

Activity: Talking to older people.

In the 'stories' section you can hear older speakers talk about their experiences when they were younger. The topics they talk about include their experiences in World War 2, leisure time, Sunday school and religion, holidays, major ship launches, and stories about their parents.

Find three older people and ask them to tell you stories about their past. You could ask them about some of the same things in the stories section, or perhaps something new like playing sports, playing a musical instrument or other hobbies they might have had.

Record these stories (if the people are willing).

If you want to donate your recordings (seek permission from the speaker first) then contact us. Contact details are on the 'Sounds of the City' website.

Write a short passage or talk about whom you chose and the kinds of things that they speak about.

Here are some questions you could ask (you can also think of your own). If you are not recording, you or the older person could also write down their answers.

1. What is your name?
2. Where were you born?
3. When were you born?
4. Where were your parents born?
5. What was it like in the house you lived in as a child?
 - a. Do you have brothers and sisters?
6. Tell me about your experience of school?
7. What kind of things did you like to do in your spare time when you were younger?
 - a. Try to get a lot of detail about the things they did, e.g. if they played games ask what kind of games.
8. Did you go to church and Sunday school
9. When did you leave school?
10. When did you start work and what did you do?
11. Did you have any hobbies whilst you were working?
12. What do you like to do in your spare time now?
 - a. Again, try to get more detail, e.g. if they listen to music or read, ask what they like to listen to or read.

Here are some things to think about when writing your passage, or talking about what you have found:

In what way do these people speak differently to you?

Why could this be? Do they come from a different place than you?

In what way are their experiences different to yours?

Further information:

This activity has been worded in such a way that younger people not yet able to read and write competently can also carry it out with the help of an adult. It introduces fieldwork, allows the student to think about how older people may speak differently and also to think about how their experiences as a younger person may differ to those of younger people a number of decades ago.

How older people speak differently to people today, both in terms of pronunciation and content, is of great interest to linguists and historians in particular.