1st Grade Family Stories Inquiry

What Do Family Stories Tell Us about the Past?

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Supporting Questions

1. Do all families have stories?
2. What artifacts could someone use to tell a family story?
3. How do families change over time?
# 1st Grade Family Stories Inquiry

## What Do Family Stories Tell Us about the Past?

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<tr>
<th>New York State Social Studies Framework Key Ideas &amp; Practices</th>
<th>Staging the Question</th>
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<tr>
<td>1.7: Families have pasts and change over time. There are different types of documents that relate family histories. 1.8: Historical sources reveal information about how life in the past differs from the present.</td>
<td>Tell a story to a partner and then list and categorize all the stories as a class.</td>
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**Supporting Question 1**

**Understand**

Do all families have stories?

**Formative Performance Task**

Tell a family story and draw a picture representing the story.

**Featured Sources**

- **Source A:** Teacher-told family story
- **Source B:** StoryCorps story recordings

**Supporting Question 2**

**Understand**

What artifacts could someone use to tell a family story?

**Formative Performance Task**

Brainstorm a class list of artifacts that would help tell a story about a family.

**Featured Sources**

- **Source A:** Family tree chart
- **Source B:** Image bank: Family artifacts

**Supporting Question 3**

**Assess**

How do families change over time?

**Formative Performance Task**

List three ways that families change over time. Draw a then-and-now picture to illustrate one of the ways.

**Featured Sources**

- **Source A:** Teacher-presented artifact
- **Source B:** Image bank: Photos featuring then-and-now comparisons

**Summative Performance Task**

**ARGUMENT**

What do family stories tell us about the past? Construct an argument, expressed in written or oral form and supported with evidence, that answers the question about why families are a useful way to understand the past.

**ACT**

Have students write a story after talking with an older family member. Bind all the students’ stories together into a book titled *Our Family Stories*, which can be shared with other first-grade classes.
Overview

Inquiry Description

This inquiry leads students through an investigation of their families as a way to begin understanding the concepts of past and present. By answering the compelling question “What do family stories tell us about the past?” students learn about change over time. Through the use of family artifacts (e.g., photographs, marriage licenses, family trees, keepsakes), students learn that such items can reveal information about how life in the past differs from life in the present and how their families have changed over time.

In addition to the Key Ideas expressed earlier, this inquiry covers the following Conceptual Understandings:

- (1.7a) Personal and family history is a source of information for individuals about the people and places around them.
- (1.8a) Various historical sources exist to inform people about life in the past, including artifacts, letters, maps, photographs, and newspapers.

Taking Informed Action activities are embedded throughout this inquiry. Students come to understand the importance of family stories and artifacts through Supporting Questions 1 and 2, they demonstrate their ability to assess the relationship between past and present in Supporting Question 3, and they take action through the construction of a class book of family stories that they share with other first-grade students.

NOTE: Teachers should use their professional judgment regarding the varied family structures of their students and the availability and appropriateness of family information. They should be sensitive throughout this inquiry as they choose sources and support students who may not possess, or have access to, artifacts from their own families.

NOTE: This inquiry is expected to take three to five 30-minute class periods. The inquiry time frame could expand if teachers think their students need additional instructional experiences (i.e., supporting questions, formative performance tasks, and featured sources). Teachers are encouraged to adapt the inquiries to meet the requirements and interests of their particular students. Resources can also be modified as necessary to meet individualized education programs (IEPs) or Section 504 Plans for students with disabilities.

Structure of the Inquiry

In addressing the compelling question “What do family stories tell us about the past?” students work through a series of supporting questions, performance tasks, and featured sources in order to construct an argument with evidence from a variety of sources.
Staging the Compelling Question

To begin this inquiry, teachers might simply ask students to turn to a partner and “tell a story.” After all the students have shared their stories, teachers can create a list of the kinds of stories on a whiteboard or chart paper. The stories are likely to be of several types (e.g., fantasy characters, sports stars, television scenes, animals), but many may be about family members and/or activities. Teachers can then ask students why families are central to so many stories and record these answers.

Supporting Question 1

The first supporting question—“Do all families have stories?”—helps students understand that families have stories and that students can learn about themselves and others through those stories. The teacher-told story and the two StoryCorps featured sources offer students opportunities to hear how different people have chosen to tell a family story. Students should understand that every family has a story and any person can tell it. The formative performance task calls on each student to tell a family story during a circle-time activity and then draw a picture that represents the story.

Supporting Question 2

For the second supporting question—“What artifacts could someone use to tell a family story?”—students spend time thinking about how family artifacts, such as family trees, scrapbooks, and photographs, can be used to tell a family story. After reviewing and discussing the featured sources (a sample family tree and images of families and family artifacts), the formative performance task asks students to brainstorm other kinds of artifacts that might be used to tell their family stories.

Supporting Question 3

By answering the third supporting question—“How do families change over time?”—students build on their understanding of the past and present in general and how families can change in particular. Thus, they assess the means by which changes can occur. After discussing the teacher-presented artifact, images of old and new televisions, and images of John F. Kennedy as a child and as an adult, students complete the formative performance task. That task consists of having students make individual lists of three changes that have occurred in their families over time, then creating a “then-and-now” drawing representing one of the changes.

NOTE: Another way to represent “then and now” is to contact local historical societies for old photographs of recognizable landmarks in the community and compare them with teacher-taken photographs of the same locations today.
Summative Performance Task

At this point in the inquiry, students have gathered primary- and secondary-source evidence to show change over time. This work enables students to begin developing an understanding of how the past and present interact and how family stories represent one way of understanding that interaction. Students should be expected to demonstrate the breadth of their understanding and the ability to use evidence from multiple sources to construct an evidence-based argument, expressed in oral or written form, that responds to the compelling question “What do family stories tell us about the past?”

Students’ arguments are likely to vary, but could include any of the following:

- Family stories tell us that our families go way back in the past.
- My family story tells me where I came from.
- My family artifacts help me understand what was important to my parents and grandparents.

Students have the opportunity to Take Informed Action throughout the inquiry by drawing on their understandings of how families change over time. Students write individual stories after talking with older family members. Teachers may then bind those stories together into a book titled Our Family Stories, which can be shared with other first-grade classes.
Supporting Question 1

| Featured Source | Source A: Teacher-told family story |

Teachers bring photographs and/or videos illustrating family members to use in telling a story about their families.
<table>
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<td><strong>Featured Source</strong></td>
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**NOTE:** Teachers and their students can listen to two stories about family life by clicking on the following links:

- The Icing on the Cake: [http://storycorps.org/animation/the-icing-on-the-cake/](http://storycorps.org/animation/the-icing-on-the-cake/)
Supporting Question 2

**Featured Source**  
**Source A**: Family tree chart

![Family Tree Chart]

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### Supporting Question 2

| **Featured Source** | **Source B**: Image bank: Family artifacts |

Image 1: Family scrapbook.
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Image 2: Grandfather and grandson fishing.
© istock /© IPGGutenbergUKLtd.
Image 3: Family recipe box.
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## Supporting Question 3

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<th>Featured Source</th>
<th>Source A: Teacher-presented artifacts</th>
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Teachers present artifacts to students that represent family stories.
Supporting Question 3

**Featured Source**

**Source B:** Image bank: Photos featuring then-and-now comparisons

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**Image 1:** Television from 1955.
© iStock/© Geckly.

**Image 2:** Television from 2010.
© Shutterstock.com/© Maksym Bondarchuk.
Image 3: Future president John F. Kennedy's family in 1931. John F. Kennedy is the young boy on the right side of the picture.
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