SOUNDS FROM THE PARK

Oral History Exercise Teachers' Notes

This resource accompanies the Speakers' Corner Timeline.

Aims of the exercise:

- For students to gain a basic understanding of oral history as a historical source and to compare it with other kinds of sources.
- For students to gain practical experience of oral history interviewing and develop skills including asking perceptive questions, active listening and interpreting information.
- For students to develop understanding of historical chronology by creating a timeline from the interview they conduct.
- By creating a timeline of their own and then comparing it with the Speakers' Corner timeline, students will draw connections between local, national and global historical events.
- By interpreting what they are told the students will examine the complexity of another person's account of the past.
- Through interviewing someone they know the students will be encouraged to consider how their own identities relate to wider historical events.

Open air public speaking used to take place all over London, and other urban centres; it was a major form of communication before the 1960s. However, in London it now only takes place regularly at Speakers' Corner in Hyde Park. Some say that because the Internet is so important, face to face debate is in danger of disappearing.

Ask the class to think about how communication methods have changed over time. Use this silent footage on the British Pathé website which shows some different communication methods used in the past, including Speakers' Corner, to give the class some ideas. Which are still going today?

Listen to the "future of Speakers' Corner" on the Speakers' Corner Timeline for a range of views about how technological change has affected

on the RECORD

face to face debate.

Ask the class: what do you think the future of Speakers' Corner & face to face debate is? What are the potential benefits and limitations of face to face debate?

Use the oral history presentation to prepare the class for their interviewing exercise. They will be asked to interview someone they know about how communication has changed in that person's lifetime. They will use the information they collect in this interview to make their own timeline showing how communication has changed for the person they interviewed. Ideally this would be a homework exercise, using the worksheet "Make your own timeline".

On the "Why do oral history" slide the questions are intended to encourage the class to discuss whether there is a difference between oral history and other first person primary sources like diaries or autobiographies. One major difference is the presence of the interviewer: an interview is always a conversation, the result of an interaction.

After the presentation split the class into groups of three and ask them to take turns playing three roles:

1. Interviewer
2. Interviewee
3. Observer

Give them a simple topic (for instance: favourite hobby, favourite item of clothing, first home) so they can hold a practice interview. The observer's role is to watch and give the interviewer feedback on their interviewing technique. Give the class four minutes for the interview and two minutes for feedback. Repeat until everyone has had a turn in each role. Ask for feedback: what was positive about being interviewed; were there things the interviewers could have improved on?

After the exercise:

Ask the students to feed back to the class what is on their timeline.

Discuss the different findings: what different dates and timescales were recorded?

Compare the results of the students' timelines with the Speakers' Corner Timeline: what was happening at Speakers' Corner at the time?

You could even **compile a large timeline from the small timelines** if you wish. If you want to do this digitally you or a student could create a timeline using this free open source software: http://timeline.knightlab.com/

If you do, contact info@on-the-record.org.uk and we'll display the class's timeline on our project's website: http://soundsfromthepark.org.uk/