

Oral History Analysis Guiding Questions

OBSERVE: Identify and note details

- What type of oral history is this (audio recording, video, written transcript)?
- Where is the recording taking place?
- Is the content easy or difficult to understand because of vocabulary or accent? If this is an audio or video recording, describe any background sounds or special effects you hear in addition to the voice.
- Who helped make this oral history? Does it seem like an interview or a conversation? Is there any evidence of a personal relationship between the person providing the oral history and the person(s) capturing the history?
- Are there details that suggest the time period this oral history relates to? Is the creation date listed in the bibliographic record? If the creation date is listed, was this oral history created at or around the same time period the content relates to?
- What other details do you notice when reading, listening to or viewing this oral history?

REFLECT: Generate and test hypotheses

- How did you feel during and after reading, listening to or viewing this oral history?
- What tone does/do the speaker/speakers have? How does the tone affect the feeling or mood of the oral history?
- If background noises or special effects are present, how do they affect the feeling or mood of the oral history?
- Why do you think this oral history was captured? What might have been the purpose of capturing this history? What evidence supports your theory?
- Who do you think was the audience for this oral history?
- What do you think the person providing and the person(s) capturing the history might have wanted the audience to think or feel?
- What was happening during the time period this oral history represents? What bias does the person providing the oral history show? Do you detect bias in presentation of this oral history? Is so, towards whom or what?
- What did you learn from this oral history? Does any new information you learned contradict or support your prior knowledge about this topic?

QUESTION: What didn't you learn that you would like to know about? What questions does this oral history raise? What do you wonder about . . .

- Who?
- What?
- When?
- Where?
- Why?
- How?

What sources might you consult to learn more?