

The Cold War Era: An Oral History

Overview

Description

Oral history is uniquely valuable because it gives students a “you are there” experience and gives life to the words in their history textbook. In this assignment, students will interview a person who lived during the Cold War. From the responses and from students’ knowledge of that time period, each student will write a paper that includes a summary of the interviewee’s experience and background information, placing their subject’s experiences within the broader context of the Cold War era. In addition, students will use their oral history subjects’ words, summaries of key events, and images from the Cold War era to create a poster. The class as a whole will view each poster, and students will do a peer evaluation of one other student’s poster.

Final Product: Students will write a 4-page paper integrating their oral history subjects’ recollections with historical background of those events. Students will use the interview and paper to create a poster on the Cold War era, using visual images to enhance the descriptions.

Subject

US History

Task Level

Grade 11

Objectives

Students will:

- Participate in a class discussion of key events during the Cold War.
- Develop a comprehensive timeline of important events of the Cold War era.
- Identify a subject to interview about his or her recollections and experiences of the Cold War era.
- Interview that subject, being careful to both record the interview and take notes.
- Place the subject’s oral history within the broader context of the Cold War.
- Review a peer’s poster, and provide constructive feedback on the content and visual appearance of the poster.

Preparation

- Read the Instructor Task Information and the Student Notes.
- Prepare student copies of the Student Notes, the *Cold War Questionnaire* handout, and the *Cold War Poster Review* form.
- Arrange access to recording devices to facilitate the oral history interviews.
- Prepare information for students on collecting an oral history interview. You may wish to consult a website link such as that provided by the History channel at <http://www.history.com/classroom/oralhistguidelines.pdf>.

Prior Knowledge

- Students should know how to use the Internet to locate reliable search engines, websites, and databases to research information on the Cold War.
- Students should be able to work both independently and in small groups to accomplish individual roles and contribute to group tasks.
- Students must know how to use a voice recording device, such as a microcassette or a digital recorder.

Key Concepts and Terms

- Afghanistan
- Berlin Crisis of 1961
- Berlin Wall
- Cold War
- Communism
- Communist China
- Cuba
- Cuban Missile Crisis
- Domino effect
- Fallout shelter
- Guatemala
- Hollywood Ten
- House Un-American Activities Committee
- Iron Curtain
- Korea
- McCarthy era
- Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD)
- Nicaragua
- Nuclear disarmament
- Nuclear missiles
- Nuclear non-proliferation treaties
- Second Red Scare
- Soviet Union (USSR)
- Sputnik
- Vietnam
- Yalta Conference

Time Frame

This assignment will require one class period to introduce the assignment, one period to discuss effective interviewing practices, and one period as closure to review the posters. Outside of class, students will need a week to prepare and conduct the interview, and a week to create the 4-page essay and a poster on Cold War events. This assignment can be modified to meet the needs of different classroom schedules and student ability levels.

Instructional Plan

Getting Started

Learning Objectives

Students will:

- Participate in a class discussion of key events during the Cold War.
- Develop a comprehensive timeline of important events of the Cold War era.

Procedure

1. Discuss as a class the scope of the Cold War, in terms of a time frame and effects on both domestic and foreign policy in the United States.
2. Have students develop a timeline of the Cold War (1946–1989) as an independent activity. Students may use their textbooks or other sources to identify important events.
3. Have pairs of students compare timelines and reconcile differences.
4. Introduce the concept of oral history. Have students who are familiar with the term offer descriptions. Tell students that they each will be recording an oral history of someone they know who lived through the Cold War. Provide students with some general background on oral histories (see Preparation).

Investigating

Learning Objectives

Students will:

- Identify a subject to interview about his or her recollections and experiences of the Cold War era.
- Interview that subject, being careful to both record the interview and take notes.
- Place the subject's oral history within the broader context of the Cold War.

Procedure

1. Use the following sources as discussion points for conducting effective interviews:

<http://www.researchfororganizing.org/index.php?page=interviews>

<http://www.dinf.ne.jp/doc/english/asia/resource/apdrj/z13fm0300/z13fm0313.html>

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/559/04/>

2. Provide time for students to practice interviewing each other on a topic of your choosing.
3. Give students a copy of the *Cold War Questionnaire* handout.
4. Discuss factors that should be considered before conducting an interview (generational differences, cultural sensitivities, interviewing etiquette, etc.)
5. Have students interview their subjects and record the oral histories. Tell students to limit their oral history interviews to one hour. It will take an additional hour to transcribe the interview.
6. Direct students to write a linear narrative of the subject's experiences and recollections during the Cold War.
7. Have students use this narrative to write an essay about key events during the Cold War. They should supplement their essay with quotations from the subject's interview. Remind students to use the proper form of citations and to include a Works Cited page at the end of their paper.

