

Random Acts of Kindness has brought more meaning into my life, and I am committed to help spread the word.

— Carol, State Parent Facilitator, HI

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These Lesson Plans are a culmination of school-wide activities and classroom activities, ranging from grades K-12.

Lesson Plan

Memories from the Heart

Submitted by Laurie - Hanford, CA

Type of Activity:

Classroom/entire grade interviews senior citizens, writes an article on the senior and then combine the articles, creating a book to present to the senior center.

Grade Level: Junior/Senior High

Time Frame: Three Months

Materials:

Pencils/notebooks

Book: Wilford Gordon McDonald Partridge by Mum Fox
"Tuesdays with Morrie" Film (optional)

Overview:

This is an inter-generation writing project that involves teenagers and senior citizens, resulting in "Acts of Kindness" from the students that amazed and surprised the senior citizens.

Enclosed is the product of several lessons that involved the 8th grade class and three senior citizens facilities in our local area. The photos from the book and the newspaper coverage confirm the change in my students attitudes through this experience. Their reverence and respect for life, senior citizens, and each other increased dramatically with this project that produced several acts of kindness for all involved.

This project has far reaching involvement with the community, the university, the county office of education, local publishers, and parents from the community. All participants get involved to support the acts of kindness this type of outreach provides for the seniors and students. The county office of education provides transportation to the senior facilities, and the grant funding that covers the publishing costs of the book. Part of the curriculum involves students finding out about service learning and identifying the six pillars of Character Counts!, our character education program at our middle school. This project takes place over three months and provides students with opportunities to advance their skills in interviewing, listening, speaking, writing, and publishing. Another great benefit is the connection they make with historical events that they thought occurred a very long time ago. When they speak to the people

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that lived the events and realize that they have met and connected with history, and made a difference in the process.

All of the lessons involved in the development of this project align with the state's Grade Level Standards in English Language Arts, and History.

The students are constant evaluators of their writing and their changes in both the personal perception of seniors and the life in general. They did this through reflective journal writing and scoring their writing against a rubric.

Objectives:

1. To make contact in the community and present the project.
2. Discuss and practice of the way to speak to seniors that are hard of hearing and may have other issues.
 - a. Slow speech
 - b. Listening posture
 - c. Wait Time
 - d. Repeat for Clarification
 - e. Speak loudly and slowly if needed

Discuss how times change but people, feelings, emotions, dreams and disappointments are common for all people regardless of age and time in history.

Procedure:

Pre-Interview Preparation

1. Find a local senior center that is willing to have students visit several times, and arrange a time for the students to visit. (make sure you arrange transportation needs with your school district.)
2. Get a list of the senior citizens from the center that are available/ willing to meet with the students.
3. Pair each student with a senior citizen in advance to save time and confusion upon arrival at the center.

Pre-Interview Class Activities

Quickwrite # 1:

What is one of the greatest gifts you have ever received and who gave it to you?

Quickwrite #2:

What is your relationship with the person that gave you the gift?

Quickwrite #3

If you could put a memory (Time in a Bottle) that involved that gift and person what would it look like?

The students share their quickwrites in their group and choose one to share with the class. As a class list, we list common feelings and elements that we heard when we listened to the quickwrites.

1. Choose a focus as a whole class; for example we choose objects that we could focus on to help memories unfolded. I read "Wilford Gordon McDonald Partridge" by Mum Fox to get the students to evaluate the importance of objects that can focus someone on a specific memory.
2. The students also watch clips from "Tuesdays with Morrie" and read excerpts for the book regarding life and how someone may feel close to the end of their life.

In class, discuss how to interview a senior citizen. Focus on the details, so when writing the article, an accurate description of the senior citizen is formed for the reader. Have the students brainstorm questions to ask. Possibility: To have students come up with interview questions as homework to bring to the interview with them.

