

Story Seeds: Nurturing Youth's Connection to Family History & Storytelling

Session Goal:

Learn creative strategies and inspiring ideas that nurture the roots of youth's connection to their ancestral stories, sowing the seeds of a vibrant storytelling tradition that will flourish for generations to come.

I. The Power of Family History: Benefits of Knowing One's Roots

- 1. Cultural Identity:** Understanding one's family history helps youth explore their cultural roots and heritage. It allows them to appreciate their traditions, customs, and values, fostering a strong sense of identity and pride in their background.
- 2. Sense of Belonging:** Knowing their family's story gives youth a sense of belonging and connection to their extended family and ancestors. This connection can create a support network that provides a feeling of security and support.
- 3. Preserving Traditions:** Through storytelling, youth can learn about their family's traditions and rituals, ensuring that they are preserved and passed down to future generations.
- 4. Inspiration and Resilience:** Hearing stories of their ancestors' struggles and triumphs can inspire youth to overcome challenges and develop resilience. Learning about how their family dealt with adversity can provide valuable life lessons.
- 5. Building Empathy:** Listening to stories of their family members' experiences can foster empathy and understanding. It helps youth relate to the struggles and achievements of others, promoting compassion and open-mindedness.
- 6. Connecting Generations:** Storytelling bridges the generation gap, allowing youth to bond with older family members. This connection can be emotionally enriching and can help preserve the wisdom and knowledge of older generations. It fosters intergenerational respect.
- 7. Enhancing Communication Skills:** Listening to and telling stories can improve communication skills as youth learn to articulate their thoughts and emotions in a narrative form. It improves active listening.
- 8. Motivation for Success:** Learning about family achievements and successes can motivate youth to strive for excellence and create their own positive impact in the world.
- 9. Strengthening Family Bonds:** Sharing stories within the family creates a sense of

intimacy and strengthens family bonds. It encourages open communication and nurtures a supportive family environment.

10. Preserving Oral Tradition: In many cultures, storytelling is an essential part of the oral tradition. By engaging with this tradition, youth contribute to its preservation and continuation.

11. Understanding Family Patterns: Family history can shed light on recurring patterns, traits, and behaviors within the family. Understanding these patterns can be insightful and can help youth make informed choices in their lives.

12. Roots in History: Family history is often intertwined with broader historical events and societal changes. Understanding these connections provides a unique perspective on history and how it has shaped the family's journey.

13. Shared Experience: When family members gather to share stories, they create a shared experience that strengthens their emotional bond and builds a sense of togetherness. Promotes unity and a sense of camaraderie.

14. Passing Down Knowledge: Storytelling is an effective way to pass down knowledge, wisdom, and life lessons from one generation to another. Traditions, customs, and values are often embedded in these stories.

15. Preserving Family Legacy: Through storytelling, family members keep the memories and legacy of their loved ones alive, even after they have passed away.

16. Creating Family Rituals: Storytelling can become a cherished family ritual, where everyone comes together to share and listen to stories during special occasions or regular gatherings.

17. Preserving Language: In some cases, storytelling is an essential means of preserving the family's native language and cultural expressions.

18. Learning Family History: Storytelling allows younger members to learn about their family's historical background and understand their ancestors' journeys and struggles.

19. Building Identity: Shared stories help shape the family's identity, strengthening the sense of "who we are" and what the family represents.

20. Fostering Creativity: Telling stories encourages creativity and imagination in both storytellers and listeners, making the process enjoyable and engaging for all.

21. Coping with Loss: Storytelling can aid in coping with loss by providing an outlet for emotions and a means to remember and honor departed family members.

II. Challenges in Nurturing Youth's Connection to Family History

- Digital distractions
 - Disconnection from ancestral heritage
-

III. Strategies to Engage Youth in Family History and Storytelling

- Making it relatable: Tailoring family history to resonate with youth's interests
 - Leveraging technology: Using digital platforms and multimedia to engage and captivate young audiences
 - Active involvement: Encouraging participation through interactive activities, such as interviews and creating family trees
-

IV. THE SEEDS...

Level Up the Fun: Gamify Family History

1. ***Storytelling Game Night***: Organize a game night where family members take turns sharing stories from the past. You can use prompts or cards with different storytelling themes to spark conversations and encourage storytelling skills among teenagers.
2. ***Family History Bingo***: Create a fun family history bingo game with squares representing various family members, events, or locations. As you explore family history together, mark off the squares on the bingo card.
3. ***Family History Trivia Night***: Organize a family history trivia night with questions based on the family's history. Divide into teams and compete to see who knows the most about the family's past.

Family Yarns: Connecting Through Stories

1. ***Storytelling Sessions****: Schedule regular storytelling sessions where grandparents share their life experiences, childhood memories, and stories about their own parents and grandparents. Grandchildren can ask questions and actively engage in the conversation. Conduct interviews with other family members, such as aunts, uncles, and cousins, to gather more stories and insights about the family's history.
2. ***Collaborative Storytelling Projects****: Initiate collaborative storytelling projects where teens contribute to creating an interconnected narrative about their family history. Each participant adds a chapter or segment, building upon the previous contributions and expanding the overall story.
3. ***Historical Artifact Storytelling****: Encourage teens to choose a significant historical

artifact from their family's collection and create a story around it. They can delve into the artifact's origin, the people associated with it, and the historical context, bringing it to life through vivid storytelling. Think of it as an online memory box.

