

All about me: Making a family history book at Key Stage 2

A National Literacy Trust Membership resource

Project overview

A pupil and an adult member of their family spend a day/half-day in school making a family history book.

You may prefer to encourage a whole family to work together on their book, bringing siblings from different classes and asking parents or carers to come along.

Objectives

To support home/school ties

To enable pupils to explore their family's history

To encourage collaborative and engaging writing projects 'outside' school

To develop first/third person writing skills

To encourage parents /carers to become involved with their children's learning

SMSC Development: 'Myself as a unique human being'



Planning

How this project is organised depends on the school setting, available space and staffing. Send out an outline of the project to parents inviting interest. If, say, twenty (or fewer) parents/carers from across KS2 respond positively then this might be a manageable group to work with. However, if numbers are higher, then a first-come, first-served system may need to be implemented with a fixed maximum number.

Send a preliminary questionnaire-style fact-finding sheet (see below) to each family taking part so that they know what writing will be expected from their participating child. Photographic images of family members, pets, et al, will make a big difference to the visual attractiveness of the book, so invite participants to come with digitised images if possible (rather than photographic originals) that can be pasted into the book. As not all households will have a printer, schools may be able to assist with, for example, printing images from memory cards or sticks or, where only photographic images are available, provide scanning facilities for families.

All text © The National Literacy Trust 2017

T: 020 7587 1842 W: www.literacytrust.org.uk Twitter: @Literacy_Trust Facebook: nationalliteracytrust

Duration and timing

Is this to be a half-day or full day project? Years 3 and 4 could be a half day; Years 5 and 6 a full day, for example? Make it a fun day so allow plenty of time for breaks, drinks, nibbles and of course collectively sharing family anecdotes and stories. Alternatively you might like to run this as an after-school project over a few weeks.

At its simplest, the book's textual structure is in three parts – the pupils', parents' and grandparents' (great-grandparents') generation. Each section may take more than one page especially if there are several photographic images to accommodate. You might allocate a specific time (e.g. one hour) for completing each of the three/four sections.

Each page represents the family's chronology, starting with the pupil and siblings, and then working back, page by page, through the generations. Finally, the pages are assembled into the cover (either made beforehand, or by the family) and title/artwork applied.

Many families have diverse structures and complexities, so sensitivity is essential. Try to concentrate on three different generations where possible.

Preparation

In the school situation, parent/carer and child come with their fact file and draft the first page of their book. After editing by parent/carer and/or staff member this is transferred to the presentation page. Pages could be graphically structured with headings, subheadings, and lines for writing plus areas for images. An alternative, and strongly recommended, approach is for page plans to be suggested on a white/interactive board, and the families themselves decide what goes where. Pages may look rather haphazard this way, but it avoids the impersonal, clinical appearance of so many photocopied worksheets we give children to 'fill in the words' on.

Making a loose leaf album

The advantage of this easy to make book is that pages can be inserted and removed easily. There is no need to plan how many pages are necessary.

No scissors needed, but glue stick required for attaching images.

Materials for each family:

A4 cartridge paper pages. (The quantity required for each book will vary, but have ten sheets per family at hand.)

A2 cartridge paper for the cover.

(To strengthen the front and back cover insert a sheet of A4 card into the cover fold.)

Diagram 1

Cover. Fold A2 paper in half lengthways, and then fold in half again vertically.

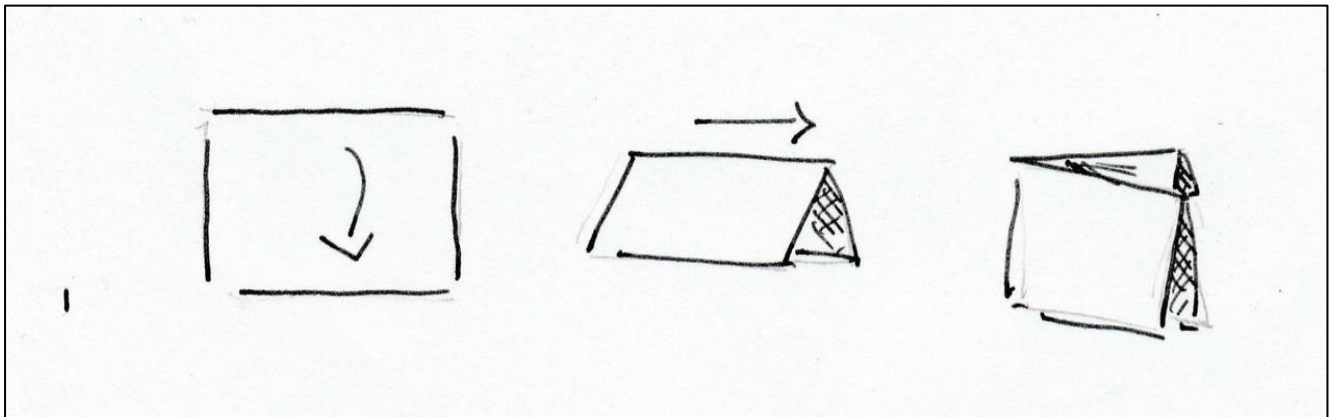


Diagram 2

Lay ruler about 2 centimetres from spine edge and fold front cover forward over ruler.

