



# Writing Historical Fiction from an Interview

**Using abstraction to tell the story of a major moment in history  
through the eyes of a family member or neighbor**



# Historical Fiction project

You are going to write a historical fiction narrative about a tragedy from the perspective of an adult you know, when they were a child

To do this, you will:

- Interview this adult about their relationship with this tragedy
- Research the tragedy to understand what happened
- Write a first draft of your narrative from the perspective of your interviewee
- Read your first draft to your interviewee and collect feedback
- Make changes based on that feedback and write a final draft

# The Interview

For homework tonight or this weekend, you are going to interview a family member or a neighbor about a significant historical tragedy, chosen from the list below. You will write down their answers to the questions given, as well as two questions that you will come up with yourself. Make sure to get specific details!

Have your interviewee choose from the following tragedies. If possible, have them choose one that happened when they were close to your current age.

- Assassination of John F Kennedy (1963)
- Assassination of Malcolm X (1965)
- Assassination of Martin Luther King Jr (1968)
- Munich Olympics massacre (1972)
- Jonestown suicides (1978)
- Assassination of John Lennon (1980)
- Challenger Space Shuttle explosion (1986)
- Deadly Los Angeles riots (1992)
- World Trade Center truck bombing (1993)
- Oklahoma City bombing (1995)
- Columbine school shootings (1999)
- September 11 terrorist attacks (2001)

# Interview Questions

1. How old were you when this tragedy occurred? Who did you live with?
2. How did you find out about this tragedy?
3. What were your first thoughts and feelings about this tragedy? What did or didn't you understand?
4. How did other members of your family, or other adults around you, respond?

In addition to these four questions that everyone will ask, you will ask two more questions of your own. Don't ask simple factual things – ask about feelings, reactions, perspectives, changes in your interviewee's life, etc.

# Research

In class, you will research the tragedy your interviewee chose to learn some additional key facts and details about what happened.

When you write your narrative, you will portray these facts from the point of view of your character. They could be watching the news, reading the newspaper, talking to someone else, etc.

# Feedback

After writing the first draft of your narrative, you will read it to your interviewee.

Your interviewee will give you detailed feedback about your narrative, and you will write down their feedback. You don't have to make every change they suggest, but you should be as authentic to their story as possible.

	Doesn't Meet Expectations [0]	Approaching Expectations [1-2]	Meets Expectations [3-4]	Exceeds Expectations [5]
Interview	Interview not completed	Interview shows little effort Few details included Answers not written in complete sentences	Interview shows some effort Some details included Answers written in complete sentences	Interview shows excellent effort Many details included Answers written in complete sentences
Research	Research not completed	Very few notes taken Notes aren't important relevant to tragedy	Some notes taken Notes are somewhat important and relevant to tragedy	Many notes taken Notes are all important and relevant to tragedy
Narrative: Style	Narrative is not written from the perspective of the interviewee Many spelling and grammar errors	Narrative is written from the perspective of the interviewee, but that character is not well developed Some spelling and grammar errors	Narrative is written from the perspective of the interviewee, and that character is somewhat developed Few spelling and grammar errors	Narrative is written from the perspective of the interviewee, and that character is very well developed No spelling or grammar errors
Narrative: Details	Narrative includes no meaningful details	Narrative includes few details about the historic event Details are presented as facts that do not flow well with the narrative	Narrative includes details about both the event and the interviewee Details are integrated into the narrative	Narrative includes rich details about the event, the interviewee and how the interviewee responded to the event Details are well integrated into the narrative and from the perspective of the interviewee
Response to Feedback	Feedback not collected	Some unimportant feedback collected Feedback did not lead to changes	Some meaningful feedback collected Feedback led to some changes	Lots of detailed, meaningful feedback collected Feedback led to big, meaningful changes