

## Pre-production: Preparing for Your Life Songs Interview

### OVERVIEW

#### ESSENTIAL QUESTION

How do you prepare for a successful and insightful interview?

#### OVERVIEW



*In this lesson, students are introduced to the Life Songs project and practice writing effective interview questions. Once introduced to Life Songs, students determine who they would like to interview for the project. Then, they discover how to write engaging questions by preparing a sample interview question and soliciting feedback from a classroom partner. After receiving feedback, students draft a list of possible interview questions for their Life Songs project.*

This lesson focuses on preparing for a Life Songs interview. First, students are introduced to the media production process and the concept of pre-production. Next, they identify a person they would like to interview for the project. Through interactive classroom activities, students discover that the way a question is phrased can elicit different answers. Finally, students work with a partner to draft sample questions for their Life Songs Interview.

This lesson is split into three parts, each of which may require a class period to cover.

#### *What is Life Songs?*

*Life Songs is an intergenerational media project organized into a four lesson unit plan. Over the course of the unit, students participate in a group singalong, identify and discuss their favorite songs, prepare interview questions about another person's favorite songs, and conduct and record an interview with an adult who shares how certain songs shaped their life. The unit culminates in students presenting a completed version of their Life Songs Interview. Through Life Songs, students acquire beneficial skills and experience in media production while participating in social and emotional learning activities.*

## OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this lesson, students will:

### 1. KNOW (KNOWLEDGE):

- The goals of the Life Songs project
- The media production process
- That the way a question is written can greatly influence the length and depth of the answer
- Strategies for writing effective and engaging interview questions

### 2. MASTERY OBJECTIVE:

- Students will be able to craft effective and engaging interview questions by working with a partner to draft and review sample questions.

## ACTIVITIES

### MOTIVATIONAL ACTIVITY

1. Inform students they will be watching a clip of singer-songwriter Raye Zaragoza. Encourage them to think like detectives, and try to figure out what is happening in the clip.
2. Play **Clip 1, Life Songs Interview with Raye Zaragoza and Her Father, Gregory Zaragoza**. Afterward, ask students:
  - What do you think was happening in the clip?
  - Who might be the two people in the clip? How did they know each other?
  - What were they talking about?
  - Why might Zaragoza be interested in talking to this person about this topic? How might Raye Zaragoza and her father be involved in music?
3. Explain that the clip is part of TeachRock's Life Songs project, where students interview older people about the music that has influenced their lives. Inform the class that they will be working on this project for the next few class sessions, to create an audio or video project similar to what they just watched.

### PROCEDURE:

1. Ask students:
  - What sort of work might have gone into the video you just watched?
  - What sort of work might have had to be done before the video was shot?
2. Inform students that what they have been discussing is called the **Production Process**, and almost every kind of media (movies,

- What sort of work might have had to be done after the video was shot?

2. Inform students that what they have been discussing is called the **Production Process**, and almost every kind of media (movies,

podcasts, YouTube, or TikTok videos, etc.) goes through this process before people see it.

3. Show **Image 1, Media Production Process Outline**. Work through the image with students, explaining that producing media usually involves three steps: pre-production, production, and post-production. Inform students that in this session they will focus on the pre-production step. Ask students:
  - Knowing that Life Songs is an interview project, what sort of tasks might be needed for pre-production? What will you have to have prepared before you can record an interview with someone?
4. Inform students that for the Life Songs project, the pre-production step will involve connecting with someone to interview and creating interview questions to ask them.

### Part 1: Locating and Contacting the Interviewee

**Note:** *if teachers prefer, they can assign students an adult to interview (another teacher or staff member at the school, for example). If this option is taken, skip Part 1 and move to Part 2.*

5. Distribute **Handout - Choosing an Interview Subject** and ask each student to take some time to fill it out. Remind students that Life Songs is all about interviewing someone about music, so they should try to think of someone that likes to talk about music. Also, remind them that the person should be easy to get in touch with, either in person or over the phone or internet.
6. At this point, students should contact the person they would like to interview to get their approval. Teachers can use the below text as an official invitation to the project:

Dear , \_\_\_\_\_

Students at our school are participating in Life Songs, a special project to interview an adult and learn about the music that has been important in their life.

