



Q2 • Storytelling • High School • Local Hero Research Project

Theme: New Mexico's Contribution

Time Required: 1-2 weeks

Materials Needed:

- Research materials (books, articles, online resources)
- Notebooks and pencils
- Optional recording device (phone or tablet)
- Construction paper or cardstock with art supplies
- Bulletin board or display materials

Activity Overview

In this activity, students learn to document and analyze the stories of local heroes through the process of oral history research. They will conduct interviews, review written sources, and present findings that connect personal experiences to larger historical and social movements. By studying local heroes, including veterans, community organizers, Indigenous leaders, cultural figures, founders, scientists, athletes, and first responders, students will explore how everyday people influence history. This project deepens understanding of how oral histories complement written records by capturing diverse voices and lived experiences.

Learning Objectives

- Conduct structured research on a local hero using oral and written sources.
- Practice interviewing, note-taking, and ethical documentation skills.
- Analyze how individual stories reveal broader patterns in history.
- Present findings in a clear, compelling way using multimedia or writing.

Essential Questions

- How does oral history expand our understanding of historical events?
- What makes someone a hero in their community?
- Why is it important to record local stories for future generations?
- How do personal experiences shape our collective memory of history?



How to Implement

1. Introduce Oral History:

Watch *Conversations with History: Studs Terkel* or read about his work collecting oral histories like *The Good War*. Discuss how oral history provides a broader view of the past, especially by including marginalized or underrepresented voices.

2. Identify a Local Hero:

Students select a hero from the present or recent past, veterans, Indigenous leaders, scientists, founders, or artists. Encourage diversity of perspectives across New Mexico's communities.

3. Plan and Conduct Interviews:

Research background information about the chosen person. Request an interview (in-person or virtual). Prepare thoughtful questions using an interview guide. Obtain permission and explain the project purpose.

4. Analyze and Present:

Write a report or create a presentation summarizing key findings. Optional: Include visuals, photos, or audio clips. Conclude with a written reflection or thank-you note to interviewees.

Educator Tips

- Model professional communication when requesting interviews.
- Emphasize the importance of consent and accuracy when quoting or recording.
- Partner with local libraries, archives, or historians for research guidance.
- Consider inviting a local librarian or journalist for an in-class workshop.

Connection to Statewide Theme

This activity supports the NM250 Storytelling: New Mexico's Contribution initiative, helping students connect local oral histories to state and national narratives. Schools may extend this project into a "Voices of New Mexico" showcase or share excerpts using the #MyNMStory hashtag.