4. **Record Interviews:** Encourage grandchildren to interview their grandparents using video or audio recordings. These interviews can capture valuable family history and personal anecdotes.

Near & Far: Exploring Ancestral Locations

1. **Ancestor Photo Scavenger Hunt*:** Create a scavenger hunt around your home or local area featuring old family photos. Provide clues that lead teenagers to discover the photos and then have them share stories or anecdotes related to the pictures. Unfamiliar places or items in a photo? [Give Google Lens a try!](#)
2. **Virtual Family History Tours:** Take advantage of technology to take teens on immersive journeys to explore ancestral towns, historical landmarks, or cultural sites related to their family history. Use sites like [Google Earth](#) or historical databases to explore the places where your ancestors lived, and encourage teenagers to research and share interesting facts about those locations. They can virtually navigate the locations and discover the stories behind them.
3. **Map Exploration:** Find a map where teens can plot and explore their family's geographical origins. They can trace migration routes, mark ancestral hometowns, and learn about the historical and cultural significance of these places.
4. **Family History Road Trip:** Plan a road trip to visit different places that are significant to the family's history, such as ancestral homes, towns, former family businesses, or historical and family landmarks. This can provide a deeper connection to the family's history and heritage.

Roots & Routines: Traditions Through the Generations

1. **Family Cookbook Compilation*:** Invite teenagers to collect and compile family recipes from different generations. Encourage them to interview relatives, document the recipes, and include stories or memories associated with each dish. They can provide step-by-step instructions, personal anecdotes, and photos of the dishes, allowing others to explore and try out these treasured recipes. Include the stories behind each recipe and any special memories associated with them.
2. **Preserve Family Letters*:** If there are old letters exchanged between family members, preserve and read them together. These letters offer insights into the lives and relationships of past family members. Don't forget postcards!
3. **Documenting Traditions*:** Work together to document family traditions and customs. Include the stories behind these traditions to pass them on to future generations.

4. ***Heritage Crafts****: What traditional crafts or skills have been passed down in the family, such as knitting and woodworking? Capture these crafts and skills with photos, stories, and memories or maybe even directions ancestors have left behind.

The Ancestral Journey: A Family History Roadmap

1. ***A Day in the Life****: Transport teens to different time periods by browsing newspapers from their ancestors' lives. They become immersed in history and get first-hand accounts of things that happened, photos, advertisements, and much more as they gain historical and social context.
2. ***Historical Family Timeline****: Create a timeline of significant events in the family's history, incorporating both historical events and personal milestones.

Collaborative Kinship: A Team Approach (Storied Groups)

1. ***Collaborative Family History Projects****: Enable teens to collaborate with other family members to collectively build a comprehensive family tree. They can contribute stories, photos, and documents and engage in discussions or online forums to share insights and knowledge.
2. ***Organize Family Reunions****: Plan and participate in family reunions or gatherings. These events provide opportunities for extended family members to share stories and connect.
3. ***Compile a Family History Book****: With the input and stories from both grandparents and grandchildren, work on writing a family history book that can be passed down to future generations.
4. ***Digital Heritage Exhibitions****: Create virtual heritage exhibitions where teens can curate and showcase artifacts, photographs, and stories from their family history.

Camera Chronicles: Family History Through the Lens

1. ***Digital Memory Preservation****: Help teens upload and organize digital copies of family photos, videos, and audio recordings. You can add tags, descriptions, and annotations to preserve and document the memories digitally.
2. ***AI (Artificial Intelligence) Photo Opp****: Do you have a story but no photo to go with it? Have teens create an AI photo to help tell your story. [My favorite is Midjourney!](#)

Roots Quest: Teaching Teens to Uncover Ancestral Secrets

1. ***Learn Together****: Find online learning opportunities where grandparents and teens can learn genealogy research techniques and storytelling methods or even attend live interviews with renowned historians or genealogists together.

2. **Research Together***: Use online resources to find historical documents, census records, and other sources that can shed light on the family's history.

** Activities marked with an asterisk are possible on Storied.com.*

LECTURE LINKS

[Mentimeter.com - Create word clouds, quizzes, and polls for FREE.](#)

[Google Lens](#)

[Google Earth](#)

Maps

- [David Rumsey Map Collection](#)
- [Library of Congress Map Collection](#)

Historical Events Timelines

- [Historical Events by Year](#)
- [News & Events Year-by-Year](#)

[Midjourney AI Photo Generator](#)

Learning Opportunities with Storied

- [Storied Resource Center](#)
- [The Family Treehouse Podcast](#)
- [Storied's Teachable Courses](#)

Presented by: Heather Haunert, hhaunert@storied.com