Drawing Conclusions

Learning Objectives

Students will:

- Review a peer's poster, and provide constructive feedback on the content and visual appearance of the poster.

Procedure

1. Have students produce the final draft of their Cold War essays.
2. Have each student create a poster about Cold War events. Have them use images to highlight important events and use as captions for the images. Captions should include both the oral history subject's words and brief summaries of some events.
3. Half of the class will display their posters while the other half circulates and views the display. Then the groups switch so that each student can display and discuss his or her poster.
4. Students complete the assignment by reviewing one classmate's poster, using the *Cold War Poster Review* handout. Assign each student a poster to review.

Scaffolding/Instructional Support

The goal of scaffolding is to provide support to encourage student success, independence, and self-management. Instructors can use these suggestions, in part or all together, to meet diverse student needs. The more skilled the student, however, the less scaffolding that he or she will need. Some examples of scaffolding that could apply to this assignment include:

- In the Getting Started section, give students a list of Cold War events to use in their timelines and discuss the Key Concepts and Terms to get students focused on the topic.
- Guide students through the interviewee selection process.
- If an appropriate candidate isn't readily available, arrange for students to conduct independent research as an alternative.
- Invite a guest speaker to come and conduct a group interview as opposed to the individual assignment.
- Show students videos of effective interviews.
- As a group, discuss how and when students might modify the questions they intend to ask during the interview. Allow students time to brainstorm the kind of questions that would be best to ask. Use the Owl at Purdue as a guide (<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/559/06/>).
- Provide students more interviewing practice time when necessary.
- Show students an example of a linear narrative based on an oral history to use as a model.
- Remind students to choose specific memories of the most powerful recollections from the interviews to use in their essays.
- Collect and present examples of timelines and oral histories.
- Provide support, as necessary, for students doing research in preparation for composing their essays.
- Provide a template for citing sources correctly in a Works Cited page, as needed.
- If too time intensive, modify the final product by decreasing the essay page requirement or removing the poster component. An additional option would be to substitute the written report with an oral one to accompany the poster and relay the interviewing events.
- Provide students with guidelines on what to look for in the peer poster evaluation.
- Meet throughout the project with students to discuss needs, questions, or problems.

Solutions

The information below is intended to help you assess students' final work products. It may not represent all possible strategies and ideas. The accompanying scoring guide provides specific examples of ways a student might demonstrate content understanding and mastery of cross-disciplinary skills.

Necessary Elements

- Students should select powerful quotations from their subject's interview and use these quotations in both their essay and poster to illustrate people's strong reactions to Cold War events.
- Essays should seamlessly incorporate the subject's quotations with the descriptions of Cold War events.
- Students should accurately place their subject's accounts in historical context.
- Essays should include a complete and accurate Works Cited page.
- Essays should be logically organized and have few or no grammatical errors.
- Posters should combine powerful images of the Cold War with captions consisting of a mix of quotations from the oral history subjects and simple descriptions of the events pictured.
- Peer reviews should be positive but constructive in tone.

Key Connections

- Students should demonstrate an understanding that a "cold" war is a conflict fought diplomatically over ideological differences, whereas a "hot" war is a conflict involving military action. Both sides wanted to avoid military conflict for fear of nuclear destruction.
- Students should demonstrate an understanding of the complexity of the political issues of the Cold War era and the conflicting ideologies of capitalism and communism.

Common Misconceptions

- Personal recollections and accounts are not always a reliable source of historical information. A person's opinions, biases, and beliefs influence their memories of the Cold War, and their accounts may differ from what students read in their textbook and other sources used.

