WHO ARE WE?

Who are we now? Oral History

Using comments, memory and extracts from the life story of an elderly lady to think about our own identity, and inspire the collection of further oral histories.

KS2 | 60 Mins | Group

KEY QUESTION: Does our age make a difference to who we are, and how we see the world?

Background

Collecting oral histories is a great way to think about how people are different, how we live life differently, but there are many things that bring us together in communities. These extracts from one older lady show one opinion about how we live, and provide some interesting discussion points. Using this as a model to collect more oral histories from the surrounding community of the school will help a class think about different identities, and different generations.

Activity

1. Give out small extracts from the oral history (below) to learners in small groups, and ask them to discuss what has been said, whether they have a different view, and what they have learned about the person speaking through their words.

2. Support the class to plan their own collection of oral histories, by deciding who they will ask, what open questions they might use to help people speak, and how they will record what is said. A great way to do this to begin with would be to invite someone in to be asked questions who is known to be comfortable in that environment, for learners to practise asking and recording, before they go and ask people in their own families and communities.

3. Explore the key question above, by discussing the ideas that have arisen as a whole class. Do older people have a collective voice? Would other older people say similar things about themselves and the places that they live? How could we find out? Do young people have a collective voice? How could we find out?

4. These histories can then be used for various different things, but an important learning outcome can be the valuing of people’s experiences and opinions.

Based on original material created by Schools Linking Network supported by the Pears Foundation.
About who we are now

I’d sooner try and make something than buy something that I know is going to fall apart in a year’s time. I buy old sheets from charity shops and make aprons, and use them for the backs of quilts, then get bits of material, ribbons and old buttons, and make kitsch quilts.

There’s no point in doing ‘Make do and Mend now, because there are charity shops, jumble sales and other places where people can go and buy things for their children – things that they want. Families do have to make do with old or second-hand things, but those places are the best way now.

Things break so quickly now. My old twin-tub I had for years, and was still working when I sold it. Then my Hotpoint was 22 years. This washer-dryer will be 4 yrs old in May and I’ve had the engineer out nine times. I’ve had two motherboards, a new fan, two electrical circuits, and various other odds and ends. If it goes wrong again I’ll get rid of it, and get a new one. It will be cheap enough.

About where I live

I’ve lived here thirty-three years and only know two other people.

People come and go.

About how people live together

There was the war – then we had community, but through the bombings, then putting everyone in tower blocks, there ended up with a lack of trust in communities..

After the wars the communities disappeared.

It needs something drastic now to bring people together again. In the snow, and the floods, people helped each other. took others in, people they didn’t know.