Visiting the Senior Center

1. Have students meet with the seniors. Make sure they each bring a notebook, pen, etc.
2. Remind students to be polite, speak clearly and to thank the seniors.
3. Have the students ask the seniors of a certain object that has a memory to them – this will help develop a story and memory to write about.

Post Senior Center Visit

1. Have students write a couple paragraphs about the senior citizen.
2. Revise the rough drafts to include details and interesting language that will honor the senior and their life.
5. The final events include the hands history day with interaction with the objects that they have been learning about the lives of the seniors that used those objects. The seniors became the teachers to the students in during this day.
6. The last event is the greatest act of kindness; the presentation of the book to the seniors.

Samples of Final Writings by Students:

(The final project was spiral bound with photographs of the senior citizens and the students interacting. The text has been slightly modified in places to protect the privacy of the following individuals.)

Sample #1:

Winnie

By Lee-Ann

Winnie has been a resident of this Senior Home for about three months. She has lived a very fun and eventful life. Winnie was born in **** on September **, 19** and is ** years young. Her family is and always was important to her. She grew up in a large family, consisting of nine children. Now, in her later years, she has five generations of children: her immediate children, one boy and two girls, eight grandchildren, eleven great-grandchildren, and nine great-great grandchildren. I was surprised.

When Winnie was a young girl, she lived out in the country where there were fields of grass and flowers to play in. She loved living out in the country, especially in the springtime when everything

was blooming. Their farm consisted of the usual horses, chickens and pigs that her family got their money from. Winnie loved her house and the land, except for the fact that they lived so far away from everything in the city. Sometimes she would ride one of her horses to get somewhere. Even though it a long ride, the view was so beautiful she couldn't help but love it.

Winnie was a young girl who loved school. It was different than it is now. They had to build their own schools. The first one built by the community had two rooms. The second school they built was a three-room school. She told me how the schools went from primer to the eighth grade. Today the eighth grade isn't enough schooling, but back then your official education was through. It was a choice to go to high school and get a higher and better education. No school is like that anymore.

Back then there were no televisions or computers. They had to make do with what they had when it came to entertainment. Winnie remembered a lot about entertainment when she was a child. She remembers all of the parties and get-togethers they had. There were swim parties, prayer meetings and ice-cream suppers. I think she really like those gatherings. An ice-cream supper was when people got together and made ice cream and enjoyed it together. Life back then was so simple, yet fun. Entertainment centered on social gatherings. Those were the days.

After Winnie grew up and moved out of the house, she had to make a living. One of her jobs was at a grocery store. She worked there for a while until she got a job as a teacher. That was her favorite job. Working with kids is what she loved. At this time she had a Model T. That was "the " car back then. Winnie loved her car and her job. She had a fun teenage and adult life. Her future was yet to come.

As an adult Winnie traveled a lot. Her husband accompanied her on the trips. She went to many parks. One that she remembers most was Zion Park in Utah. While there she took pictures and toured a house that was built into the rock. The parks she went to meant a lot to her because she loved them so much. Winnie told me that she had albums full of pictures of all the parks she visited.

Winnie is a wonderful, warm, and heart-felt person. I enjoyed spending time, sharing stories and just talking with her. She is almost like a great-grandmother to me. I will never forget the time I had with her and all of the stories she shared. That day was very fun, and her hugs are still with me today. She is my new friend and I will never forget that day and those hugs. Winnie is the greatest grandma of all time.

Sample # 2:

Doris

By Laura

Doris is a resident at a Senior Center nearby. She was born into a small family. Her father, an only child, came from Ireland and moved here with his family, while her mother came from Illinois. The two were married and had twin girls, Doris, and her sister Dorothy. Doris told me that she and her sister were definitely not identical twins. Dorothy was much taller and loved to go skating, while her sister liked to sit and read a good book. Even today at the senior center, you can find Doris enjoying the pages of a good story. Now Doris recognizes how lucky she was to live in such a sheltered and wonderful family.

