Wrap-up:**

Youth put final touches on the last revision, type it (if they haven't already), and print a hard copy. These final touches may include changes to content, mechanics, grammar, organization, sentence structure, and length.

*In both projects, we did not provide ample time for students to complete their culminating projects, informational posters. We dedicated a great deal of time on the visual characteristics of the posters, as this is a powerful communicative aspect. Youth were challenged artistically and worked diligently to ensure their posters' attractiveness. As our deadline quickly approached, youth became extremely stressed and rushed. Much of the writing revision fell by the wayside in an attempt to finish the posters' visuals. In the time allotted, youth were only able to focus on content revisions of their writings, so the final products had grammatical and mechanical errors. Later on, the youth were able to correct these errors with a tutor.*

*If your culminating project requires more than one component, have the youth do the components one at a time. Think about what component is most important or significant to your project and have students complete that first. It is suggested that you decide upon the length of the writings and provide plenty of time for students to do writings and revisions completely.*

# Peer Editing Checklist

Author's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Your Name \_\_\_\_\_

*Read carefully through the entire writing once. Then, look at each section of this checklist and check off the things that the author has done well. If the author has not done an element or has not done it well, leave the space blank. The author will know to address the blanks in her/his next revision. Remember, this is a first draft, so there will be many spaces left blank.*

## Content

### The writing...

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. has a title that is appropriate to the topic
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. has a clear thesis that addresses the research question with supporting historical evidence
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. focuses on the thesis or main idea throughout its entire length
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. is clear and understandable
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. is the appropriate length; does not ramble on
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. has a thesis that is supported by historical evidence

## Organization

### The writing...

- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. contains a clear introduction, body, and conclusion
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. has clear paragraphs with correct paragraph structure
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. flows well between ideas, and transitions are used
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. paces action to accommodate changes in time, place, or mood

## Development

### The writing...

- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. has examples and quotes to support the main idea of each paragraph
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. has examples and quotes that are the appropriate length and do not take over the paragraphs

\_\_\_\_\_ 13. uses appropriate punctuation for quotations

\_\_\_\_\_ 14. contains ample commentary to explain quotes, examples, events, and people

### **Style**

#### **The writing...**

\_\_\_\_\_ 15. uses a rich vocabulary appropriate for the audience

\_\_\_\_\_ 16. uses a variety of sentence structures

\_\_\_\_\_ 17. attempts to bring out the emotion and reality of an event through advanced description using sensory details such as sights, sounds, and smells

\_\_\_\_\_ 18. uses language that is vivid and establishes a specific tone

\_\_\_\_\_ 19. is interesting and informative to read

### **Grammar/Mechanics**

#### **The writing...**

\_\_\_\_\_ 20. is free of grammatical errors, including punctuation and sentence errors

\_\_\_\_\_ 21. is free of spelling and capitalization errors

### **Comments:**

Take the time to give the author some written comments. Be sure to note what the author did well and aspects of the writing that you liked. Also note what the author still needs to work on. Describe anything that was unclear or difficult to understand.