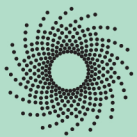


CURRICULUM GUIDE

Oral History Teaching Tips
& Lesson Overview

Muslims in Brooklyn



CONTENTS

- 1 Message from Brooklyn Historical Society**
- 2 How to Use this Curriculum**
- 3 Lesson Summaries**
- 4 Oral History Teaching Tips**
- 5 Oral History Clip Summaries**
- 6 Credits**

MESSAGE FROM BROOKLYN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Dear Teachers,

We made this curriculum for you. For well over a century, Muslims have lived, worked, and prayed in Brooklyn, making it a major center of Muslim life for New York City and the nation. Yet a gap in knowledge and understanding exists between many non-Muslim Americans and their fellow Muslim citizens and neighbors, a gap that has led to the marginalization and erasure of Muslim histories, diversity, and experiences from our national life.

By creating accessible learning opportunities through various media formats and experiences, this website seeks to contribute to a significant narrative shift about Muslims not only in Brooklyn but throughout the country. Oral histories provide us greater access to often marginalized or diminished voices, and can be both personally empowering and collectively transformative. Listening affirms narrators' voices and inspires listeners to tell their own stories; and sharing the listening experience establishes a common frame of reference for cross-cultural and intergenerational communication.

Using oral histories along with historical context and structured activities for educators, this website provides opportunities for us to hear Muslims tell their stories in all their complexity and nuance and creates essential avenues for non-Muslims to understand how those stories relate to and speak to their own experiences, and promotes listening as a tool for greater accountability and openness.

The most compelling stories are often those that are grounded in people's everyday lives, experienced individually and locally. In 2017, Brooklyn Historical Society launched Muslims in Brooklyn, a three-year, multifaceted public history project designed to amplify the stories of Brooklyn's Muslim communities and contextualize those stories in the broader history of the borough. For us, it is through the study of Brooklyn's diverse local histories that we understand our shared national heritage as a multiethnic, multiracial democracy. The borough's local Muslim histories hold great resonance for national conversations on religious diversity and pluralism.

We hope that you find inspiring ways to use these resources in your classroom.

Deborah Schwartz
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Director of Education

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Manager, Teaching & Learning

HOW TO USE THIS CURRICULUM

In collaboration with the Oral History and Education Departments of Brooklyn Historical Society, Habiba Noor Ph.D., Independent Curriculum Writer and Adjunct Faculty, Department of Education, Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas developed these lessons to support teacher and student use of the *Muslims in Brooklyn* oral histories.

This curriculum includes seven thematic lessons that are adaptable for students from elementary grades through college, and can be integrated into many subjects, but especially social studies, English, and advisory classes. We recommend that all teachers begin with the **Listening as a Creative Act** lesson, as this lesson introduces both oral history as a primary source and the major themes of the *Muslims in Brooklyn* project.

Each lesson has the following components:

- **ORAL HISTORY CLIPS**

A list of clips taken from the full-length oral histories—the primary sources on which the lessons are based. Clips are available to download or stream on muslims.brooklynhistory.org.

- **INTRODUCTION**

Think-Pair-Share prompts are designed to activate students' prior knowledge and provide the “hook” for the remainder of the lesson sequence.

- **WHOLE GROUP LISTENING**

Students listen to the first clip together, and then discuss based on the themes and topics of the lesson.

- **SMALL GROUP LISTENING**

In small groups, students listen to additional oral history clip(s), and compare and relate with the clip they listened to as a whole group. Afterwards, the students share their analysis and discuss how their thinking about the theme has evolved as a result of more opportunities to listen and reflect.

- **APPLICATION**

We provide two options for completing the lesson sequence. Students can create a black-out or collage poem using the printed oral history clip transcripts to represent their interpretations of the themes of the lesson. Additionally, there are suggestions for unique projects that encourage deeper exploration of the themes of each lesson: for example, a research project, a letter, a timeline, etc.

LESSON SUMMARIES

LISTENING AS A CREATIVE ACT ALL GRADES

In this lesson, we introduce students to the value of oral history as a primary source. We invite them to consider the importance of orality (verbal expression) and the fact that oral histories are created collaboratively by the interviewer and the narrator. Additionally, this lesson asks students to consider the relationship of historians to primary sources. How do interpretations of primary sources vary? What are the implications of these understandings for how we analyze primary sources and historical narratives? How does the inclusion of oral histories impact our perceptions of historical events?