One of the first memories Doris has from childhood was of her father and his whistle. She told me about how her father would take the metal instrument out of the cupboard by the kitchen sink, and fill it with just a little water. He would then blow into the long, thin spout to create a wonderful chirruping sound, much to the delight of the twin sisters. "We thought that was just great," she told me. When she blew that whistle for me at the senior center, I could hardly believe how much it sounded like a bird resting in the treetops. What a clever toy!

During the Great Depression Doris went to a junior college instead of attending a University as she always dreamed. She had a friend who was attending the University who told her stories of being extras in movies on special Saturdays. The college was the perfect setting for movies, and Doris would have loved to go, but she had to stay where she was. Eventually, she met a man who owned a forest green Mercury convertible. He loved that car and would take Doris on rides down the street. She loved trips through the fields with the manual top down and the wire wheels speeding down the road. She smiled when she remembered what a romantic ride this was.

Well, the two eventually got married, and started a small family. Her two girls and their father made Doris a very happy mother. They would enjoy barbecues in the backyard and play lots of sports. Her husband loved the outdoors and made sure that his family and community received lots of it. He was very involved in the community little league and enjoyed it very much. I asked Doris if she wanted to give a little advice to our generation, and she told me, "Don't be afraid, just got" She says that people used to be, and still are, afraid to do things. But once you do them, it isn't really that bad at all.

I have really enjoyed these trips around the community and to the senior center. I always knew that the senior citizens in our community have amazing stories to tell our generation. But I never took the time to sit down and listen to them. I've learned from Doris that not all of the elders had to live out in the country, trek through the snow barefoot, or make their own bread. She told me that she feels left out sometimes when the other women talk about all of the hard work they had to do on their family farms.

However, I have found out that Doris is very much like me. In fact, Doris, and all of the other people that we interviewed on our trips through the community are amazing in their own way. I think it is great that our class gets to take part in preserving these people and recording their memories in a book.

Sample # 3:

Lorine

By Kyle

Lorine has lived a very long and wonderful life. She is an amazing lady who lives at a Senior Center. About three months ago, she moved here to be closer to her youngest son, who lives nearby. She prefers to be called by her, middle name, which is Lorine. Her nickname is "Honeybunch." She was born on March **, 19**. Lorine is the older sister of twins; a boy and a girl.

When she was about thirteen her family moved. Her first school experience there was a bad one. Her parents immediately put her into a better school. The new school had a lot of students, and she did not fit in; she felt like an "outside-outsider." This was the same school that her parents and uncle went to when they were her age. The principal there was also the same one that her parents had when they were students. Lorine's favorite subject in school was Geography.

Her first car was the one her husband courted her with. It was a 1929 Ford. They got married on June **, 19** when she was ** years old. When they got married they bought a Chevrolet. Their marriage together lasted for fifty-seven years, until her husband died of cancer, which had settled in his back.

Many of Lorine's family members have participated in some of the United States' many wars. Her grandfather was a drummer boy in the Civil War and her father fought in World War I. One year her son came home with some terrible news. He told her he had to leave in ten days to fight in the Korean War in Japan. She was very sad that her son had to go and really did not want him to. Then, on her birthday, they took him away on a bus to leave for Japan. Luckily, he did not have to fight at all during the two years he was there. He returned home safely and brought her back a sword, a silk scarf and a lot of trinkets.

A precious gift that Lorine showed me was a little glass perfume bottle. It was given to her by one

of her granddaughters and she has kept it for many years. Her favorite hobby is reading, but unfortunately she lost that ability. She cannot see very well or read because of a stroke that she had years ago. Lorine has two sons, eight grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren.

I was very amazed to find out that Lorine remembered exactly where she was when she found out President Kennedy was shot. She said that she was in a Furniture store helping her friend buy some dining room furniture. The moment will stay fixed in her mind forever.

My experience with Lorine has been a great one. I was a little scared about going to meet a senior until I met her. She shares a room with another lady, and since she's in a wheelchair, her bed takes up most of her living space. I have also learned a lot about how people use to live back in the early 1900's.