

Doing History

1. Begin by introducing yourself and your organization. Prepare attendees by explaining how you will facilitate the conversation. For example, *“Today we are going to be talking about what “Doing History” means to us in our community. We will look at a couple of different poems and photos to help guide our conversation. I encourage you to listen to each other with respect and share your opinions and thoughts openly with the group.”*
2. **Introductions – 10 Minutes**
 - a. Introduce yourself and pass out the *Little Red School House* image.
 - b. Have participants introduce themselves by stating their name and one word or phrase that comes to mind when they see the image.
 - c. Ask participants:
 - i. Did anyone’s response surprise you?
 - ii. Would anyone like to elaborate on their response?
3. **Whole Group – 10 Minutes**
 - a. Ask participants: What’s happening in this image?
 - b. Why do you think the artist drew this image?
 - c. What does this image have to say about teaching history?
4. Whole Group – 15 Minutes
 - a. Pass out *At the Un-National Monument Along the Canadian Border* by William Stafford. Have participants take turns reading the poem and discuss:
 - i. What is going on in this poem?
 - ii. Are there any monuments or sites in Idaho that connect to this poem?
 - iii. Why do you think some places are more important than others?
 - iv. Who decides which places are most important to a community?
5. **Small Groups – 15 Minutes**
 - a. Break participants into small groups of 2-3 and pass out *Of History and Hope*, by William Miller.
 - b. Ask participants:
 - i. What is this poem about?
 - ii. How can history be hopeful?
 - iii. How can we talk about our past with optimism?
6. Large Group – 15 Minutes
 - a. Bring participants back together in the large group to discuss:
 - i. Why should we teach history in school?
 - ii. What is the power of history?
 - iii. What is the power of hope?
7. **Wrap – Up – 10 Minutes**
 - a. Have participants go around again. Have participants say one word or phrase that come to mind when they consider Mark Twain’s quote, “History doesn’t repeat itself, but it often rhymes.”
 - b. Thank participants for coming and encourage them to keep talking!

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Additional Questions

1. How is history different from “the past?”
2. How can people have different perspectives of the same event?
3. How important is it to include multiple perspectives of historical accounts?
4. What do we learn from history?
5. What stories are typically featured in your community’s museums and libraries?
6. What stories are left out that you want to learn more about in your community?
7. How do you learn about the history of your community?
8. Where do you go to learn about your community’s history?
9. How does learning about history differ from learning about your family’s past?
10. Has there been a time where you learned about history in a way different from how it was originally explained to you?
11. How does it feel to learn new information about history?
12. How do multiple perspectives help inform more comprehensive, rich, and interesting narratives?
13. What role does interpretation play when we talk about history?
14. What role do museums, libraries, and archives play in documenting our history?
15. Why is documenting our history important?
16. What should be included when we preserve our history?
17. Who’s voices should be preserved by museums, libraries, and archives? How does differ from whose voices are actually preserved?
18. Who’s voices do you seek out for information about the past?
19. What is the “American story?”

Little Red School House



At the Un-National Monument along the Canadian Border

William Stafford

This is the field where the battle did not happen,
where the unknown soldier did not die.

This is the field where grass joined hands,
where no monument stands,
and the only heroic thing is the sky.

Birds fly here without any sound,
unfolding their wings across the open.

No people killed—or were killed—on this ground
hallowed by neglect and an air so tame
that people celebrate it by forgetting its name.

Of History and Hope

BY MILLER WILLIAMS

We have memorized America,

how it was born and who we have been and where.

In ceremonies and silence we say the words,

telling the stories, singing the old songs.

We like the places they take us. Mostly we do.

The great and all the anonymous dead are there.

We know the sound of all the sounds we brought.

The rich taste of it is on our tongues.

But where are we going to be, and why, and who?

The disenfranchised dead want to know.

We mean to be the people we meant to be,

to keep on going where we meant to go.

But how do we fashion the future? Who can say how

except in the minds of those who will call it Now?

The children. The children. And how does our garden grow?

With waving hands—oh, rarely in a row—

and flowering faces. And brambles, that we can no longer allow.

Who were many people coming together

cannot become one people falling apart.

Who dreamed for every child an even chance
cannot let luck alone turn doorknobs or not.

Whose law was never so much of the hand as the head
cannot let chaos make its way to the heart.

Who have seen learning struggle from teacher to child
cannot let ignorance spread itself like rot.

We know what we have done and what we have said,
and how we have grown, degree by slow degree,
believing ourselves toward all we have tried to become—
just and compassionate, equal, able, and free.

All this in the hands of children, eyes already set
on a land we never can visit—it isn't there yet—
but looking through their eyes, we can see
what our long gift to them may come to be.

If we can truly remember, they will not forget.

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13. William Stafford, *At the Un-National Monument Along the Canadian Border*, 1998. Retrieved from: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/52881/at-the-un-national-monument-along-the-canadian-border>.
14. *Little red school house*. 1897. Retrieved from: <https://www.loc.gov/resource/ppmsca.58625/>.
15. Miller Williams, *Of History and Hope*, 1999. Retrieved from:
<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/47107/of-history-and-hope>