TCCRS Cross-Disciplinary Standards Addressed

Performance Expectation	Getting Started	Investigating	Drawing Conclusions
<i>I. Key Cognitive Skills</i>			
A.1. Engage in scholarly inquiry and dialogue.	✓	✓	✓
A.2. Accept constructive criticism and revise personal views when valid evidence warrants.			✓
D.1. Self-monitor learning needs and seek assistance when needed.	✓	✓	✓
D.2. Use study habits necessary to manage academic pursuits and requirements.	✓	✓	✓
D.3. Strive for accuracy and precision.	✓	✓	✓
D.4. Persevere to complete and master tasks.	✓	✓	✓
E.1. Work independently.	✓	✓	✓
E.2. Work collaboratively.	✓	✓	✓
F.1. Attribute ideas and information to source materials and people.	✓	✓	✓
F.3. Include the ideas of others and the complexities of the debate, issue, or problem.	✓	✓	✓
F.4. Understand and adhere to ethical codes of conduct.	✓	✓	✓
<i>II. Foundational Skills</i>			
A.4. Identify the key information and supporting details.	✓	✓	✓
A.8. Connect reading to historical and current events and personal interest.		✓	✓
B.1. Write clearly and coherently using standard writing conventions.		✓	✓
B.2. Write in a variety of forms for various audiences and purposes.		✓	✓
B.3. Compose and revise drafts.		✓	✓
C.1. Understand which topics or questions are to be investigated.	✓	✓	
C.5. Synthesize and organize information effectively.	✓	✓	✓
C.6. Design and present an effective product.		✓	✓

C.7. Integrate source material.	✓	✓	✓
C.8. Present final product.			✓
E.1. Use technology to gather information.	✓	✓	
E.3. Use technology to communicate and display findings in a clear and coherent manner.		✓	✓

TCCRS Social Studies Standards Addressed

Performance Expectation	Getting Started	Investigating	Drawing Conclusions
<i>I. Interrelated Disciplines and Skills</i>			
B.2. Identify and evaluate sources and patterns of changes and continuity across time and place.	✓		✓
B.3. Analyze causes and effects of major political, economic, and social changes in U.S. and world history.	✓	✓	
C.2. Evaluate changes in the functions and structures of government across time.	✓		✓
E.4. Identify and evaluate the sources and consequences of social conflict.	✓	✓	✓
F.1. Use a variety of research and analytical tools to explore questions or issues thoroughly and fairly.	✓	✓	
<i>II. Diverse Human Perspectives and Experiences</i>			
B.4. Evaluate how major philosophical and intellectual concepts influence human behavior or identity.	✓	✓	
<i>IV. Analysis, Synthesis, and Evaluation of Information</i>			
A.4. Understand the differences between a primary and secondary source and use each appropriately to conduct research and construct arguments.	✓	✓	✓
C.1. Understand and interpret presentations (e.g., speeches, lectures, informal presentations) critically.			✓

<i>V. Effective Communication</i>			
A.1. Use appropriate oral communication techniques depending on the context or nature of the interaction.			✓
A.2. Use conventions of standard written English.		✓	✓
B.1. Attribute ideas and information to source materials and authors.	✓	✓	✓

TEKS Standards Addressed

<i>Cold War: An Oral History - Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS): Social Studies, History</i>
<p>113.41.c.8. History. The student understands the impact of significant national and international decisions and conflicts in the Cold War on the United States. The student is expected to:</p> <p>113.41.c.8.A. describe U.S. responses to Soviet aggression after World War II, including the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the Berlin airlift, and John F. Kennedy's role in the Cuban Missile Crisis.</p> <p>113.41.c.8.B. describe how Cold War tensions were intensified by the arms race, the space race, McCarthyism, and the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), the findings of which were confirmed by the Venona Papers.</p> <p>113.41.c.8.C. explain reasons and outcomes for U.S. involvement in the Korean War and its relationship to the containment policy.</p> <p>113.41.c.8.D. explain reasons and outcomes for U.S. involvement in foreign countries and their relationship to the Domino Theory, including the Vietnam War.</p> <p>113.41.c.8.E. analyze the major issues and events of the Vietnam War such as the Tet Offensive, the escalation of forces, Vietnamization, and the fall of Saigon.</p> <p>113.41.c.8.F. describe the responses to the Vietnam War such as the draft, the 26th Amendment, the role of the media, the credibility gap, the silent majority, and the anti-war movement.</p>
<p>113.41.c.11. History. The student understands the emerging political, economic, and social issues of the United States from the 1990s into the 21st century. The student is expected to:</p> <p>113.41.c.11.A. describe U.S. involvement in world affairs, including the end of the Cold War, the Persian Gulf War, the Balkans Crisis, 9/11, and the global War on Terror.</p>
<p>113.41.c.17. Economics. The student understands the economic effects of World War II and the Cold War. The student is expected to:</p> <p>113.41.c.17.C. describe the economic impact of defense spending on the business cycle and education priorities from 1945 to the 1990s.</p>
<p>113.41.c.29. Social studies skills. The student applies critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired from a variety of valid sources, including electronic technology. The student is expected to:</p>

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113.41.c.29.A. use a variety of both primary and secondary valid sources to acquire information and to analyze and answer historical questions.

