

Writing Historical Fiction from an Interview

Using abstraction to tell the story of a major moment in history through the eyes of a family member or neighbor

Hello families and community members!

Our grade students are currently reading The Watsons Go to Birmingham by Christopher Paul Curtis, a historical fiction novel about the 16th Street Baptist Church Bombing told from the perspective of a ten year old boy. Today in English Language Arts we kicked off a historical fiction narrative project. Our scholars will be writing narratives about other historic tragedies from the perspective of you, when you were younger.

Your student has a work packet with all of the information they need, but we wanted to share it here as well for your convenience. Your student will ask you to choose one of the following historic tragedies:

- Assassination of John F Kennedy (1963)
- Assassination of Malcolm X (1965)
- Assassination of Martin Luther King Jr (1968)
- Munich Olympics massacre (1972)
- Jonestown suicides (1978)
- Assassination of John Lennon (1980)
- Challenger Space Shuttle explosion (1986)
- Deadly Los Angeles riots (1992)
- World Trade Center truck bombing (1993)
- Oklahoma City bombing (1995)
- Columbine school shootings (1999)
- September 11 terrorist attacks (2001)

Please choose one you have a relatively strong memory of that occurred during your childhood, or your early adulthood.

Your student will ask you the following four questions:

1. How old were you when this tragedy occurred? Who did you live with?
2. How did you find out about this tragedy?
3. What were your first thoughts and feelings about this tragedy? What did or didn't you understand?
4. How did other members of your family, or other adults around you, respond?

Additionally, your student will ask you two questions that they write themselves. You are encouraged to help them ask questions that allow you to share the details of your story!

After researching more about the event during class and writing the first draft of their narrative, students will have a follow-up homework assignment in which they read you their first draft. Please provide lots of feedback on what they have written, both praise and critique! Our students will be encouraged to enjoy some creative freedom (like most historical fiction), but we also want these narratives to be authentic to your story.

Thank you for collaborating with your student on this project!