I have chosen you as the person that I would like to interview.

If you agree to participate (and I hope that you will!), I will share questions with you ahead of time so that you can start thinking about songs that have been special to you during your life. I would also like to set up a time or maybe a couple of interview times for us to talk. During those interviews, I would like to record your answers to my questions. Life Songs interviews can be done remotely or in person, and we can decide what is best for us.

After our interview is complete, I will be working to create a media project about the songs that we have talked about.

If you accept, I look forward to spending time talking with you about the music that you have loved and remember in your life.

Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_

### Part 2: Drafting Good Questions

7. Explain to students that the next step in the interview planning process is thinking about questions you might want to ask your interviewee. Ask a few volunteer students the following questions in order:
  - Where are you from?
  - Can you tell me about where you were born and where you grew up?

8. After student volunteers answered both questions, ask the class:
  - Which of the two questions that I asked received a longer response? Why might that be?
9. Pair students up. Distribute **Handout - Writing Effective Interview Questions Activity** to each pair. After students complete the activity, ask them:
  - What was it like interviewing a classmate? Was it fun? Were you nervous?
  - Did any of the questions lead to a longer discussion? Which ones?
  - Which questions led to the longest answers? Which led to the shortest answers? Why might that be?
  - What are some things you can do to make interviewing your classmate more fun or less stressful?
10. While still in pairs, distribute **Handout - Single Question Activity** to each student. After students complete the activity, ask each pair to share with the class their questions, what they discussed during the interview, and how they improved their questions. Ask students:
  - Based on the activities you did with your partner, what do you think makes a good interview question?
  - What might be some good strategies for writing engaging interview questions? (*If desired, list strategies on the board.*)

### Part 3: Creating a List of Questions

**Note:** *At this point in the lesson, all interview subjects should be confirmed.*

11. Inform students that they will now be writing some interview questions for the person they plan to interview. Remind them that the interview is all about music, and most of the questions should reflect that.
12. Explain to students the “20/80” rule: the interviewer should be speaking 20% of the time, and the interviewee should be speaking 80% percent. To make sure the interviewee is excited to speak, the interviewer should try to write questions they would enjoy answering, and questions that will require long answers.
13. Ask students to jot down what they know about the person they plan to interview, using **Handout - Interviewee Brainstorm Worksheet** as a guideline. Tell students the worksheet will help them develop the questions they would like to ask.
14. Using **Handout - Interviewee Brainstorm Worksheet**, ask students to begin jotting down questions they would like to ask their interviewee. If students were able to fill out a lot of the handout, encourage them to write questions more specific to what they know about the person. If students weren’t able to fill out a lot of the handout, encourage them to start with more basic questions. Students should try to draft 3-5 questions (teachers should feel free to amend the number based on grade level and student ability). If desired, you can pass out **Life Songs Example Questions** to inspire their thinking.

15. Pair students up and have them share the drafted questions with a partner. Then, using what they learned in Part 2 of the lesson, have student groups find ways to edit and improve each question.

### SUMMARY ACTIVITY

1. Play **Clip 1, Life Songs Interview with Raye Zaragoza and Her Father, Gregory Zaragosa** again. Then ask students:
  - Using what you have learned, do you think Zaragoza asked good questions? Why or why not?
  - In what ways might the questions she asked be improved?

## STANDARDS

### COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

#### *College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Writing (K-12)*

Production and Distribution of Writing 4: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Production and Distribution of Writing 5: Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.

Research to Build and Present Knowledge 7: Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

#### *College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Speaking and Listening (K-12)*

Comprehension & Collaboration 1: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

#### *College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Language (K-12)*

Language 1: Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

Vocabulary Acquisition and Use 6: Acquire and use accurately a range of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when encountering an unknown term important to comprehension or expression.



## RESOURCES

### VIDEO RESOURCES

- Life Songs Interview with Raye Zaragoza and Her Father, Gregory Zaragosa

### HANDOUTS

- Handout - Choosing an Interview Subject
- Handout - Writing Effective Interview Questions Activity
- Handout - Single Question Activity
- Handout - Interviewee Brainstorm Worksheet
- Life Songs Example Questions