THE BEST NEIGHBORHOOD GRADES 2+

What do we value in our neighborhoods? Designed for younger students, this lesson draws on an oral history clip that discusses a narrator's relationship with her neighborhood. Students identify how this narrator defines Sunset Park, Brooklyn as "the best neighborhood" and compares it to her hometown in Palestine. The students then create their own list of qualities and illustrate the elements that make a neighborhood "the best."

EID AND RAMADAN IN BROOKLYN GRADES 3+

What are the different ways that Ramadan, Eid-ul-fitr, and Eid-ul-Adha are observed and celebrated in Brooklyn? This lesson draws on anecdotes from residents in various Brooklyn neighborhoods and communities. Students will compare and contrast information in the oral histories to see the diversity of celebrations amongst Muslims in Brooklyn, and then consider the similarities and differences with their own cultural traditions.

GROWING UP AND FITTING IN GRADES 4+

This lesson asks: What does it mean to 'fit-in'? These oral histories focus on the challenges of growing up and how the narrators negotiated between social practices at home with the culture of school and their social life. While these oral histories describe unique challenges of belonging, students will recognize that the challenge of 'fitting in' is, to a large extent, a universal challenge. The lesson culminates by asking the students to practice their empathy skills and consider what advice they would give to a friend who is going through similar challenges.

MIGRATION STORIES GRADES 4+

This lesson asks: what causes people to migrate? Students will understand that migrations are often driven by larger cultural, political, and economic forces, and categorize these into the categories of "push" and "pull" factors. The lesson culminates by asking the students to create a welcome guide for someone who is newly arrived to their community.

LESSON SUMMARIES

BELONGING IN BROOKLYN GRADES 6+

In this lesson students examine what it means to feel like you ‘belong’ in a neighborhood. They examine how broader forces, often outside the neighborhood, can lead to change. They also examine how individuals have brought change to their neighborhoods, and consider how neighborhoods are made and re-made by everyday people. The lesson culminates with students embarking on individual research projects based on events mentioned in a narrator’s oral history clip.

AFTER 9/11: THE POLITICAL IS PERSONAL GRADES 9+

This lesson asks: In what ways do events we hear about on the news impact the everyday lives of people? Students will explore how policies enacted after the events of 9/11 impacted the lives of Muslims in Brooklyn. Students will understand that oral histories offer evidence of how major events changed individual people’s lives, and how the effects of an incident continue long past the initial experience. The lesson culminates with students creating timelines from the collection of oral history clips included in the lesson. Students then compare their choices of which events to include and exclude on their timeline, and consider the implications of their choices on the interpretation of an historical event.

ORAL HISTORY TEACHING TIPS

Brooklyn Historical Society's Collection

Begun in 1973, Brooklyn Historical Society's oral history collections include over 1,200 interviews. The collections provide a wealth of historical evidence about the lives of 20th- and 21st-century Brooklyn residents, and reveal how diverse individuals and communities have sought to preserve vital social, political, religious, and cultural traditions as Brooklynites, New Yorkers, and Americans. The collections contain interviews conducted in English, Spanish, Cantonese, and Mandarin, with narrators born as early as 1880. Recording the voices of today's and yesterday's Brooklynites is just one of the ways that BHS fulfills its mission to make the vibrant history of Brooklyn tangible, relevant, and meaningful for today's diverse communities, and for generations to come.

What is an oral history? How do oral histories contribute to historical records?

Historians use direct evidence of eyewitness accounts — primary sources — diaries, newspapers, public records, photographs, drawings, maps, physical remains, and oral histories to interpret past events.

Oral histories, in audio, written and now digital formats, rely on the memories, views, and opinions of a narrator and serve to amplify the kinds of information provided by other primary sources. They offer first-person perspectives of living through major events and deepen our sense of how these events impacted individuals. Every oral history relies on the memories, views, and opinions of the narrator.

Oral histories are intimate conversations between and among people who have generously agreed to share their recorded memories, views, and opinions with archivists and researchers.

Why teach with oral histories?

Teaching with oral histories awakens students' emotional connection to and personal investment in the history that surrounds them. Through listening closely to first-person accounts of the past, students learn how catalytic events reshaped lives.

But, when students listen to oral histories, they do more than learn about the past. They are empowered by understanding the valuable role they can play in interpreting and creating historical knowledge. By practicing tools for respectfully interpreting the different subjective points of view inherent in primary-source records, students discover that they, too, are an integral part of the continuum of history.

Who created this oral history?

The recorded oral history interview is co-created by the narrator and the interviewer. Without the interviewer, the narrator of an oral history might never have recorded their memories. The interviewer provides a frame and structure for the narrator to describe their memories; they create questions, and listen to the responses.

