



WHY DO STORIES MATTER?

Lesson Plan

SUMMARY

This lesson will introduce students to the mission of StoryCorps and impactful stories recorded by other young people. Students will reflect on the power of sharing their stories, listening to the stories of others, and the question, “What makes a story important?”

OBJECTIVES

- Students will know and reflect on the mission of StoryCorps
- Students will reflect on stories recorded by other young people
- Students will reflect on the power of sharing their own stories, and listening to the stories of others
- Students will reflect on the question, “What makes a story important?”

STANDARDS: See Common Core Standards attachment

TIME: 45 minutes

PREPARATION

- Review the lesson below
- Print out student copies of the Personal Reflection Worksheet & the Scavenger Hunt Worksheet (Optional)
- Print out the Student Gallery Walk Stories large enough to be read easily, and post stories around the room at eye level.

MATERIALS:

- Interactive whiteboard; or a computer with connection to the Internet, a projector & speakers
- Student copies of the Personal Reflection Worksheet
- Printouts of the Student Gallery Walk Stories tape or pushpins for hanging them around the room
- Optional: Student copies of the Scavenger Hunt Worksheet



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WARM-UP: BALL TOSS (5 minutes)

1. Ask students to move their chairs into a circle and stand in front of their chairs.
2. Explain that each student will say their name and one word, name, or image that they think of when they hear the word “story.”
3. Model by tossing the ball to a student and saying your name and one word you think of when you hear the word “story.”
4. Explain that each word can be said only once. Students who cannot think of a word have the right to pass, and you will come back to them at the end.

DEBRIEF (2 minutes)

Facilitate a short class discussion using the following questions as prompts:

- What did you notice about these words?
- Were there any patterns that emerged during the activity?

INTRODUCTION TO STORYCORPS (10 minutes)

1. Ask if anyone in the room has ever heard about StoryCorps. What do they know about it? Allow students to share.
2. Explain that the purpose of the first activity is to get to know a little bit about StoryCorps. Students will do this by watching a short animation about the origins of StoryCorps, recorded by founder Dave Isay, as well as reading the organization’s Mission Statement.
3. Play the Origins of StoryCorps animation for students. You can also view the transcript of the animation.
4. After students watch the animation, ask them to write down one question they have about StoryCorps using the Personal Reflection Worksheet.
5. Ask for a couple volunteers to share their questions. After each volunteer shares, ask the group to raise their hands if they would also like to know the answer to that question.



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6. Answer each student's question about StoryCorps if you are able, and write down the questions you need to further research before reporting back answers to students next class.
7. Next, ask for a volunteer to read aloud the StoryCorps Mission Statement. This is listed on the Personal Reflection Worksheet.

StoryCorps' mission is to preserve and share humanity's stories in order to build connections between people and create a more just and compassionate world.

We do this to remind one another of our shared humanity, to strengthen and build the connections between people, to teach the value of listening, and to weave into the fabric of our culture the understanding that everyone's story matters. At the same time, we are creating an invaluable archive for future generations.

8. Ask students to circle, highlight or write down words or phrases from the Mission Statement that stand out to them, or which they think are most important.

DEBRIEF (3 minutes)

Facilitate a short class discussion using the following questions as prompts:

- What stands out to you about the StoryCorps Mission Statement?
- What parts of the Mission Statement did you find to be most important?
- What parts of the Mission Statement do you hope we can experience ourselves in our classroom?

ACTIVITY: GALLERY WALK (20 minutes)

9. Explain to students that now that they have a baseline understanding of StoryCorps, they will read stories told by other students who have recorded their stories.



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10. Give students around 10 minutes to walk around the room in complete silence reading the student stories posted on the wall. Encourage students to try to read as many of the stories as possible in 10 minutes.
11. At the end of the 10 minutes, ask students return to their seats. Ask students to use the Personal Reflection Worksheet to write down the name of the person whose story stood out to them the most and to write a brief summary of that story.
12. After they have completed their summaries, ask students to turn and talk to a classmate about what story they chose and why it stood out to them.

DEBRIEF

Facilitate a short class discussion using the following questions as prompts:

- What did you notice about these stories? Any similarities or themes?
- Why did some stories stand out to you more than others?
- What can you learn by listening to someone else's story?
- What can you learn by sharing your own stories?
- Do you think these stories are important? Why or why not?

Talking point: StoryCorps believes that everyone has an important story to tell. We believe that the only criteria for an important story, is that the storyteller feels that the story is important to them.

CLOSING: POPCORN RESPONSES (5 minutes)

“Popcorn” is a technique in which a set amount of time is allotted for students to respond to a prompt. The sharing is a “popcorn” because students are invited to voice their responses randomly rather than going around in a specified order, and they don't have to raise their hands. However, there should be only one student speaking at a time, so if two students speak at the same time, one should let the other go first. Students are invited to pass if they don't wish to respond.



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Invite students to share their responses to the following question, popcorn style.

- Why does my story matter?

OPTIONAL HOMEWORK ACTIVITY: STORYCORPS SCAVENGER HUNT

Tell students that in order to explore more about StoryCorps' work, they will complete a digital scavenger hunt. Send printed copies of the Scavenger Hunt Worksheet home with students, and ask them to fill them out as homework. This activity requires students to have Internet access.

After students hand their worksheets in next class, you can also choose to facilitate a short debrief discussion using the following questions as prompts:

- What was the most interesting thing you learned on StoryCorps' website and why?
- Did the Scavenger Hunt leave you with any new questions about StoryCorps?

SUPPLEMENTAL MEDIA:

If you'd like to share additional information with your students about StoryCorps, you can choose to play StoryCorps Founder Dave Isay's [TED Talk: Everyone Around You Has a Story the World Needs to Hear](#).