113.41.c.29.F. identify bias in written, oral, and visual material.

113.41.c.30. Social studies skills. The student communicates in written, oral, and visual forms. The student is expected to:

113.41.c.30.A. create written, oral, and visual presentations of social studies information.

113.41.c.30.B. use correct social studies terminology to explain historical concepts.

113.41.c.32. Social studies skills. The student uses problem-solving and decision-making skills, working independently and with others, in a variety of settings. The student is expected to:

113.41.c.32.A. use a problem-solving process to identify a problem, gather information, list and consider options, consider advantages and disadvantages, choose and implement a solution, and evaluate the effectiveness of the solution.

113.41.c.32.B. use a decision-making process to identify a situation that requires a decision, gather information, identify options, predict consequences, and take action to implement a decision.

The Cold War Era: An Oral History

Introduction

The Cold War lasted over 40 years, from the end of World War II to the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. How is a “cold” war different from a “hot” war? How did the first Cold War impact the lives of those who lived through it?

You will start by creating a timeline of Cold War events. You will then select one person who lived through the Cold War to interview about what life was like during this period. You will then write an essay tying the experiences of your interview subject to the larger domestic and international context. Finally, you will create a poster of the Cold War, using powerful images whose captions use a combination of quotations and brief summary statements from your oral history subject. You will examine other students’ posters, and complete a peer review of one of them.

Directions

Getting Started

1. Take part in the class discussion of the Cold War, in terms of a time frame and effects on both domestic and foreign policy in the United States.
2. Then, develop a timeline of the Cold War (1946–1989), using your textbook or other sources to identify important events.
3. Work with another student to compare timelines and reconcile differences.
4. Think about what, if anything, you know about oral history. How is it different from the history in your textbook? Read the information about oral history provided by your instructor.

Investigating

1. Practice interviewing a classmate after your class discusses appropriate interviewing practices.
2. Identify the subject of your interview.
3. Conduct your oral history. Your instructor will provide you with the *Cold War Questionnaire* handout that has a list of questions to ask your subject.
4. Write a linear narrative of the subject’s experiences and recollections during the Cold War.

5. Use this narrative to write a 4-page essay about key events during the Cold War. Supplement your essay with quotations from the subject's interview. Remember to use the proper form of citations and to include a Works Cited page at the end of the paper.

Drawing Conclusions

1. Write a final draft of your essay.
2. Create a poster about Cold War events, using powerful visual images to highlight important events or themes. Use captions for the images that include both the oral history subject's words and brief summaries of some events. Take note of the sources of the images used, and add to your Works Cited Page.
3. Half of your class will display their posters while the other half circulates and views the display. Then the groups switch. When you are displaying your poster, engage viewers in conversation about your oral history subject and his or her experiences.
4. Your instructor will assign you to review one of your classmates' posters. Be positive in your review, even if you offer suggestions for improvement.
5. Turn in your timeline, both drafts of your essay, Works Cited page, and poster to your instructor.

Cold War Questionnaire

Please use the following questions to extract lucid and meaningful information from your subject.

1. What year were you born?
2. Where were you born?
3. What do you remember about your parents' political convictions, positions, interests, and concerns? Did both parents have the same feelings, or did they differ?
4. How did the manner in which politics was discussed at home affect the way you felt about the state of the world at the time, particularly in regard to the USSR?
5. What did Communism mean to you when you were growing up? Do you remember conversations about "the Russians" or "the Chinese"? What did those labels mean to you?
6. Describe one major military Cold War event that you lived through and remember clearly.
 - a. Do you remember the Cuban Missile Crisis? If so, please share your memories of that event.
 - b. What were you doing when the Berlin Wall came tumbling down? What did it mean to you at the time? Were you aware that this event marked the end of the Cold War?
7. Looking back, do you think the pop culture of the era was affected by the Cold War? In what ways?
8. Were you in the military during the Cold War? Please describe your experiences to include where you were stationed, your MOS (Military Occupation Specialty), and your general reflections of military service. If not, did you know someone in the military during the Cold War? What was your impression of his or her experience?
9. Did you ever participate in a protest during this time period? Did you know people who did? Describe your beliefs about what was happening and why you (or the person of your acquaintance) decided to demonstrate in this way.

10. Did you ever see a bomb shelter growing up? If so, please describe it. Did your family have a plan for nuclear attack? If so, did you ever think you would actually need to use it?

11. How do you think the Cold War shaped who you are today?