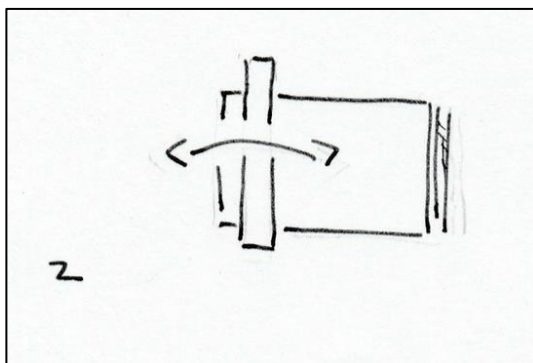


Diagram 3

Remove ruler and reinforce crease.

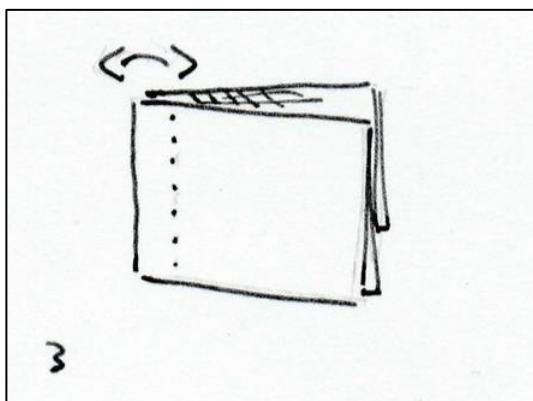
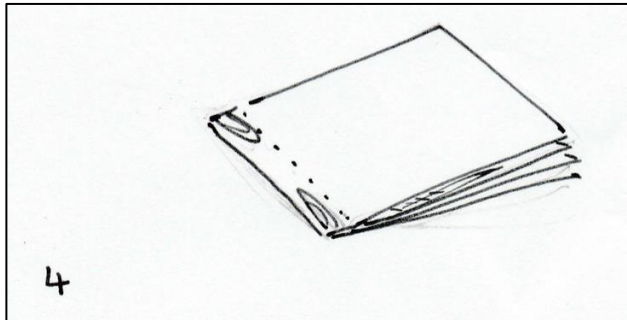


Diagram 4

Collate pages and assemble into cover using jumbo paper clips.



Areas covered should, of course, be as inclusive as possible. The following are suggested questions and areas to explore with families.

Planning the contents – fact finding

Section 1. About me

Section 2. My parents/carers

Section 3. My parents'/carers' parents

Section 4. How far back can you go – great grandparents, ancestors?

1. About me

Name and age.

What do you enjoy most at school and at home?

Do you have any pets?

Do you have a funny/scary story about yourself (for example, getting lost)?

Imagine that you are twenty-five. What would you like to be doing then?

Do you have any brothers or sisters?

What are their names and ages?

What can you tell us about them, what things do they enjoy doing?

What is the best thing about each of them?

Is there a funny/scary story about them?



2. My parents/carers

Where were they born and where did they grow up?

Do they have any brothers or sisters?

Is there anything you would like to write about them, like what jobs, or special interests they have?

What is your most favourite thing about them?

Apart from winning the lottery, what are their dreams?

3. My parents'/carers parents

Where were they born and where did they grow up?

Do they have any brothers or sisters?

What makes them special to you?

Is there a special story about them that you know about like them being 'mods or rockers' in the 1960s?

4. How far back can you go – great grandparents, ancestors?

Do you know anything about any other members of your family from the past?

What can you record about them?

Do you have any family stories that have been passed down to you?

Display and celebrate

Once your special family history books are complete, don't forget to celebrate! Perhaps share family to family, or even in assembly for the rest of the school. Such family history books make gorgeous displays for the school community and will encourage future 'no fear' writing workshops.

Further support

If you need to source materials for this project on a budget, you may want to try Budget Paper Supplies Ltd, Arborfield Mill, Helpston, Peterborough, PE6 7DH. Telephone: 01733 252868. Email: enquiries@budget-paper.co.uk. This company sells the cheapest high quality paper in the country! £5 for 500 sheets of A4 discount cartridge and £10 for 250 sheets of A2 discount cartridge.

Our huge thanks to Paul Johnson, genius book maker and inspiration to all those who look to make literacy come alive in creative ways, whose work formed the basis of this resource. Visit Paul's website to find out more about his work developing literacy through book art.
www.bookart.co.uk