

Enjoying Your Family History

Ready!

- This unit can take up to 45-60 minutes depending on the depth with which you present the lesson. Engaging the audience with good discussion will help fill the sixty-minute time slot.
- The purpose of this unit is to encourage parents to explore their family history with their children. By doing this they will help connect their children to the strengths of past generations and provide them with a feeling of family unity and belonging.
- This unit would work best with children that are kindergarten age or older because there will be some researching involved.
- Read and review the following material at
 - http://www.arfamilies.org/family_life/family/strengths_and_strategies/enjoying_your_family_history.asp - *Enjoying Your Family History*
 - <http://www.pbs.org/kbyu/ancestors/firstseries/teachersguide/> - *Ancestors – Teaching Guide* (Read through the episodes)
- Decide what you find important in the material and what you would feel is important for the objectives you would like to accomplish in your presentation. Prioritize questions that you will use so as to stay within your time slot.
- For a more in-depth presentation of family history, you may check out the PBS “Ancestors” video series from the State Office.

Grab!

- Take copies of family history forms for each participant.
- Take PowerPoint presentation – be sure that you have the necessary equipment for displaying PowerPoint.
- Take several symbols of your family history (picture, recipe card, obituary, story, etc)
- Copies can be made of the web unit *Enjoying Your Family History* if you feel that this would be a reinforcer for the presentation
- Make copies of the evaluation form for each participant.

Go!

I have here some special items. What do you suppose makes them important to me?

[Wait for responses]

These things are all part of my family history.

[Describe the items in greater detail and explain why they are important to you and what they have grown to mean.]

All of these things were and are important enough to my family to save and cherish. Can you think of mementos, heirlooms, recipes or other special things you have saved from members of your family?

[Allow audience to respond. You may want to have a few individuals elaborate on their answers.]

Capturing the tradition and history that help shape who we are and what we stand for is what family history is all about. Exploring our roots not only connects us to our past, it gives meaning and strength to our present. Family history has the power to give each of us and our children a sense of purpose and belonging. So let's talk about ways each of us can explore and give meaning to our family story.

[Begin PowerPoint Presentation]

[Slide 1 – Introduction – Enjoying Your Family History]

Have you ever wondered what your great-great grandfather did for a living or where you got the nose that you have? Or maybe where your relatives came from and why they settled where they did? With a little investigation, you may answer these questions and in the process have a wonderful time finding out about your family history.

[Slide 2 – Start With What You Have!]

So where do you start? Each of us likely has a bit of family history right at home. Start simple. Pull out those boxes that are tucked away in closets. Here are a few things to look for:

- **Family documents such as medical records, school records, or legal records**
- **Photo albums, letters, newspaper clippings, birth announcements, wedding invitations**
- **Old books, family mementos or antiques**

If your photos aren't labeled, you may ask a grandparent, a great aunt, or another surviving elder if they know anything about the pictures.

[Slide 3 – Explore!]

Another place to look is at the home of relatives. You can photocopy many documents so that you can return them back to your relatives. Family recipes, favorite stories and adventures, and family traditions are just a few things that you can gain from visiting with extended family members. Aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents, and parents can share in the recounting of family memories. Recording these interviews as they recount experiences can help capture a gold mine of memories. Interviews are most effective if you've recorded some questions to get you started. What questions could you ask that might result in a wealth of information?

[Give participants an opportunity to reflect on questions they might ask. Some of the following might come up:

- Where did you meet your spouse? What attracted you to him or her?
- What was it like to live during a historical event such as _____?
- What do you remember about your parents or grandparents?
- How were things different?
- What holiday traditions did you have?]

There are other places to explore your family history. Some families keep important records in a family Bible. Your children may also enjoy visiting a family cemetery and do tombstone rubbings. You can visit the county clerk's office to check wedding dates or land purchases. Churches often maintain marriage and baptismal records. And of course the Internet is a great source for family history information.

[If you have Internet access, you may want to demonstrate how participants might use several of the sites cited in the resource materials]

[Slide 4- Family and Home Information]

Family records can come from many sources. Included in your materials is a checklist that names possible sources of family records.

[Slide 5– Organize!]

Now that you have gathered this information, it is time to get organized! Remember, to be effective you must sort and store in a consistent and meaningful way. Some families sort by individual. Others sort chronologically or by family era. Still others may sort by record type and keep school records together, photos together, etc. Think carefully about

how you'll organize your information so it is easily accessible for you. What ideas or insights do you have for effectively organizing your family history?

[Give the group a chance to share how they or others they know organize their family history]

Organizing information is only part of family history. To receive the full benefits of exploring your family history—you also need to find ways to celebrate it and showcase it. For example,

- **Frame the pictures of your grandparents and display them in your home.**
- **Make family scrapbooks with your children.**
- **Display tools that were owned by your father or grandfather in a shadow box.**
- **Hang up quilts or needle work done by your grandmother.**
- **One person took an old horse harness owned by her grandfather; cleaned it up; and used it for a frame of a mirror for her son's room.**

When children are surrounded by treasures of the past, it opens the door to conversations and stories that link them to the past and help them understand the values and traditions of your family. Can you think of other ways to prominently display your family history and family links to the past?