ORAL HISTORY TEACHING TIPS

The Etiquette of Listening

Oral histories are intimate conversations between and among people who have generously agreed to share these recordings with BHS's archives and researchers. Because of the personal nature of oral history, listeners may find some viewpoints or language of the recorded participants to be objectionable. In keeping with its mission of preservation and unfettered access whenever possible, BHS presents these views as recorded.

The narrators convey personal stories that may provoke unexpected reactions. When listening to the oral histories, students should display full respect to the narrator and imagine that he or she is present. Ideally, the students should listen to each clip independently, but this may not be practical for your classroom. Some classes may find it easier to have one device shared among two or more students. While you should anticipate that students will approach these narrations from different perspectives, it's important for the students not to let their reactions influence how other students respond to the clip.

Oral History vs. Oral History Clips

Oral histories in this collection run over ninety-minutes long. To facilitate teaching, we have created clips from the full-length oral histories. Stories that get told on an oral history aren't always linear; to make it easier to listen to, we've also used an audio engineer to link portions of an oral history together. However, this editing has never changed the meaning of the oral history.

Oral history clips are provided to integrate into lessons that you already teach. They are provided here in alphabetical order by their clip title. See the **Listening as a Creative Act** lesson for more support on using oral history in your classroom.

Guidelines for Using Transcripts

The audio recording should be considered the primary source for each interview. Transcripts commissioned by BHS are nearly verbatim copies of the recorded interview, and as such may contain the natural false starts, verbal stumbles, misspeaks, and repetitions that are common in conversation. The decision for their inclusion was made because BHS gives primacy to the audible voice and because some researchers do find useful information in these verbal patterns. Unless these verbal patterns are germane to one's scholarly work, when quoting from this material, researchers are encouraged to correct the grammar and make other modifications while maintaining the flavor of the narrator's speech and editing the material for the standards of print.

BHS asks that users please listen in the spirit with which these were shared. BHS abides by the **General Principles & Best Practices for Oral History as agreed upon by the Oral Historical Association** and expects that use of this material will be done with respect for these professional ethics.

ORAL HISTORY CLIP SUMMARIES

Oral history clips are provided to integrate into lessons that you already teach. They are provided here in alphabetical order by their clip title and with their run time in red. See the “Oral History Teaching Tips” and the **Listening as a Creative Act** lesson for more support on using oral history in your classroom.

“A UNICORN IN ALL THE SPACES” 1:55

Baseera Khan recounts challenges she faced growing up in Texas.

“AMERICAN DREAM IN EAST NEW YORK” 6:06

Kobir Chowdbury describes his early struggles in migrating to the United States.

“AMERICAN ISLAMIC IDENTITY” 3:07

Stacey Salimah-Bell describes her years as a troop leader for a diverse group of Muslim Girl Scouts.

“ANTI-DRUG PATROLS 1: THE CALL” 5:24

Siraj Wahhaj describes what motivated him to lead a local anti-drug campaign in Bedford-Stuyvesant in the late 1980s.

“ANTI-DRUG PATROLS 2: 40 DAY PATROL” 6:13

Siraj Wahhaj describes how his group worked with the New York Police Department in an anti-drug campaign that lasted 40 days.

“BECOMING THE BULLY” 4:50

Rabia Ahsin describes how the 9/11 attacks affected her relationships at school.

“BROOKLYN AND SUDAN” 7:49

Abdul Rasheed Abdullah describes his relationship with his sheikh, or spiritual leader, in Sudan.

“CHILDHOOD FRIENDSHIPS” 5:47

Mohammad Razvi shares memories of growing up in a diverse community in Sheepshead Bay.

ORAL HISTORY CLIP SUMMARIES

“CONEY ISLAND EXODUS” 2:50

Mohammad Razvi describes how the federal NSEERS (National Security Entry-Exit Registration System) special registration program led to a mass exodus of Pakistanis from Ditmas Park in 2002.

“EAST PAKISTAN BECOMES BANGLADESH” 6:44

Shaheen Rushd recounts her memories of the Bangladeshi independence movement and its impact on her family.

“EID IN SPANISH AND ENGLISH” 2:17

Faiza Ocasio recounts how her Puerto Rican community celebrated Eid.

“EID: A COMMUNITY AFFAIR” 2:10

Abdul Rasheed Abdullah discusses the uniquely African-American Eids at Masjid Khalifah.

“FASTING WITH FAMILY” 3:16

Zeinab Bader describes how moving out of a Muslim society affected her religious practice.

“FEAR OF DEPORTATION” 8:43

Mohammad Razvi discusses how his community was gripped by the fear of deportation in the first two years after the 9/11 attacks.

“FINDING MY IDENTITY” 4:38

Mohammed Fayaz reflects on how his sexuality affects his relationship with his family.

“FIRST DAY” 1:28

Hammad describes her first day of school as an ESL student in Sunset Park.

“FIRST IMPRESSIONS” 2:29

Ahmed Nasser describes his first memories of Brooklyn.

ORAL HISTORY CLIP SUMMARIES

“FRIENDS WHO ARE GUYS” 2:03

Shahana Hanif challenges the different standards of behavior for boys and for girls in her community.

“FROM PALESTINE TO BROOKLYN” 7:04

Zein Rimawi recounts his multiple migrations from Palestine to East Germany to Jordan and, finally, to Brooklyn.

“I SAW MY HEADSTONE” 8:51

Stacey Salimah-Bell describes her experience of witnessing the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Center.

“INNER STRENGTH” 5:58

Nsenga Knight discusses the role of martial arts in her Muslim community.

“LANGUAGE OF INTELLIGENCE” 2:38

Rabia Ahsin talks about moving between different languages and different clothing choices. Her parents are Pakistani and speak Punjabi and Urdu, the official language of Pakistan, Arabic: the language of the Quran, the Muslim holy book, and English.

“MESSY MUSLIMS” 3:59

Mohammed Fayaz describes the diverse community of Muslims he met through group chats and social media.

“MUSLIM POLICE OFFICER ON 9/11” 6:09

Ahmed Nasser describes the experience of working as a police officer in the days after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks.

“MY HORIZONS BROADENED” 4:00

Linda Sarsour describes her personal introduction to activism through changes in her community post-9/11.

“ON MALCOLM AND MARTIN” 4:27

Siraj Wahhaj recalls how he felt when he heard about the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. He describes how this event was pivotal in his study of the Black Nationalist movement.

ORAL HISTORY CLIP SUMMARIES

“OUT OF THE SOUTH” 6:15

Stacey Salimah-Bell recounts her visits as a child to family in South Carolina.

“OUTDOOR EID” 4:41

Nsenga Knight remembers when her community used to have Eid in Prospect Park.

“PALESTINE AND BRAZIL IN THE BRONX” 6:06

Fatima Shama describes how her family made New York a home away from home.

“PUBLIC SPACES” 7:07

Shahana Hanif describes how her desire to live ‘beyond the stoop’ and her alliance with local community activists to create more public spaces in Kensington were initially inspired by events in her home country of Bangladesh.

“RACIAL STRIFE IN THE CITY” 8:19

Fahiym Abdul-Wasi describes the racial tension in New York City in the 1980s, specifically the danger he felt as a Black man attending school in the predominantly white neighborhood of Bensonhurst.

“RAISED TO BE QUIET” 3:24

Shahana Hanif contrasts her quiet behavior with that of her sister.

“ROMANCE” 4:08

Su’ad Abdul Khabeer discusses cross-cultural relationships among Muslims.

“SALAT” 4:27

Idris Brathwaite describes how religious expectations intervened on his fun.

“TATARS IN BROOKLYN” 7:45

Alyssa Haughwout narrates her family’s journey from Eastern Europe to Brooklyn via Ellis Island. She describes the origin of the oldest mosque in Brooklyn, which was founded by the Tatar community.

ORAL HISTORY CLIP SUMMARIES

“THE BEST NEIGHBORHOOD” 2:13

Linda Sarsour compares growing up in Brooklyn’s Sunset Park neighborhood to her memories of her Palestinian hometown.

“THE BRIDGE GENERATION” 1:15

Asad Dandia describes growing up in a Pakistani neighborhood in Brooklyn.

“TO KNOW WHERE I’M FROM” 3:16

Rabia Ahsin discusses when she started wearing a headscarf to school.

“WE DIDN’T HAVE FRIENDS” 3:15

Shahana Hanif describes her parents’ attitudes toward friendships outside the home.

“WE DON’T LOOK MUSLIM” 5:00

Alyssa Haughwout describes how her peers never knew she was Muslim.

“WE HELPED IT CHANGE” 6:07

Mahmoud Widdi describes the influence his father had on their neighborhood and the way the community memorialized him by petitioning the city to name a street in his honor.

“WE WERE WATCHED” 8:31

Asad Dandia describes his encounter with an FBI informant.

“YOU’RE JUST LIKE YOURSELF” 5:39

Mohammed Fayaz describes his experiences as a gender fluid child in a traditional Muslim family.

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COVER PHOTO *Eid in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn, 2019, courtesy of Joey O’Loughlin.*