[Give the group an opportunity to respond.]

[Slide 6 – Record Your Story!]

Now that you have everything gathered and organized you may be wondering—what's next? An important part of family history is recording your own story. Taking the steps as a family can be a fun and uniting experience. You may want to start by completing your Pedigree Chart, Family Group Records or Source Note Record. Turn to your handouts to see what these forms look like.

[Review and help participants understand the purpose of each form.]

The next step is to create a family timeline. Timelines can be created several ways.

[Direct participants to handout.]

We feel close to those who have shared similar human experiences. Community group participants come together around common causes such as abuse, surviving cancer, a love of gardening, the sharing of a faith or

political affiliation, etc. Knowing the experiences or feelings that we share with our ancestors will link us to our past. What stories or experience have most linked you to your past?

[Give participants an opportunity to share if they would like.]

[Slide 7 – Use Your Family History!]

Family history is most joyful when we use it to strengthen our connection to others. There are many ways we can use our family history. Here are a few:

- **Host a family reunion.**
- **Care for family graves with your children.**
- **Share family stories instead of watching television.**
- **Decorate your house with memories of the past – frame pictures, make scrapbooks, display quilts.**

Turn to the handout, “Creating a Legacy for Your Family Worksheet” for even more ways to use your family history.

[Give group a chance to look at the worksheet and share comments]

[Slide 8 – Connect to the Strength of the Past!]

Remember, family history is more than filling out a pedigree chart. It is about connecting our children and families to the strength of the past. It is about deepening our understanding of life. It is about sharing, celebrating, and continuing the traditions that have made our families strong and shaped our human experience.

[Ask for concluding comments or questions. Distribute the evaluation if you assess the program. Invite participants to learn more about strengthen families at www.arfamilies.com. Thank the group for their participation.]

More information about family history can be found at:

<http://www.pbs.org/kbyu/ancestors/charts/> - *Ancestors (Charts and Records)*

<http://www.genhomepage.com/> - *The Genealogy Home Page*

<http://www.cyndislist.com/> - *Cyndi’s List of Genealogy Sites on the Internet*

<http://www.familysearch.org/> - *Family Search – The Church of Jesus Christ Latter-Day Saints*

<http://www.ancestry.com/main1.htm> - *Ancestry.com*

This unit was originally written by Dana L. Horton and later revised and expanded by Steven A. Dennis.

Creating a Legacy for Your Family

Choose one or more of the following activities, and share it with the class.

1. Collect and organize family photos, letters, papers, etc.
2. Write down or record family stories.
3. Collect and write down family recipes.
4. Record special family celebrations and traditions.
5. Keep a journal.
6. Complete a four-generation pedigree chart.
7. Research or create a family crest or shield.
8. Hold a family reunion and gather family data at the reunion.
9. If there is musical talent in the family, record a session of favorite music.
10. If there is artistic talent in the family, create a family project that could be an heirloom.

11. Interview and record all of your older family members.

12. Make genealogy part of the first day celebration during Kwanzaa or any traditional holiday.

13. Find the gravesites of ancestors and help maintain these sites.

14. Create a time capsule of current memorabilia for future generations to view.

15. Create a "photo pedigree" showing your ancestors.

This information may be found at <http://www.pbs.org/kbyu/ancestors/firstseries/teachersguide/activity-ten.html>

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Cemetery Record

Ancestor's Name _____ ID # _____
 Ancestor's Name _____ ID # _____

Cemetery Data

Cemetery Name _____
 Address _____
 City, County, State, Zip _____
 Directions _____

Grave Data

Location _____

 Condition _____

Tombstone Data

Name	Name
Birth Year	Birth Year
Where	Where
Death Year	Death Year
Where	Where

Inscription/Notes

 Compiler _____ Date _____
 Address _____
 City, State, Zip _____



Example of Family Timeline

Year/Era	Important World Events	Important Family Events	Important Personal Events

You are now ready to start plugging in the pieces. What were you doing during the 60's or 70's? How did Watergate, Woodstock, the death of Elvis, the Vietnam War, or September 11th impact you and your family? What memories do you have of your school years? When did you start your first job? What was your first car? Who was your first lost love? What situations or stories still bring you tears or laughter?

Remember, family history isn't only about passing on a legacy or life lesson to future generations. It is also about reflecting on your own life, deepening your own life mission, and gaining greater understanding about who you are. Such an understanding will help you better reach out and support each other.

Please answer the following questions in order to help us know whether this session was helpful to you.

1. This workshop gave me specific ideas that will be helpful to me.

- I strongly agree.
- I agree.
- I neither agree nor disagree
- I disagree.
- I strongly disagree.

2. I think this session will help me be a better family member.

- I strongly agree.
- I agree.
- I neither agree nor disagree
- I disagree.
- I strongly disagree.

3. I am glad I attended this workshop.

- I strongly agree.
- I agree.
- I neither agree nor disagree
- I disagree.
- I strongly disagree.

Comments or suggestions: